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BADISCHE LANDES BIBLIOTHEK KARLSRUHE

A German Girl in America.

by

Augusta Bender.

Chapter I.

„My dear little friend tells me a great many nice things about you", said Mrs. Bittersweet, folding the letter and putting it upon the little table between the parlor windows. Then she lazily dropped upon the green sopha and invited the bashful looking girl to take an easy chair.

„You make quite a good impression, indeed," she continued, surveying the gracefully rounded figure with a scrutinising glance. „Your toilet, however, needs to be looked after, especially that shawl of yours. Why, nobody but old cooks and housekeepers wear Scotch plaids now. The fashion has passed away years ago, and Philadelphia differs from New-York in many

points, especially in dress. Here everybody knows everybody – between Oak and Pine Streets, I mean, where the best and oldest families live. And it is into these families, if I understand the purport of this letter, that I am now to introduce you as a German teacher. Let us then, first of all, begin with your head-gear. Will you put your bonnet upon that cushion – stand and move a little toward the light, please! –

„But what was I going to say just now? Oh, yes! Bonnets here are not worn so large as yours, and rather turned down, especially by such young and rosy cheeked persons as you are, my little dove. We older women can be more daring in this respect. I myself wear a round hat – it is upon the piano, there –"

„The one with the red and blue feathers?" asked the young stranger in a tone of naïve astonishment.

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„Precisely! the other belongs to my little daughter Minnie, whose acquaintance you will soon make, my Fräulein! But once more to return to your toilet – your bow is much too light for you, too much of a baby – blue. Brown or grey would be more becoming to you; for here you ought to wear nothing but quaker colors."

„Is that also a quaker color?" the maiden asked with unconscious irony, pointing to the lady's carmine and red silk dress trimmed with skye-blue.

„Not exactly, Miss Elsa, if you will permit me to call you so –" and the lady did not seem the least disconcerted by so much directness and simplicity – „with me it is quite another thing. I have been known here these last fifteen years, or so, and therefore can do a great many things which a little foreign maiden with such raven-

black eyes could not allow herself. Or are they green, those eyes of yours? Indeed, quite as puzzling as the color of your hair – golden gleams when the light falls on it, reddish rather than chestnut – brown. People might take you for a mermaid, dear, if you had not this open, candid expression on your face. But do not look so sorrowful and cast down your eyes, as you cannot help having these striking contrasts of color in your face and hair. All we can do is to subdue them a little by art – the art of the dressmaker and milliner."

After this lengthy delivery Mrs. Bittersweet drew nearer the bewildered girl and tapping her lightly on the shoulder, she once more resumed:

"I do not wish to make you sad, my dear Fräulein, but only to give you instructions as your country-woman, in how to win the good will of the Americans,

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which, for a self-supporting woman, is of the utmost importance – until she finds the right sort of a husband, of course, which is only a question of time with you. There is, for example – –"

„Oh pray, Mrs. Bittersweet!" the girl interrupted in a beseeching tone, extending her hands deprecatingly. But the lady did not allow herself to be so easily thrown off her track, nor did her delicacy of feeling prompt her to be less plain spoken, although she could not help noticing the great confusion and deep blushes of her protegée.

„But perhaps you already have a lover in Germany," she continued, „or is it some fellow traveller who has laid seige to and captured your heart – No? Indeed not? Why, that is a misfortune to be easily remedied at your time of life, I think. It is true, I

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myself was engaged at seventeen, but twenty one is not old, although it would be better for you if you could play and sing well – for there is nothing in the world so captivating as a good voice well trained, such as I once had. – Indeed it is not even now so broken and worn out as the news-papers have represented it to be, and if I had not always had a little trouble here," and she pointed to her chest, "I might have become something more than an admired amateur."

Here the widow was interrupted by a violent attack of coughing, and when it was over she leaned back, exhausted, for a few seconds and closed her eyes.

Elsa gazed at her with pity and astonishment. It now became apparent to her that, in spite of her rapid talk and gestures, Mrs. Bittersweet was much older than she at first

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appeared to the inexperienced eye of the German girl, and that her black curly hair and her florid cheeks betokened rather of art than of nature.

Mrs. Bittersweet, after having rested a little, seemed to recover. She mechanically adjusted the little curls and frizzles on her forehead, opened her eyes, and after heaving a deep sigh she continued:

"You must certainly be hungry, my dear Miss Elsa, but we shall have supper very soon, that is if Anna is not late to-day, or in bad humor. I wonder where Minnie is staying so long! The mad-cap cannot remain quietly at home for an hour or two. – But here she comes at last! Come in, come in, my child! Here is a young lady who has come all the way from Germany."

The "child," a head taller than her mother, emerged from the corridor.

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„What do I care for Germany?" she said with affected contempt, throwing her little brown felt hat on an easy chair. „They know nothing of style over there. — No German I ever saw, was stylish, and never will be, I am sure! And you certainly would be like them, Mama, if you had not come here when you were a babe in your mother's arms."

The widow tittered at this compliment and complacently rubbed her ring-laden fingers.

„You must not carry your pert jokes too far, dear Minnie!" Thus saying, Mrs. Bittersweet rose and stepped to the piano.

„My name is not Minnie, but Eugenie — the name of her who is to me still Empress of France and the most beautiful woman in Europe," the "child" replied, her dark eyes flashing with indignation.

„All right, Eugenie! All right, my little

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daughter!" and the widow heaved a comical sigh. "But what will Miss Keller think of a girl of thirteen carrying on in such a manner!"

"Fifteen and a half," Minnie-Eugenie exclaimed defiantly. "Do you think that denying my age makes you look younger, or that young Mr. Allen comes on your account?"

"Pshaw, Minnie -- Eugenie, I meant to say --"

"Never mind, Mama! You know I have no objection whatever to your being made love to by old Mr. Cornelius."

Mrs. Bittersweet colored a little and struck a few chords.

"Old Mr. Cornelius? ha, ha! A mad cap of fifteen criticising one's age! - Why, Mr. Cornelius is only in his prime! as you soon may judge for yourself, my dear Miss Elsa! For Liska has asked me especially

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to introduce you into his family."

"Is he a teacher?" Elsa asked, trying to feign an interest, she did not in the least feel.

"Teacher? No! He is the speaker of a philosophical-religious society, of which I am a member, although I do not understand him half the time. Nevertheless he is a very interesting man indeed, and being cautioned, I hope you will not let him steal your heart."

"By a man of — of —"

"Forty-five years of age, at least!" Minnie-Eugenie broke in maliciously.

Elsa, with a smile, that crossed her serious face like a sunbeam, turned towards Mrs. Bittersweet, to thank her for her good will at all events. The widow's face assumed a thoughtful expression, as if she were deliberating whether it were not, after all, a foolish thing to give to herself and her maturing daughter

a rival possessed of such dangerous attractions. But her mood soon changed again and she returned to the subject of Mr. Cornelius.

"Never mind this mad-cap," she said. Men do not grow old as rapidly as we poor women do; and Mr. Cornelius has been so very unfortunate in—ah! hm!—affairs of the heart and that sort of thing, that no one who knows what his experiences have been, can fail to pity and admire him. Yes, pity him for having wasted such a great heart upon—hm! But come up stairs and let us look at your little room. You will not find the price of four dollars too high, I hope; and board you can get in the neighborhood for five dollars a week. But we can talk that over by and by, dear."

So saying she linked her arm in that of Elsa, who, half dazed, did not know what

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to make of all she had heard and seen within the last half hour, especially in regard to Minnie-Eugenie who, just then, had taken off her little boots and, tossing them over Elsa's head into the back parlor, turned on her heels and told her mother to bring down her slippers.

Chapter II.

Half an hour later Elsa, in a dejected mood, was sitting in her little bed-room two flights up, looking out upon a timber yard surrounded by high glaring brick walls. As far as she could see in the twilight all the houses were of the same monotonous brown-red color which, since her arrival in Philadelphia, had so jarred upon her keen sense of beauty.

"Oh, that Lisha were here!" she sighed despondingly. Then she rose as if trying to stifle her sobs by a courageous decision and,

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for the first time, she looked about the little place lit up by a flickering gas-flame. The result of her examination did not seem to interest her, however. In the back-ground was a low iron bed-stead and at its foot a small wash-stand, the shabbiness of which was only partially concealed by white drapery. In the middle of the room stood a little oblong table covered with a thin white cover over a reddish foundation, and near it was a green-painted rocking chair. At the right of the window there was a chest of drawers with a large looking glass, and in the corner on the left was an old-fashioned open desk with writing materials ready for use.

Catching sight of these, ~~Lisa~~ Elsa's large dark eyes began to sparkle and a smile illuminated her countenance. „The dear professor", she murmured, „should long ago have had a letter from me. I

will write him at once. It is too late to unpack and arrange my things to night, even if my trunk has come."

In a moment she was seated before the old desk and had begun to write:

Philadelphia Nov. 23d, 187-.

"My much respected Herr Professor!

You are certainly right in reproaching me for my tardiness. Seven weeks is indeed a long time, especially in this "go-ahead" country, called time. I cannot even offer the excuse of having nothing to write about, for so much that is new and strange is constantly taking place, that it seems impossible to collect my thoughts and duly express them in writing.

"But let me begin at the very beginning. Scarcely had the train started and I had begun to realize that I had lost sight of the dear faces, the church-spires of our capital and all the

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familiar objects which I had hitherto known, than I began to think with a sort of longing of the time when I should be on board the steamer where I might reflect upon all I had left behind me and all that might be before me, without the interruption of changing cars or looking after my baggage. It is no small undertaking, you know, this starting out in the world to take care of one's self, especially when one goes to a strange country. — How many times I have said to myself, will anybody else consider me as good a teacher as the dear professor believes me to be! —

What I could not do now, I hoped to accomplish after having started on the next step, that is, to find courage to face the wide, wide world and to realize that all, now, was depending on my energy and clear-sightedness.

But scarcely had we left the Weser for the

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German Ocean, when – with shame and horror – I felt the difference between a railway journey and an ocean-voyage. – But I shall not try to give you too vivid a picture of the situation. „One is as little apt to die of sea-sickness, as of love-sickness," as an unsympathetic fellow-passenger remarked to me. – The most repugnant feature of that unaesthetic malady is the utter annihilation of one's own identity. One can neither think nor act, one can only resign one's self to be a shapeless bundle of inarticulate misery.

There is nothing so little heroic, so humiliating as this utter paralysation of our moral faculties.

