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THE BEGGAR GIRL OF PONT DES ARTS

WILHELM H., FF

THE BEGGAR GIRL
OF PONT DES ARTS

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
GERTRUDE GOLDBERG

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ANYONE who, in the year 1824, occasionally visited the Hotel "Koenig von England" in Stuttgart or who took a stroll down the broad avenue between two and three o'clock in the afternoon may remember—unless he has a very bad memory—certain figures who attracted everybody's attention. There were two men, who were quite different from the run of usual guests and pedestrians and seemed rather to belong to the Prado in Madrid or a cafe in Lisbon or Seville. Picture a tall, thin elderly man with dark greying hair, deep and burning eyes dark brown in colour, a boldly shaped nose and thin lips. He walks slowly, proudly and upright. On seeing his black silken breeches and stockings, the large roses on his shoes and the broad buckles at his knee, or the long thin sword at his side, the high, pointed, broad-brimmed hat, set at an angle on his forehead you would have expected, had you any imagination at all, to see a short doublet and a Spanish cloak instead of the black frock-coat which the old man wore.

As to the servant who followed him, his proud gait, his rascally and foolhardy face, his strange and conspicuous clothes, his brazen manner of looking around, gaping at everything without admiring it would readily recall to your mind a servant in a Spanish comedy who follows his master faithfully like a shadow, who while far beneath him in degree yet has* the very same pride, but excels him in cunning and slyness. He is carrying his master's umbrella and raincoat under his arm, and in his hand a silver box with cigars and a lighter.

Did not everyone stop to look at these two passers-by ? Yet it was only Don Pedro di San Montanjo Ligez, steward to the Prince of P., who at that time was staying in Stuttgart, and Diego, his servant.

It often happens that a small and trifling event makes a man famous and conspicuous, and thus it happened to young Froeben. He had already spent half a year wandering about Stuttgart. Every day at two o'clock sharp, he would pass through the palace gate into the park, methodically walk three times round the lake and five times up and down the broad avenue, passing the splendid carriages, the pretty ladies, a host of directors, councillors and lieutenants without being noticed; for he looked quite a nondescript man of about 28 to 30. But one afternoon, he had met Don Pedro on the broad avenue and the latter had greeted him in a very friendly manner, had taken his arm in a confidential way and had walked with him a few times up and down in eager conversation. Since that fateful moment he was regarded with curiosity and even with a certain respect ; for the proud Spaniard who did not speak to anybody else, had treated him with marked esteem.

The prettiest ladies discovered now that he was rather good-looking, that there was even something interesting in his face that was not often to be seen in the park. The directors and councillors of all kinds speculated who the young gentleman could possibly be ; and only a few

lieutenants could furnish the information that, now and then, he masticated a beefsteak in the "Museum", that he had been living in the "Schloss-Strasse" for half a year and he rode a fine Mecklenburg horse of his own. They added a lot about the excellence of this horse, how much it had possibly cost ; thus they came to discourse on horses in general, and listening to such a conversation was supposed to be very instructive at that time.

Since then one often saw young Froeben in Don Pedro's company and usually in the evenings he appeared in the "Koenig von England" where he sat with the Senor apart from other guests and talked with him. Diego stood behind his master's chair diligently serving him and his guest with Xeres and cigars. Nobody could really understand how these two men had come together nor what interest kept them so close. One made wild guesses, bold conjectures, yet the young gentleman himself could have given full particulars for the mere asking.

II

W A S it not in the beautiful gallery of the brothers Boisseree' and Bertram that they first found and recognised each other ? Those hospitable gentlemen had allowed the young man **to** visit **their**

picture gallery as often as he liked ; and he did so whenever he was free at noon, when the gallery was opened. Whether it was raining or snowing even, when the weather was inviting him to an exploration of the environs, he came. He often looked very ill, but nevertheless he came. You would, however, grossly over-estimate Herr von Froeben's aesthetic taste if you thought he had studied or copied the splendid pictures of the old Dutchmen. No, he entered softly, greeted the owner silently, went into a distant room, stopped in front of the picture at which he looked for a long time and left the gallery just as silently. The proprietors were too delicate to question him about his strange liking for the picture ; but it must, of Course, have struck them too ; for often when he left he could hardly hide the tears welling in his eyes.

The small picture was, actually, of no great historic or artistic value. It represented a lady in a half Spanish, half Old German costume. A bright friendly face, with clear and lovely eyes, with a pretty little mouth and a soft, round chin stood out very vividly from the background. Her beautiful forehead was framed by abundant hair and a small hat trimmed with white shaggy feathers was tipped a little roguishly to one side. Her dress which revealed only her pretty neck was hung round with heavy golden chains and testified to modesty as well as to the high social standing of the lady.

"After all he is in love with the picture," they

thought, "like Kalaf with that of princess Turarldot, though with much less hope ; for the picture is about 300 years old and the original no longer alive."

After some time Froeben seemed no more to be the only admirer of the picture. One day the Prince of P. visited the gallery with his attendants. Don Pedro, the steward, left the strolling masses of on-lookers and walked alone from room to room looking at the paintings ; but as if struck by lightning he stopped with a cry of surprise in front of the portrait of that lady. When the prince left the gallery, they sought for the steward for a long time in vain. Finally he was found in deep meditation in front of the picture, his arms crossed, his fiery eyes half closed, his lips pressed together. He was reminded that the prince was already going down the stairs. The old man's mind, however, seemed at that moment to be concentrated on one thing only. He asked how this picture had come to be present there. He was told that it had been painted several hundred years before by a famous master and its present owner had acquired it by chance.

"By Heavens, no !" he replied, "the picture is new, it is not even a hundred years old. From where do you say ? From where ? In heaven's name, do tell me where I can fijid her !"

The gentleman was told an\$ looked too venerable to be ridiculed for this outburst of feeling ; but when he heard the same assertion

again that the picture was old and probably painted by Lucas Cranach himself, he shook his head doubtfully.

"Sirs," he said and laid his hand on his heart, "Sirs, Don Pedro di San Montanjo Ligez considers you to be honourable people. You are not sharp dealers and I am sure you do not want to sell me this picture as an old one. By your kindness I am allowed to see these pictures, and you are much respected in this province. But unless everything is playing me false, this picture...I know the lady whom this picture represents."

With these words he left the room bidding them a respectful good-bye.

"Really!" said one of the owners of the gallery, "if we did not know for certain by whom this picture was painted, when and how we obtained possession of it and for how many years it hung in C, one might be persuaded that it was a fake. Young Froeben, too, apparently seems to be attracted almost daily to this picture by some reminiscence. And the eyes of this old Don, were they not gleaming with the fire of youth when he confessed that he knew the Donna painted here? Strange, how often imagination plays tricks on quite sensible people; and I should be very much mistaken if we have seen the last of the Spaniard.

III

AND so it happened. On the following morning when the gallery had only just been opened, Don Pedro di San Montanjo Ligez entered with a firm step and went past the long row of pictures to the room where the lady with the hat trimmed with feathers was exhibited. He was annoyed to find the place in front of the picture already occupied, that he could not examine it in exclusive privacy as he would have liked. A young gentleman who was standing in front of it, looked at it for a long time, stepped to the window, looked at the drifting clouds and stepped back again before the picture. The old gentleman felt slightly irritated ; however, he had to have patience. He concerned himself with other pictures ; but deeply absorbed by his thoughts of the lady, he turned round every now and then to see whether the young gentleman had not yet withdrawn ; but he stood like a wall, and seemed to be plunged in meditation. The Spaniard coughed in order to awake him from his dreams ; the other went on dreaming ; he scraped his feet a little on the floor ; the young gentleman turned round, but he only cast a hasty glance at the old gentleman and then fixed his eyes again upon the painting.

"San Pedro ! San Jago di Compostella !" murmured the old man. "What a tedious and silly amateur !" He left the room and the gallery in exasperation ; for he felt that to-day his anger would deprive him of every enjoyment. If only he had waited ! The day after, the gallery was closed, and so he had to wait another 48 hours

till he could once more to see the painting which so greatly interested him. Before the cathedral clock had finished striking twelve he hastened up the stairs, entered the gallery, hurried into the room he knew so well, and—fortunately he found himself alone and could look at the picture all by himself.

For a long-time he gazed upon the lady, tears in his eyes, he passed his hand over his brows. "Oh Laura !" he murmured to himself. Suddenly he heard a sigh near him. He turned round frightened. The young man of the day before yesterday was there again looking at the picture. Annoyed at being disturbed he gave a hasty nod ; the young man returned it in a somewhat more friendly manner, but no less proudly than the Spaniard. This time too, the latter wished to wait until the unwanted neighbour had gone ; but in vain. To his dismay he saw the other taking a chair and sitting down a few yards from the painting in order to look at it comfortably and at his leisure.

"Such a dandy !" murmured Don Pedro, "it seems to me he wishes to make fun of my grey hair." He left the room still more annoyed than the last time.

In the entrance-hall he met one of the owners of the gallery ; he thanked him most heartily for the enjoyment the collection gave him, but could not abstain from complaining a little of the distraction caused by the young man. "Mr. B.,[?]" he said, "you have perhaps noticed that I was specially attracted by one of your pictures ; I am

greatly interested in it, it has a certain significance for me which—which I cannot explain to you. I came as often as you permitted me the pleasure of seeing the picture, enjoyed looking at it undisturbed since most people don't stay there long, but—to think that a young and wicked man should spy on me and out of sheer spite, remain for hours in front of this picture which does not concern him at all !"

Mr. B. smiled ; for he knew almost for certain who could be the other one who had disturbed the old gentleman. "I am afraid, Senor, I do not quite agree with you," he replied ; "the young gentleman, too, seems to have a personal interest in the same portrait. It is not the first time that he has stayed there so long."

"How is it? Who is he?"

"Herr von Froeben," the other continued, "he has been staying here for five or six months, and he comes every day regularly at this hour to look at the portrait. You will at least admit that he takes an interest in the picture since he has been coming to see it for such a long time."

"Six months ! Sir," exclaimed the old man, "then I have certainly done him much wrong ; may God forgive me ! I think I was even rude to him. Arid he is a nobleman, you say ? It shall never be said of Pedro di Ligez that he was rude to a stranger. Please tell him—but let it be ! I will meet him again and speak to him."

IV

THE next day, when he appeared again on the scene and found Froeben already in front of the canvas he went up to him in a friendly manner ; but when the young man stepped respectfully aside to make room for the old gentleman the latter bowed politely and said : "If I am not mistaken, Sir, I have already seen you standing in front of this picture several times. You seem to take the same interest in this picture as I do ; I too can never see enough of it."

Froeben was surprised at these remarks. The old man's visits to the picture had struck him, too, he had found out by inquiry who he was, and after the formal and cold welcome of yesterday he did not expect such a friendly address. "I admit, Sir," he replied after some hesitation, "this picture attracts me more than all the others ; for there is something in this picture that has a certain meaning for me." The old man gave him an inquiring glance as if this reply did not quite satisfy him, and Froeben continued more calmly : "It is a strange thing with works of art, specially with painting. Often thousands of people pass by a picture, find the drawing correct, and agree with the colouring, but it does not impress them much, whereas for one individual it might have a greater significance. He stops fascinated, is scarcely able to leave it, and returns again and again to look at it."

"You may be right," said the old man meditatively looking at the painting, "but I think you can say that only of great compositions, of paintings in which the painter represents a certain

idea. Many a man passes by until one catches the real meaning of it, one who realizes the deep idea of the artist. But could you say that of such portraits ?"

The young gentleman blushed. "And why not ?" he asked smiling. "The pretty lines of this face, this noble forehead, this thoughtful glance, this lovely mouth, has not the artist created them with a deep understanding ? Are not these features so attractive that..."

"Excuse me, Sir," the old man interrupted him, contradicting him in a friendly way. "As a matter of fact it was a very pretty lady who served the artist as a model ; she came of a family of beautiful women."

"Oh ! Which family ?" exclaimed the youth astonished. He doubted whether the old man was in his senses ; his words, however, seemed greatly to excite him. "This picture is a pure fancy, Sir, it is at least several hundred years old !"

"Then you believe in that fairy tale too ?" murmured the old gentleman. "Between us ! This time the owners have been deceived ; I certainly know the lady."

"For Heaven's sake ! You know her ? Where is she now ? What is her name ?" asked Froeben with great excitement seizing the Spaniard's arm.

"I had better say, I used to know her," he answered with a trembling voice, casting a sad glance towards the lady. "Yes, I knew her, in Valencia twenty years ago ; a long time ! It is

none other than Donna Laura Tortosi."

"Twenty years !" repeated the young man sadly and down-heartedly. " Twenty years—no, it is not she."

"Not she ?" Don Pedro exclaimed passionately. "Not she, you say ? Then you think an artist has painted these features from his own imagination ? But I will not be unjust. He who painted her was certainly a skilful artist. His colours are natural, natural and fresh as in real life. Believe me ! from his fantasy such an artist would create quite a different picture* Even though you do not know the Tortosi family don't you think that the lady obviously has certain family resemblances such as are found only in good portraits and never in paintings from the imagination ? I tell you, it is a portrait, Sir, and, by Jove, no other than Donna Laura's, as I saw her twenty years ago in the lovely town of Valencia."

"My dear Sir," replied Froeben, "there are resemblances, striking resemblances. For instance, on seeing a portrait of a friend, one often thinks that it is a good likeness of him, save that he appears dressed in a strange, old-fashioned costume, yet in reality it is a remote ancestor from the Thirty Years War or even a stranger ! I also admit that this portrait shows so-called family features, that it resembles the amiable Donna Laura. But this portrait is surely an old one, and, one knows from registrar's and parish registers that it has already hung for 150 years in the Magdalen Church in C, that the church obtained possession

of it as a bequest and not on their order, and that it was apparently executed by the German painter Lucas Cranach."

"The Devil take me !" shouted Don Pedro angrily jumping up and seizing his hat "It is a deception from hell ! In my old age he wants to overwhelm me with sadness and grief !" The old man's eyes were filled with tears when he left the gallery with hasty and resounding steps.

V

BUT he still visited the gallery. Froeben and he still met each other frequently in front of the picture, and the old man became more and more fond of the young man whose modest but sure judgement, whose amiable frankness, whose noble bearing showed a good education, excellent knowledge and a tact rarely seen in a man of his age. The old gentleman was a stranger to this town, he felt lonely. He was, however, not so much estranged from the world that he did not like now and then to talk to somebody. So it happened that, unawares, he made friends with young Froeben. He was, of course, attracted by him all the more as he shared with him a mutual love for that picture.

He, therefore, liked to accompany the young gentleman on his walks and often invited him to join him in the evenings. One night, when the

dining-room of the "Koenig von England" was unusually crowded and they were surrounded by so many unknown guests that they felt hampered in their intimate talk, Don Pedro said to his young friend : "Sir, if you have not already promised to serenade a lady this evening with a lute beneath her window, and if no other promise prevents you, I should very much appreciate your opinion of a bottle of genuine Pietro Ximenes that I have with me in my room."

"You honour me too much," Froeben replied, "I am not bound by any promise, for I don't know any lady here. At this place it is not the custom either to play the lute at night in the street or to chat with one's sweetheart from beneath her window. I shall be delighted to have the honour of your company."

"Well then, would you please wait a minute here until I have made preparations with Diego. I shall send for you."

The old gentleman had made this invitation with a strange ceremony that struck Froeben. Now for the first time, he remembered that he had never been in Don Pedro's room, for they had always met in the common dining-room of the hotel. It was obvious that in introducing him to his rooms, the Portuguese gentleman wished to show a special politeness. A quarter of an hour had passed when Diego appeared with two silver chandeliers, bowed respectfully before the young gentleman and requested Froeben to follow him. Froeben followed him and, passing through the dining-room he noticed

that all the guests stared after him and obviously-discussed him in a whisper. On the first floor Diego opened a folding-door and showed his guest in. Surprised, he stopped on the threshold. His old friend had taken off his frock-coat, put on a black doublet with red puffed sleeves and buckled on a long sword with a golden hilt, and a dark red cloak was falling from his shoulders. Ceremoniously he went to meet his friend and stretching out his thin hands which contrasted sharply with his full cuffs, he bade him welcome. "I am happy to see you, Don Frobenio," he said, "I hope you don't mind the poor appointments of this room ! You can hardly have home comforts abroad, you know. In my hall in Lisbon you can, of course, walk much more softly and my divans are of pure Moorish workmanship. But be pleased to sit down on this narrow thing called a sofa,—as the wine of Mr. Schwaderer is pure and good."

With these words he led the young gentleman to a sofa. A side-board was covered with sweetmeats and wine. Diego poured out the wine and brought cigars and a lighter.

"For a long time," Don Pedro went on, I have desired to have an intimate talk with you, Don Froebenio."—"You see, often when we met at noon in front of Laura's portrait I watched you absorbed in contemplation, and—forgive the prurience of my old eyes—I art) afraid the object of this picture must possess a still greater interest and deeper meaning for you than you have admitted as yet."

Froeben blushed. The old man looked at him sharply and piercingly as if he wanted to read the very bottom of his soul. "It is true," he replied, "this picture is of a deep significance for me and you are right in believing that it is not the work of art that interests me but the object of the painting. Oh, it reminds me of the strangest, but at the same time the happiest moment of my life ! You will be amused if I tell you that I once saw a girl who bore a striking resemblance to this picture. I saw her only once, and never again, and I, therefore, call it good luck that I am at least able to trace her lovely features again in this picture/'

"Good Lord ! that is the case with me, too !" exclaimed Don Pedro.

"You will laugh, however," Froeben continued, "if I confess that I can only speak of a part of this lady's face. I do not know whether her hair is blond or brown, whether her forehead is broad or narrow, whether her eyes are blue or dark. But this pretty nose, this lovely mouth, these soft cheeks, this tender chin, all this I find on the picture exactly as I saw it in life !"

"^Strange, that those features which usually impress one's memory much less than the eyes, the forehead, and the hair, should remain so vividly in your mind although you had seen her but once ?"

"Oh, Don Pedro," said the young man, touched, "a mouth like this, even if you may have kissed it once only, you will not so easily forget. But I will tell you how it happened."

"Stop ! Not one Word more V^l the Spaniard interrupted him. "You would take me as a sorry specimen if I wheedled a secret out of a gentleman without first putting mine in pawn. I will tell you about the lady whom I recognized in that strange picture, and then, if you will deem me worthy of your confidence, you may repay me by telling your story. But you are not drinking ; it is genuine Spanish wine, and this is the wine you will drink if you visit Valencia with me."

They drank of the enlivening Pietro Ximenes, and the old man started :

VI

"SENOR, I was born in Granada. My father was in command of a regiment, and he and my mother were descended from the oldest families of that kingdom. I received instruction in Christianity and all branches of learning becoming to a nobleman, and when I was 20 years of age, having shaped promisingly, my father decided that I was to become a soldier. But he was strict and ruthless in matters of duty. He knew my mother's affection for me and was afraid she might make it difficult for him to judge whether I did my duty properly. He determined to send me to another regiment and he chose Pampeluna where my uncle was in command There I received a thorough

training, and in the following years I attained the rank of captain. When I was 30 years old my uncle was transferred to Valencia. He possessed influence and arranged that within 'six months I should follow him as his adjutant. But before I arrived in Valencia many things had changed in my uncle's household. Long ago, while in Pampluna, he had lost his wife. In Valencia he made the acquaintance of a rich widow, and he had married her some weeks before my arrival at his house. You can imagine how surprised I was when he introduced me to an elderly lady as his wife. But my surprise was increased and turned to joy when Jie also introduced a girl, as beautiful as the day, as his daughter Laura, my cousin. Upto that day I had never known love, and my comrades, therefore, had often called me Pedro el penro (Pedro of stone). But this stone melted like wax under Laura's fiery glances*

You have seen her, Don Froebenio. On that picture her heavenly features are reproduced with uncanny precision. Oh, just like that was her coiffure, as daringly as on the painting she used to plant her rakish little hat with the floating feathers, and when she opened her dark eyes from under her long eyelashes it was as if the gates of Heaven opened and a bright angel appeared with a friendly smile.