„Anfangs wollt' ich fast verzagen,
Und ich glaubt', ich trüg' es nie,
Und ich hab' es doch getragen,
Aber fragt mich nur nicht wie?"

„Yes, indeed! Had it not been for Heine,

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I would consider that fortnight on the ocean a total loss, and you may imagine that such a fraction would be no small consideration for a candidate of old-maid-ship.

„As it was, I only count the first half entirely lost; after that I read - you will doubtless be amazed - Heine's lyrical poems, and for the first time. — The book belonged to one of my most interesting fellow-sufferers, a young theologian, who was on his way to Milwaukee, where he has been called to take charge of a parish.

But you need not smile so knowingly, dear Professor! the general behavior of my companions in misery was by no means flattering to my vanity. It even seemed to me that he tried to slight me - perhaps because he thought it unbecoming on the part of a clergyman's - daughter to derive pleasure

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from the works of such a satyrical poet. Perhaps he thinks the privilege – either of being satirical, or of appreciating satire, a prerogative of his own sex.

„ Now be candid and confess whether in this respect men, as a rule, are not the most incorrigible philistines! – But I must tell you a little more about ocean-life, as I have seen it. – A steamer is a world in miniature full of gossip, intrigue, demonstrations of sympathy and badly concealed antagonism. – As an impartial observer I saw in this tragi-comical spectacle nothing but the general, the eternally human, which on the dreary watery desert is especially depressing.

„ The trivial curiosity, the rapid affinity of like for like, the shallow conversation, the coquetry of women with men they never saw before and never will see again, perhaps –

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all this must appear to the thinking observer even more shallow and superficial on the wide, wide sea than elsewhere.

„However there are exceptions everywhere, and so there were among my fellow travellers. — Foremost among these was a woman who especially interested me; — both Jewish and Christian blood was in her veins, and her uncommon beauty and amiability I am at a loss to describe. So completely did she enchant and enslave me that, although a woman, I can easily imagine how dangerous she must be to the peace of mind of the genus masculinum.

„I lost my very soul to her, without ever thinking whether she condescended to entertain any warm feeling for me. It is said and so generally believed, that I too must accept it, that such light-complexioned

persons as your humble servant have not a great deal of magnetic attraction, even though they may have the power of magnetic repulsion. The latter part of this assertion I found to be true in regard to one of our travelling-companions, a Dutch East-Indian.

„What strange eyes of greyish-blue he had! Indescribable they were, and just as contradictory as icy fire, or red-hot ice! Such must be the eyes of the snake-charmer.

„And me, too, he would have liked to charm, although — as you know — I am no serpent. — He was very conscious of his power and called it „to biologize." But even unconsciously I was led to avoid him wherever I could do so without incivility.

„The icy-hot charm of his steel-grey and steel-hard eyes — he probably now is using it in hypnotical experiments on others. If I

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remember rightly, he was bound for the West where he has distant relatives, who will doubtless be pleased to see him as he has made a fortune on one of the Spice-Islands.

„He would, indeed, have shown me a good deal of attention, this Flying Dutchman, but — yes there certainly is something in this theory of attraction and repulsion.

„Perhaps you wonder why I did not stay in New-York, instead of coming to the Quaker-City, especially as my new friend Liska, who is an actress, remains there the greater part of the season. It was, indeed, a great trial to leave her, but Liska ~~advised~~ wished it, Liska advised it, and against her persuasions I am powerless."

Elsa dropped her pen and read over what she had written. „That is all true enough," she murmured to herself, „but my other motive

for coming here – Ah, nonsense! – as if I could tell anybody, even the dear professor that. After all," she continued in a low voice, "what am I running after but the shadow of a shadow, the lingering remembrance of a day-dream. – Poor Frau Wilden! She lost her only son, but I lost a beautiful idol, in which – owing to a sad presentiment – I never dared to fully believe. – To-morrow another and last inquiry, and then – farewell, farewell, thou last pale flower of withering hope and youth."

And the girl bent her head and wept – wept long and silently, as if following to the grave some one she had loved and cherished in secret adoration.

The stillness was suddenly broken by a few intrusive sounds. Mrs. Bittersweet was playing something from a new operette.

Better a thousand times the solitude, the

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heart- hunger and loneliness, the prospect of endless miles of red bricks, broken by greyish marble- stoops and green shutters, than that Mrs. Bittersweet, of whose proximity these impressive sounds reminded her, should come upon her, and perhaps question her in regard to the letter and its contents!

To be sure it was only to her desk, old, much respected Herr Professor; but she quickly slipped it out of sight and prepared to obey any summons she might receive.

Chapter III.

The clock had struck eight one a neighboring church the following morning when Elsa went downstairs into the basement dining room, which was but dimly lighted by the grey gloomy light of a rainy November day.

Mrs. Bittersweet, as Anna, her housekeeper, reported to Elsa, had already entered upon her daily round of calls, shoppings, meetings of charitable societies, etc. And neither Anna — nor as Anna herself affirmed — any other living being could even approximately foretell, when the lady would come home again. —

And this was not an exceptional thing but an every day occurrence. Anna always had to be on the look-out for her mistress, was always obliged to have dinner ready from one o' clock to — Heaven knows what hour in the evening! For it was Mrs. Bittersweet's habit to be late on all occasions, and Anna could not bear it any longer. It is true, the latter herself had been late, when — for once — Frau Bittersweet had come at the appointed time; but what did that matter! They ought to be mighty glad, Mrs. Bittersweet and her daughter,

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that she had stayed with them so long. Any other girl would have left them long ago.

Miss Heller, therefore, had best make up her mind at once to be as little trouble as possible, for otherwise her stay in this forlorn household would not be of long duration, no matter how prepossessing her appearance was, how good the impression the Fräulein had made on her who was virtually the mistress of the house.

So this important personage rattled on most loudly but voluminously, while she occupied herself in arranging the table. At last she placed before Ella a colossal pot of steaming hot coffee, and then butter with fresh rolls.

Anna, apparently, was in good spirits that morning and very gracious to the German stranger, whose manner

was so timid and unassuming.

The rather melancholy sweet young face, lighted so rarely by a smile, assumed an air of dignity as the woman proceeded:

„That lazy, mischievous thing, Miss Minni has not come down yet," and her dark heavy eybrows contracted as if she were looking for words emphatic enough to express her opinion. „Everything will be cold again, but I do not care about it," she grumbled. „No getting her to bed at night, and no getting her out in the morning — at least until her lesson-hour. But thank heaven, she is not my daughter, Miss Heller! And if her mother wants to make a musician, a comedian, or, for aught I know, a circus-rider of her, she must take the consequences, but no one seems to care in this country."

Disgusted with the servants prattle Elsa

rose and moved towards the door. But not wishing to seem unkind she paused and said:

„And how long have you been in this country, Anna? You were not born here, were you?"

„Oh no! I came over only five years ago — when I was not much older than you, I think."

Elsa regarded her in surprise. The little person with her wrinkled, sallow face seemed more than twice her own age.

„Yes indeed," the servant continued, as if divining the cause of Elsa's surprise; „people seem grow old in this country, and you — now looking so young and blooming — it would have been better for you had you remained in your own country."

The tears gushed from Elsa's eyes, and covering her face with both her hands, she rushed out of the room and up the stairs, to hide

her emotion from the intrusive servant.

„Remain at home, indeed! If that were only possible! But how could her mother with the meagre pension of a clergyman's widow support five young daughters! She was the eldest and it had but seemed her duty to go out into the world and try to earn enough to take care of herself and help the others as much as might be in her power.

She had chosen to come to America instead of going to Russia or England. — Was she following the ignis fatuus of a delusive hope, and was the gleam growing fainter day by day?

She dared not answer these questions, and she would not think of returning, until she might hope to relieve those she had left at home.

Onward then, courageously! no matter how many more disappointments might be in store for her. — And so, first of all, to Poplar Street,

where she hoped to find an old time friend, a countryman. – Two years had elapsed since his mother had last heard from him. „He may have gone elsewhere, may be dead," she said to herself. – Nevertheless she would go and inquire. –

„Yes indeed," said Mrs. Atkinson, the owner of the boarding-house in Poplar-Street, „that's what he looked like, the German Engineer who once boarded here; for although I have forgotten his name, I shall never forget his looks and ways: Erect and tall – with dark hair and eye-brows, at times a little gloomy – but oh, so obliging and courteous, always ready to do one a favor! And then so particular in all his habits. He always folded his napkin to a nicety and hung up his towels as only married men have learned to do, and moreover – he always settled his account promptly. – Such a gentleman is not soon

forgotten. but whether he intended to go to St. Louis or to Chicago — I could no more tell than I could tell you where last years clouds have gone to! — To be sure he left an address when he went away — but I lost it long ago. — If you will leave your address I will be pleased to let you know if I ever hear from him again. Wilden, yes that was his name; and yours.... You are German also? — Well, life is full of surprises. — Have you been here long?"

The somewhat slovenly clad woman was beginning to show a disagreeable amount of curiosity, and Elsa endeavored to repress all evidence of disappointment in order to avoid further questions. She went down the steps with a brisk step, but her lips quivered and her gait slackened as she returned to the house in sixteenth street. — —

And again she was seated alone in her

little room – struggling firmly and resolutely with grim meekity, trying to think of Mrs. Bittersweet's good qualities and – if possible – to bear patiently the caprices of her wayward daughter.

And as if to test the strength of her endurance Mrs. Bittersweet just then bustled up the stairs and into the room – fidgeting and fussing about a few seconds, and finally approaching Elsa with outstretched arms to clasp the protestingly recoiling girl to her high-laced, heaving bosom.

"Why, here you are all alone, my little Dove!" she cried. Then she withdrew a few paces surveyed the toilet of her protegée and nodding approvingly, she rattled on:

"That is already a great deal better, Miss Heller! and you did well in putting on that black dress, as it subdues the high colours of your-

of your face and hair. Is it brown or red, that hair of yours? — Why, you seem to change the color of your complexion, eyes and hair, as a chameleon is said to change that of his skin."

The poor girl felt, as if there were something to be ashamed of in the coloring with which nature had endowed her, as if it were not refined to be so fresh and healthy looking. She was not vain enough, however, and she was just then too sad to remember that in her native country she was considered a person of uncommon beauty.