My love, Senor, was a joyful one. I could always be near her. Those barriers which in my country used to separate the lovers and to make love painful, timid, sorrowful and cunning, those

barriers did not separate us. How bright did the future seem to me ! My uncle loved me like a son. As far as I understood from his hints he would not have disliked my proposing to his daughter, and on the part of my father there was no difficulty to be expected. For Laura was descended from a noble stock and her mother's wealth was well known. How great my love was you can see from the fact that I loved without having any difficulties or afflictions. Usually love originates from the sweet sensation that you are, perhaps, not displeasing to your sweetheart. As fire slinks along under the roofs and, stopped by a wall, suddenly bursts forth into the houses, destroying everything, and leaps up to the sky, crackling, so does love. The little liking grows. You are roused by apparently unsurmountable difficulties ; you feel a passion that can only be cooled down in the arms of your sweetheart. You speak to the lady at the fence, you send her letters through her maid ; her figure, her lovely image is in your mind when you are awake and in your dreams ; for you have but seen her with her veil and her mantilla. At last, be it through cunning or through force, the obstacles are removed. You fly to your sweetheart, lead her to the altar and—afterwards look at the treasure a little closer. Every now and again the lady reveals a new whim every day she unveils her heart more freely until finally you would much prefer to stand once again at the fence singing love-songs—and never come back.

VII

"B Y Jove, you are an acute observer," Froeben replied blushing ; "there is some truth in your words, but is it entirely so ? No, in that case the divine spark which sets the heart ablaze, the blissful moment which is sufficient for understanding, would both lie, and yet I believe in their divine origin.—Dear me ! Was my experience any better after all ?"

"I understand what you want to say," said Don Pedro. "That moment is divinely beautiful, but often caused my delusion. But, pray, let me go on with my story ! I was neither stimulated, nor hampered by any obstacles, and nevertheless I loved as warmly as any young cavalier in Spain. The only possible obstacle was Laura's heart, and—her eyes had already often told me that they liked to meet mine. All those little proofs of love that a lover usually furnishes, Donna Laura accepted kindly, and within three months she allowed me to make her a confession of my love. Her parents had watched the affair for a long time ; my uncle approved of it and said he had petitioned the king for a major's commission for me in recognition of my efficiency in duty. Together with the news of my promotion I was to confess my love to my father and to ask him for his sanction. I promised to do so. Oh, why did I ! Don't you sometimes think a demon gives us happiness like a beautiful toy only in order to destroy it suddenly ?,

"Soon after having made sure of my good fortune I made the acquaintance of a captain in a Swiss regiment. I liked him very much and often

brought him to my house. He was a handsome blond youth with clear, blue eyes, a white skin and ruddy cheeks. From his looks one would not have believed him to be a soldier, yet his famous military deeds were on everybody's lips. His whole appearance was so novel in this country, where the sun tans faces, where black eyes flash from under black hair, that it made him more dangerous to women. When he spoke of his country, of the mountains covered with perpetual snow, everybody listened attentively to his words, and many a lady must have tried to gain his affection.

"One morning, a friend who knew about my love for Laura, came to see me and gave me mysterious hints to understand that I should either be on my guard or get married to my cousin without waiting for the major's commission because many a thing might happen that I should not like at all. I felt embarrassed, asked questions and learned that in the house of a married friend Donna Laura met now and then a man who, wrapped in a cloak, came there secretly. I thanked my friend and bade him good-bye, I did not believe anything of what he had told me. But a sting of jealousy and distrust remained. I reflected on Laura's behaviour towards me ; I found it unchanged ; she was as pleasing and kind towards me as before, allowed me to kiss her hand, even her pretty mouth—but that was all. Only now it struck me how cold she always was in my embrace ; she did not press my hand when I pressed hers, nor did she return my kisses.

"I was tormented by doubts. My friend came again, stirred the fire considerably by giving me more precise news and I made up my mind to watch my lady's movements closely. We usually took our meals together, my uncle, my aunt, my beautiful cousin and I. On the evening of the day when my friend had warned me for the second time, my aunt asked her daughter at table whether she would keep her company on the balcony.

"She answered she had promised to call on her friend. Involuntarily I must have looked at her more closely ; for she cast down her eyes and blushed. An hour before night-fall she left for that lady's house. When it was getting dark I secretly went to that house and kept a sharp look-out. I was overcome by a tremendous jealousy when I saw a disguised figure sliding up the street crouching under the shadows. I placed myself in front of the street-door. The figure approached and wanted to push me gently aside. But I grasped his cloak and said : "Senor, whoever you may be, I believe I face this moment a man of honour, and I ask you as an honourable man to render me an account !"

"At the first sound of my voice I saw him start. After a moment's hesitation he replied : 'What is the matter ?' 'Swear on your honour,' I continued, 'that you do not enter this house for the sake of Donna Laura di Tortosi !'

"'Who ventures to call me to account for my movements ?' he cried in a dull and dissembled

voice. From his pronunciation I saw that he must be a foreigner. I had strange forebodings.⁴ The Captain di San Mantanjo ventures to do so/ I replied and, in the twinkling of an eye, I pulled away his cloak from his face—it was my friend Tannensee, the Swiss.

"He was standing there like a criminal, unable to utter a word. But I had drawn my sword and, speechless with anger, I indicated that he should do the same. 'I have no weapon with me but a dagger' he replied. I wanted to plunge my sword into his breast without hesitation, but when he stood thus in front of me, not moving a muscle, prepared for anything, I could not do such a horrible deed. I retained enough self-control to decide that he should give me satisfaction outside the town gate the following morning. I remained in front of the door. He promised to do as I wished and went away. .

"For some time longer I kept watch until at last Laura's sedan-chair was brought and I saw her get in. Then I followed her home slowly. The torments of jealousy did not allow me any sleep, and I was wide-awake when some steps sounded before my door by mid-night. There was a knock. Astonished, I put my cloak round my shoulders and opened the door. It was Laura's old maid-servant who gave me a letter and quickly withdrew.

"Senor ! God forbid you should ever get such a letter ! She confessed that she had been in love with the Swiss long before she came to

know me, that, being afraid of her mother's anger who hated all foreigners, she had always restrained him from proposing for her hand that, terrorised by my aunt's threats, she had put up with my proposal. She laid all the blame on herself, and took a solemn oath that Tannensee had often wanted to confess everything to me and had been restrained from doing so only by her imploring requests, by her fear that she would be kept under still stricter surveillance afterwards. She gave me to understand that the family honour would be stained if I did not help her and the captain to flee. She implored me, for Heaven's sake, to abstain from fighting. For if he were killed there would be no other way left for her but to take her life. She concluded by appealing to my generosity. She would always respect me but could never give me her love.

"You will admit that such a letter can, just like cold water, extinguish all the flames of love ; it even calmed down my anger. But I could not forgive the slight to my honour, in that I had been duped. I, therefore, appeared on the scene of action at the appointed hour. The captain must have felt deeply how much he had offended me. Although he was a better fighter than I, he only defended himself, and it was not his fault that I thrust my hand into his sword here between thumb and forefinger so that I was unable to continue fighting. While I was being bandaged I gave him Laura's letter. He read it and implored my pardon. I forgave him with a heavy heart.

"The story of my love is finished, Don Froebenio ; for, five days later, Donna Laura had disappeared with the Swiss."

"With your help ?" asked Froeben.

"I helped as much as possible. My aunt's grief was, of course, great ; but under these circumstances it was better that she should never see her daughter again than that the honour of the family should be disgraced."

"Noble man ! How much it must have cost you ! It was really a hard trial !"

"That is true," replied the old man with a sad smile. "At first I thought this wound would never heal. Time does much, my friend ! I never saw them, never heard of them again. Only once the newspapers praised a Colonel Tannensee as a brave man who had, with Napoleon's troops, offered a fierce resistance to the enemy in the battle of Brienne. Whether it was the same, whether Laura is still alive, I do not know."

"But when I came to this town, visited that gallery and saw my Laura again after 20 long years, just as she had looked in her young days, the old wounds burst open again and—well, you know the rest."

VIII

WITH ceremonious gravity, as is proper to the steward of the Prince of P., a man from Old

Castilian stock, Don Pedro di San Montanjo Ligez had told his story. When he had finished he drank some Xeres, took off his hat, passed his hand over his forehead and his chin and said to the young man at his side : "You now know what I have confided to very few people as yet, Don Froebenio, but it is far from my intention that you must repay my confidence, although your secret would be as safe in my breast as the dust of the kings of Spain in the Escorial,—though I wonder in what way you are interested in that lady,—but curiosity is not seemly to old age, therefore, that is enough !"

Froeben thanked the old man for his information. "I will tell you my little story with pleasure," he said smiling ; "it is not concerned with the secrets of any lady and ends where others begin. But if you allow me I will relate it tomorrow ; for tonight it is already late."

"Just as you like," replied Don Pedro pressing his hand. "I will know how to honour your confidence." Thus they parted. The Spaniard accompanied the young man politely up to the entrance of the lobby and Diego held the light for him until he was in the street.

The day after, Froeben went as usual into the gallery. For a long time he stood in front of the portrait and on this day he actually thought more of the old man than of the lady. He waited over an hour but—the old man did not turn up. When the clock struck two he went into the park, walked at a slow pace round the lake, past beautiful

carriages crammed with ladies more beautiful, innumerable directors and lieutenants, and often took out his binoculars and looked along the avenue ; but the venerable figure of his old friend did not show up. In vain he looked for the thin black legs, the pointed hat, or the splash of colour, which was associated with Diego complete with umbrella and raincoat. "I wonder if he has fallen ill ?" he asked himself and ambled instinctively along the 'Schlossplatz' to the hotel 'Koenig von England' in order to call on Don Pedro. "The Senor has departed," the head-steward replied to his question. "Only last night the prince received telegrams and this morning His Highness and his attendants left in six carriages for W. The steward who travelled in the second carriage, left a card for you here."

Anxiously Froeben seized this last sign of friendship. It read as follows : Don Pedro di San Montanjo Ligaz, Major Rio di S.A. etc. Annoyed Froeben was about to put this cool farewell into his pocket when he noticed on the back of the card some words scrawled in pencil. He read : Good-bye, my dear Don Froebenio ! You must remain in my debt for your story. My best regards to Donna Laura !

He smiled at the old gentleman's message, and yet, when, on the following days, he stood in front of the picture, he was sadder than ever ; for Don Pedro's departure had left a blank in his life. He had very much appreciated the good old man's, conversation. After a long time he had been once

again on friendly terms with somebody and he now felt more distinctly than ever that only a lonely man, a man without hope, is utterly unhappy. Had it not been for the picture that was holding him back by its peculiar magic, he would long ago have left Stuttgart, that had no other attractions for him. One day, therefore, when Messrs. Boisseree showed him a true copy of the dear portrait, a lithographic print, and made him a present of it he regarded it as a hint from fate, took leave of the original, wrapped the copy carefully and left the town as quietly as he had entered it.

IX

His sojourn in Stuttgart had been only for the sake of the picture he had found in that gallery. When he reached the capital of Wuerttemberg he had been bound for the Rhine and now he set out for it again. He admitted to himself that the last few-months had made him almost too soft. He felt, not without a twinge of shame that his melancholy, all his thoughts and desires had verged on folly. He had decided to travel all the year without having a definite plan or destination in mind. He wished to attribute the long break of his journey to the pleasant situation of the town, to its magnificent environs. But had he really found

the town so pleasant ? Had he called on people, made any acquaintances ? Had he not shunned meeting anybody to avoid being disturbed in his loneliness of which he had grown so fond ? Had he enjoyed the magnificent environs ? "No !" he said to himself, smiling. "I behaved like a fool ! I locked myself in a room in order to read ! Did I really read ? Was not *her* portrait on every page ? Did I go anywhere but to see her or to walk alone up and down amongst the crowd of people ? Is it not almost madness to follow a shadow on such long walks, to examine carefully every girl's face to see if I could recognize the pretty mouth of my unknown sweetheart ?"

Thus the young man scolded himself, formed the most edifying resolutions ; and yet—often when his horse crawled slowly uphill he forgot to give it the spurs on top of the mountain because he was absent-minded. How often when he opened his luggage at night and came across the roll, he mechanically unfolded the portrait of his sweetheart and forgot to go to bed !

But the charming hillscape of the Neckar, the magnificent plains of Mannheim, Worms and Mayence did not fail to impress him sufficiently. They diverted him and filled his mind with new and friendly pictures. And one morning, when he set out from Bingen, only one picture was standing before his eyes, a picture that he was to see that very day. Froeben had been travelling through France and England with a fellow countryman and the companion had gradually become a friend to

him. When he reflected on their friendship he had, it is true, to admit that they were not brought together by any affinities ; but it often happens that dissimilarity Welds a closer tie than similarity. The Baron of Faldner was somewhat rough and uncultivated. Even that journey, that adventurous life in the two capitals of Paris and London could but imperfectly polish and refine his exterior. He was one of those people who, disdaind sound knowledge of science and are convinced that they are useful fellows, i. e. people who are naturally endowed with a knowledge of everything, who have a natural grasp of husbandry, cattle-breeding, farming, and consider themselves born farmers, who believe that they grasp without effort what others have to acquire painfully by study. This self-love kept him happy ; for he did not see on what weak pillars his knowledge was founded. He would have been still happier if this self-complacency had been confined to business. But he displayed it wherever he went, gave advice without accepting any and considered himself to have an able head. But that was not what others thought of him. On account of all this he was a disagreeable companion and at home something of a bully, for he was apt to consider himself clever and always in the right.

Froeben asked himself smiling : "will he still use the expression, *I said as much P ? How often, when he had never expected a thing to happen, did he seize my hand and shout: 'Friend Froeben, did I not say already four weeks ago that it would turn out like that ? Why did you not take my advice V

And when I proved up to the hilt that he had really said just the contrary he was not to be daunted and bore a grudge against me for three or four days."

Froeben hoped that experience and the beautiful scenery around him would make his friend wiser. His estate was situated in one of the loveliest spots of the Rhine valley, near Caub, and the nearer the traveller approached, the more joyfully his heart beat at the sight of the glorious mountains and the majestic river, and the more often he said to himself : "No, he must have changed. In these environs one cannot but be unselfish, friendly and sympathetic, and when enjoying this view one must surely learn that he may not be always in the right. But had he learnt at all ?"

X

BY night fall he reached the farm. In front of the house he gave his horse in charge of a servant, asked for his master and was shown into the garden. There he recognized while still at a distance the figure and the voice of his friend. At this moment he seemed to be having a fierce quarrel with an old man who was busy digging. "Whatever you may have been doing in your old-fashioned way for 50, or for a hundred years, the tree has now to be taken out as I said. Fire away,

old man ! One should always think carefully over everything one does." Sighing, the workman put on his cap, looked sorrowfully once again at the beautiful apple-tree and, angrily it seemed, he began digging. The baron, however, whistled a bar, turned round, and saw a man standing before him who smiled at him in a friendly way stretching out his hands towards him. He looked at him surprised. "What can I do for you ?" he asked briefly.

"Don't you know me any more, Faldner ?" the stranger replied. "Have you quite forgotten Paris and London in your nursery-garden ?"

"Can it be you, my dear Froeben !" exclaimed the other one hastening to embrace his friend, "But, good Lord, how you have changed ! You look so pale and thin ; that comes from sitting in a closed room and pouring over books. You never will take my advice ! I have always told you it is no good for you."

"My friend/" replied Froeben who by this welcome was reminded of the thoughts he had on the way, "my friend, think of it ! did you not always tell me I was fit to be neither a farmer nor a forester and I should choose either the career of laW or that of diplomacy ?"

"Oh, my dear Froeben !" said the other smiling vaguely "you still have such a bad memory ? Did I not tell you even then..."

"Yes, you are right. We won't argue !" his guest interrupted him, "let us rather talk about something sensible : how have you fared since we last met ? What are you doing ?"

The baron had some wine brought into an arbour and started talking of his life. His story consisted of almost nothing but complaints about bad times and the foolishness of men. He gave rather clearly to understand that, with his intelligence and the knowledge he had stored on his journeys, he was getting on very well in his farm* But at one time his neighbours had officiously tried to dissuade him from some course of action, at another time he had encountered pig-headed stubbornness from his very workmen who, always thought they had a better knowledge based upon long experience. In short, he admitted that he had been living a life full of perpetual sorrows and troubles, full of quarrels and anger. Some lawsuits concerning disputes about boundaries had moreover filled with bitterness the few happy hours left him from the management of the farm. "Poor fellow!" Froeben thought when listening to this story; "when you are still having the same hobby which you cannot leave off!"

But then it was the guest's turn to relate his story, and he was able, in a few words, to tell his friend that he had been attached to the embassies of several courts, that nowhere had he found any pleasant company, that he had taken a long leave and had now been strolling about a bit in the world.

"Lucky fellow!" said Faldner. "How I envy your circumstances! Here to-day, off to-morrow, not being under any obligations you can travel wherever and whenever you like. There is some-

thing beautiful about travel ! I too should like to move about in the world as freely as before⁷

"Well, what is stopping you ?" Said Froeben smiling, "I don't think that your big farm prevents you from doing so. That you can leave in somebody's charge any time. Have your horse saddled and come with me!"

"That you wouldn't understand, my dear friend !" replied the baron with an embarrassed smile. "To begin with, as regards the farm, I cannot be absent for one day, without everything going wrong, for, you see, I am the life and soul of it all. And then—I made a stupid mistake—but never mind ! I can't travel any more."

At this moment a servant entered the arbour and announced that Her Ladyship had come back and sent him to ask where tea should be served.

"I think in the upper room," he said blushing slightly, and the servant left.

"My God ! When did you achieve frau ?" Asked Froeben surprised. "It's news to me ! Well, I wish you luck ; but do tell me—I would sooner have dreamt of the sky falling down than of such news. And since when ?"

"For six months," the baron replied modestly without looking at his guest. "But how can you be surprised at that. You can imagine, since in my big farm I look after everything myself. I . . ."

"Well, I find it quite natural and appropriate, but when I recall the way you formerly spoke about marriage, it never occurred to me that you would ever find a girl to your liking."

"Oh no, pardon me !" said Faldner, "I always used to say—"

"Well, you always used to say," said the young man smiling "and I always used to say that you would not find any girl to your liking. For you had in your mind an ideal (I did not much like that ideal) that could not be found anywhere. Anyway, once again my heartiest congratulations ! But since there is a lady in the house who invites us to tea I cannot appear in travelling clothes. Wait a little, please ; I shall soon be back. So long !"

He left the arbour, and the baron looked after him with a dull glance. "He is not wrong," he murmured to himself.

But at this moment a tall woman entered the arbour, "Who left you just now ?" She asked quickly. "Who said good-bye ?"

The baron got up and gave his wife a surprised look. He noticed that the usual palor of her cheeks had turned into dark red. "No, I cannot stand it any longer !" he shouted violently. "Josephe, how often must I tell you that Dr. Hufeland has severely forbidden you, with your constitution, to move about too quickly. How hot you look now ! I am sure you walked a long way. And must you go down into the garden where it is now getting cool ? Every now and again I have to repeat things as if you were a child. Ain't you ashamed of yourself ?"

"I only came to call you," said Josephe in a trembling voice ; "don't get annoyed at once ! As

to your fears I went by carriage the whole way and do not feel hot at all. Why can't you behave ?"