Meanwhile Mrs. Bittersweet had repaired to the looking glass to put a stray curl in order. This done she exclaimed:

„You are looking a little too grave, my dear. I hope you have not felt lonesome during my absence. I have been in but half an hour, or so, and I wish I had not

come home at all. The whole dinner spoiled as usual, the soup too salt, the meat cold, the vegetable burnt, and Anna bad-tempered and peevish - as if I was a little school-girl in need of a lecture. - Take care, Fräulein Heller, not to offend my kitchen-tyrant! you may slight me as often as you have a mind to, but Anna - never! if you do not want her to make your life as unbearable as she makes mine.

„No love from anybody, since my poor husband died so prematurely - no affection from my own child even, still less from those I have served and sheltered. Get married, my dear Fräulein, while there is a chance for you. Next Sunday afternoon I shall introduce you to my friend Cornelius. - But first of all I want you to read over a treatise on chemistry and to catch from

it a few technical terms. You smile incredulously, but you will soon learn for yourself that – as Lisha expresses it, – a learned man cannot be reached through his heart, but through his hobby; and Mrs. Cornelius' hobby is chemistry. You were going to say something, my dear Miss Keller?"

No, Miss Keller was not going to say anything, although she opened and closed her lips repeatedly as if she were choking. – But when she was threatened with a new embrace from Mrs. Bittersweet, she mechanically retreated toward the window, stretching forth her arms deprecatingly. She was too much upset to tell the lady in plain words the scorn she felt for husband hunters. She could only murmur a half articulate protest which Mrs. Bittersweet failed utterly to comprehend. – With a knowing smile she counselled Miss Keller

to put on a lighter dress, as she had invited her physician, Dr. Oldenberg, to tea. This gentleman was also a bachelor, she added.

And then for the ensuing ~~quarter~~ half hour Mrs. Bittersweet, in her own quarters, busied herself in thinking of the best way to rid herself of the provokingly pretty and lovable girl she had just left.

Chapter IV.

Many an unsuccessful walk and talk had Elsa undertaken in her effort to get pupils. The old professor had not overrated her capacity, but she sadly lacked the self-assurance and the power of adapting herself at once to outward circumstances, which in America are so indispensible to prompt success. — It is true, her candor and her refined simplicity of address had

won her the sympathy and good-will of several ladies of the best and oldest families, and some of these forthwith became her pupils and procured her others. But to the young and thoughtless the pathetic earnestness and gentle melancholy of Elsa's countenance did not appeal as strongly, as mere superficial accomplishments might have done. ~~Elsa's countenance did not appeal as strongly as mere superficial accomplishments might have done.~~ Elsa, though well informed and naturally graceful, was not stylish in the fashion-plate sense of the word, and this is the one unpardonable sin in the judgement of many, even among those not void of true refinement.

Elsa smiled incredulously when Frau Bitterneet tried to bring home to her the possible consequences of this outward neglect. For

how could anybody expect her, so she thought, with the ever vivid recollection of her mother's pinched circumstances and pecuniary difficulties to spend on contemptible trumperies what to those at home, might bring relief from harassing anxieties.

Not for a day could Elsa forget the pale careworn face of her poor mother – struggling heroically to live through the month, without being forced to encroach on the meagre allowance of the next.

Mrs. Bittersweet, unable either to comprehend or appreciate such constancy to the absent, although the girl had spoken of the hard life in the fatherland, made very sarcastic remarks about one squandering youth and beauty, even though she not infrequently found herself thinking bitter things of their possessor.

"You will never get a husband, Miss Heller, if you do not try to be more cheerful and to make yourself more attractive," was the usual summing up of all her admonitions, quite unconscious that her loud colors and her painted sunken cheeks made her seem a ridiculous spectacle which the friendless girl almost pitied.

One day in December she made an important announcement to Elsa. Upon the recommendation of Mrs. Stecker, the banker's wife, whom Mrs. Bittersweet had, as she explained, requested to extend such — Miss Slade, the principal of a fashionable school for young ladies, had consented to examine Miss Heller's credentials with a view to offering her the position as instructor of German in her school.

Discriminating persons pronounced Miss

Slade's school to be not only the most fashionable but also among the best, and Elsa hailed the opportunity with delight, although the terms proposed were not very favorable. for the study of German was optional and Miss Slade herself did not know how many of her pupils would find the youthful German teacher and her methods sufficiently interesting to induce them to undertake the study of that language.

When Elsa entered the school-room, Miss Slade, an elderly, elegantly dressed woman with white hair and clearly cut features, was seated at a side-table at one end of the room. Without raising her beautiful intellectual head, she simply nodded to the German teacher, pointing with her right hand toward an oblong table near the middle of the room, at which about half a dozen young ladies

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were sitting – some idly, some carelessly bending over their books.

Elsa, following the custom of her own country saluted the class with a bow and a friendly good morning. Only two of Miss Slade's pupils, Miss Stecher, the German banker's daughter, and a demure young quakeress, returned the teacher's civility. – Elsa flushed slightly, but with dignity born of an inherent refinement and clear – sightedness, she seated herself at the upper end of the table and politely put to the class some questions in German. The same ominous silence, but slightly relieved by a few stammering words from Miss Stecher. The little quakeress only blushed.

Would the young ladies have the kindness to answer her questions that she might judge of their proficiency?

Again the same stony silence. Not even said Miss Stechers voice was heard.

Elsa looked helplessly about to see if the principal was not coming to her assistance. Miss Mark, however, seemed too busily engaged to note what was going on.

The young teacher then repeated her request in the same low-spoken, polite manner, opened a book she held in her hand and passed it to the young lady nearest her, and in carefully enunciated English requested her to read and translate a few sentences.

Fräulein Heller's English had been acquired in exchange for German lessons which she had given an Englishwoman whom she had known in Germany, and it was remarkably pure and well spoken considering that she had never been in an English speaking country until after she had

learned the language. Indeed Miss Bennett was almost the only English speaking person she had ever known. The circumstances influencing their lives were almost similar and the two girls had become warmly attached to each other. Miss Bennett frequently repeated charge not to fall into the habit of too rapid utterance had resulted in a deliberation of speech strangely at variance with the pronunciation to which the young Philadelphians were familiar, but that which impressed them as most amusing was the intonation, the young teacher's unconscious imitation of the English woman's inflection.

It was really very pretty, they agreed afterward, but at the moment it only excited their mirth. The girl who had been requested to read began to smile and the smile developed into a giggle in which nearly

all present joined.

Miss Stecher's face became scarlet. As a child she had been called a "Dutch" girl in malice. She felt a great deal of sympathy for the young teacher, but the eyes of her companions were upon her; and it seemed to her they were conscious of all the snubs and injuries she had endured as a child when her father was not so rich and her mother had never dreamt of sending her to such a select school as Miss Slade's. — To forget and make others forget that time was the paramount desire of Miss Stecher, and so she stifled the sympathy which rose from her heart and joined in the suppressed titter.

Before the book had reached her, she had decided to renounce the study of German which her father had urged her to pursue.

The young lady next to her unconsciously

helped her to announce this decision by saying as the book was handed to her:

„This is not at all as I thought it would. You see, Miss Keller, we all speak German, that is enough to get along, and we thought you would read to us and tell us about the German poets and philosophers and help us understand the literature." —

„Yes, it is the literature we want to know about," chimed in two others.

Miss Keller was aghast. „The literature," she repeated, „but for that one should surely know the language."

„Oh, everything is translated into English nowadays," another remarked.

Miss Keller's consternation increased.

„I understood I was to teach you German," she began.

„Yes, we would like well enough to

responded a tall girl, „but all those troublesome rules, — and then the pronunciation — I am sure I never could learn it."

„Everything takes time," Miss Keller answered softly. „German is not more difficult than English, and I am sure you would enjoy the knowledge. German is a very useful language; perhaps you will sometime travel in Germany."

„That may be," replied the tall girl with a careless laugh, „but one can always hire somebody to interpret. I will take a maid along who speaks German and French, though I speak French myself," she added in a tone that betokened how sure she was of this accomplishment. „At all events I have decided to give up German," she proceeded, „for I am going to graduate next year, and there are so many

things to learn —"

„And so have I!"

„And so have I!"

„And so have I!"

Miss Heller's knowledge of English did not enable her to understand the meaning of the chorus until a fourth added: „Yes, we are all going to graduate next year, and after all, as Miss Stahr says, German is not so very useful — unless you have German servants," she added meditatively.

With a sense of resentment she could not quite suppress, Elsa turned to Miss Stecher and the young quakeress.

„And you?" she said.

„Oh, I was only going to take to, to help the movement," Miss Stecher stammered, unconsciously availing herself of an expression which often fell from her

mother's lips.

„And you also, Miss — — do you consider German as only useful in intercourse with servants?" Elsa asked, addressing herself to the little quakeress. — The tinge of satire, coupled with her unintentional severity of tone and manner, lost her her last friend.

„I thought there was to be a class. I would not like to be alone; I will wait until a class is formed," was the answer.

Elsa rose, picked up her gloves and grammar and stood looking toward Miss Slade, who, after what seemed a long period of deliberation, arose and walked, not toward the table, but toward the door. Apparently she had taken no note of what had passed between Elsa and the pupils, but when she spoke it appeared that she had been very observant.

„I am sorry you did not succeed in forming a class, Miss Heller," she said in a sympathetic tone.

„I thought a class had already been formed," Elsa answered.

„Yes, nearly all the young ladies have acquired the rudiments of the language, and I was hoping you would be able to make it sufficiently interesting to induce them to continue. If you had talked to them in German, perhaps."

„But that would have been a waste of time," Elsa replied.

„Oh no! we often gain time when we seem to lose it. But it is too late now to act upon that principle, and I must ask you to excuse me, as I am very busy with preparations for the holidays. Good morning, then, my dear Miss Heller! I wish

you a merry Christmass and a happy New-
Year, in case we should not meet again
in the old one. I am sorry you should
have failed, but then you know a teacher,
a really successful teacher, must possess a
great many qualities. You are young, and
when you shall have acquired some experience,
you will doubtless do better."

Elsa struggled to overcome her agitation
and to take her leave in a befitting
manner. Once in her little room she
threw herself upon her bed and tried to think.
The events of the morning seemed like a bad
dream. — She had been misunderstood and
treated cruelly, but whom to blame for
it — she knew not. She had met with a
new style of school-girl. It seemed so strange
that school girls should decide thus for
themselves without consulting either parent

or teacher. Should she write to Liska and ask if she might go to her for a day or two? — It would be a relief to tell it all to her friend and have her advice. But she remembered that Liska was then playing in the West, and even if she were to see her or to write to her — would not the recital of the scene at Miss Slade's bore her friend, who had once said to her: "You may laugh with everybody, but if you have any weeping to do, do it alone." — Oh no, she would not even ask Liska's opinion, until she had had a fair chance of proving her capacity as a teacher. The recollection of this mornings events came back to her, and made her ask herself, whether there were no other roads to recognition and prosperity in America than teaching.

Chapter V

For a long time Elsa lay wondering what she could possibly do to wipe out that incomprehensible failure at Miss Hade's school. It was evident that that lady considered her alone responsible for the reluctance of her pupils to study German. Suddenly a thought flashed across her mind: Liska had once said in speaking of her own career: "Before the necessity of taking care of myself arrived, I had waited and taken part in amateur theatricals very successfully, and I knew of nothing else I could do. I was so successful that I imagined I could get a position as leading lady at once. I soon found out my mistake, however, and was ready to take any part, no matter how unimportant, provided it opened the way for study and advancement. — Just at that time Mr. Swinton

attended a performance given by the amateur club of which I was a member. What he saw of my acting induced him to offer me a position in his company — at how much do you think? Eight dollars a week. I ~~did~~ declined his offer indignantly and — but I had rather not tell you what a foolish thing I did from spite and resentment.

" I entered Mr. Swinton's company later on more favorable terms, and did I succeed in so short a time? Some say it is because I can fall backward so naturally in a swoon. Others — because I can take so many different parts, — what do I say? I scarcely know how to explain it, but be sure of one thing: I have studied and worked hard and sometimes I have been really discouraged. But," the actress had concluded with a gay laugh, " what a charming ingénue you would

make! You would be a decided revelation to the blasé woman of the world which is the character I usually represent; that is one of my strong points — seeing the hidden or only half revealed possibilities of a part — And you, certainly you would make a most charming ingenue! Those eyes — I wonder if they would keep their innocence. — And then, that exquisite accent — You would certainly make a hit!"

It all came back to her now. She had been bred to look upon the stage and stage people as belonging to a world with which she herself had but little to do. — She had seen a few of the classic dramas in her own country. She had never had occasion to exchange a word with anybody associated with the stage until she met the fascinating Liska, who put to flight all prejudice. — Miss Trah's nonchalant declaration that, unless one employed German

servants, a knowledge of the German language was of little value, came back to her also, and her face flushed again with resentment for what seemed a wanton insult. If this were the opinion of Americans in general, of what avail her knowledge of the language and literature in which she had somehow been led to believe they were so interested?

Sooner than live through another scene like the one in Miss Slade's school-room, anything which might await her upon the stage seemed but a small matter. — She too would study and work, she too would begin at the bottom of the latter; and if she might one day become a popular favorite like Liska — — Such a possibility seemed to contain the assurance of all that she was so earnestly striving for. Her mother provided for in her old age, her sisters educated for some career other than

teaching -- Indeed, she would go straight to the Chestnut Street theater, ask to see Mr. Swinton and make known her desire. --

After having stared at her a moment or two, the man at the box office said in reply to her inquiry that if she had any message to deliver to Mr. Swinton he would see whether he was in his office.

She handed him a card and then waited with flushed cheeks and throbbing pulses., feeling that her face betrayed her excitement and realizing for the first time how adventurous was the nature of her proceeding. -- She was pleased, however, that Mr. Swinton was in, and courageously she followed the boy who came to conduct her to the manager.

Mr. Swinton, a middle aged gentleman of decidedly professional appearance, was lazily reclining on the sofa smoking a

cigar and reading a news-paper, when the card was handed to him.

"Elsa Keller," he murmured musingly; a foreign name — don't know it. What does she want?"

"Did not say, sir!" the boy replied.

"Was she young?"

"I think so."

"Pretty?"

"Kinder pretty; not much style, though."

"Bring her in."

"A foreigner," the manager repeated to himself with a languid smile, thrusting aside his cigar and stroking his short cropped gray hair. Then he gathered himself up into a sitting posture and tried to look bored.

When Elsa, softly, entered, he half rose and after a few seconds' survey, pointed her to an easy chair opposite. The girl, with the quick instinct

of a delicate nature, had taken the manager's moral measure, before he knew what to make of her physical appearance, for pretty was no word for it. He regarded her for a moment, while the flush on Elsa's cheek gradually lessened and her manner became composed; it seemed that her heart almost ceased to beat.

"What can I do for you, young lady?" the manager said in a tone less sharp and loudly than he usually assumed on similar occasions.

Rising and resting her right hand on the back of the chair, she told him of her desire to become an actress, unconsciously revealing to him her reason for coming to America and the efforts she had made to secure a position as a teacher. "I do not know anything about the stage," she concluded humbly, "but I will study and work – oh so hard!"

Of that the manager was perfectly sure, he

said. Germans could always be relied upon doing anything requiring energy and perseverance. The stage, however, was no school-room but a show-room; and to show off well one needed something more than talent and application. "Beauty you have to a certain degree," Mr. Swinton continued, without heeding her look of indignation, "your accent would also improve in time - but silks, velvets, diamonds and plenty of money for incidental expenses are necessary to securing even moderate success in the rôles which I think you have in mind; for like all aspirants to dramatic honors you, of course, expect to select your own parts."

"I had not thought of such a thing," Elsa faltered, "Lisha once said I would make a good ingénue — —"

"Ah, you know her!" Mr. Swinton exclaimed in evident surprise.

"I met her on the steamer, and she was very kind to me," Elsa explained. "She is wonderful; is she not?" she added with enthusiasm.

"Ah, there you have it exactly!" the manager cried, rising and pacing the room. "Liska has the power not only of dazzling her audience but also of charming the critics. — Apart from her financial resources — —"

"Resources!" Elsa exclaimed astonished, "she told me herself how poor she was when she entered upon her career as an actress."

The manager smiled ~~equivocally~~ ~~sardonically~~ and apparently was about to proceed, but he checked himself as if awed by the look upon Elsa's face and began again very gravely:

"You have only seen one side of the medal, and Liska herself would doubtless like to forget that there is another side. So she fascinated you and said you would make a good actress?

She ought to have told you the truth, but it is her forte trying her art upon an ingénue, she never fails to win admiration — —"

He stopped again, checked by the expression of Elsa's countenance. "Pardon me, Miss Heller," he continued, if I have given you pain, but it is necessary to see things as they are. Let us be practical. You think you would like to go on the stage, and doubtless you are sincere in saying you would work and study hard. But your desire for becoming an actress springs from necessity, not from an innate belief that it is your proper vocation."

"Of course I had not dreamt of ever being like Liska," the poor girl stammered.

"Liska is a genius in her way," Mr. Swinton responded dryly, and in a kinder tone he added: "Be grateful that you are not a genius, Miss Heller! for genius is imperious

and never adapts itself. It heeds no advice and the impossible does not exist for it; it blazes forth with elementary impetuosity and leaves home and friends either to rule the world, or to be crushed by it, and to die in a ditch, starving and forgotten. Genius is fate and too often — fatal," and with a smile at his own wit the manager led the way to the door with as much stateliness as if he had been showing out a tragedy queen.

"Do not think me unkind," he said with evident sincerity as he opened the door.

"Oh no, indeed!" Elsa replied, extending her hand. "I am glad you were honest with me, even though what you said is a little discouraging."

"Never give up," the manager responded holding her hand a second. "Do not be influenced by those who show you only the bright side

of stage life," he added with fervor; "they may mean well but they are no safe guides. Teaching may be dull work, but it is better for you," he concluded abruptly. — And the next moment Else stood in the corridor, regretting that she had not asked him where Liska was at the time playing and when she would return to New-York.

As she went away she tried to think of all Mr. Swinton had said regarding Liska. Despite the fact that he seemed after the first mention of her name to avoid referring to her, Else could not rid herself of the belief that he was unfriendly to the actress. "He is doubtless angry because she left his company," she said to herself. The deprecating smile which had followed her enthusiastic mention of Liska's name, recurred to her mind, and she almost forgot the sincere pressure of the

hand and the hearty "never give up", which, for the moment, had made Mr. Swinton seem more truly a friend than anybody she had met in America. Then she seemed to hear Lisha's voice to which, from the first, she had listened with pleasure, and to see the fascinating woman whom she had obeyed unquestioningly. She could never hurt Lisha by telling her the whole of her experience with Mr. Swinton, and so she would keep it to herself, she concluded.

Chapter VI

It was Christmas. In a little cheerless backroom, rhetorically called "study" sat Mr. Cornelius bending over a lexicon, in which, for the last quarter of an hour, he had, in vain, been looking for a technical term derived from the Greek. Opposite, near the old chimney, sat his sister Jacobine — stiff, impressive, chilly and chilling — so, at least, she appeared to the warm-hearted German girl sitting on the sofa.

How very much like her brother this very ripe spinster looked, Elsa thought, and yet how very different; for that which in the man's manner might be termed a sort of stately dignity, became in the woman hardness and harshness.

After having in her artless, candid way talked for more than ten minutes in hopes of finally striking at least one responsive chord in Miss

Binckens soured disposition, Elsa, at last, gave up in despair. — Flint might give forth sparks, but leather — — Elsa sighed.

Mr. Cornelius looked up from over his spectacles and frowned slightly. He pushed back his long, thin, greyish hair. Then he said with grave deliberation:

"You must not take things to heart, like that, Fräulein Heller; if you are convinced of having tried to do your duty by the young ladies — "

"Certainly, Mr. Cornelius — — "

"Pray, let me finish my sentence first — to do your duty, I said, then you ought to dismiss the matter entirely from your thoughts. A lesson more or less — — "

"Pardon, Mr. Cornelius" the girl interrupted with a look of deprecation and a voice vibrating with suppressed emotion at this unfavourable interpretation of her state of feelings".

"It is not altogether a question of a lesson more or less, nor of money — much as I wish to earn some. I was thinking of what must be the result of having made such a failure. Miss Slade's is the best school in Philadelphia. People will ask the reason of my dismissal, and what am I to tell them? I do not even now understand how it came about. I can explain it no more than you do," she concluded turning to the lady.