"Your cheeks give you the lie," he continued angrily. "Must I tell you everything over and over again ? You did not put on your shawl either, as I told you to do whenever you go down to the garden in the evenings. Must I throw away good money for things I have to buy for you and which you do not use at all ? Good Lord ! I could go crazy ! You won't do me the least favour ; your perpetual obstinacy will kill me ! Oh, I should often like to...."

"I beg your pardon, Franz !" she implored him, suppressing her tears ; "I did not see you the whole day and wished to surprise you here. You see, I forgot all about the shawl and the evening. Forgive me ! Will you forgive your wife ?"

•'It's all right. Let me alone ! You know I do not like such scenes. And even tears ! Drop that disagreeable habit of weeping at every trifle ! We are having a guest, Froeben, who I told you, was my travelling companion. Listen ! Behave yourself sensibly ! See that I may not be obliged to look after the household myself ! We shall have tea in the drawing-room."

Without saying anything more he left the arbour, and walked along the avenue towards the manor-house. Sadly Jbsephe followed him. She had a question on the tip of her tongue, but though she would have liked very much to ask this question, she looked it up deep in her breast.

LATE at night when the baron accompanied his guest to his room, the latter could not abstain from congratulating him on his choice. "Indeed, Franz," he said pressing his hand heartily. "That's the wife for you indeed ! But you have always been a lucky chap. That you with your strange maxims and demands would take home such an amiable and charming girl was really beyond my dreams."

"Well, I am content with her," the baron replied dryly, and attended to his candle. "One cannot have everything ! One must after all seek consolation from this thought in this imperfect world !"

"My dear fellow ! I hope you are not ungrateful for so many beautiful things. I have seen many women but—Goodness knows—none of such faultless beauty as your wife. Those eyes ! That beautiful forehead ! That delicate, slender figure ! I really don't know which to admire more, her charming features or her fine tact, right judgement and good breeding."

"You seem to be quite enchanted," said Faldner smiling. "This comes of reading too much instead of learning by practice. I always told you so. It is a peculiar thing with women," he continued with a sigh. "Believe me f One who knows housekeeping and is able to work quickly is often more useful in a farm than a well-bread woman. Good night ! Be glad that you are still free and—don't choose too quickly !"

When he had left the room **Froeben looked**

after him with annoyance, "It seems to me that this brute is even now not satisfied with his lot ; he has chosen an angel and by his ridiculous pretensions he makes a hell of his house. Poor woman !"

It had not escaped his notice how she looked at her husband, for approval before she did or said anything, and how often he cast a furious glance at her when, in his opinion, she had made a mistake, how he often made clumsy gestures, pressed his lips together and groaned when he thought his guest would not notice it. And with what patience of an angel she bore all that ! She had made a deep and wonderful impression on him. To match her abundant blond hair you would have expected blue eyes, rosy cheeks and perhaps a little nose that, by its graceful sauciness, usually adorns a fair-haired woman better than a dark-haired one. But beneath her blond eyebrows there were brown eyes that did not surprise one by their fire or great liveliness but by a certain meditative melancholy that Froeben, thought he found it very seldom, liked immensely in beautiful women. Her nose was Hellenic, her cheeks were usually pale suffused with only a shade of red, and the only bloom in her face was provided, by her lips at the sight of which you could not help thinking of soft red cherries*

" And that splendid figure !" Froeben continued in his thoughts, "so delicate, so tall, and when she crosses the room, almost gliding ! Gliding ? As if I could not see that she has a heavy burden to

carry, that her lips repress many a word of grief, that her eyes are only waiting to weep at her husband's rudeness as soon as she is alone. No ! It is impossible," he continued after some meditation, "she cannot have married for love's sake. The world that lies behind these eyes is too big for Faldner's understanding, his wife's heart too tender for the brutal repression of this domestic bully. I pity her !"

With these words he went to a cupboard where the servant had put his travelling requisites. He opened it ; his first glance fell on the well-known roll, and he blushed. "Have I not been unfaithful to you this evening ?" he asked. "Did not another picture find its way into my heart ? Have I not caught myself at reflections on my friend's wife that neither become me, nor can be of any use to her." He unrolled the portrait of his sweetheart and stood startled. A thought which up to then had been like a confused dream, suddenly crystallized in his mind, the thought that Faldner's wife bore a strong resemblance to this picture. Her hair, her eyes, her forehead were, to be sure, quite different from those of the portrait, but it seemed to him that there was a striking likeness in the nose, the mouth and the chin, even in her graceful neck. "And the voice !" he said. "Did not the sound of this voice seem well-known to me from the very first moment ? What is the matter with me ? Can it be possible that my friend's wife is that girl whom I saw only once, only partially revealed, whom I always love and for whom I have

been looking in vain since that moment ? This figure—yes, she too was tall, and when I put my cloak round her and clasped her to my heart I felt a fine and slender waist. And this evening did I not often meet her eyes examining me closely ? Did she recognise me, too ? But—what a fool I am ! How could Faldner with his suspicious nature, his strict principles about nobility and irreproachable reputation have married an unknown beggar girl ?"

Again he cast a searching glance at the picture. That moment he believed he was sure, the next moment he was again doubtful. He cursed his treacherous memory. Had not the features of this portrait entirely merged into his earlier reminiscences so that he could no more picture the unknown person otherwise than she was in the portrait ? And now that he had found some new striking resemblance, was he not caught in an eddy of doubts ? He threw the painting aside and dug his heated brow into the pillows of his bed. He felt a great desire for sleep that would enable him to escape from these tormenting doubts and show him the true picture in his dreams with overpowering certainty.

XII

THE following morning, when Froeben entered the drawingroom where he has to have breakfast, his

restless friend had already departed on horseback to inspect some earth-works at the outskirts of his farm. The servant who gave him this news, added with an air of importance that his master was very unlikely to come back before noon, because he would also have to inspect his new plant, some clearings in the forest, where a new garden was being laid out and many other things. "And her Ladyship?" Asked the guest.

"Has already been in the garden for an hour picking beans and will soon be here for breakfast."

Froebon walked about in the hall thinking over the events of the last evening. How unlike things appear in the clear morning light from those in the haze of the evening! He had the same experience with the confused thoughts that bobbed up and down in his mind. He smiled at himself, at the doubts that had stirred his lively imagination. "The baron," he said to himself, "is after all a good man; he certainly has many idiosyncrasies, and his rudeness, is more on the surface. But whoever lives with him for a certain time will get used to it. And Josephe? How often one is steeped in prejudice!" He tried to chase away those thoughts of the day before, those resemblances which now appeared to him silly and outlandish. Preoccupied with such thoughts he had stepped to the mirror and looked over the visiting-cards that were attached there. One of them which announced Faldner's own engagement, struck his eyes. He read the nicely engraved words: 'Baron F. von Faldner with his bride Josephe von Tannensee.'

"Von Tannensee?" Like a lightning this name brought back to his mind that resemblance he had found between his friend's wife and his dear picture. How is it? Is she perhaps the daughter of that Laura with whom my dear Don Pedro was once in love? What joy for him if it were true, if I could give him news of his lost love. Did he not find in that wonderful portrait a striking resemblance to his cousin? Does not the daughter possibly take after her mother?"

He hid the card quickly as he heard the door being opened. He turned round and—saw Josephe coming in. Was it the pretty morning-gown that covered her delicate figure—was the day-light more favourable to her than the candle-light? At this moment she seemed to him immensely more charming than yesterday. Her locks streamed artlessly around her forehead, the fresh morning had breathed a pale red on her cheeks and she smiled in such a friendly manner when she wished hiui good morning. Yet her eyes appeared dull and swollen with tears.

XIII

SHE invited him to have breakfast with her. She told him that Faldner had set out on horse-back at day-break and had asked her to appologize for him. She described the many business affairs

to which he had to attend that day, and which would keep him busy till noon. "His life is filled with sorrows and troubles," she said. "But I think he cannot do without this activity."⁷

"How long has he been like this?" asked Froeben. "Has he been especially busy only recently in his farm?"

"Not much," she replied, "everything is going its usual way. He has been like that since I have known him. He is tireless in his work. During the last spring and summer not a day but found him very busy in his farm."

"Then you must often feel very lonely, I am sure," said the young man. "So completely alone in the country, and Faldner away the whole day!"

"Lonely?" she replied in a trembling voice and bent towards a little table at her side; Froeben saw in the mirror that her lips were quivering. "Lonely? No! The lonely ones are visited by reminiscences and—" she added whilst trying to smile—"do not you think the housewife has quite enough to do and to worry about in such a big household? One is not lonely then—or rather, one is not allowed to be lonely."

One is not allowed to be lonely? Poor thing! thought Froeben; does your heart forbid you the dreams of reminiscence that visit you in your loneliness, or is it that our harsh friend forbids you to be lonely? There was something in the sound of her voice that seemed to contradict her smile.

"And yet," he continued giving his feelings and her words another direction, "and yet women seem

by nature to be specially destined for a quiet and lonely life. At least with those peoples who in general boasted the most magnificent men, the woman was mostly confined to her apartment; thus it was with the Romans and the Greeks, thus it was even in our Middle Ages."

"I would not have thought that you would mention these instances," replied Joseph, her eyes examining his features. "Believe me, Herr Froeben, every woman, even of the lower classes, before she knows anything about the circumstances in which a man lives, perceives very soon whether he has come in contact with many women or not. Such intercourse, undoubtedly, endows him with that fine tact, that tender sensibility always to choose a topic of conversation specially suited and most pleasing to women, on education that, as a matter of fact, no man should lack. You will deny that all the less," she added, "since you obviously owe part of your education to my sex."

"There is much truth in this," remarked the young man, "and I will admit that women had less influence on my way of thinking than on my manner of expressing my thoughts. Recently I have been compelled by my position to associate with the world at large, specially with women. But my experience with these women made me realize quite clearly that they are in fact very little fitted, at any rate very few of them are,—for the hurly-burly of life."

"And why?"

"I will tell you even though you may be cross

with me. It is a fine feature of modern times that the bigger circles realize that addiction to games after all cloaks the poverty of the mind. One, therefore, leaves Whist, Boston, Faro etc. to the elderly gentlemen and to some ladies who are not at all capable of keeping a conversation going. In France, of course, gentlemen between 20 and 30 play games in society ; but these are only those miserable wretches who want to imitate English dandies or who feel that they lack will to take part in conversation. Since the time this mixed conversation has become fashionable in all ranks of society, that is, men and women have made it a practice to plant themselves round the fire-place (or in Germany round the sofa), having tea whilst carrying on extremely soulful discourses, women have obviously forgotten their rightful occupation/

"Excuse me ! But you are too severe ; how should..."

"Pray let me finish," Froeben continued eagerly, seizing, without realizing it, the hand of the beautiful young woman. "A lady of so-called good society receives visitors in her house once a week in the evening, the other evenings she is out repaying calls. At such parties, unless it is one of the big balls, which are held rather seldom, the young people have but few dances. The other gentlemen and ladies talk. There are very well educated and really clever men silent and dull with men, but with women expansive and witty ; these display a brilliance that surprises everybody. It is not vanity that makes them sparkling or eloquent, it is the

feeling that women take more interest in their knowledge than men who are more systematic and more exacting in their demands/

"Well, I can picture such men ; but go on !"

"Such men give a conversation form, background, life. Conversation between women only, specially between spirited women will not be nearly as lively as it will be if only one man is present as witness or umpire in some way or other. By all kinds of witty and interesting topics introduced into conversation by such men, women are unnaturally excited. In order to take part in the conversation, to appear intelligent and educated they have to make every possible effort, they have so to say to strain every nerve so as to take their full share in the general conversation. These springs, however, are usually exhausted soon. Think of fit ! What a bother having to talk intelligently for seven evenings a week throughout the whole winter season !"

"No, you are going too far, you are exaggerating—"

"Not at all. I only say what I saw or experienced myself. In modern times, since such conversation has been coming into fashion, girls are being educated quite otherwise than formerly. Poor creatures ! What a lot they have to learn now between their tenth and fifteenth years ! History, geography, botany, physics, even the so-called higher art of drawing and painting, aesthetics, history of literature, not to mention singing, music and dancing. Men usually learn to under-

stand these subjects only after their eighteenth or twentieth year. They learn them by degrees, therefore more thoroughly. They learn much by experience, and can, therefore, make a better use of their knowledge, and, in their twenty-third year or later, on entering those circles gifted with some worldly wisdom and adroitness, they show great self-confidence. But the girl? Believe me! If such an unfortunate girl, her head crammed with knowledge of different kinds, enters into big society, how strange must everything appear to her at first! Though she would like much better to stay in her room, she is dragged without mercy into all circles; she must appear bright, must talk, must display her knowledge, and—how soon must she reach the end of all her knowledge! You smile?

"Poor thing she has no time to enlarge her knowledge acquired at school. Like all the older girls she must be able to talk about works of art, about literature. During the day she, therefore, collects all sorts of technical terms, reads newspapers to get an opinion on the newest book. Every evening actually means for her an examination in which she must skilfully make use of all she has crammed. You can imagine how much such futile talk, must make a man with real education and knowledge shudder. He will find it ridiculous, even dangerous. He will curse that accomplishment which deprives women of their quiet life and makes them ape men; whilst men become effeminate, getting used to talk and gossip about everything in the women's way. For nobler women he will

wish back that homely quiet, that solitariness in which they feel at home and which enables them to show up much better than in those intellectual circles !"

"There is much truth in what you say," replied Frau von Faldner, "I cannot, however, judge of it properly because I was never lucky or unlucky enough to move in those circles. But it seems to me that there also, just as everywhere, exaggeration causes deterioration. What you say is true : for us women a narrower sphere of action is denoted, that family-'life which is our calling after all. We will lose all balance if we totally abandon this sphere ! But will you entirely deprive us of the enjoyment of an intellectual conversation with men ? It is true, those seven evenings a week must lead to affectation,, and exhaustion. But cannot a middle path be found in this matter ?"

"I have perhaps exaggerated too much ; I wanted—"

"Let me have my say, too," she said, "you said yourself that women among themselves rarely carry on intellectual conversations. I know too well what a nuisance in a female gathering a so-called intellectual woman can be, who finds everything frivolous, unless it is intellectual enough for her. We feel oppressed, nervous and with our little knowledge we would sooner blush before a man than one of our own kind. When only women or girls are together they usually talk of the household, the neighbours, of news or even fashion. But shall we be confined to these subjects ? Shall we

be kept in the dark about subjects which are instructive and of general interest ?"

"Good Lord ! You have misunderstood me. I did not mean that."

"It is true," she continued eagerly, "it is true, men have this thorough and methodical discipline which despises half-education or a pretence of knowledge. But how much do we women like to listen to a conversation of men that deals with subjects not far from our thoughts, for instance about an interesting book we have read or about pictures we have seen ! We certainly learn a lot by listening or even by taking part in the conversation. Our powers of judgment will be improved and every educated woman must take pleasure in such a talk. I can scarcely believe that men will think any the worse of us for that," she added smiling, "unless we presume to show off or abandon the modest sphere assigned to us."

XIV

How beautiful she was at that moment ! The conversation had flushed her cheeks, her eyes were shining and her smile at the end of her speech had something fascinating about it that Froeben did not know what to admire more, the beauty of this woman or her intellect and the simple and beautiful way of expressing herself.

"Certainly," he said, rapturously, "we certainly would be very unjust if we did not respect such gentle and just ambitions. For I should consider *that* intelligent woman very unhappy who finds pleasure in reading and in cultured conversation but who, unfortunately, does not meet with any response in the persons around her. Really, so entirely confined to herself she must feel very unhappy."

Josephe blushed, and a dark cloud passed across her beautiful forehead. She sighed instinctively. Froeben, realized with a shudder that the very woman he had just now described, was sitting at his side. Without intending it he had revealed her grief. For could her boorish husband ever meet her delicate demands? He who saw in his wife only his chief-housekeeper, who regarded everything intellectual as useless, hardly be expected to satisfy any intellectual cravings. Perhaps he even intentionally withheld them from her.

Before Froeben could give the conversation another turn and change its subject, Josephe said without making him feel his mistake: "We women in the country enjoy, of course, this pleasure rather seldom. Yet we are not so much alone as it perhaps appears to a stranger. We have frequent calls to make. Just see! how many visiting cards are sticking on that mirror there!"

Froeben looked at it and remembered the card he had taken. "Oh," he said, taking it out, "I committed a little theft a short time ago." He showed it to her. "Can you believe that up to yesterday I did not even know that my friend was

married ? 'And your name I learned only a little while ago from this card. Your name is Tannensee?'

"Yes," she answered smiling, and I changed this obscure name for the beautiful one Von Fanner'."

"Obscure ? If your father was Colonel von Tannensee your name was not at all obscure."

She blushed. "Oh, my dear father !" she said. "Well, it is true, I was told that he was considered a brave officer of the Emperor and—he was buried as a general. I never knew him. I saw him only once, when he came back from the campaign. He has been dead thirteen years now."

"Was he not a Swiss ?" Froeben asked further.

She looked at him surprised. "If I am not mistaken my mother told me that some relations of his were living in Switzerland."

"And your mother, is her name Laura and does she come from Spanish stock ?"

She turned pale and said in a trembling voice : "Yes, she was called Laura.—But, good Lord, what do you know about us and from where ? —From a Spanish family ?" she continued more calmly. "No. You are mistaken, my mother spoke German and was a German."

"Then your mother is dead ?"

"Yes, she died three years ago," she replied sadly.

"Oh, don't call me a ferret for asking these questions, but had she not black hair and brown eyes like you ? Did she not bear a strong resemblance to you ?"

"You knew my mother ?" She said, trembling still more.

"No. But listen to a strange occurrence !" replied Froeben. "I should be very much mistaken if I did not make the acquaintance of an excellent relative of your mother's." And then he told her of Doti Pedro. He described how they had found each other in front of the picture ; he had the copy brought from his room and showed it to her, He told her how they had made friends and how Don Pedro had told him his story. He repeated it with great tact. From a certain delicacy of feeling he even dated back these incidents and Laura's flight by a whole year and finished the story with these words : "If you had not said your mother was a German I would have believed for certain that your mother Laura was the Spaniard's Donna Laura Tortosi, and the Swiss Captain Tannensee was your father, the colonel."

Josephe had become meditative and rested her forehead on her hand. When he had finished she was apparently not able to answer him at once.

"Oh, don't be angry with me," said Froeben, "If I interpreted the wonderful play of chance as I did."

"Oh, how can I be angry with you ?" She said and her emotion caused her beautiful eyes to fill with tears. "Heaven has ordained that it should remain an enigma for me. How could I ever delude myself that I could be quite happy ?"

"Good Lord ! What have I done !" exclaimed Froeben when he saw her tears streaming in a

flood. " All that is only a silly supposition of mine. Your mother certainly was a German, your relatives and yourself should surely know all that much better than I — "

XV

" M Y relatives ?" She said in tears. "Oh, that is just my misfortune : I have none. How lucky are those who can look back on an ancient descent, who are tied by blood to good people ; how pleasant are the words 'uncle' or 'aunt' ; they are in a way a second father, a second mother, and what magic lies even in the word 'brother' ! Indeed, if it were in me to envy anybody his luck I would often have envied this or that girl for having a brother ; he is her most natural, most faithful and best friend and protector."

Froeben moved anxiously to and fro. Without knowing it he had struck a tender chord in her bosom. He was to be told certain things of which he was instinctively afraid. He kept quiet when she dried her tears and continued :

"Fate has often tried me in strange ways. I was my parents' only child and thus I was deprived of the great blessing of having brothers and sisters. We were living with strangers and I had no relatives about. My father did not seem to be on the best terms with his relatives in Switzerland,

for my mother often told me that they bore a grudge against him for having married her in preference to a rich Swiss girl they wanted to force on him. I saw my father very seldom. He was in the army, and you know how unsettled times were in the reign of the Emperor. Thus there was nobody left to me but my dear mother, and indeed she took the place of all relatives. When she died I was left utterly alone in the great world. Amongst millions of people there was nobody to whom I could turn and say : 'will you be parents now ?'"