"Perhaps I can enlighten you," Fräulein Fabricius replied with her monotonous soulless voice, raising herself up with much solemnity. "The reason of your failure to create a good impression on the outset, has been partially revealed to me. You remember, perhaps, that on entering the class room you wore a pair of coarse woolen gloves. You should have born in mind that you were about to

present yourself to fashionable, well dressed young ladies and you ought to have taken pains to look attractive. — Still you might, perhaps, have succeeded in making them forget your attire by giving things a humorous turn and by laughing yourself when you could not prevent others from doing so. Many failures, as Miss Slade has since remarked to me, have been remedied by a well timed jest. With pupils of the class you were supposed to teach at Miss Slade's, it does not do to insist upon severity of conduct. Even though Miss Slade might have wished to give you a further trial, she doubtless saw at once that it would be useless to try to form a class just then. It would have been better for you to have sought the advice of some experienced person before undertaking such a venture. It seems you are very impulsive — are you not?"

To this interrogation Elsa did not respond. Miss Jacobine's chilling philosophy was to her like tangible residuum from the froth and puree of Mrs. Bittersweet's policy. Nevertheless she felt it a great relief to be accused of nothing worse than too plain attire. She forgot that Fräulein Jacobine was still regarding her, seeing with her mind's eye the anxious look upon her face, as she had often noticed it when the tips of her gloves began to show signs of wear. "Dear mother," she said to herself, and then she smiled faintly. She could bear anything better than to see her mother suffer. —

The silence continued, until, suddenly, Mr. Cornelius pushed back his lexicon, looked out of the window and then drew back with a look of disappointment, got up and paced the room meditatively.

"Hark," he said, turning to his sister, did

you not hear the door bell ring? No? — Why do you allow Lalie to go out with a maid," he continued impatiently.

"What could happen to her?" his sister replied placidly.

"Oh, strange things happen every day. Have you forgotten — —"

"Don't fret," Mrs Jacobine calmly interrupted; "it is not yet four o'clock; I told Karoline she might keep her out until that time."

Fräulein Jacobine's answer only served to increase her brother's anxiety. "It is almost four now," he said again, starting up.

"Yes, and here comes Lalie," his sister added in the same tone in which she had been speaking. But if the pattering footsteps upon the stair had failed to move her from her usual undemonstrative attitude, the effect upon the man was entirely the reverse. — He said

nothing, but going to the door he opened it and stamped down so that the child, literally, finished her ascent by walking into his outstretched arms.

Elsa felt her heart go out toward the man who but a moment before had seemed to her so entirely void of feeling. She understood at once that Edie was his child and remembered what Mrs. Bittersweet had told her regarding Mr. Corneliuss' unfortunate marriage. Between himself and the child there seemed to exist such sympathy as could not be wholly accounted for by the ties existing between father and child. The little one was not very demonstrative, but she lay still against his heart, caressing his cheeks with her little hands, until he set her down and very gravely presented her to ~~Lisa~~ Elsa.

Then with the air and gait of a little princess the child walked over to Elsa and

presented her rosy cheek for a kiss. But sud=
denly looking up she threw her tiny arms around
Elsa's neck and with the instinct of sweet
womanhood kissed her on the mouth.

Elsa's eyes filled with tears and unconscious=
ly she pressed the bewitching little maiden to
her heart. But feeling the sharp suspicious
eyes of Fräulein Faerbine on her face, she sup=
pressed her emotion and began to ask the little
girl some conventional questions.

But the child continued to cling to her fondly
and it was evident that her aunt did not
enjoy the scene. —

Lalie in no way resembled her father. She
was a little brunette with large, dark, spark=
ling eyes. A warm bloom tinted her velvety
cheek and her black hair fell in waves
about her graceful shoulders. When she shook
her head she had the air of a Shetland pony.

Mr. Cornelius, on the contrary, was not of striking appearance. His features, though moulded on a large scale, were not indicative of extraordinary energy, nor of high intellectuality.

Was it really an unlucky love affair that had made him so contradictory? Elsa asked herself. There was about him nothing of the robust heartiness of the German-Americans she had met on the steamer. His family had come from the North of Germany — those dreary lowlands which now seemed further than ever removed from the country she called her home. When she had received Fräulein Jacobine's invitation to spend Christmas day with her, she had eagerly accepted, for it had seemed to bring her a step nearer the old home to which her heart was so fondly turning; but from the minute she entered the house she had felt as if every moment increased the distance.

The child had slipped away and ran out into the hall, and soon her pretty prattling voice was heard from a distance.

Mr. Cornelius evidently felt called upon to say something about the duties of life and the obligation to make the best of everything. Elsa raised her hand deprecatingly, with a quite imploring look; but the speaker interpreted the gesture as an indication of the fitness of his remarks. — He dwelt upon the pettiness of her own tribulations compared with the discouragement one trying to lead humanity upward, met with. He, who had undertaken this mission, had been denounced by some for maintaining the ideas of God and the immortality of the soul, by others for insisting that religion and science were kith and kin. Nobody comprehended his attitude regarding the evolution of moral ideals which, he explained, were neither utilitarian nor metaphysical.

Elsa, who had just vaguely heard what he said, felt obliged to make a few remarks, even though she could show no warm interest in the subject.

"Why, after all, not restrict yourself to simple lectures on ethics in general without touching upon their origins, about which there is so much strife and misunderstanding?" she asked.

"Because the categorical imperative needs a practical foundation," the speaker rejoined dogmatically; "because no philosophical barricades are fireproof against the onset and impetus of the elementary passions of the human heart. For would we not all cheat, steal, poison and trespass in every possible way, if there were no thought and fear of God and Hereafter?"

"Oh!" Elsa exclaimed in wild amazement, "certainly not I, Mr. Cornelius, no matter what might be the ultimate consequences."

"Perhaps," Mr. Cornelius said musingly; "there are some characters – a very few, though, which can be said to be organically moral. Mine is not, Miss Keller; and if I had not succeeded in – – but never mind what! Have you studied chemistry?"

Here Miss Jacobine, who had shortly before quitted the room, returned and sat down with an air of quiet protest against all things scientific or sentimental.

Dinner had been served at an early hour and Elsa felt that she might now, with propriety, take her leave. Neither Mr. Cornelius nor his sister urged her to stay; the latter stood by coolly while she put on her hat and jacket, and then equally frigidly walked with her to the door.

Chapter. VII

When Elsa found herself in the open air, the shades of evening had already begun to descend upon the city, and the street-lamps was being lighted at the corner of Fourth and Poplar-street. From either of these thoroughfares swept a cold blast, which nearly upset the slender girl, as she stood waiting for the street car.

Half an hour later she was standing in front of Mrs. Bittersweets house, longing to steal quietly up to her room and "to cry it out" she knew not what. — But the parlor was brightly lighted, and the sound of laughter and conversation came to her as she ascended the steps. She hoped to escape the observation of Mrs. Bittersweet and her guests, but scarcely had she touched the bell when the door was opened, and that lady herself, with outstretched arms,

greeted her effusively and helped her to take off her wraps. Then with her right forefinger extended in mock caution she whispered in German: „Now bless your dear little heart! just think a moment and tell me whom of all people in the world you would like best to see at this moment;" and then in a louder voice, she continued: "I ought to let you suffer a little as a punishment for having kept this conquest a secret from me. But I will be merciful. Now just guess who is here."

Elsa remained silent for a moment - and then answered:

„I cannot imagine who has taken the trouble to look me up." Then she colored up to her temples, and a rapturous vision rose before her: "Is it a gentleman?" she asked falteringly.

„Ah, you are beginning to own up!" Mrs.

Bittersweet replied.

"Is he young, tall, with brown hair and eyes," Elsa whispered with a throbbing heart, "and yet it is not possible – not possible!" she added bowing her head as if from shame and pressing both her hands upon her heart.

"Oh you precious little hypocrite!" Mrs. Bittersweet exclaimed. "Of course he is tall – and very interesting," she added rapturously, "but you know as well as I that the Dutch East-Indiaman is not dark, but light."

Elsa started as if stung by an adder. "How dare he come here?" she exclaimed indignantly, drawing herself up to her full height.

Mrs. Bittersweet was sure she understood the girl's attitude and in a different tone she answered:

"Oh you girls always imagine that you are not giving a man any encouragement,

but in this case you have let him gaze too long and deeply into those brilliant hazel-eyes of yours, and now he cannot leave this country, before having gazed into them still longer and sounded their depth, perhaps. — But he can tell you better than I why he came; so please walk in!" And as she spoke she opened the door and with her arm around Elsa's shoulders she ushered her into the parlor.

The man who arose as they entered was certainly not past middle age and yet he had the air of never having been young. His hair was thin and of no definite colour, his look wary, his lips drawn together as if he were always on the defensive, and this expression accorded well with his vigorous energetic movements. Judging from his salutation one would have thought him

an old friend, but Elsa who had never been able to think of him without repugnance, acknowledged his greeting so coldly that he immediately assumed a different attitude and the look and tone of passionate but subdued emotion.

"Ah, the pleasure of seeing you again, Miss Keller!" he murmured; then he paused and pressed his hand upon his heart, as if overpowered by his feelings.

"I thought you had long ago sailed from San-Francisco," Elsa remarked. "It was your intention, I believe, to start from that port."

He bowed.

"You seem to have forgotten the pledge I gave you at our parting," he said.

"A pledge? I know of no pledge," she interposed emphatically.

"Never mind, Miss Heller! It was in spite of your remonstrances; for I had promised myself that I would seek and find you even were you to go to the North pole. Had you gone in that direction it could not have been much more difficult to trace you. — I knew your friend, Madame Liska, would have your address, but I did not know hers, and I spent a long time trying to find it. — At last — whom should I meet one day in a New-York street — car, but Liska herself —"

"And she gave you my address?" Elsa interrupted incredulously.

"Not immediately; she has her reasons, of course, for not wishing me to disturb her schemes. It was only when I assumed an air of indifference, saying it might be too late anyhow to see you before my departure, as my passage was engaged for an

early date, that she confessed that you were staying with Mrs. Bittersweet. You must have known that I would come," he added in a low insinuating voice; "are you not glad to see me?"

He continued to gaze fixedly at her, and while she was conscious of a desire to ask him to take himself out of her presence, she realised also that something prevented her from giving utterance to her desire.

Mrs. Bittersweet had passed into the back parlor from which the view was cut off by heavy curtains. But the sound of subdued conversation assured Elsa of the proximity of others and this knowledge seemed to liberate her will power from the thraldom of the man who had never once withdrawn his gaze.

"Why do you come here to annoy me thus,

Mr. Van Der Velten?" she supplicated.

His look changed, but he was still regarding her with dilated eyes and nostrils.

"Why have I come?" he repeated, "because I want your love, yourself, and I will have you."

"Never!" Elsa spoke the word with so much emphasis, that he rose to his feet, and as he did so his whole manner changed. He advanced a step toward the girl, saying:

"You little know how easily I might overcome your resistance, but I prefer that you should overcome it yourself."