"Then your mother's name was not Tortosi ?" asked Froeben.

"I did not call her anything but 'mother' and she never spoke to me about her early life. Besides, when I was growing up she was always ill ! My father called her only Laura and in the few papers that were found after her death and given to me, her name appeared as Laura von Tortheim."

"Well !" cried Froeben gaily, "that is as clear as the day : Laura was your mother's name, Tortheim is nothing else but the version given by the fugitives. That captain in Valencia is your father, Colonel Tannensee ; and moreover, didn't you yourself admit a striking resemblance between this portrait and your mother, and did not my dear Don Pedro recognize his Donna Laura in the original ? Now you are no more alone, you have at least an excellent cousin, Don Pedro di San Montanjo Ligez ! How pleased my friend will be to claim relationship with such well-known people!"

THE Bi

"Good Lord, what will my husband say !" she cried sorrowfully, covering her face with her shawl.

It was inconceivable to Froeben that she could react to it otherwise than he did. He was mostly thinking of Don Pedro's joy of having found a daughter of his Laura. He was rich, unmarried, and still felt the old enthusiasm for his beautiful cousin. Froeben took Josephe's hand from her eyes ; she was crying bitterly.

"Oh, you don't know my husband" she said, "if you think he will take these speculations in good part. You do not know how suspicious he is. Everything must be orderly and regular, everything must be decent and proper, for him and he hates every extraordinary thing from the bottom of his heart." Then she continued without bitterness ; "I had, of course, to consider it a favour that this rich and highly esteemed man should marry me, that he was content with the few family documents I could give him. But still," she exclaimed crying more bitterly, "still I must hear every day that he could have allied himself with the most esteemed families, that he could have married this or that girl. Whenever he is angry with me he tells me that my family has only recently been advanced to the nobility, that there is nothing known about my mother's family and that some of the Tannensee family in Switzerland have even cast off their 'von' and have become plain merchants."

Now for the first time a horrible light dawned upon the young man. He said to himself : "Then I have, come to a house of misfortune f,0 an un-

happy union. Oh, not for the sake of love did she marry him but for protection, because she stood alone in the world. And Faldner, as I know him, took her because she was beautiful, because he could show her off. The miserable woman ! And that barbarian reproaches her with her reverses, even reminds her of how much she owes him !" He felt drawn to her by a mixed feeling of annoyance at his friend and of pity and esteem for this beautiful, unhappy woman. He kissed her hand and tried to infuse courage and confidence into her. "Consider all this as not having been said," he murmured. "It is worrying you, I* see. Of what use is it to Faldner ? Let us keep this to ourselves* In any case it is not likely to lead to anything."

Josephe looked at him in blank amazement. The tears in her wide open eyes were drying up and Froeben realized a kind of pride in her features. "Sir," she said straightening herself, "I cannot possibly believe that you mean what you said. You should know that Baron Faldner's wife can not share with you a secret that her husband is not allowed to know."

With these words she rudely pushed the tea cups aside, got up and—with a curt bow she left the flustered guest. Froeben wished to hold her back to apologize for what he had done, to make good everything, but she had already disappeared through the door before he had wits enough to rise from the sofa. Annoyed he went down into the garden. He did not know whom to blame, himself

or the hostess whose touchiness seemed to exceed all bounds. However, as it usually happens on such occasions, his excitement slowly calmed down and he regained enough self-possession to think* the matter over. And then he found much in extenuation of Josephé. "She does not love him," he said to himself, "perhaps he treats her harshly, is more a master than a husband. She was deeply moved when I spoke to her about the higher enjoyments of life. I saw how frightened she looked when she had poured out her heart to me, when she told me how much she lacked inspite of her happy appearance. Must she not feel awkward at having disclosed this want to a friend of her husband's ? And further, when I told her everything, down to the last detail, when I spoke of her descent in such a cock-sure way, when, in a slightly rude manner perhaps, I struck chords that nobody had yet touched in her, was it not quite natural that she should lose her temper on that account ? And when she finally thought of the suspicion of the baron did she not become more and more afraid and embarrassed ? And I," he continued striking his forehead, "could I expect her to share with me a secret that she could not disclose to her best friend, her husband ? And if she kept it secret from her husband, should she not be afraid of being entirely at my mercy ? She must, of course, consider such an offer strange and rude." How noble the character of this woman appeared to him now ! Still in her youth—for she could at most be nineteen years old—from where did she gain such

strength, such circumspection, such unusual breeding, such refined manners ? He felt, perhaps for the first time in his life, that women possess some refinement, cleverness, strength, self-control, in short, some secret resource which is denied to even the proudest, and the most powerful men.

XVI

BARON VON FALDNER came back for lunch, and Josephine welcomed him with her usual charm, touched perhaps with a shade of solemnity. But he hastily unlocked himself from her embrace. "Is it not enough to drive one mad, Froeben ?" He shouted, without taking any further notice of his wife. "At immense expense I have a steam-engine sent out from England, and when I think everything is all right and already calculate on an 80-100 per cent profit, it won't work !"

"Franz !" exclaimed Josephine, turning pale.

"It won't work ?" Said Froeben after her.

"It won't work !" repeated the unhappy farmer. "The joints won't join, the gearing stands still, some part must have been missing. You know, Josephine, I spent a great deal of money on it. At great expense I had a mechanic sent from Mayence and put the drawing before him. 'Nothing easier !' said the cur, and now when I give him A to be joined to A, and B to B,—for everything is marked

with a number and described—not even the devil can put it together. Oh, it is enough to make one go off his rocker !”

They sat down at the table in a bad humour. The baron bit down his rage at his failure and the probable loss of his capital. He drank a lot of wine which incited him to make naughty jokes. Josephe was even paler than usual. Quietly she attended to her duty as a housewife, and Froeben could only guess her feelings, for she avoided looking at him. He could not swallow his food. In his friend's face he saw his annoyance at the frustration of his hopes ; he saw courage, determination and yet unmistakable fear in the features of the beautiful woman. He sometimes felt as if he had brought bad luck to this house. During the meal conversation flickered and was at last extinguished into silence. But when the dessert was served and the servants had left the room at a signal from Josephe, she drew a deep breath and with flushed cheeks began : "This morning you missed a rather strange talk between myself and your friend. You know, we did not know much about the relatives on my side. Now suddenly a light dawns upon my obscurity, for he brings a lot of esteemed relatives into our house/”

Faldner cast a surprised and inquiring glance at his friend who was a little confused at the outset. This matter called for tact. At this moment he felt very strongly the superiority that a man of the world possessed over an uncultivated and coarse-grained person like Baron Faldner, and with

composure making adroit use of the circumstances he proceeded to tell the strange story of the picture and of his acquaintance with Don Pedro.

Against all expectations, the baron became visibly more cheerful as the story progressed. "Ah ! strange !" were the only words he uttered now and then, and when Froeben had finished, he called out : "Is there anything clearer than this ? Donna Laura Tortosi and Laura von Torthheim, the Swiss Captain Tannensee and your father are the same persons. And as to the steward, dear Froeben, you say he is rich, very rich ? Wealthy, unmarried and still cherishes his old liking for his dulcinea of Velencia ? Dear me, Josephe, then you might possibly come in for generous share of the Spaniard's piastres !"

Josephe had certainly not expected this remark. The guest noticed from her face that she wilted at her husband's vulgarity in the presence of a witness. A load, however, seemed to have been lifted from her heart, and she now pressed her husband's hand, perhaps only because, she had found him less bitter than usual, and she said quite cheerfully : "It seems to *jne* that there is a special dispensation of Providence in our friend's strange meeting with the Spaniard. It comes back to my mind that, now and then, my mother would sing Spanish songs when she felt lonely. That is perhaps the reason why I was not educated in your faith, though I know for certain that my father belonged to the Reformed Church. Well, the best thing will be for our friend to write to Don Pedro."

"Yes, do me the favour," said Faldner. Write to the Don that you have not found his Laura but obviously her daughter. It might lead to something, you know ! To whom will he bequeath his treasure but to you, darling ? Didn't I tell Countess Landskron when I proposed to you : "Even though she does not possess much, in fact nothing, she will bring fortune to my house ! And shall we not reap the blessing now ? How much did you say you think the Spaniard worth ?"

XVII

THE baron had ordered some more bottles of wine. At his last words Jbsephe got up and left the room. It was incomprehensible to Froeben that his friend should treat this lovely and noble being so rudely. He felt that she was ashamed of her husband's vulgarity ; on account of this feeling , he replied in a rather annoyed manner : "How do I know ? Do you think I go about asking acquaintances : 'How much do you weigh ?'"

"Oh, I know your whims about this matter," laughed the baron. "A miserable fellow who possesses what you call feeling and 'savoir vivre*' is in your eyes as good as one who has an income of two hundred thousand pounds. But seriously, we must come to some arrangement with this Don, and I am depending on you/'

"Certainly you can depend on me. But what of Countess Landskron? You have not yet told me how you made the acquaintance of your wife."

"Well, that is really a little story," replied Faldner pouring out another glass of wine for his friend and himself. "You know my business-like mind, my sensitive tact in things like that. I could have taken my choice among the daughters of the whole country; rich ones, wealthy ones, beautiful ones, pretty ones, all of them were at my disposal. But I thought: all is not gold that glitters, and I looked for an efficient housewife. Chance took me to the farm of Countess Landskron. Josephe was then her companion as Miss Tannensee. I was pleased with the diligent and busy girl. Pouring out tea, peeling apples, breaking beans, watering the flowers, in short, she knew to do everything so gracefully and nicely that I thought, if this girl did not make a good housewife no one else would. I spoke to the countess about the matter. The little information she could give me about Josephe's relations discouraged me at first. She told me that she had known Josephe's mother and after her death had taken charge of the girl. She did not possess anything, but the countess gave her a decent trousseau. Her parents' marriage certificate and her baptismal certificate were in order—well, when one is in love, one is usually a fool and thus I took her into my house."

"You must be profoundly happy with this lovely being."

"Well, well, so-so. She is not at all practical,

and I must really seize her silly books to get her used to the house and the garden. For, after all, how can one manage here in the country, if the housewife puts on great airs, sits on the sofa reading novels and almanacs, is prone to be touchy, as she undoubtedly is, and leaves the kitchen and the garden to look after themselves ?"

"Good Lord ! But for this work you could keep maids/" remarked Froeben whose heat and annoyance had been increased by the wine.

"Maids ?" asked Faldner smiling and opening his eyes widely. "Maids ! There you see the theorist ! My friend, you don't understand anything of this matter ! Would not the maids sell half the garden behind my back : the beautiful vegetables, fruits, salads ? And besides, in the kitchen ! From where to get enough wood and butter if everything is entrusted to the maids ? No ! There the wife must have full control, and unfortunately I made a bad bargain with Josephe. But cheerio ! The Don shall make good everything."

Froeben whose heart and delicacy of feeling were hurt by all he had seen and heard, did not dare to contradict him. When his host rose he did so too, and tolerated his embrace patiently. More in order not to see Josephe so soon after this occurrence than to enjoy the baron's company, he accepted his invitation to go out with him to inspect his new plant. The horses were trotted out, the men jumped into the saddle, and Froeben was just about turning the corner when he cast a glance backwards and perceived Josephe's figure at

the window. With a woeful glance she waved her hand gracefully after them. "Your wife is waving her hand to say good-bye," he called out to Faldner ; but the latter laughed at him. "What do you mean ?" he said continuing on his way. "Do you think I have spoiled her so much that she must take leave for an afternoon with kisses and embraces, with wishing and waving her hanky ? God forbid ! By that you spoil your wife ; and if you ever happen to marry, for God's sake, handle things as I do. No word of a journey or a pleasure-ride beforehand. The horse is trotted out.—'Whither, darling ?' she asks on the first or the second occasion. No answer ; you put on your gloves. 'But then you will leave me alone ?' she will ask farther, stroking your cheeks. You cheerfully take the horsewhip and say : 'Yes. This evening I will go to the out-houses, some work or other has to be done. Good-bye ! And if I am not at home by nine o'clock you need not wait with the soup.' She is frightened, you don't notice it ; she wants to run after you ; you wave her back with the horsewhip ; she rushes to the window, drapes herself and the hankerchief on the window, and calls good-bye, waving her white banner to and fro. Let her wave and don't notice it ! Dig your spurs into the horse and gallop off ! I swear that inspires women with respect ! The third time, mine no more asked questions, and, thank God, the whining has come to an end !"

During this excellent speech the baron had, with the greatest calmness, filled his pipe, lit it and

was now smoking, looking over his fields and forests without expecting a reply from his guest. The latter pressed his lips together, and his heart was still more depressed by the speech of this brute. "Oh, you cur," he said to himself, "even worse than a cur; for the Lord has given you reason! You learnt how to train a horse or to plant a tree into better soil, but how to deal with a good soul, how to understand a loving heart is beyond your wits. How she looked after him, full of grief, for he had not bidden her farewell, full of the patience of an angel, she had already forgiven him his rude words ; with a glance so full of love ! Of love ? Is she able to love him ? Are not her delicate feelings being insulted a thousand times ? Does she not see that he shows more affection to his hound than to her ? The thought, however, that she really loved him would be unbearable for Froeben. No, it cannot, it must not be !" With these words he gave his horse the spurs so that it quickened its paces into a canter. "Hey, hey, my dear fellow ! will you make a race with me ?" the baron shouted after him and put his pipe into his pocket. "I give you a start of two hundred paces and yet I will catch up with you." In conformity with the rules of sport, he calculated the distance and when he thought Froeben was two hundred paces in advance he set spurs to his horse and to his triumphed joy, he reached the plant at the same moment as his friend.

XVIII

T H E mechanic, a modest man, who was, however, highly renowned for his skill, welcomed them at the door. "Not yet getting on?" asked Faldner with a gloomy look. "Indeed, either my correspondent in London is a scoundrel and deserves to be hanged, or you, Master Froehlich, know how to put a watch together but not to assemble a plant, as you made me believe."

The man seemed deeply grieved by the baron's words. He reddened and had a bitter word on the tip of his tongue; but he repressed it and passed his hand over his straight hair as if he wanted to smooth his ruffled interior in the act of smoothing his hair. "Excuse me, my lord," he replied, "if the plan and the sketch of a plant in which the gearing and the screws are exactly given, are put before me, I will assemble the plant even though I had never seen it before. But I must be given a free hand and then I make myself responsible for everything being all right; but now—"

"Are you now referring to the little help I gave? You want to put the blame on that? You say yourself you have never seen such a plant in your life. But I have seen one, even two, three in France, in England, and know quite well that the bigger wheels have to be geared to the middle of the cylinder and the smaller ones further up—"

"But, good gracious, excuse me, my lord," replied the draughtsman impatiently, "this plant of yours is constructed differently, you can see that even from the plan—"

"Never mind the plan; plants are plants, and

they are all alike. I am being cheated, deceived from all sides ; I have thrown my money away !"

In the meantime, Froeben had taken the drawings in his hand and looked them over. He found that the construction of this plant was very simple and it was easy to assemble if the wheels and screws, marked in the drawing, fitted in. In former times, he had thoroughly studied mathematics and physics. Together with his friend he had seen and inspected the most famous engineering works. But, having seldom expressed his opinion on this matter, he was regarded by Herr von Faldner, who used to show off his knowledge, as ignorant of engineering. Now, when Faldner's anger was threatening to increase, he turned to the mechanic, made inquiries about these or those pieces given in the drawing, and when the latter showed them, when he saw that they were fitting in properly, Froeben said to Faldner : "I take a bet that you have not been cheated at all. For just as F and H fit into P—you see these are the main gears by which the stamping-machine is connected with the oil-press—the remaining parts will also fit."

"Oh, you are a godsend/" exclaimed the mechanic joyfully, "how quickly you made this out. Yes, F is the main gear, H is geared to the balancing rods, here the wheel KL has to be fixed."

"The plant is very simple," continued Froeben, "and my friend's only fault is that he has in mind the construction of larger engineering works, which,

of course look quite different. By the way, Faldner, you will remember that we saw at Sir Henry Smith's in Devonshire an oil-mill that was made almost exactly to this plan."

The baron hid his astonishment behind an ironical smile which he turned, first to his friend, then to the mechanic. "Do whatever you like," he said indifferently, "I give up the whole thing as lost. It would have been much more sensible if I had had an English mechanic sent together with the engine. Anyway try your luck with all these wretched screws ! I think when I come to fetch you after some hours, you will be fed up with this machine—ABC ; for in this you are a mere beginner as I well know." Whistling he left the house,, mounted on horseback and rode into the forest. '

At once, Froeben had everything dismantled that had been joined previously according to the baron's arbitrary design. The numbers were put in proper order, and with this occupation, he became more and more cheerful ; for it brushed away the gloomy pictures in his mind. Not without a jsmile he noticed that the mechanic looked at him with beaming eyes, that his assistants and apprentices regarded him respectfully as a past-master of their art. Joy and life had entered the workshop where, that morning, they had heard only the commands and the curses <*&f the baron and the demands and contradictions of the supervisor. Soon everything was put in order, and when, in the evening, the baron came back from the forest he was surprised, but seemed at first not

to enjoy the progress of 'the work. He had expected to find everything in confusion. But smiling, the mechanic handed the drawing over to the baron, led him to the cylinder and pointing now to the paper now to the machine he showed with joyful pride what they had achieved up to that hour. "If it goes on like that" added the mechanic, "and if that gentleman gives us such excellent help to-morrow, I guarantee that we shall finish the work before Sunday."

"Nonsense !" was all that the baron replied handing back the drawing. Froeben was not sure whether his friend murmured curses or acknowledgements from time to time while they rode back to the manor-house together.

XIX

THE good progress that the assembling of the plant made, perhaps also the glittering prospect of Don Pedro's Spanish quadruples cheered up the baron during the following days. Froeben had written to the Spaniard at W. and his host made him promise to stay with him until he received a reply from W. The baron's treatment with Josephe also became more human. Probably more out of regard for his friend than for her, he even allowed her to curtail her household duties, and in the mornings or in the evenings, when he himself was busy, he

allowed Froeben to read out to her or to go with her for a walk. In a few days she obviously revived. Her bearing became stronger, a glimmer of quiet pleasure reddened her cheeks and many a moment, when her lips showed a lovely smile and her cheeks small dimples, Froeben said to himself that he had rarely seen a more beautiful woman. He was often so confused by the sight of her that he thought that the beloved picture of his dreams had materialized, that he recalled half-forgotten reminiscences, and even her voice, when trembling with emotion, seemed as if he had not heard it here for the first time. During those days he more frequently took out the portrait at which he had previously looked for hours, and if by chance he came across it and unrolled it, if he looked into the eyes of his unknown sweetheart, he felt ashamed, he thought he had to apologize to her lifeless portrait for his neglect. "But," he said then, "is it unfair to make some days of this poor woman's joyless life more pleasant? And how little it needs to give pleasure to this lovely being and to make her happier! Reading a nice book with her, talking to her, accompanying her on a walk to her favourite places—that is all she needs to be cheerful and happy. Faldner could have the very heaven in his house if he cared to share now and then one or other of these little joys."