A look of disdain was the only answer Elsa vouchsafed, and collecting himself he resumed his seat.

Elsa had risen also and now she moved toward the fire-place, resting her right arm on the mantel-piece.

"Rest assured," she said, "that my feelings will never change."

"Once I might have believed that," Van der Velden answered languidly, "but – but other women have said the same and have changed their minds. It is a woman's privilege, you know."

"I mean what I say," Elsa retorted firmly.

"Doubtless," he responded, "but you have seen others obey my will, and you were always afraid to trust yourself to my influence."

Elsa turned angrily toward him.

"It was not fear," she exclaimed, "it was simply because I did not wish to be a subject for hypnotic experiments. You might spend your time more profitably than by experimenting upon those weak enough to yield to your power. You might – at least – take men."

The sound of the closing of a door was now

heard, and Mrs. Bittersweets caller having depar-
ted, that lady appeared in the opening of the
portiere, where she remained a second in an
attitude which said plainly: "Am I intruding?"

Elsa walked toward her and took her hands.
She wished to emphasize as decidedly as possible
her desire to keep her hostess with her. At the
same time she dreaded the possibility of her becoming
acquainted with Van Der Veltens' object in calling.

Hospitality was, however, Mrs. Bittersweets'
strong point, and her invitations were given
upon the spur of the moment without any
thought as to consequences. She did not care
for rank or wealth; what she dearly loved
was genius not yet developed, and she was
continually discovering in her protégé's
promises of a great future, which, though
they had been rarely realized, she always be-
lieved in, attributing their lack of recogni-

to unfavorable circumstances.

Mrs. Bittersweet had also meant to be very kind to Elsa, and the latter was not ungrateful, although from their first meeting a barrier had seemed to separate them, a barrier which she had no desire to remove, and the existence of which Mrs. Bittersweet had no idea. But at that moment, when Van der Velten's eyes were fixed upon her with such an expression of sinister admiration, the proximity of even Mrs. Bittersweet was reassuring. She tried to make the latter understand that she did not care for the man's company, but Mrs. Bittersweet, as usual, proved very obtuse. Van der Velten, apparently, had made himself most agreeable to her during the time preceding Elsa's arrival and without seeming to do so, he must have taken pains to make known the interest he took in the young girl.

The warning look in Elsa's eyes was entirely lost upon Mrs. Bittersweet, and it is possible that the latter did not even feel the restraining pressure of the girl's hand. "We shall hope to see you very often, Mr. Van Der Velten," she said very cordially.

"You are very kind," he murmured, bowing low, but never once removing his gaze from Elsa.

"I am most irregular in my habits," Mrs. Bittersweet continued. "My friends have to take their chances of finding me at home; but Miss Heller is at home most of the time, and I am sure she will be glad to see you."

Elsa's fingers contracted around those of Mrs. Bittersweet, and then her hand dropped as she recognized the impossibility of making the widow comprehend how unwelcome the presence of the stranger was to her.

"Mr. Van der Velten's affairs demand his speedy return," she said coldly, regarding the man steadily in order that he might clearly understand his dismissal.

"Very true," he responded blandly, "but if I could dispose of my interests in the Spice Islands I think I might find this country very agreeable, for a while at least."

"That would be delightful," Mrs. Bittersweet assured him.

"For me, at least," he assented with another bow, evidently intended for an acknowledgment of her cordiality, but which did not prevent him from noticing the look of hopeless alarm in Elsa's eyes.

If it was his intention to bring matters to a climax in which Mrs. Bittersweet's blind admiration and Elsa's helpless fear would fully reveal themselves, he could not

have succeeded better.

"Good evening, Miss Keller," he said in a tone whose mock humility barely disguised his exultation. Then bowing very low over the widow's hand he ~~lent~~ kissed his lips to it and passed out.

Chapter XIII.

A few days after his sudden appearance the Dutchman called upon Mrs. Bittersweet alone. Elsa was not at home, but she gathered from the animation of the widow that the latter had been very much pleased with her visitor. But when she made some remarks to the effect that she intended to invite Van der Velten for New-Years eve, Elsa, with flashing eyes, declared under such circumstances, she would not be one of the party.

Without any attempt at self-control the

irdon burst into a violent fit of anger.

"With such conceited prudery you will never get a husband," she cried, starting up from the piano. She was going to add some other invectives, when a look from Elsa's eyes brought her back to reason.

"According to my recollection, Mrs. Bittersweet, I have never asked you to find me a husband," saying this, Elsa, with proud bearing, her head very erect, moved toward the door, trying in vain to check her tears.

Mrs. Bittersweet hurried after her and took her by the arm.

"How unreasonable you are!" she exclaimed with forced hilarity. "I really did not mean to hurt your feelings--"

"I accept your apology," Elsa interrupted with dignity, "provided that you promise me never again to encourage the Dutchman

as far as I am concerned. As for your own behavior in regard to him it is not my duty, of course, to proffer my advice."

"You ought to have been prioress of a convent," the widow exclaimed with a hasty kiss on Elsa's flushed cheek. But the girl was so indignant at her landlady's lack of tact and want of dignity that she excused herself with a headache and walked out of the parlor.

On the stairs she was met by Anna the housekeeper who whispered to her that Mrs. Bittersweet had shown the Dutchman all over the house, Miss Heller's room not excepted.

Elsa gave a start of anger and, then, passed up to her room which seemed to her as if desecrated by the look and breath of a man whose arrival was so decidedly forboding of evil.

Why did her beloved Liska expose her to such

dangers in the house of a woman who, despite of good intentions, could never be a fit adviser to an inexperienced girl. What would have become of her under the enervating influence of the widow, if her quick observation and insight into character had not put her on her guard – especially toward a man of such ambiguous proceedings and doubtful antecedents as that Dutch East-Indian.

Perhaps, she continued her soliloquy, that Lisha felt too much assured of her friend's strength of character and purity of heart as to feel any alarm on her behalf. "Yes, indeed, that must be the reason," said the girl aloud, with her usual eagerness to explain everything to the advantage of her charming friend.

Still she decided not to go down on New-years eve to meet the obnoxious stranger – and this resolution taken, she tried to compose

herself and give to her thoughts a more practical turn, as there were many puzzling questions incident to her experience as a teacher, and her repeated efforts to think a means which might bring her nearer to Lischa whom she believed to be her only real friend in America.

Elsa passed her New-Years eve in writing a long letter to her mother and sisters, in which she took the utmost care to speak only of pleasant and hopeful things, and not at all of her pecuniary troubles — her last pennies from home having been spent on some necessary articles of winter clothing.

On New-Years morning, however, she received a letter from New-York which made her look upon the future with confidence.

Lischa wrote her that she meant to come to Philadelphia on one of the next days, in order to arrange for some theatrical perfor-

manoeuvres under the management of her former teacher, Mr. Swinton. She probably would not stay more than a few hours — but she intended at all events to see her dear friends, Elsa and Mrs. Bittersweet, hoping they were getting on well together.

For a few days, Elsa, happiness beaming upon her face, went about as if in a dream, without paying any attention to the mysterious allusions of Mrs. Bittersweet who had also been gratified with a letter from the actress. But Elsa was so happy, now, that she tried sincerely to bear with the widow's failings of temper and inconsistencies of character. —

It was a clear brisk morning in January when Liska, with a rosy hue on her cheeks, threw open the parlor door abruptly and stood on the threshold with a radiant smile.

Although not quite as tall as Elsa, she

had a very elegant and supple figure. Her small well shaped head was surrounded by a profusion of wavy black hair, and the vivacity of her large dark eyes indicated her jewish origin.

Elsa, who had just been trying to warm ~~herself~~ benumbed fingers at the grate-fire, gave a start and a cry and then ran toward the beautiful woman. But suddenly she checked herself and drew back a few paces.

„No," she said with a gentle tone and droop in her eye, „it is impossible that you should care for such as me; for you have yet become a great deal more beautiful since I have seen you last."

Liska laughed overloudly at this expression of admiration, showing her ivory teeth to best advantage.

"Oh you are still the same foolish German Elsa who won my heart on the steamer."

Saying this she let her sealskin muff slip down on the floor, and drew the blushing girl to her bosom. Then falling back a little and holding Elsa at arms length she continued with a comical sigh:

„I know we must have great patience with you sentimental Germans. You squander your life deliberately – never seeing the town for the many houses, just as my – ah – hm – –"

She halted to collect herself as if she had been on the point of alluding to something that should remain a secret as yet. But Elsa did not take notice of her friends diplomacy, nor was she sensible of being treated by Lis= ka as a mere child, to whose power of comprehension people had to adapt their words and actions.

Liska was her senior by only a few years, and to-day she seemed even younger than

usual in her little Polish fur-cap and her long sealskin coat that fell to her tiny feet with their most exquisitely made Polish fur-boots.

It was not without an effort that Elsa tried to recover from the effect produced upon her by so much loveliness, and with a tremor in her voice she said at last:

"But don't you want to take off your cap and cloak?"

Nodding assent with a regal mien Liska suffered her friend to kneel down to unbutton her cloak, and having shaken it off with a graceful bent of her figure she also held out her little hands to have her gloves unbottoned by her skilful attendant. And during this performance, she playfully pulled — now one of Elsa's ears, and then the other, giving her a tap on the shoulder into the bargain.

and finally laughed outright at the bewildered girl who stood as if entranced by so much grace.

With a coquettish jerk of her head Liska at last tossed off her cap which Elsa picked up immediately and put it with the rest upon a chair by the window.

Liska, meanwhile, had glided on a tabouret near the fire-place. It did not seem to occur to her that the German girl might expect her to inquire about her health and feelings.

And, indeed, Elsa did not seem to want anything for herself; she was only too happy to gaze upon the beautiful artist and to discover new charms in her movements and attire.

„Do you want to bore a hole in my forehead, Simplicia; by looking at me so steadily," Liska, at last, said languidly as if tired

by so much admiration.

"I don't understand how anybody can be so beautiful," Elsa replied with a faltering voice.

"Oh nonsense! Leave it to men to talk such silly stuff, for they are good for nothing else. Rather tell me how you like this most lively and amusing of all American cities. Are you really so grave and reserved as Mrs. Bittersweet tells me in all her letters? Eh, this is not the way to men's heart, not even to that of pedantic Mr. Cornelius! Why, Simplicia, you have been here fully two months now, without, in the least, profiting by the occasion. Do you think you will remain young forever, or that marriageable men can be found by the hundred? Is Mr. Cornelius not sedate enough for you, or are you afraid of Dame Jacobine who is for ever lying in ambush with her critical

scissors to cut the threads of her brother's love-affairs?"