Josephe's affection caused, by the way, a pleasant and flattering sensation in the young man. Every morning, every evening seemed to be a new festival for her. When he came down for breakfast

she had already prepared everything nicely and neatly. One day she chose the hall that commanded a splendid view of Rhine in the far distance, another day the terrace from where they saw before them a rural painting of labourers in the field and in the vineyards, near enough to make everything seem like a life-like picture, and yet far enough to avoid being disturbed in the quiet enjoyment of the morning. Another time she chose an arbour in the garden where the view was shut by dense plane-trees and only the fresh morning air or the rays of the morning sun were allowed to enter. Thus she always appeared to spring agreeable surprise on Froeben. When her friend came in, she got up cheerfully and held out her hand to welcome him. If, still enchanted by the sight of her, he remained speechless, she would start a conversation, relate this or that, gave everything she said a special frame, a peculiar charm through her good humour and her precise observation. Afterwards when she quickly cleared the breakfast-table, and sat down opposite him with her needlework, her eyes expectantly fixed on him as he essayed to read out of his book, he often felt as if he must forget everything, even the whole world. For a very short and blissful moment he dreamt he was a happy husband sitting here at the side of his beloved wife.

XX

FROEBEN was very pleased that Josephe had chosen as her favourite the very poet who attracted him

above all others. Whilst he was reading Jean Paul's magnificent poetry he had often to come to her aid by explaining to her this or that obscure figure of speech. But she picked up quickly, her natural aptitude and her delicate feeling together with her absorption in the poetry, made her guess sometimes what her friend was just going to explain to her.

One day she said : "There lies a world full of thoughts in this *Hesperus*! Every human feeling, joy and pain, love and grief, lies separately before us ; whilst we are sucking in the sweet odour of a flower, he knows how to describe its innermost parts, its tender leaves, its fine stamens without destroying it or stripping its petals."

"Yes," replied the young man, "involuntarily we live, we think, we weep with Victor ; and Klotilden's pale cheeks, her uncomplaining grief impress us more than any description could do."

"How grateful I am to him," said Josephe softly, "that he reconciles, that he heals the wounds of sadness ! It was in his power to make Klotilde perish from the pains of unrequited love ; Victor would have called out to her before her death : 'I do love you above all P and she would have passed away with a smile on her lips. Imagine our immense pain, our bitter feeling against fate if we saw these beings perish without hope, without consolation ! But it would not have been possible ; Victor would not have loved so long, he would have given himself up to Joachime or to the princess ; for a

man cannot love for a long time unless his love is reciprocated !"

"Do you mean that ?" replied Froeben, smiling sadly. "Oh, how little you must know us, what little value you must attach to us, if, as you say, we had not the courage to love faithfully throughout this short life even without our love being returned."

"I consider it possible with women," said the beautiful girl. "Unreciprocated love is a great misfortune, and women are certainly more apt than you to bear suffering quietly for a whole lifetime. A man would either shake off such a sorrow or pine away with the consuming grief !"

"Neither of the two—for I am still living and loving⁷ said Froeben with a distracted glance.

"You are in love !" exclaimed Josephe in such a peculiar tone that the young man looked at her frightened ; she cast her eyes down when meeting his glance, a deep red spread over her countenance and faded away as quickly as it had appeared.

"Yes," he said trying hard to assume a lightness of tone, "I am in that position. I am still in love, perhaps more calmly, but no less profoundly than on the first day ; I am in love with scarcely even any hope ; for the lady of my heart does not know anything about my love ; and nevertheless, grief, as you see, has not killed me yet."

"And may I know," she said in an intimate way but, as it seemed to Froeben, in a trembling voice, "may I know who is the fortunate one ?"

"Oh, you see, that is just the trouble, I do not know who she is, nor where-she is living, and yet

I am in love. Yes, you will consider me a second Don Quixote if I confess that I caught a glimpse of her only a few times, that I can recall only some portions of her face, and yet I am scouring the world to find her, because I cannot find a moment's rest at home."

"Strange," remarked Josephe looking at him meditatively, "strange ! It is true, I can picture such a case. But yet you are a rare exception, dear Froeben, Do you know at all whether you are loved ? Whether the girl is faithful to you ?..."

"I don't know anything of all that," replied Froeben earnestly and with pent-up grief. "I know nothing but that I would be happy if she belonged to me, and I know only too well that I shall perhaps have her and shall never be entirely happy !"

The fact that the young man had repressed his feelings on previous occasions, caused him to be overcome the more powerfully at this moment by painful memories of many an unbearable hour of sadness. He rose quickly, left the arbour and walked towards the manor-house. Josephe looked after him with glances full of infinite love. One tear after another welled up in her eyes, and only when they dropped on her beautiful hands did she awake from her dreams. And ashamed, as if she had caught herself in a guilty secret she blushed and pressed her handkerchief on those treacherous eyes.

THE prediction of the old mechanic had come true ; for by the last day of the week the plant was completed. Although the baron had at first been angry, he had, in his great joy at the good success of the first trial, loaded the old mechanic and his assistants with presents and had invited all his neighbours round to celebrate the setting up of the plant. However happy and gay he was on this day, however joyfully and jovially he welcomed his numerous guests, it did not escape Froeben's observation that he bothered poor Josephe with orders and arrangements of a hundred kinds, and nothing she did seemed to satisfy him. One moment she had to be present in the kitchen in order to spur on the servants and to give a helping hand, the next he corrected this or that fault in her dress. He was almost driven to despair if she did not come down the stairs quickly enough to welcome the arriving guests at the porch. He wanted the dinner-table to be placed thus or in another way ; now he wanted the coffee to be served in the garden, then in the drawing-room. With the patience of an angel and a resignation incomprehensible to her friend she bore all these trials. She was everywhere, looked after everything and could even find a moment to ask her friend why he was so gloomy just to-day, and to cheer him up so that he might take part in the general joyfulness.

Everybody was charmed at the beauty of the hostess and the promptness with which she obliged her guests. The men envied the baron his possession of such a treasure in his house and several of

the elderly ladies told him openly how they admired the rare natural gift for housekeeping, the intelligence and tidiness of such a young woman. "Do you see," whispered the happy baron in his friend's ear, "do you see how a discipline like mine works wonders? To-day I am on the whole quite satisfied with her, but without my helping hand everywhere would the domestic reputation of my wife be? But she is developing, I always said so, she is developing." The general joyfulness and the wine excited Faldner more, and finally it was high time to rise from the table; for he and some gentlemen from the neighbourhood had started making-jokes and allusions that offended every sensitive ear.

They drove to the new plant, installed it formally amidst jokes and laughter, returned and were surprised anew at the tasteful and yet practical arrangements Josephe had meanwhile made in the garden. Without asking her husband's permission she had dared to have a large arbour built according to her own fancy. All kinds of refreshments awaited the guests there, and the fact that she was praised by everyone worked wonders on the baron. He was not even annoyed that they had used for the arbour young "ash and pine-trees from his forest and had not followed his own plan of putting up a tent out of boards and carpets. He gave his wife a kiss on her forehead thanking her for the pleasant surprise.

The ladies and gentlemen sat around the room in couples. The men were freely partaking of the host's old wines, and soon a general cheerfulness

animated the whole party. They played witty and ingenious games, and when the gay humour of the men increased still more they did not disdain games of forfeits. Thus it happened that, when the pledges were called, Froeben was to redeem his by paying a penalty, and Josephe who was to decide on this penalty, ordered him to tell a true story of his life. Her choice met with general approval and the baron applauded * his intelligent wife with joy. When Froeben was hesitating and reflecting, the host exclaimed : "Well, shall I tell something for you out of your life ? Perhaps the piquant story of the girl, of the Pont des Arts ?"

Froeben blushed and looked at him disapprovingly ; but the guests, anticipating an amusing secret, shouted : "The story of the girl, the story of the Pont des Arts !" Perhaps only to avoid resisting wishes of his friend who had already taken a drop too much, he submitted to the request that he should recount his experiences. The baron, however, promised his guests that as soon as the narrator would swerve from the exact truth, he would correct him, for he was associated with the act himself.

XXII

"I DO not know," Froeben started, "if the ladies and gentlemen are aware that, years ago, in course

of travelling through Europe, I lived with dear Faldner for some time in Paris and even shared a house with him there. We pursued our studies jointly, visited the same circles, introduced each other to our friends and in this way lived inseparably. We had a mutual friend, the amiable, as well as learned, Doctor M., a fellow country-man, who was living in Rue Tarenne which joins Rue Dominique and lies on the leftjaank of the Seine. Our usual evening walk was through Champs Elysees, over the beautiful bridge to the Champ de Mars and from there through Faubourg St. Germain to our friends's flat where we often talked far into the night, of our home, of France, of things we had seen and many other topic. I should like to add, that we were living at Place des Victories, at some considerable distance from Rue Tarenne, and on our way back we used to go over Pont des Arts in order to cross the Lauvre and to avoid a round-about way through side-streets. One night, it may have been after eleven o'clock—it had rained a little and the wind was very cold and biting especially near the river—we walked from the Quai Malaquais over the Pont des Arts towards the Louvre. The Pont des Arts is only accessible to pedestrians and, therefore, there was not much life around and on the bridge at that time of the day. We walked silently over the bridge pulling our cloaks more tightly around us. I was just about to go down the steps at the other end of the bridge when I was fascinated by a surprising sight,

"Leaning against the bridge, there stood a slen-

der, rather tall female figure. A small black hat, coming well over her forehead, was tied tightly under her chin and a green veil fell over her face. A black silken cloak, pressed by the wind, closely enveloped her figure and indicated an extremely youthful waist. A small hand coming out of the cloak, was holding a bowl. In front of her stood a small lantern scattering a flickering light and its gleam fell on a dainty little foot. Perhaps nowhere else than in that city is there so much deep distress living cheek by jowl with the highest splendour and luxury. But yet in Paris one sees comparatively few beggars. They seldom thrust themselves impertinently near you, and you will never see them running after a stranger and begging. Old men or blind ones sit or kneel at the corners of the streets holding their hats before them and leave it to the passer-by whether he will notice their imploring glance or not.

"The most ghastly sight, for me, was those beggar crouching at a corner at night with veiled hats, candles burning in front, standing motionless, almost dying. Many of my friends in Paris had assured me that they were mostly people from the better classes of society who had, by misfortune, fallen so low that they were forced to work for their bread and those who were too weak or proud would take this last way out of it, before consigning their lives to oblivion in the Seine.

"To this class of beggars, I concluded, belonged that female figure on the Pont des Arts to whom I felt irresistibly drawn. I looked at her more

closely ; limbs seemed to shiver .with cold even more than the little flame in the lantern. But she kept quiet and let her obvious distress and the cold night-wind speak for themselves. I hunted in my pocket for some small coins but I could find neither a sou nor a single franc. I turned to Faldner asking him for a coin. But annoyed at being exposed to the biting cold waiting for me, he shouted at me in our language : * Leave beggars alone and hurry up ! Let's get home. I'm feeling cold !' 'Only a few sous, old boy' I pleaded with him ; but he grasped my cloak and wanted to pull me away.

"Then the veiled figure called out to us in a trembling but melodious voice in good German : 'Oh, gentlemen, have pity on me !' Her voice, her words framed in our language held something so touching for me that I asked my friend again for some money. He laughed : 'Well then ! Here are a few francs/ he said, 'try .your luck with the maid but leave me out !' He put the money in my hand and walked on laughing. As a matter of fact I was at that moment at a loss as to what to do. I was sure she must have heard what Faldner had said, and I hated hurting her in her misfortune. Hesitatingly I stepped up to her. 'Dear child/ I said, 'you chose a bad corner here ; to-night but few people will pass here/ She did not answer at once. After a while, she murmured scarcely audibly : 'If these few only have compassion on misfortune !' I was surprised by this reply ; it was so natural and yet so appropriate. The noble bearing of the girl, **the** tone in which she said those words, stamped

with him over the bridge. The night was too cold to encourage following him. But I'll take a bet that, after all, he saw neither a sick mother, nor anything of the kind, but the lady of the Pont des Arts had sung the old siren's song in another way/'

He laughed at his own joke, and the men joined in the coarse laughter. But the ladies cast their eyes down, and Josephe appeared as dissatisfied with her husband's words as with her friend's strange story. For as pale as death she held her cup in her hands so that it rattled, and cast but a single glance at the young man, in a manner that made him feel deeply ashamed. "I think," he said interrupting the laughter of the men with a loud voice, "I think I have redeemed my pledge ; but I do not admit the interpretation my friend seems to put on this incident. Allow me, therefore, to go on. Upon my soul !" he added blushing, and with shining eyes, "I will tell you the plain truth."

"The girl went back over the bridge. While I was walking silently a little behind her, I had time to give her a good look. Her figure as far as her clinging cloak hinted it, her bearing, and particularly her voice were very youthful, her gait was quick, but light and gliding. She had refused my arm when I had offered it to her for guidance. At the end of the bridge she took the turning to Rue Mazarin. 'Has your mother been ill for a long time ?' I asked walking up beside her and trying to get a glimpse of her features through her veil. 'For two years' she Replied sighing ; but since the last eight days she

cloak wide open, and I saw that I had not been deceived. She had a fine and slender waist and, as far as I could make out in a glimpse, she was wearing a clean dress. She quickly gathered the cloak, and as I helped her to put it round her shoulders again, I felt her soft and tender hand.

"We had already walked through Mazarin Street, St. Germain Street, Ecole de Medecine Street and from there through some small by-ways, when she suddenly stopped and complained that she had lost her way. I asked her in which district she was living and she said St. Severin. I felt embarrassed for I did not know myself how to find this street. Either from fear or from cold, I saw her shivering more violently. I looked around. I noticed a light reflected from a basement where *eau de vie* was being sold. I asked her to wait, went down the steps and made inquiries. They gave me directions and I hoped I could find her lodgings. When I came up I heard loud talking nearby. In the weak light of a street-lamp I saw the girl offering a fierce resistance against two men, one of whom had seized her hand, the other one her cloak. They laughed and spoke kindly to her. I divined what was going on, rushed up to them and snatched her hand from the grasp which held her. Speechless and weeping she clung tightly to my arm.

"Gentlemen,⁷ I said/ you see you are mistaken. You will at once let go the cloak of Mademoiselle*'

⁴"Oh, pardon sir !• replied the one who had seized her cloak. 'I see you have prior rights on Mademoiselle P And laughing they went away.

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"As we continued on our way, the poor child was shivering violently. She still held fast to my arm, and was close to dropping.

"Cheer up F I said to her, 'St. Severin is not far, you will soon be at home.' She did not reply. She was still crying. When we were in the street that, according to the description, was supposed to be St. Severin, she stopped again. 'No, you must not go further with me, SirP she said. 'It cannot be.* —'But why not, as You have brought me as far as this ? Please don't think me capable of bad intentions !' With these words I had, without knowing it, seized her hand and pressed it perhaps. She withdrew it hastily and said : 'Excuse my silliness in bringing you so far ; please, leave me now V I felt that her recent experience had hurt her deeply and perhaps evoked her distrust against myself ; this feeling moved me deeply. I took the silver Faldner had given me, and wanted to give it to her. But the thought how little this small gift could help her, made me withdraw my hand, and I gave her some gold coins I had with me.

"Her hand quivered as she took the money ; in the dark she seemed to mistake it for silver ; yet she thanked me in a trembling voice and wished to go.

"One word more/ I said and held her back ; 'I hope your mother will recover ; but she might still be in need of something, and yoti, my dear child, are not made/for evening walks such as to-night's. Won't you be in front of the Ecole de Medecine to-day week at the same time so that I

might make inquiries about your mother ?' She appeared undecided ; at last she said: 'Yes'.—'And do put on again your hat with the green veil that I may recognize you/ I added. She agreed, thanked me once more, and disappeared quickly into the night/'

XXIV

"WHEN I awoke the the morning after this adventure, it seemed to me as if it had all been only a dream* But Faldner who turned up soon and started pulling my leg in his vivacious way, dispersed my doubts. When I considered the affair quite calmly in the morning light it seemed to me too improbable to relate to my sceptical friend. These days, refinement of manners has reached a degree when it is almost degenerating into imbecility. In certain cases one would prefer to appear something of a rake, than to be considered, a fool, a queer fellow or a man of weak mind and narrow views.

"Still more than by Faldner's teasing I felt deeply grieved by something, by some uneasiness that I could not explain. I blamed myself for not having seen even her face. 'What's the good of this excessive discretion' I said to myself. 'If Y spend a few Napoleons I can at least ask the favour of lifting the veil a little.' And yet when I recalled the behaviour of the girl who, with all her simpli-

city had nothing vulgar about her, when I considered how I was attracted by her gracious attitude, her cultured manner of answering my questions, I had, somewhat to my own vexation, to attempt to find an excuse for myself. There is something in the human voice that, without our knowledge of the features, the eyes, and the social position of the speaker, directs us in what tone to address the person. How infinitely different not only in its manner but also in its tone is the speech of an educated person from that of an uneducated one ! The girl's voice was so soft and tender and her brief answers came from the bottom of her heart. The whole day I could not get rid of these thoughts. The miserable girl with the little black hat, the green veil, and the plain cloak accompanied me in my thoughts even in the evening when I attended a brilliant party of ladies.

" During the following days I was angry with my own foolishness for having put off seeing the girl for an entire week. I counted the hours till the next Friday, and even that vast capital of the world, as it is called by its inhabitants, seemed to have no attraction whatever but the beggar girl of the Pont des Arts. At long last, Friday came. I employed all kinds of tricks to disengage myself from Faldner and my other friends for that evening, and when it was getting dark I set out on my way. It was over an hour's walk, and I had time enough to think over the whole matter. 'To-day/ I said to myself, 'to-day you will know for certain what to think of this person. You will offer to go

with her ; and if she accepts you must confess yourself deceived. She will have to show her face to-day,too/

"I had walked quickly so that it was not even ten o'clock when I reached the square of Ecole de Medecine, ana our appointment was not till eleven. I entered a cafe, glanced absent-mindedly at heaps of newspapers ; at last, it struck eleven o'clock.

"On the square there were a few people and, much as I strained my eyes, no green veil was to be seen, I always kept to the side of the College of Medicine, because there were several street-lamps burning. The moments of such suspense are painful. 'What if she has enough of your gold and does not come at all, what if she laughs at your kind-heartedness ?' I thought, after having walked ten times up and down the square. It struck half past eleven. I started to grumble at my own foolishness. There, in the light of a street-lamp, about thirty yards from me, something green was fluttering in the wind. My heart beat violently as I rushed along—it was she. 'Good evening', I said, holding out my hand to her, 'good that you kept your word. I was beginning to think you would never come'. She bowed without taking my hand and walked at my side. She appeared deeply affected. 'Sir, my noble fellow country-man', she said with trembling voice, 'I had to keep my word in order to thank you. I certainly did not come to-day to exploit your kindness again. Oh, how richly, how generously did you give us that present! Can the heart-felt gratitude of a

daughter and the prayers and blessings of a sick mother compensate you ?'

"Don't speak about that/ I replied. 'How is your mother ?'—'I think I may have some hope again/ she replied, 'the doctor, it is true, did not say anything definite, but she is feeling much stronger. Oh, how grateful I am to you ! By your gift I was again able to prepare nourishing meals for her, and believe me, the thought that there are still such good people alive has increased her strength nearly as much.'

"What did your mother say when you came home ?"—'She was very much worried about me, because it was so late already/she replied. 'She had so reluctantly consented to my going out and then pictured to herself some accident that might have occurred to me. I told her everything. But when I opened my cloth and took out the gifts I had collected, and she saw gold amongst them, gold amongst the copper and silver coins, she was astonished and—' she stopped and seemed unable to continue speaking. I wondered whether her mother had thought evilly of her, and I pushed my inquiries further. With a touching frankness she confessed: 'Mother said our generous fellow countryman must be either an angel or a prince.'⁷

• "'Neither the one, nor the other', I told her. 'But how long did it last ? Have you still got any money ?'

"Oh, we have some still/ she replied bravely it seemed. But it did not escape my notice that she sighed involuntarily at these words.

"'And how much have you still in hand?' I asked more definitely and in a more pressing manner.

"'We paid a chemist's bill and one month's rent with it, and I cooked meals for mother out of it ; but there is still something left.'

"How miserably they must have lived if they could pay with this money a chemist's bill, one month's rent, and cook for a whole week !—'But I want to know,' I continued, 'exactly how much you have got !'

"'Sir !' she said offended, taking a step backward.

"'My good child, you don't understand,' I replied stepping nearer, 'or perhaps you don't want to confess out of an exaggerated delicacy of feeling. I am asking you in earnest, can you expect any help when the francs are exhausted ?'

"'No,' she said timidly and softly ; 'I'm afraid none !'

"'Think of your mother and don't reject my aid !' With these words I had offered her my hand. She seized it hastily, pressed it to her heart and praised my kindness.

"'Well, come on then f I continued taking her arm. 'Unfortunately I did not come here straight from home and had not provided myself with money. Have, therefore, the kindness to come with me through a few streets to my residence, where I can give you something for your mother'. Silently she allowed herself to be led. However pleasant the idea of supporting her further was to

me, I felt almost offended when she accompanied me without hesitation—at night to the residence of a man ! But things happened quite differently from what I had expected. We had gone about two or three hundred yards when she stopped and withdrew her arm. 'No, it cannot, it must not be,' she exclaimed, bursting into tears. 'What has troubled you so suddenly ?' I asked astonished, 'what cannot be ?'

'No, I won't go with you, I must not go with you.'

'But, good gracious.' I replied, pretending to be annoyed. 'As a matter of fact you seem to have very little confidence in me. If it were not for the sake of your mother I would certainly leave you now ; you annoy me.'

'She took my hand and pressed it with emotion. 'Did I annoy you ?' she exclaimed. 'Oh, by God, that I did not want ; pardon a poor inexperienced girl ! You are so generous ! How could I offend you ?'

'Well then, come on/ I said, leading her further. 'There is no time to be lost, it is late and the way is far.' But she stood still, crying and murmuring : 'No, I will not go further under any circumstances'.

'But of whom are you afraid ? Nobody knows you, you will not be seen by a soul; you can confidently come with me.'

'I implore you for God's sake, leave me alone ! No, no, it must not be, don't urge me any more !' She was trembling. I felt that if I once more

talked about the dying mother's plight she would come with me ; but I was deeply affected by the girl's anxiety.

"Well, then let us stay here,' I said. 'But tell me, are you able to work ?'

"Certainly, Sir,⁵ she replied, drying her tears.

"Could you, for instance, wash my fine linen ?'

"No,' she answered very decidedly, 'we have no facilities for that.'

"Here is a white cloth,' I continued, 'could you purchase half a dozen cloths of this kind and sew them for me ?'

"She looked at the cloth and said : 'With pleasure, and I will sew them very fine.' To my shame I had to take out some money now, although I had denied having any with me.

"Buy six such cloths,' I continued, 'and could you possibly have three of them ready by Sunday night ?' She promised. I gave her something more for her mother, telling her that I was not prepared to-day but could do more on Sunday. She thanked me heartily. She seemed to be pleased that I had given her work to do. Once again she began talking about it, how nicely she would do the cloths, and, if I was not mistaken, she even asked me if she might make some hemstich in them. « I agreed to everything ; but when she was about to say good-bye, I held her back, 'by the way, you must do me one favour'. I said, 'you can do it certainly and easily.'"

"And what ?' she asked, 'is that ? How gladly I will do everything for you.'

"Let me lift that veil and see your face, **that** I may have at least one souvenir of this evening.⁷

"She moved back, holding her veil more firmly. 'Please, don't F She replied, and seemed to have a little struggle with herself ; 'you have the beautiful remembrance of your good deeds. My mother has strictly forbidden me to lift my veil, and I assure you,' she added, 'I am as ugly as sin. **You** would only be frightened P

"But this resistance irritated me still more. A really ugly girl, I thought, does not speak of her ugliness. I wanted to seize the veil, but she slipped away like an eel : '*Dimanche ! An revoir F* she called out, and hurried off. Astonished I looked after her ; at a distance of about fifty yards she stopped, waved at me with my white cloth calling out in her silvery voice : 'Good night P"

XXV

"DURING the following days I was always thinking of the class to which this girl might belong. The more vividly I recalled her educated manner of speaking, her tender mind, the more she rose in my estimation. That matter at least, I decided, had to be cleared up, and I resolved not to allow myself to be put off again with fair words, as with the veil Sunday arrived. You will remember, Faldner, that afternoon when we were sitting with some

friends in Montmorency in the garden of the great poet. You wished to go home late at night but I was always in favour of an early retyn and when you stayed on I cleared off in spite of your scolding. Of course you did not believe me, when I complained that I could not stand the night air ; but neither could you have thought that I was hastening to a rendezvous with the beggar girl of the Pont des Arts. This time she was first on the spot, for since she had to bring me the cloths she was afraid I might miss her and think that she had not kept her word. With an almost childish joy and, as it seemed to me, with a still greater confidence than before she rattled away while showing me the cloths in the light of a street-lamp.

"She seemed to like hearing me praise her fine work. 'Look, I have also stitched your name in,' she said showing a tiny E. V. F. in the corner. Then she wished to return me a lot of silver change as balance, and only my determined declaration that I should feel offended by this made her accept it as her wages.

"I ordered some work again, as I saw that this kind of gift was acceptable to the tender mind of the girl, and this time ordered frills and cuffs. Her mother had not become worse but could not yet leave her bed. This improvement she said, was comforting to her. When the discussion about the mother's health was finished I dared to ask her straight away how they lived.

"The story she related to me in a few words is of such a daily occurrence in France that it

might serve as a model for almost every poor householder. Her father had been an officer in the *grande armee*, had been put on half-pay after the first restoration of the Bourbons. Afterwards during the Hundred Days he had sided with the Bourbons again and had been killed with the Guards in the battle of Mont St. Jean. He must have acted rather carelessly, for his widow lost her pension and lived ever since in abject poverty. During the last two years they had been making both ends meet mostly by selling their scanty belonging and had just reached that extreme degree of misery when there is nothing left for the poor but to leave the world.

"I asked the girl if she could not have improved her circumstances by trying to support her mother in some other manner.

"'You mean to say if I had entered service,' she replied without feeling offended. 'You see, that was impossible. Before mother's illness I was too young, a little over fourteen years, and then she suddenly became so weak that she could not leave her bed. She, therefore, always needed somebody near her and could I leave her nursing to a stranger? Yes, if she had been in health I would, willingly have entered service in a milliner's shop or as a governess in a decent house, for I have learned quite a lot, Sir; but as things were it was not possible.'

"This time too, I asked her in vain to lift the veil. The hints she had given about her age incited me still more, I must admit, to see the

face of the girl who could have been but little over sixteen. But she implored me to desist, as her mother had given her weighty reasons not to allow it.

"From that time we met every three days. I always had some small work for her, and she had it ready in time. The more steadfastly I adhered to the attitude I had adopted towards her and the more strictly I kept within the bounds of decency the more intimate and open-hearted became the good girl. She even admitted that throughout the three days she had kept thinking of the next meeting. And was it any different with me ? Day and night I was preoccupied with this strange being who grew more and more interesting to me by her refined mind, by her delicacy of feeling and by her peculiar relation to me.

"In the meantime, spring had arrived and the time I had long before fixed with Faldner for a journey to England, had come. Many a man will perhaps consider it silly but it is nevertheless true that I thought of this journey with reluctance. Paris itself had nothing interesting for me any more. But that girl had so captured my mind that I regarded the prospect of a long separation with sadness. I could not put off the journey without making myself ridiculous, for there was no valid reason for postponing it. I even felt ashamed of myself for being so utterly silly. Finally I decided to depart. But I am sure nobody ever looked forward to a journey with as little keenness as I.

XXVI

"EIGHT days previous to my departure I spoke to the girl about it ; she was frightened and cried. I told her to ask her mother if I could call on her. She promised to do so. The next time, however, she very sadly gave me the reply that her mother had declined this honour, as it might prove too exciting for her present state of health. As a matter of fact I had asked for permission to call only in order to see my girl in day-light and without her veil. I, therefore, asked again. But she requested me to come once more on the evening before my departure ; she would meanwhile implore her mother until she got her permission to lift the veil. I shall never forget that evening ! She came, and my first question was if her mother had given the permission ; she said yes and lifted the veil by herself. It was bright moonlight, and trembling, I looked anxiously underneath her hat. But she seemed to have got a partial permission only ; for my enchantress wore a mask over her eyes. But how beautiful, how charming were the parts of the face revealed ! A fine, small nose, beautifully formed rosy cheeks, an amiable little mouth, a chin as smooth as wax, and a slender snow-white neck ; the eyes I could not see quite clearly, but they seemed to me dark and fiery.

"She blushed when I gazed at her for long enchanted. 'Don't be cross with me for having put on this mask. At first my mother flatly refused to give her permission,' afterwards she gave it only under this condition. I was at first rather angry about it. But she told me some reasons which I could understand.

"And what were those reasons ?" I asked.

"Oh, Sir/ she replied sadly, 'you will always live in our hearts but you yourself must forget us completely. You must never, never see me again, or even if you do, you must not recognize me.'

"Do you think I shall not recognize your beautiful features even if I am not allowed to see your eyes and your forehead ?"

"Mother thinks,' she replied, 'that can't possibly be, for if one has seen only half a face it is difficult to recognize it.'

"And why should I not see you again and recognize you again V

"She burst into tears at this question, pressed my hand and said : 'it must not be ! What does recognizing a miserable girl matter to you ? And—no, mother is right ; it is better so.'

"I told her that my journey would not last long, that perhaps in only two months' time' I could be back in Paris and that I hoped to see her again. She* wept more violently and persisted in her refusal. I implored her to tell me why she thought I would never see her again.

' " I have a presentiment/ she replied, 'that I am seeing you to-day for the last time. I believe my mother will not live much longer,—the doctor told me so yesterday,—and then everything is over ! And even if she lives sometime longer, in London you will quickly forget such a poor girl as myself.'

"Her grief moved me deeply, I tried to cheer her up. I promised solemnly not to forget her. I made her promise to come to that place on the

first and the fifteenth of every month, so that I might find her again. She agreed, smiling bravely through her tears. Tare well, then, and good-bye/ I said embracing her and putting a simple little ring on her finger, 'fare well ! Keep me in your mind and don't forget the first and the fifteenth !'

"How can I forget you ?" she cried looking up at me through tears. 'But I shall never see you again. We must part for ever.'

"I could not help kissing her beautiful mouth. She blushed but allowed it patiently. I put a bank-note in her little hand. She once more looked at me very intently and pressed herself more closely to my heart. 'Good-bye,' I said, gently disengaging myself from her arms. The last moment of leave-taking seemed to give her courage. She clasped me once more to her heart ; I felt a warm kiss on my lips. 'For ever ! Good-bye, for ever !' she cried painfully, tore herself away and flitted away across the square.

"I have not seen her again ! after a stay of three months I went back from London to Paris. On the fifteenth I went to the 'Place de l'Ecole de Medecine.' I waited over an hour, but my girl did not appear. Many a time did I walk through the Rue St. Severin, and looked up at the houses, even made inquiries after a poor German woman and her daughter, but I never heard anything of them. The charming being had prophetically said to me on parting : 'For ever' !"

THE young man had told his story with an ardour which stamped it with truth and made a deep impression at least on the ladies of the party. Josephe cried bitterly and the other ladies and girls, too, wiped their eyes now and then. The men had become more serious and seemed to listen with great interest. Only the baron smiled now and then and occasionally nudged his neighbour whispering his remarks in his ears. Now, when Froeben had concluded he burst into loud laughter. "I should say you got out of the affair pretty well !" he exclaimed. "I always said, my friend is a sly dog ; he knows what's what. Look, how well he knew how to move the ladies to tears, this rogue ! Indeed, my wife is crying as if the priest had refused to grant her absolution. That is delightful, upon my honour ! Imagination and truth ! *Dichtung und Wahrheit!* This you learnt from Goethe, imagination and truth, it is a wonderful joke."

Froeben felt offended by these words. "I told you already", he said annoyed, "that I left out imagination, poetic or otherwise, and told the truth only ; I hope you will consider it as such."

"-God forbid!" laughed the baron. "Truth f You supported that girl for your own reasons, old boy, that is all, and out of your night visits to her place you made a short story for us. But well told, well told, I must admit."

The young man flushed with anger ; he saw Josephe staring anxiously at her husband. From her look he feared that she too might share his suspicion and think badly of him. He was unwill-

ing to lose the respect of this lady, at any rate, through those vulgar jokes. "Please, keep quiet !" he said. "Not once in my life did I ever have any reason to cloak or misrepresent anything ; and I cannot endure when others do so on my behalf. I am telling you for the last time, Faldner : On my word ! everything happened as I have related."

"Well, hang it all !" replied the other, clapping his hands. "From excess of noble-mindedness and delicacy you threw away a few hundred francs on a cunning prostitute that led you on by the stale little story of misery and a sick mother and you did not gain anything but a paltry kiss ! Poor devil ! To be made a fool of by a common wench in Paris !"

The young man was annoyed even more by the mocking sympathy and the laughter of the party who, at his expense, applauded the baron's bad joke than by the baron's offensive remark. Most deeply offended, he was about to leave the party when he was held back by a strange and pitiable sight. Josephe, pale as death, rose slowly ; she apparently wanted to answer her husband. But at that moment she fainted and fell down like one dead. Horrified all of them jumped up, ran about pell-mell, the ladies raised the fainting woman, the men asked each other confused questions as to how it could happen so suddenly. Froeben nearly fainted from fright, and the baron, now trying to calm his guests, now running back to his wife, muttered curses on the weak nerves of the woman, and blamed the exaggerated fastidiousness, **the scru-**

pulous regard for decorum, which made women faint. All of them were speaking, advising, shouting at the same time and no one either heard or understood the others.

After a few minutes Josephe recovered consciousness. She asked to be taken to her room. She was led there, the girls and the women, curious and officious, crowding after her. They recommended a hundred remedies, they related how they had had, on such and such an occasion, the same experience, they agreed that the hard strain on Frau von Faldner and the fact that she had been so worried and so busy the whole day, had of necessity brought about this event which had been accelerated by the fear that the baron might expose himself to ridicule, having already behaved in a very ungentlemanly way.

Meanwhile the baron tried to restore the previous calmness amongst the men. He had wine poured out copiously, drank the health of this or that gentleman and tried to calm himself and his guests by all kinds of soothing words. "That results from nothing but the absurd refinements of these wretched modern times", he called out. "Nowadays no society lady is considered fashionable unless she has really weak nerves. Fainting is now the right thing. The devil invented all this foolishness. Another result is that one cannot call anything by its right name. Everything must be done delicately, decently and in conformity with good manners ; it is enough to drive one wild ! Just now she felt vexed at my making a

slightly broad joke. These jokes are the salt of company. Such things should be allowed amongst friends ! And I considered you more clever, friend Froeben, than to take such a joke amiss."

But Froeben whom the baron had addressed in the last part of his speech, had been away from the guests for a long time. Angry and annoyed at himself and the world he had gone to his room. He did not quite know what to make of the incident. His mind, still half excited by anger at his friend's rudeness, half moved by fright at the lady's accident, was too full, too excited to settle down into the calm of meditation. "Wouldn't she too disbelieve me?" he said to himself, full of grief. "Will she too attach more weight to the vile words of her husband than to the plain bare truth I told ? What was the meaning of those strange glances she sometimes cast at me during my narration ? How could she be so deeply moved by those happenings as to turn pale, to shiver ? Can it be true, indeed, that she likes me, that she is much concerned about me, that she felt offended by Faldner's mockery that degraded me so much in her eyes ? And what was in her mind when she rose and wished to speak ? Did she want to stop Faldner's indecent speech or perhaps even defend me?"

With these thoughts he had paced up and down the room. Now his glance fell on the roll containing the portrait. He unrolled it and looked at it, smiling bitterly. "How could I be talked into pouring out my heart to genteel people who

cannot understand these strange things ? Coarse and vulgar things seem to them more natural than unusual ones. How could I bring myself to speak to these dolls of your dear cheeks, your sweet lips ? Oh, you poor, poor thing ! Where might you be now ? Do you still think of your friend and those evenings that made him so happy ?"

His eyes filled with tears when he looked at the picture thinking what bitter wrong people had done to-day to that miserable being. He wished to suppress his tears, but they streamed still more copiously. Moments such as these made his long pent-up grief overflow the more powerfully, the more his discouragement turned into sadness.

XXVIII

THE next morning Froeben was thinking over the events of the previous day and was wondering if he had not at once leave the house where he might perhaps be exposed to such annoyances even more often, when the door opened and the baron entered depressed and ashamed. "You did not come to dinner last night and did not turn up to-day," he began, approaching him. "You are cross with me ; but be sensible and forgive me ! Throughtout the day I had drunk too much wine, was feeling a little too lively and then—you know my weakness—I cannot help teasing. But I have

been punished enough in that the fine day ended so miserably and my house will be the topic of the neighbourhood for the next four weeks. Don't please make my life entirely miserable and be friendly with me as before !"

"Let the matter drop," Froeben replied gloomily, offering his hand. "I don't like discussing this matter any further. But to-morrow I mean to move on ; I won't stay here any longer !"

"Don't be a fool !" exclaimed Faldner who had not expected this and was seriously frightened. "To move off at once on account of such a scene ! I always said you were such a hothead No, nothing of the kind ! And had you not promised me to wait till you would get letters from the Don in W.? No, you must not go away so soon. And, as regards the people of the party, you need not be ashamed. All of them, specially the ladies, gave me a hard drubbing. They said you were entirely right and I was to blame everything."

"How is your wife ?" Asked Froeben evading these issues.

"Quite all right, it was only a little fright as she was afraid we would have a serious quarrel. She is waiting for you with the breakfast. Come down now, and be sensible ! I must ride out, don't take it amiss. The mill will start working to-day. Is everything O. K. again?"

"Righto !" said the young man. "Let us drop the whole matter !" With strange feelings that he himself could not quite explain, he followed the baron who, pleased at his friend's speedy reconcilia-

tion, hurried ahead. Quickly he reported to his wife what he had achieved, and then left the manor-house in order to put his mill to work.

Had everything changed entirely to-day or had Froeben himself only changed ? It seemed to him that the features of his hostess were quite different when he entered the room. She looked so sad and sorrowful and yet her smile was so amiable, so cordial when she bade him welcome. She said that her indisposition of the previous day had been due to much too great a strain, and she seemed loth to discuss the incident at all. But Froeben who was much concerned about the good opinion of his friend, could not bear that she, almost purposely, should not touch on his narrative at all. "No," he exclaimed, "I won't allow you to escape like that, my dear lady ! It does not much matter to me what the others think of me. What do I care whether such commonplace individuals apply their vulgar standard to me ? But I would indeed feel extremely sorry if you too misjudged me, if you too doubted the truth of my narrative which I should certainly never have exposed to such ears. Oh, for Heaven's sake, do tell me quite frankly what you are thinking of me and my story !"

She looked at him for a long time. Her beautiful big eyes filled with tears. She pressed his hand. "O Froeben, would you like to know what I am thinking of the matter ?" She said. "Although the whole world might doubt the truth, yet I would know for certain that you had told a true story ! You do not know how well I know you !"

He blushed joyfully and kissed her hand. "How kind of you not to misjudge me ! I certainly related everything, everything exactly as it happened.

"And this girl," she continued, "is she the same of whom you were speaking the other day ? Don't you remember when we were speaking of Viktor and Klotide how you confessed to me that you loved without hope ? Is it the same girl ?"

"It is indeed she," he replied sadly ; "but, you must not laugh at this silliness. You feel too deeply to find this ridiculous. I know everything one can say against it. Time and again I have called myself a fool, a dreamer, running after a shadow. I do not even know whether she loves me—"

"She loves you !" Josephine involuntarily interrupted. But blushing over her own words she added: "She must love you. Do you not feel sure that such a noble mind must make a deep impression on the heart of a seventeen-year-old girl ? And in all her remarks which you repeated to us there certainly lies—if I am not mistaken—a considerable amount of love."