She laughed aloud, but this time there was no silvery ring in her voice which sounded strangely harsh, almost threatening.

Elsa looked up in surprise, but her pure soul knew of no distrust where she once had given her love and confidence.

"You do not seem to like Mr. Cornelius and his sister — why, then, did you wish so much that I should make their acquaintance?" she asked simply.

"Did I though? I had almost forgotten it. Why, you were so young and inexperienced, and perhaps I thought that a man of such gravity and erudition as Mr. Cornelius might be of some moment with a girl like you. And if he were not so hampered by his child and that spinster

sister — — "

She stopped again and turned her eyes toward the wall. " But how do you like little Lalie," she asked at last, her voice strangely vibrating.

"Oh, she is an angel!" Elsa cried enthusiastically. "I wonder whence she got those dark brilliant eyes, and that profusion of raven hair!"

"From her mother, of course!" the actress cried excitedly; "not from her insipid father."

"Do you know her mother?" Elsa asked with sudden curiosity. "She must be a worthless woman who can leave her only child — not to speak of her heart-broken husband."

"Ah, why all of a sudden so harsh and hasty in your judgement, my virtuous maiden!" cried the actress with flashing eyes and a strident voice. "Have you so soon caught fire at that cold and cheerless hearth and heart

of Lord Cornelius?"

She had started from her seat – pacing the room in great excitement – quite oblivious of her rôle and audience who strove in vain to comprehend the reason of this unfounded outburst of temper.

"Did I offend you Liska?" the girl at last asked with a tremulous voice and bewildered look.

"Offended – me!" the actress responded, collecting herself; "oh dear me, no, Simplicia! I am only a little startled at your phenomenal ignorance of the world and by the bluntness of your speech. Why, only school – girls can be pardoned for venting their feelings and opinions in such strong language; and it is for your own good that I tell you this. Once thrown upon our own ressources we can no longer take our likes or dislikes into consideration, but we must think only of how much

use a person or thing may be to us. But the best thing is, to appear entirely indifferent to everything. You see, the world is nothing but a mighty stage, and ~~it is~~ only bad actors cannot identify themselves with the part they have set out to play in life."

"Oh yes, you are wise and clever, Liska!" said the girl with a look of gratitude and admiration that smote the actress to the heart. "It is very, very good of you to waste your time and thought upon such a stupid girl as I am. For what else but your excessive kindness should ever have induced you to take notice of me — you who are accustomed to see the world prostrate at your beautiful feet."

The face of the actress took an expression of genuine confusion and embarrassment.

"You are far better than I," she murmured, bending her head.

"Oh Liska!" cried the girl hurrying toward her, "the most beautiful gem in your crown is your great modesty. But I must go now and order some refreshements and I heartily beg your pardon for not having done so before. What would you like best – tea or coffee?"

"Neither," the actress replied consulting her watch; "Mr. Swinton has promised to come for me in a carriage, and I wonder that he is not yet here."

Elsa felt so disappointed that she nearly cried, moreover as she saw Miss Minnie-Eugenie stammering toward the house and soon heard her pull the bell most vigorously, thus showing her determination to get in as quickly as possible.

Elsa ran out to open the door, and in bounced Minnie without taking any notice of the German girl.

"Oh Mrs. Co—— Miss Krakowitza, I mean to say, how very stylish you look in that dark

green velvet dress!" thus exclaiming she ran toward the actress and kissed her hastily.

"Minnie, you have not yet thanked Miss Keller for opening the door for you," the actress said reprovingly. "But pardon me, my dears, there is my carriage coming. Quickly help me on with my furs, please. — That's it! Thank you! Now, au revoir, Simplicia! and good bye, little Minnie! My love to your mother, and many pleasant things besides."

And before poor Elsa could wipe the blinding tears from her eyes, the actress was already nodding to her on entering the carriage, the door of which was held open for her by someone within.

Elsa could just get a glimpse of the arm and the handsome profile of the person in the carriage. And that profile — over which appeared a profusion of curly brown hair, sent a

thrill through her heart – she knew not why! But she was very certain that it was not Mr. Swinton who thus was hurrying the actress away, for she well remembered his features and the cut and color of his hair. – She was greatly at a loss how to account for Liska's mistake, for such it evidently was

Chapter IX.

When Elsa had performed her daily task, she retired to her little room with a feeling of disappointment. None of the many things which she had intended to tell her friend and about which to ask her advice, had been talked over. She had not even been able to put in a remark in regard to the strange appearance of the Dutchman and the undignified behavior of Mrs. Bittersweet.

It would be very hard indeed if this uncanny stranger should drive her out of the little nest in which she had hardly begun to feel somewhat at home.

While she was thus musing in the dark, she heard laughing and talking going on in the lower regions of the house, intermingled with the clattering of plates and glasses. She wondered why the sounds from the dining room should all of a sudden have become so audible, when she was startled by a knock on the door. It was Tommie, the errand girl.

"If you please, Miss," she stammered, "Mrs. Bittersweet would like you to come down at once. there is a visitor for you."

"Who is it?" Elsa asked suspiciously, putting as much rigor in her tone, as she had command of.

"Please Miss, a gentil, Miss!"

"Can she not come up?"

"No, she is in an awful hurry," says Mrs. Bittersweet," and without allowing Elsa any time for further questions, the girl was running down the stairs.

It was nothing unusual that Elsa was summoned in this peremptory way; and down she went accordingly.

Through the half open door of the back parlor streamed bright light and rang out peals of laughter. The first thing Elsa saw on entering was a tea-table, and at its head sat Mrs. Bittersweet in a low-necked dress of lavender silk, the frizzles of her hair falling deeply over her forehead.

Seeing Elsa she sprang up immediately; taking the disconcerted girl by both hands and drawing her into the room.

"Caught, my sweet little Dove! caught

and fettered," she exclaimed in a wild fit of gaiety. "And now you must stay here and take tea with us and not creep back again into your den, unless you have made up your mind to become an old maid — or alte Jungfer, if that sounds better to you. For shame!" she rattled on, forcing Elsa into a chair at the long side of the table; "to spend the most beautiful years of life within the four walls of an attic. Mr. Van Der Velden! have you ever seen such a wilful young lady before?"

Until then Elsa had not noticed the gentleman appealed to, as he was sitting behind the door — his back turned to the wall.

He wore the same threadbare coat that only looked the shabbier for the violent brushing it had previously undergone. His grey cravat of the same shade as his trousers, was tied with studied negligence, and his spare sandy

hair was brushed over the temples and frizzled a little toward the crown, to disguise the ravages of time — in women called baldness. The short retreating chin, so indicative of guile and cunning, was shaved so closely that it almost became prominent under the thin compressed lips.

Elsa, a quick observer of character, did not know whether this objectionable guest of Mrs. Bittersweet was not rather deserving of pity than of aversion, as he certainly did not look nearly as easy-going and comfortable as Indian Nabobs are generally supposed to.

The Dutchman, however, interpreted the changing expression of Elsa's features in his favor, and pushing back his tea-cup, he replied blandly:

"The questions of an interesting lady can be answered best in a tête-à-tête."

This was as rapid and insignificant as possible but the speaker put so much expression into

his looks, eying both ladies that it was doubtful with whom of the two he would best have liked to be alone. – And to make his meaning still more uncertain, he threw a side-glance at Minnie-Eugenie, seated at his left that seemed to say plainer than words: "Oh the fools! as if I did not prefer to either of them thy sweet girlishness.

Minnie, however, was uncommonly subdued and serious; she seemed a trembling little bird under the fascinating gaze of a serpent.

The East-Indiaman had so judiciously divided his attention between mother and daughter that it seemed incredible he could extend them toward a third person. But he did. While he, full of assiduity, anticipated the wants of the new comer on his right, he seemed to listen with the deepest admiration to all the silly and clever things which Mrs. Bittersweet, with a

talent of her own, was uttering at random. And at the same time he eyed the daughter as a pant, whereupon the latter moved hither and thither uncomfortably without ever opening her lips.

Elsa, too, was even more reticent than was her wont with unsympathetic people. She tried anxiously to avoid any remark that might have induced Mrs. Bittersweet to put in an indelicate jest or reproof.

The Dutchman seemed to notice well and to interprete rightly the disturbance of the German girl. He had showed some good breeding by occasionally coming to her rescue when Mrs. Bittersweet became entirely too effusive. — Elsa would gladly have thanked him for this, had he otherwise inspired her with greater confidence. As it was, she followed his tricky moves with increasing alarm and suspicion.

"My much respected Mrs. Bittersweet!" said

I offer you this slice of ham? — Fräulein Elsa! if I may address you thus — your appetite seems to be smaller than that of a swallow. I wonder where you get this rosy complexion from. And you, my charming Miss Eugenia! if, as I presume, you are going to become an artist — for it is genius that is sparkling from those fiery eyes of yours — then you, first of all, must try to lay a good physical foundation."

Thus he tried to say something agreeable to all of them.

Minnie Eugenie, highly flattered, colored up and had eyes and ears only for this charmer from India.

"Are you, then, musical, Mr. Van Der Velden," she asked after a pause.

"A little, Miss Eugenia! If your admirable Mama has no objection, I shall try to find out whether my hard stiff fingers have not

completely forgotten the art of my younger years. What would you like me to play, Mrs. Bittersweet! the Appassionata or a composition from Don-Juan? - And you, Miss Hell, would you like to hear the Ouverture of Tannhäuser, or that of the "Flying Dutchman"? Do you not pity him, my unhappy countryman who could not enter the harbor of peace and rest until a pure, faithfully loving woman had sacrificed her life for him?"

And his glowing eyes rested upon the features of the young German with such a gloomy look of despair as if he himself had been that wretched sea-farer who longed for rest and salvation.

Then he sat down upon the piano-stool as if lost in painful reverie, improvised for a few moments - at first gently and longingly, like the lay of a lost soul wandering about the

gates of paradise. Then it resounded louder, shriller, frantically as if the spirit of a wild pirate king were fumbling in the strings, wailing out wine melodies never before heard the agony of an unspoken and unspeakable wretchedness, such as human words and human tones can never express.

Never before had Elsa heard such playing. They were the performer's own improvisations interspersed with those of other composers.