The young man seemed to listen to her words with delight. "How often did I say to myself," he said, "when I sadly recalled the past without the least consolation. But what is the use ? Often I struggled with myself, sought diversion in the bustle of the crowd, in the pressure of business, but without any success. That lovely, miserable being was always in my mind. My only desire was to see her once again. It is still my desire,—I may confess that to you who know how to appreciate my feel-

ings. I set out on this journey, too, because the ardent desire of looking for her, of seeing her once again drove me to it. And examining this desire thoroughly I often find myself possessing her for ever !—You are looking aside, Josephe ? Oh, I understand. You are thinking I should never have chosen a creature so deep in misery and whose circumstances were so uncertain. You are thinking of the judgment of the people. I too thought of all this very often, but—as true as I live !—if I found her again as I left her, I would ask no body but my heart. Would you be so hard on me, Josephe,?"

She did not reply. Still looking aside, her forehead resting on her hand, she offered him a book asking him to read out to her. He took it hesitatingly, casting an inquiring glance at her. It was the first time that he could not quite see through her behaviour. But she motioned him to read and he obeyed. At the beginning he read distractedly ; but by and by he was fascinated by the subject, his thoughts were more and more carried away from the previous conversation, and he was finally so enchanted that in the course of the reading he did not notice that the beautiful lady was looking at him full of sadness, full of affection, that her eyes often filled with tears she tried to suppress. He stopped after a long time and Josephe had meanwhile composed herself so much that she could calmly discuss what they had read. But yet it seemed to the young man as if her voice trembled now and then, as if the former confidence

she had shown in her husband's friend, had disappeared. He would have felt unhappy had not that bright ray of affection bursting forth from her eyes given his observation the lie.

XXIX

As the baron was not expected before the evening and Josephe had retired to her rooms, Froeben resolved, in 'order to escape those tormenting thoughts at least for some hours, to sleep away the hot noon time until dinner. In the arbour of which he had grown fond through many a beautiful hour he had spent there with the amiable lady, he lay down on the moss-bank and soon fell asleep. He had left his sorrow behind and they did not follow him through the gate of dreams. Only pleasing memories mixed with new, lovely pictures. The girl from St. Sevrin Street with her melting voice appeared before him and told him of her mother. He scolded her for having kept him waiting so long, for he had come on the first and the fifteenth. He wanted to punish her with a kiss, but she resisted, he lifted her veil, raised her beautiful face by the chin and—here was Don Pedro who had put on the girl's clothes, and Diego, his servant, splitting his sides with laughter at the magnificent joke.—Then, with a bold jump of his dreaming imagination

he was again in Stuttgart in that picture gallery. The pictures had been disarranged ; in vain he searched through all the rooms for the dear portrait ; it was not to be found. He began to shout and started lamenting aloud. Then the man in charge of the gallery came along and requested him to keep quiet and not to awaken the pictures that were asleep. Suddenly he perceived the picture in a corner, but not as a half-length portrait as before but full-length. It looked at him teasingly with roguish glances, it stepped out of the frame alive and embraced him ; he felt a long-hot kiss on his lips. As it happens when one awakes from a dream and says to oneself, still dreaming, that it was only a dream, so it happened to the young man. He thought he was awakened by a long kiss, that he had opened his eyes and saw, bent over him, a rosy face that he seemed to know. For the sake of enjoying the sweet breath and the warm kisses that he sucked in, he closed his eyes again. He heard a faint rustle, opened his eyes once again and saw a figure in a black cloak, a black little hat with a green veil, gliding away from him. When she was just vanishing round the corner she turned her face once more towards him : There were the features of the beloved girl, and as at that time she had now also put on the mask over her eyes. "Oh, it is only a dream !" he said smiling to himself and wished to shut his eyes again. But the feeling of being awake, the rustling of the wind through the leaves of the arbour, the rippling of the fountain,

all this was distinct enough to tell him that he was wide awake and alert. The strange and lively apparition of his dream was still standing before his mind ; he looked at the corner where she had disappeared ; he looked at the place where she had stood and bent over him ; he thought he felt the kisses of his beloved still on his lips. "What is the matter with you ?" he asked himself frightened. "You are dreaming though you are awake, you see her about you though you are in your right senses ! No, I never thought that one could dream so distinctly. Can visions even leave footprints behind ; for these footsteps here in the sand are not mine". His glance fell on the moss-bank where he had been lying ; he saw a tiny folded paper and took it up, astonished. It had no address, it looked like a *billet doux* ; he hesitated for a moment whether he should open it ; but wondering who these people were who could communicate with each other in such a way, he unfolded the paper—a ring fell out. He held it in his hand while perusing the letter ; he read :

"Often I am near you, my noble rescuer and benefactor. I am hovering about you with that boundless love which has fanned my eternal gratitude. I know your generous heart is still beating for me. You roamed through countries to look for me, to find me. But your efforts are useless—forget such a miserable creature ! What could I be to you ? Though my greatest happiness would be to belong to you entirely....it never can be! For ever! I told you so already at that time. Yes, I will

always love you but—it is the will of fate that we should be separated for ever, that perhaps only in your kind remembrance may live the Beggar Girl of the Pont des Arts."

The young man thought he was still dreaming, either the old dream or a new one. He looked around ; but all the things around him, the well-known arbour, the bank, the trees, the manor-house in the distance, everything was there as before. He looked, he was awake, he was not dreaming. And these lines were really there, were not a figment of his imagination. "Did somebody after all want to make sport of me ?" He asked himself. "Certainly; Josephe is responsible; was that apparition perhaps only a fake ?" On rolling the paper together he felt in his hand the ring that had been hidden in the little letter. Curiously he took it out, looked at it and turned pale. No, that at least was no deception ; it was the same ring he had given to the girl that night when he had parted from her for ever. Though, at first, he was tempted to believe in something supernatural, the indication of the presence of his beloved delighted him so much that he thought no more of the words in the letter. He did not doubt for a moment that he would find her. He pressed the ring to his lips, hastened from the arbour into the garden casting eager glances at all paths, at all bushes for the dear being. But he looked for her in vain. He asked the gardeners, the servants in the manor-house whether they had seen a strange woman. Nobody had seen her. Confused, hardly able to think coherently he came

to the dinner-table. In vain Faldner inquired why he was looking bewildered, in vain Josephe asked him whether yesterday's bad humour had remained with him. "Something happened to me,"⁷ he replied, "that I should call a miracle if I were superstitious."

XXX

THIS strange incident and the words of the letter which he read over perhaps ten times a day, had made the young man quite melancholic. He began to reflect whether it might be possible for supernatural beings to intervene in the life of mortals. How often had he laughed at those visionaries who believed in apparitions, in messengers from another world, in guardian spirits hovering around men. Time and again he had proved it to be physically impossible that incorporeal beings should become, visible or should be able to do things like mortals. But how to explain what he had experienced himself? Often he resolved to forget everything, to think of it no more, and the next moment he worried himself to dwell lovingly on his recollections. Then her features appeared again more distinctly than ever. He had seen her when she turned round once more at the corner; he had seen again her lovely mouth, her rosy cheeks, her chin, her slender neck. He took out the portrait, he compared every

feature, he covered the lady's eyes and forehead with his hand, and it was the lovely little face as it looked from underneath the mask.

As, the next morning, Josephe was too busy in the house to have a talk with him, he again sat down in the arbour. Whilst he was reading he was preoccupied with the thought whether the girl would make her appearance again. The mid-day heat had a lulling effect on him ; he made every effort to keep himself awake, he read assiduously ; but by and by his head sank backwards, the book dropped from his hands, and he fell asleep.

Nearly at the same time as the day before he awoke, but there was no figure with a green veil to be seen anywhere. Smiling at himself for having expected her, he got up, sad and discontented, to go to the manor-house. Then he perceived at his side a small white cloth but he could not remember having put it there. He looked at it ; it seemed to belong to him, for his initials were sewn in at the corner. "How has this cloth come here ?" he exclaimed, excited, when, on a closer inspection, he discovered that it was one of those cloths the girl was to have sewn for him and that he had preserved like a most precious relic. "Can that be a new sign ?" He unfolded the cloth looking to see if a note were again put in between. It was empty ; but at another corner of the cloth he discovered some letters, too, sewn in like his initials ; tiny and neat there were the words : 'For ever !' "Yet she has been here, all the same P the young man **called out** annoyed. "And how could I sleep like a

hog while she was here ? Why does she give me a new token ? Why repeat those sad words that even then, and again only yesterday, had made me so unhappy ?" Once again he plied the servants one after another with inquiries about a strange person who had been in the garden. Unanimously they answered in the negative, and the old gardener said that since three hours nobody had gone through the garden but her Ladyship. "And how was she dressed ?" asked Froeben, strangely surprised. "Oh, Sir, that is too much for me to answer," replied the old man ; "she was dressed in elegant clothes, you know, but what do I know of female attire ? When she went past me she nodded in a friendly manner and said : 'Good day, James !' "

Froeben took the old man aside : "I implore you for Heaven's sake," he murmured, "did she not wear a green veil and big black spectacles ?"

The old gardener looked at him suspiciously, shaking his head. "Black spectacles ?" he asked. "Her Ladyship wear big black spectacles ? Good Heavens, what do you think ! She has eyes as sharp and clear as a chamois and you ask if she wore glasses on her nose, like those, if I am permitted to mention, old women wear in church ? No, my dear Sir, such absurd thoughts you must put out of your head, they would do you no good. And take it in good part, Sir, but you should put on a cap in, this heat, to avoid sunstroke." Thus the old man spoke and went away shaking his head. But to the other, servants he indicated, tapping his forehead with his forefinger, that the young

gentleman might be not quite right in the upper storey.

XXXI

FROEBEN was still of the opinion that the behaviour of the girl he loved so heartily, was inexplicable. He was so entirely preoccupied with these mysterious incidents that he failed to notice many things that otherwise should have struck him. Josephé appeared at the table with eyes rimmed with red. The baron was taciturn and had now and then to relieve his ill humour which clearly showed on his brow and in his eyes, by swearing at the bad cooking and worse housekeeping. The unhappy wife submitted to everything quietly and patiently. As if looking for help and comfort she sometimes cast a swift glance at Froeben. But she did not notice how her husband watched for those glances intently, how, he frowned when he saw her eyes going that way-

All this passed before Froeben's eyes and ears without his noticing it. He did not even take the trouble of asking Josephé for the cause of this burst of passion. It did not occur to him that she showed greater reserve in Faldner's presence. He attributed to the usual activity of his friend the fact that he urged him in the following days to accompany him to this or that spot of the farm and to

spend the greater part of the day with measurements and calculations in the forest or in the field. But one morning, when Faldner, booted and spurred, was already waiting for him he pleaded slight indisposition in order to escape these unpleasant field inspections. When he, unsuspectingly, remarked that he would read out to Josephe once again, it struck him that the baron shouted angrily : "No, she shall no more read anything, nothing at all ! Moreover everything has been going wrong for sometime ! That's just what I want—that she should spend the whole morning reading, her head filled with romantic ideas such as I have already seen haunting her. For God's sake, read for yourself, my dear Froeben, and don't take it amiss if I place my wife somewhere, else ! You go into the garden after breakfast, Josephe ! To-day they are to cut some vegetables ; afterwards you will be kind enough to call on the parson's ! For a long time you have been owing him a call." With these words he took his riding-whip from the table and hurried away.

"What's the meaning of all this ? What's the matter with him to-day ?" Froeben, astonished, asked the young lady who could scarcely hide her tears.

"Oh, he is usually like that," she replied without raising her eyes. "Your presence made him, for a while, quit his old routine ; now, you see, he is as before."

"But, good Lord," he exclaimed annoyed, "do send a maid into the garden !"

"I am not allowed," she said promptly, "I have to watch the work myself ; he wants it so."

"And the visit at the parson's—?"

"I have got to pay it, you have heard that I have to pay it and so it cannot be helped. But you," Josephe continued, "you, my friend, appear changed since a few days, no more as cheerful, and confiding as before. Don't you like this place any more ? Is my husband, or am I perhaps the cause of your ill humour ?"

Froeben felt embarrassed ; he was about to speak of those strange incidents in the garden to his friend. But the thought of confessing his weakness to the clever young woman, held him back; "You know," he said evasively, "that during the last few days I got some letters from S. And if I seem to be in an ill humour it is due to those tetterers only." She looked at him doubtfully. She seemed to have a reply on the tip of her tongue ; but as if she had divined lack of confidence in the glances of the young man and felt annoyed by it, her beautiful lips quivered, suppressing the reply. She quietly rang the bell, told her maid to bring her- hat and umbrella and then without asking him to accompany her, went to work in the garden.

When Froeben, some hours later, went down into the garden, and asked for Josephe, he was told she had gone to call on the parson. He hastened to the arbour and sat down, his heart beating. To-day he was resolved not to go to sleep. "I will see," he said to himself, "whether that being that hovers about me so mysteriously,

has yet a third token for me. I shall pretend to be asleep, and, as sure as I am alive, if it appears again I will catch hold of it and examine what kind of a creature it is." He read till it was noon ; then he lay down and shut his eyes. Often slumber tried to overpower him. But expectation, unrest and his strong will kept him awake. He might have been lying for half an hour when there was a rustling in the twigs of the arbour. He had scarcely opened his eyes a little when he saw two white hands carefully parting the twigs probably in order to obtain a view of the sleeping person. Then he heard some very soft steps on the sand. Furtively he cast a glance at the entrance to the arbour, and his heart almost burst with joyful impatience when he saw his girl in her black cloak and black hat, the green veil flung back, the black mask tied over the upper portion of the beautiful face.

XXXII

SHE approached tiptoe. He saw a deeper red colouring her face when she stepped nearer. She looked at the sleeper for a long time ; she sighed deeply and seemed to dry some tears. Then she came still nearer ; she bent over him, her breath touched him like a messenger from heaven announcing the proximity of her sweet lips. She bent

deeper and her mouth rested itself on his as gently as the first glimmers of dawn descend on a hill.

Then he could not restrain himself any longer ; he quickly put his arms round¹ her waist and with a short shriek of terror she sank to her knees. He jumped up frightened, for he thought she was fainting. But she was only speechless and was trembling violently. He lifted her up and, filled with delight at meeting her again, he placed her gently on the bench at his side. Covering her mouth with ardent kisses he pressed her to his heart : "Oh, now I have got you again, at last, at last once again, you beloved being !" he exclaimed, "you are not a phantom, you are alive, I am holding you in my arms just as I did then and love you just as formerly, and I am happy, blest ; for you love me, too !" A dark flush covered her cheeks, she did not speak, she tried in vain to disengage herself from his arms. "No, now I won't let you escape any more," he said, and tears, tears of happiness filled his eyes. "Now I hold you fast, and nobody in the world can tear you away from me. Come on ! Cast off that jealous mask, I will see the whole of your beautiful face ; oh, it was always alive in my dreams !" With her last strength she seemed to want to keep his hand from the mask ; she breathed hard, she wrestled with him. But the maddening desire of the young man to taste such indescribable happiness after such long privation, gave him an easy victory. With his one hand he held her arms, pushed back her hat with the other, untied her mask and—saw the wife of his friend.

"Joseph I" he shouted, as if cast down into an abyss, and his thoughts jostled each other. "Joseph !"

Pale, numb, tearless, she was sitting at his side and said, smiling sadly : "Yes, Joseph."

"You have deceived me then ?" he said bitterly while all the hope, all the happiness of the previous moment passed before his mind. "Oh, you could have saved us that farce !" Then, a thought flashing through his mind, he continued : "But, for Heaven's sake, from where have you got that ring, that cloth ?"

She blushed anew, burst into tears and hid her head on his chest. "No," he exclaimed, "I must have a reply ; it is my ring, and the cloth—for Heaven's sake, how came both into your hands ? From where did you get the ring ?"

"From you, Edward !" she murmured, pressing herself still more tightly to him, feeling ashamed.

Then there dawned a light in Froeben's mind. Still he was blinded by this glare ; but he gently raised her head and looked at her with glances full of admiration and love. "It is you ? Am I dreaming again ?" he said after having looked at her for a long time. "Did you not say you were my sweetheart ? My God, how veiled were my eyes ! Yes, these are your lovely cheeks, this is your charming mouth that kissed me to-day, not for the first time !"

A bright glow covered her cheeks. She looked at him full of delight and rapture. "What would have become of me without you, you noble man !" she called out, her eyes filling with tears. "I bring

you the blessing of my dear mother ; you brought her relief in her last days. Oh, how can I thank you ? What would have become of me without you ! But—" she continued covering her face with her hands, "what *has* become of me ? The wife of another, your friend's wife !"

He saw her sobbing with profound grief and her tears pearly down through her tender fingers. He felt how whole-heartedly she loved him, and for all that she belonged to somebody else, not the faintest reproach touched his mind. "That's it," he said sadly, pressing her to his heart as if he could not lose her yet. "That's it ! Let us think it was destined that this should happen to us, because we would perhaps have been too happy. But at this moment you are mine. Throw away everything, every thought, every duty ! Think you are crossing the square of the School of Medicine, and I am waiting for you. Come, embrace me as formerly, oh, only once again !"

Lost in remembrances, she had thrown her arms round his neck ; reality seemed to vanish from her mind ; the past seemed to emerge clearer and clearer, her mouth showed a lovely smile causing tender dimples in her cheeks. "And did you not know me ?" she asked smiling. "And you did not know me ?" he asked, looking at her with tenderness. "Oh," she replied, "that time I observed your features very exactly and impressed them on my memory ; but indeed, I would never have recognized you. The reason for this might be that I had only seen you at night, wrapped in your

cloak, your hat pulled deep on your forehead, and how could I think. It is true, when you called out to Faldner the first evening you were with us : * Good-bye', your voice had a familiar ring, as if I had heard it already. But I always laughed at myself for these silly fancies.' Afterwards I thought now and then it was you ; but again and again I was in doubt. But last Sunday when you mentioned Tont des Arts' a peculiar light came over your face, you seemed to indulge in reminiscences, and at the first words I was sure that it was you, only you ! But you, of course, could not recognize me —I have become very pale, haven't I ?"

"Josephe," he replied, "where were my senses ? Where were my eyes, my ears that I did not recognize you ? When I saw you for the first time a joyful tremor went through my soul. You bore such a striking resemblance to that picture which, through a series of coincidences I had found similar to you and have loved. But by the discovery of your mother's family I got on the wrong track ; I saw in you nothing but the daughter of the beautiful Laura, and often, when I was sitting at your side my mind was far away looking for you !"

. "My God !" exclaimed Josephe, "is it true, is it possible ? Can you still love me ?"

"Can I love you ?—But am I allowed to ? Good Heavens ! Your name is Frau von Faldner ! ,But do tell me, for Heaven's sake, how all that came to pass [Why did you never wait for me any more ?"

XXXIII

SHE wiped her tears, she could with difficulty compose herself enough to be able to speak. "You see," she said, "it was as if an unfriendly fate had brought about all that in order to make me unhappy. When you had gone I had no more joy in life. Those evenings with you meant so very much for me. You see, from the very first moment when you asked your companion for money in our dear mother-tongue, my heart had been beating for you. And when you showed such great concern for us with such an unbounded generosity, with so much delicacy of feeling, alas ! I should often have liked to press you to my heart and to confess that I worshipped you like a heavenly creature. Nothing whatever would have been too difficult for me to do for you ; and how grandly, how generously you behaved towards me ! You left.— I wept a long time ; for a painful feeling told me that it meant farewell for ever. Eight days after your departure my poor mother died. What you had given me then was just enough to bury my mother. A lady, Countess Landskron, who was living in our neighbourhood and had heard of us, sent for me. She examined me very closely, she carefully looted through my mother's papers that I had to give her. She seemed satisfied and engaged me as her companion. We set out on a tour. I shall not describe to you how my heart bled when I had to leave Paris. You were due to return in a fortnight. Then I would have gone to the square on the first, could once again have had a talk with you, could once again have taken leave from you,

That was not to be ! And when we drove from Rue St. Severin past the well-known Place de l'Ecole de Medecine, my heart almost broke, and I said to myself: 'For ever V Edward, I never heard of you again. I did not know your name. I thought you must have forgotten the beggar girl long ago. I lived on the mercy of other people, I had to bear much that was bitter; I bore it, for it was not the most painful thing. But when the countess moved to her estate in this district, when Faldner proposed to me, when I noticed that she considered it a good settlement, and was perhaps tiring of me—well, I had been happy only once in my life, and since I could no more hope to be happy again I was so unconcerned that I became his wife."

"Poor child! To be married to this Faldner !—Why did you have to become of all people this man's wife, you with such a sensitive heart, such a tender mind, you who certainly deserved a nobler lot than this ? Josephe, I cannot, I must not stay here one day longer. For all his coarseness I once called him friend, now I am his guest, and even if everything were not as it is we would not be permitted to be happy together !" There was an intense sadness in his words. He shut the eyes of the beautiful lady with a kiss lest he might become more moved by the sorrow they reflected. "Oh, give me one day more !" she murmured affectionately, "I found you only just now and you are already thinking of leaving me ! Only one more morning like this ! You

see, when you are gone, the gate of happiness will be closed to me for ever. I shall have to endure a hard lot. Therefore, I must save up some memories in which to rest in the endless desert of the future."

"Listen, I will confess everything to Faldner," the young man said after some reflection, "I will tell him everything so that he must be moved himself. He does not love you anyway, neither do you love him, and you are unhappy. He shall leave you to me. My house has nothing like the grandeur of this manor-house. You can have a view of all my lands from my little terrace. I have little wealth. But if you were going to live in my house I would put my hands on the floor as a carpet for you to step on, I would carry you on my hands, you should be the queen of my house and I your first and most faithful servant !"

Woefully she looked up at the sky, crying more passionately. "Oh yes, if I were a heretic and of your faith, it could have been done. But we are united in Catholic wedlock and can only be separated by death ! Oh, my God, how unhappy these laws make people sometimes ! What supreme happiness" to be with you, near you, always to care for you, to follow your glances, and every day to return a fraction, however small, of all you have done for my mother and myself."

"Must we part for ever ?" he replied gloomily, "only to-morrow and then to be separated for ever ?"

"For ever !" she said softly, almost inaudibly, pressing her lips more tightly on his.

"So, I find you here, you common wench !" someone shouted suddenly, standing there beside them. Both of them were on their feet, startled. Trembling with anger and fury, holding in one hand a paper and with the other raising a whip, the baron was about to strike at the pretty neck of the erring wife. Froeben seized his arm, wrested the whip from him by force and flung it far away. "Please, don't make a scene here/" he said to the furious husband, "your workmen are in the garden, you will only bring disgrace upon yourself and your house by such a scene."

"What!" the other shouted, "is not my house already disgraced enough by this vile person, this pauper, whom I sheltered in my house ! Look at this sweet note to this fine gentlemen, this story-book hero," the baron shouted, addressing Josephine triumphantly holding up the little paper, "do you think I do not know your handwriting ?" And turning to Froeben he shouted : "I had to marry a common wench with whom you were carrying on, and when you were fed up with her, the good Faldner was to take her as a wife. Then after six months, you pay a visit here, seemingly by chance, to renew the intrigue by fooling the husband. You will have to pay for this, you scoundrel But this beggar woman may return once more to the Pont des Arts with her bowl and lantern or live on your sinful money. My workmen will chase her from my house with the hunting-whip."

XXXIV

ON such occasions, a man of good breeding has a decided advantage over an uncultured man in being able to control his temper and thereby avoiding hasty and foolish actions. A glance at Josephe sitting on the moss-bank pale and trembling and unable to speak, convinced Froeben what was the proper manner to adopt towards her. He offered her his arm and conducted her from the arbour to the manor-house. The baron scowled furiously at them and was about to call his workmen in order to carry out his threat, but the fear of adding ridicule to dishonour kept him from doing so. He ran up to the hall and found Josephe lying on the couch, burying her weeping face in the cushion, and Froeben standing at the window looking absent-mindedly out of the window. Shouting and swearing, the baron strode up and down the room and cursed himself for having wasted his life by marrying such a hussy. "There can't be any justice in the country if I am not able to rid myself of her," he shouted. "This beggar girl who had forged her certificate of baptism and other papers, who pretended to be of equal rank with me ! Our marriage is null and void !"

"After all, that would be the most sensible thing," interrupted Froeben. "The question is, how are you going to deal with the matter without making yourself ridiculous—"

"Ha, my fine fellow !" shouted the baron in his wild excitement, "you even mock at me after having caused all this disgrace by your boundless impertinence. Follow me, we need no further evi-

dence for our divorce. This can be settled at once. Follow me I"

On hearing these words, Josephe got up, threw herself on her knees before the enraged husband and threw all the blame on herself, her friend being entirely innocent. She pointed to the slip of paper which he held in his hand which she had recognized. She solemnly affirmed that Froeben had learned only just then who she was. But the young man, interrupted her intercessions ; he lifted her up and led her back to the couch. "I am accustomed to making my arrangements before engaging in a duel," he said coldly to the baron, "and I would suggest that you do not neglect them either. But before we do anything, your wife must leave this house, as I do not want her to stay here any longer when I am not here to protect her Against your ill-treatment."

"You act as if this thing were your personal property," replied the baron, laughing with anger. "But I almost forgot, Madame was already your property before. Where do you intend to take the sweet angel ? To a poor-house, a hospital or to the first fence you find to continue in her profession ?"

Froeben did not listen to what he was saying. He turned to Josephe and asked : "Is the Countess Still living nearby ? Do you think you could possibly stay there for the next few days ?"

"I will go there," she whispered.

"Well, Faldner will be civil enough to have you driven there. You wait there for further rews : either he admits -that he has judged us

wrongly or else he makes up his mind to give you the divorce."

XXXV

JOSEPHE had left for the Countess. Before leaving, Froeben had advised her to mention at her arrival that she would be there'only for a few days. He, in the meantime, would find out the mood of his friend and if possible induce him to become reconciled with her, and would let her know accordingly. "No, no," she cried passionately, stepping down from the terrace to the coach, "I will never again set foot on this threshold. I will turn my back on these walls for ever. Believe me, a woman can bear a lot. I suffered a long time and my heart would often break, but to-day he has exhausted my patience, I cannot forgive him. I would even go back to the Pont des Arts and beg for a few sous from the passers-by, than endure any longer the insulting treatment of this cparse country bumpkin. My father was a brave soldier and a respected officer in France ; his daughter will not so disgrace herself as to be the maid-servant of a man like Faldner."

After her departure, the young man had written a few letters*and was just tidying up the little luggage he had, when Faldner entered. Froeben looked at him astonished and was expecting a fresh

out burst of his violent temper, but the baron said •: "The more often I read these unfortunate lines which I found to-day in your room, the more I come to realize that you are quite innocent in this miserable affair, that you did not know anything before and did not know this person. I forgive you the fact that I found my wife in your arms, because this person has ceased to belong to me from the moment she wrote this silly letter to you."

"I am glad, for the sake of our long-standing friendship/' replied Froeben, "that you look at the affair in this reasonable way, especially, since I have now got 311 opportunity to talk to you sensibly and quietly about Josephe. First of all, you can take my sacred word that between her and myself there has never been—not even in those days—until this afternoon any intimacy or anything that could diminish her hononr. That she was poor, that she was once forced to ask for support from others—"

"No, better say, that she used to beg," Faldner shouted excitedly, "walking about the streets and bridges of that dissolute capital to earn money. I could have had the pleasure of making **her** acquaintance at that time already. Was I not a witness of the pathetic scene at the Pont des Arts ? No, even if I believed everything you say, I have still been outraged* The Faldners and a beggar woman !"

"Her father and her mother came of good stock—"

"Myth and fiction ! What a fool I was to be

caught like that, I could, as well have married the waitress of an inn if she had a tankard as her coat-of-arms and produced a forged birth certificate."

"In my eyes this is the least important part of the affair., The main thing is that you treated her from the very beginning like a maid-servant and not as your wife. She could never love you ;. you do not fit together."

"That is the right word for it,—we* do not fit together," replied the baron. "The Baron von Faldner and a beggai: woman will never fit tqgether. And "now I am glad all the more that I followed my own bent and treated her like that. That wench did not deserve any better. I said from the very beginning there was something so vulgar about her."

This rudeness roused the young man's anger. He was about to give a spirited answer, but controlled himself for the sake of Josephe. He discussed the matter with the baron and they agreed to bring the whole question before the court and' to plead mutual aversion as the ground for separation, though, on account .of their religion neither of them could ever hope to find consolation in a new union. Josephe, though she dreaded a hopeless future, was yet willing to face it rather than be subjected to the disdainful treatment in Faldner's house. The baron, on the other hand, though he felt repentance in his lonely hours, sought distraction in his work and consolation in the thought *hat nobody had learnt about the disgrace of his having made a beggar girl of doubtful chapter Frau'von Faldner,

A FEW weeks after this occurrence, Froeben, who had retired to Mayence in order to be near Josephe, was one evening taking a walk up and down the Rhine bridge, and was ruminating over the strange interlinking of their fates. He thought also of the many possible activities which might perhaps give happiness to him and the beloved girl in the end. Just then there came, driving over the bridge a travelling coach which on account of its peculiar construction attracted the young man's attention from a distance. But soon his eyes were fixed on the servant who was sitting alongside the coachman. This brownish-yellow, gay face seemed as familiar to him as the striking colours of the livery. When the coach, which was allowed to drive on the bridge only at a slow pace, drew nearer to him, the servant recognized the young man and shouted :

"San Jago di Compostella ! There he is !" He flung open the coach window which separated him from the interior and spoke eagerly to someone inside. Presently a window at the side of the coach was lowered and the well-known face of Don Pedro de San Montanjo Ligez looked out. The coach was stopped, the young man hurried joyfully to open the door and the old gentleman fell into his arms.

"Where is she, where is the daughter of my Laura ? Oh, by the name of the Holy Virgin, is she here ? Please tell me, young man, where she is." The young man was silent with confusion and surprise. He accompanied the old man over the

bridge and told him that she was living not far away from the town and that he would be willing to take him there the following day. The Spaniard shed tears in ecstasy of joy.

"I am so grateful to you for the news you gave me," he said. "As soon as I obtained leave, Diego and I set out in the coach. We drove only six miles a day from W. to this place, because I could not stand a longer distance. Tell me, is she happy? Does she resemble her mother and what does she say of Laura Tortosi?"

Froeben promised to answer all his questions in his room. Thereafter, the Spaniard had a little rest and changed his clothes; then Froeben ordered some Xeres and filled their glasses, and Diego, as in former times, passed the cigars. When Don Pedro had made himself comfortable, the young man began his story. The Spaniard listened with increasing interest and was so absorbed in the narrative that he allowed his cigar to go out to the great consternation of Diego as such a thing had never happened during the last twenty years. When Froeben reached that part of the narrative touching base suspicions of the miserable girl, the Spaniard's old southern blood began to boil, and he could ill restrain his feelings. He pulled his hat deep over his forehead, wrapped his cloak round his left arm, and shouted with flashing eyes: "Give me my long sword, Diego, I will make him cold! As true as I am a good Christian and Spanish nobleman I will stab him even if he has a crucifix on his breast! I will

kill him, without absolution and holy sacrament ! I will send him to hell ! That is what I will do. Bring my sword, Diego !^M

Froeben pulled the old man who was trembling with anger into a chair, and tried to reason with him that all this was not necessary since Josephe was already freed from the violence of this brutal man and was living separated from him. To appease him further he fetched the picture and displayed it before Pedro's astonished eyes. The Don looked at the picture with delight. "Yes, it is she," he cried, forgetting everything else, "my poor miserable Laura !" With tears in his eyes he embraced the young man, called him his son and thanked him in a broken voice for all he had done for the miserable mother and ^Nher poor daughter.

The next morning the Spaniard and Froeben set out for the manor of the Countess. It was touching to see the old man holding in his arms the beautiful and youthful figure ; thoroughly he scanned her features ; his stern features slowly relaxed and he kissed her eyes and cheeks. "Yes, you are Laura's daughter," he said, "your father has passed on nothing to you but his fair hair ; but these are her beloved eyes ; this is her mouth ; these are the beautiful features of the Tortosis ! Be my daughter, my dear girl ! I have no relations and I am rich. By kinship, by heart-felt affection and a twenty years old grief you are tied more to me than to anybody else in the world." Josephe glanced towards Froeben over his shoulder and

looked as if she did not quite agree with this last assertion, but she was greatly moved and so kissed his hand and called him uncle and her second father.

The happiness of this re-union lasted only for a few days: Don. Pedro declared that he had to go to Portugal on urgent business and did not seem to see any reason why Josephe should not follow him there. His principles regarding the articles of his faith were too strong to allow him even the thought that Froeben should desire Josephe, the divorced wife of another, to become his wife. Nobody ever learnt what the lovers thought of this debatable point. But it is certain that Froeben several times asked Josephe to return to the Protestant Church and Josephe with infinite regret but nevertheless with great determination, refused to accept his suggestion. In despair at the approaching separation, Froeben often suggested that she should let Don Pedro go and live by herself in Germany, for though he could not become her husband, he still wanted to be always near her as a friend. But to this, also* she objected. She confessed openly that she considered herself too weak to enter into such a relationship with honour. Her misfortune had made her prouder and she shrank back from the thought of an unworthy relationship with a man whom she esteemed as much as she loved him. Alone by herself she admitted that another still more generous thought guided her. "Why," she said to herself, "should he waste the best years of his life with a miserable person who could only be a

friend to him ? Should he be deprived of the enjoyment of family life, the happiness of having children and grandchildren ? No, he has already lost me once, time will heal this grief also. He will forget a miserable being who will always think of him, love him and pray for him."

Thus, those prophetic words of Josephe 'For ever F seemed to come true. Don Pedro left the manor of the Countess together with his newly acquired relative in order to catch his ship in Holland. Froeben presumably supported by the thought of following Josephe to Portugal soon and being her friend there, accompanied his beloved on the journey through Germany and Holland, and whenever she begged of him not to increase the pain of separation by accompanying her further, he implored her with tears in his eyes ; "Only as far as the sea-coast and then for ever !"

XXXVII

IN the month of August there arrived at Ostendan English boat carrying goods and passengers for Portugal. It was a beautiful morning, the fog had lifted, and the weather promised to be favourable for the voyage. At nine o'clock in the morning a gun from the British ship announced that the passengers should come to the shore in order to board the ship. At the same time a skiff was rowed

towards the shore and a plank was thrown overboard for the passengers. From the land side many people with luggage passed over the board, and soon the skiff was full and the first instalment of cargo was brought on board the ship. Before the skiff landed the second time, four persons, distinguished by their gait, their bearing and their clothes from the other passengers who belonged mostly to the poorer classes, approached the shore. A tall, elderly gentleman walked proudly ahead. He wore a large-brimmed hat and his cloak was wrapped so skilfully and cosily round his shoulders that a sailor who observed him, called out : " I 'll eat my hat, if this is not a Spaniard I " Behind him followed a younger gentleman who conducted a pretty, slender lady. The young man was very pale, seemed to suppress a great sorrow and apparently tried to assuage the more intense grief of the lady. Her eyes were red and her brows flushed with bitter weeping; her lips were grimly set with grief, her cheeks and the lower part of her face were very pale as she staggered, leaning on the arm of the young man. The small hat with fluttering ostrich feathers, the rustling dress of heavy black silk, copious gold chains round her neck and bosom, all this did not seem to indicate a journey and, therefore, gave the impression that she was seeing the young man off. A servant dressed in coloured clothes walked behind them. He carried a large umbrella under his arm and had pulled a Spanish net over his dark hair.

When they had advanced over the sand which was still wet from the recent high tide, up to the

spot, where the board was thrown out to the skiff, they stopped. The handsome young couple looked at the boat, then at each other and the lady laid her head on the young man's shoulder, so that the ostrich feathers covered his face and concealed his quiet tears from the eyes of the curious onlookers. The old gentleman was standing not far away. With gloomy eyes fixed on the sea, he wrapped himself tightly in his cloak. His eyes were shining, whether with tears or from the reflection of the glittering waves no one could say. Now the skiff came splashing to the shore. The board was thrown across and a thundering gunshot from the boat disengaged the couple from their embrace. The old gentleman approached, offered his hand to the young man, shook it violently and walked quickly over the board. His servant followed him after a hearty hand-shake with the young man. The young couple embraced each other once more; he freed himself first and led the lady to the board: "For ever !" she whispered with a sad smile. "For ever," he replied, looking at her trembling and with tears in his eyes. Another hand-shake and she turned in order to cross the board. Quickly she walked up ; the Chief Mate, a stout Englishman, waited near the board. He held out his big hand to assist the pretty lady and was about to put in a few words of consolation when she suddenly turned away her dark eyes from the boundless sea back to the young man. Her tall and beautiful figure stepped boldly on the narrow board, her slim neck was turned back to the shore, the fluttering feathers

of her hat seemed to send over their greetings. He opened his arms ; in his features the happiness of love was mixed with the grief of a separation. Then she seemed to lose her self-control ; she ran back over the board, down to the shore, and before the ship's Mate had time to clasp his hands with surprise, she hung already at the neck of the young man and at his lips. "No I cannot cross the sea," she cried, "I want to stay here. I will do whatever you want, I am willing to throw away those fetters of a religion which prevents me from following my heart. You are my fatherland, my family, my everything ; I have decided to stay !"

"Josephé, my Josephé," the young man mumbled, pressing her to his heart in rapturous delight. "Mine, mine for ever ? God has guided your heart ! Oh, I would have perished from the pangs of this separation."

They were still locked in each other's arms when the old gentleman hastened from the skiff over the board, and approaching the group said : "Children, it was enough to take leave once ; come Josephé, it cannot be helped. They will presently sound the third gun-shot,"

"Let them fire with bullets, Don Pedro," the youngman replied, beaming with delight, "she will stay here, she will stay with me !"

"What do I hear ?" Replied the other, very grave, "I hope that it is not as this gentleman says. You will follow your relative, Josephé !"

"No V^f she exclaimed courageously, "when I was standing up there on the edge of the skiff and looked

over these waves which were to separate me from him, I took the hint for the right course of action. My mother has shown me the way. She once followed the man she loved, into the wide world. She left her parents for the sake of love. I, too, now know what I have to do. Here is the one to whom my poor mother owed her last happy hours, to whom I owe my life, my honour and everything; and can I leave him? Give my greetings to the graves of my ancestors in Valencia, Don Pedro, and tell them that there is still one of the Tortosi family who esteems love more highly than life!"

Don Pedro was deeply moved. "Well, follow your heart, it advises you perhaps better than an old man. Anyway, I know you will be happy in the arms of this noble man, and his high mind guarantees that he esteems our honour not less highly than his own. But, Don Froebenio, what are you going to say to your haughty relations when you introduce this child of misery to them? Oh God? Will you have the courage to endure the mockery of the world?"

"Farewell, Don Pedro/" said the young man with a courageous face, offering him one hand to take leave and clasping his sweetheart with the other. "Don't worry, and don't despair of me. I will hold her proudly before the world and when I am asked: What was she? I will answer not without happy pride: 'She was the beggar girl of the Pont des Arts!'"