With closed eyes and a convulsive shudder Elsa leant back in the sofa. For the first time she felt that she had to guard — not her senses, but her imagination against this demoniacal foreigner. She was strong enough to ward off anything that was ugly or vulgar, but she had to be on her guard against what at least seemed to be poetically beautiful.

Mrs. Bittersweet, however, fell into a truly

fanatical enthusiasm at the miraculous playing of the Dutchman and it cost her a terrible effort not to throw herself upon his neck.

"Dear me, Mr. Van Der Vitten! but you are a truly divine artist," she exclaimed, running up and down the parlor gasping for breath. "How could you conceal such talent in the Orient for so long a time? Or are you, perhaps, a European celebrity, visiting this country incognito?"

But the Dutchman did not seem the least moved by the outbursts of such unbridled raptures. Lost in his own thoughts and fancies he played on — Tannhäuser, Lohengrin and at last Don Giovanni. — This, however, was too much for Mrs. Bittersweet, who at the acme of her splendor had sung the part of Donna Elvira. With a yet passable voice she joined in the arias, until a convulsive

fit of coughing awakened her roughly from her ecstatic condition.

"My old enemy," she murmured, wiping her eyes, while Elsa helped her to an easy chair. Even the Dutchman had started up to busy himself about the widow with a sympathy that seemed quite genuine.

When her coughing fit had spent itself, Mrs. Bittersweet leant back, exhausted, while the Dutchman turned toward her daughter who sat by the window, silent and indifferent.

"Your poor child did not get anything at all," he said with the affected tenderness of a step-father. "Not that damned Dutchman nor the wicked Don Juan is the darling of your soul, but Romeo – the passionate and true unto death Romeo."

And while Minnie gazed at him with unconcealed astonishment at this remarkable

knowledge of her feelings, the artist began anew to draw from the keys the most wonderful melodies, which he seemed to have learned from the goddess of youth herself.

The tones came forth tenderly and beseechingly sighing and wailing, like those of the nightingale, singing under the sweet lilac-bush, upon which the white moon is pouring down her magic light.

They no longer were musical tones, sung from the coldest of instruments. It was as if the wonderful charmer from the East had undergone a thousand incarnations and was exhibiting one by one.

Elsa felt again that she had to be on her guard against this enigmatical East-Indian, and even upon Minnie's impertinent little face lay a gleam of melancholy which made her appear very attractive and lovable.

It would be hard to say how long the stranger would have continued his enchanting performance if Anna had not suddenly thrown open the door to announce Dr. Oldenburg.

The broad figure of the physician emerged from behind Anna's shoulders and stood in the frame of the folding door. He cast a rapid glance at the Dutchman, and when he removed his grey intelligent eyes, there was in them a distrustful and hostile expression which Elsa could not help noticing.

The doctor bowed somewhat awkwardly when the widow introduced the Dutchman to him, while the latter assumed a faultless attitude.

"Mr. Van Der Velten from East-India, Dr. Oldenburg from — —"

"Grossmannshausen near Berlin," completed the doctor, his broad face twitching. "Who has not heard of the celebrated Gross-

manns hausen, especially in Philadelphia where nobody can get on without a pedigree."

After this he threw himself on the nearest chair, while he eyed the East-Indian, as if he were making the diagnosis of the man's character.

Physically nature seemed to have made these two men antipodes. — Dr. Oldenberg was of heavy built. His massive head and broad vaulted forehead, his rather snub nose, his powerful chin, covered by a thick full beard, reminded one of a lion. All this, however, was softened by the gentle expression of the full lips. His quick intelligent eyes, and his beautiful white, dimpled hands formed a strange contrast to his almost burly form.

On the other hand, there was something uncanny about the ~~Dutchman~~, eel-slippery flexibility and pliancy of the Dutchman. His small head, his sharply cut profile, his

projecting nose, his long thin arms — well entirely out of proportion with his large unshapely hands and enormous thumbs.

Chiromancy was one of Dr. Oldenberg's scientific hobbies. He now gazed at the clumsy thumbs of the stranger with an expression akin to horror, and Elsa felt with satisfaction how the magic net in which the artist had tried to ensnare her, began to loosen itself in presence of the German doctor.

One passing I heard somebody play the piano," the latter explained his calling at that hour, "and of course I thought it was Mrs. Bittersmit. But as such spiritual dissipations are against my medical orders, I was going before retiring to caution my friend, as of late she has been coughing more than usual."

In saying this the good doctor blushed like a college boy who, in presence of his

lady-love, is stammering his first white-lie.

Mrs. Bittersweet had already so far mastered her vexation at this untimely interruption as to give her physician a winning smile. "You are welcome here at all times, my dear Doctorchen, even if you have come to scold me. —" Thus saying she moved nearer to him and then looked archly at the Dutchman who, with bent head, stood irresolutely near the piano.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Van Der Velten?" lisped the widow in her sweetest of tones.

The Dutchman, with an expression of absent-mindedness, sank down on a chair near the window, pulled up the blind a little and began to study with deep interest the flickering gas-light in the street-lamp opposite, while he kept a watchful eye on his surroundings. And when he, at times, gazed furtively

at the doctor, his cold pale eyes seemed like daggers. —

The widow could not refrain from telling the physician immediately of the remarkable acquisition she had made in the person of Mr. Van Der Velten — a musician of the very highest rank — a thing not at all to be presumed from his nationality.

"To me the gentleman looks more like a Slav than a Hollander," the physician declared, without, however, being willing to prove his assertion, not even when Mrs. Bittersweet called his attention to the absence of the high cheek bones, so characteristic of the slavonic nations.

Elsa who, with her arms lightly folded, was sitting opposite the doctor, felt that he looked upon the Dutchman just as she did. She was laughed and joked and overlooked the East Indian so completely, as though she were trying to

make things so disagreeable for him, that he would hardly wish to make another call at that house.

The Dutchman, however, who regarded himself a consummate connoisseur of women, saw in Elsa's conduct only a refined kind of coquetry. He eyed her with the sly mien of a bird-catcher who sees his net close over a harmless, chirping tomtit.

It was not long, however, when he got up to take his leave. Perhaps he did not think it worth his while to engage in contest with such an opponent, so little dangerous as giants generally are.

Chapter X.

After this memorable evening Mr. Van Der Velten had gained such a firm footing in Mrs. Bittersweets house, that he no longer needed to wait for invitations before putting in his appearance.

He did so the following Sunday, just in time to cause Dr. Oldenberg, who lived round the corner in Locust Street, to consider whether he should take his customary Sunday afternoon coffee at Mrs. Bittersweets, or make it himself. He decided in favor of the latter, and Mrs. Bittersweet did not regret his absence.

Dressed as loudly as usual she blushed like a maiden of sweet sixteen when the parlor door was thrown open and Van Der Velten was ushered in by Emmie the errand-girl.

Elsa was sitting in the back parlor, absently gazing on a book in her hand. After

the Dutchman had gallantly bowed to either of the ladies, he seated himself by the window and began to converse on some topics of the week, i. e. the different concerts and dramas performed at the theatres. After a while the visitor, then, passed from general gossip to some well applied compliments in regard to Mrs. Bitter-sweets toilet and general appearance, saying she might be taken for her daughters elder sister. Had she never had any other children and had her husband been an American or a German?

"Oh, a German, to be sure", said the widow giggling; "but like so many he anglicised his name, to keep people from mispronouncing it. He was a music-teacher and made a little fortune, which he partially invested in this house. I wish he had lived longer", she added, sighing affectedly.

"But you do not occupy this four storey house all by yourself?" the visitor remarked.

"Oh no! an old gentleman is occupying the floor above. He will leave us, though, by the beginning of February, and I do not know as yet who will take his rooms. We do not like to be without the protection of a man, although I am not quite as much afraid as my daughter is."

The Dutchman's eyes assumed an expression of silent exultation. "Oh, you will never lack protection as long as I live, Mrs. Bittersweet," he said gallantly, and then he added in a fatherly tone: "But where is Miss Eugenia?"

"She has a very severe head-ache," the widow answered a little plaintively; "she will probably not be down before to-morrow morning."

"She will," the East-Indian responded authoritatively. "Which is her room?"

The widow looked surprised. "Third story front,

she then replied.

With the look and bearing of a conjurer, the Dutchman stepped to the window, and turning his back upon the ladies, he muttered some words in a foreign language.

After that he dropped his head upon his breast, and with closed eyes and clenched fists he stood for some minutes without moving or speaking.

"She is coming, she is coming!" he then exclaimed as if awakening from a trance; and noticing Elsa's derisive smile he stepped toward her with a contorted countenance, and his voice came like a hiss through his set teeth.

"You too shall soon know my power and on your knees implore my pardon for your unreasonable scorn. Look yonder!" and he extended his right arm toward Minnie-Eugenie who, dressed negligently, her eyes strangely dilated was with a slow pace entering the front-parlor.

When she reached the middle of the room, she stopped as if uncertain as to the direction she was to take, and steadfastly gazed at some imaginary spot on the opposite wall.

"Miss Eugenia!" the Dutchman exclaimed, and for a moment she stood aghast as if trying to remember her whereabouts. "Poor child! your head-ache was very bad this time," he said with a tender compassion, moving toward her and laying his hand upon her forehead. "But now it is completely gone, is it not? and you must be very hungry - I know you are."

She acknowledged she was.

"Then go down immediately and let Anna prepare you some tea and toast," he said commandingly, and Minnie was going to obey his orders.

At this moment Mrs. Bittersweet, who did not know what to make of these proceedings,

said: "Anna will do nothing of the kind at such an hour of day, I know. Besides it is her Sunday out. I must go down myself and set the kettle boiling, although I am almost afraid that you two are playing some trick on me and that Minnie had no headache at all."

The Dutchman smiled knowingly without attempting to explain his method — too glad apparently to get the widow out of the room and to settle accounts with Elsa Keller who, in an attitude of defiance, was standing by the piano.

"You are still unwilling to recognize my power, Miss Keller?" he said laboring to calm his voice and the expression of his face. "You pretend not to believe in hypnotism, and nobody, for sooth! is so pur-blind as they who shut their eyes wilfully. But did I

ever boast of any occult power that could not be explained scientifically? No, Miss Keller, my power – great as it may be – is nothing but knowledge – knowledge pure and simple. Now suppose you fix your eyes on mine without winking and blinking – just as you are doing now, although your spirit, I know, is in a state of rebellion – – and – – and – – But what is the matter, Miss Keller! What makes you startle and recoil like that?"

"Take away your hands," she said firmly, but almost inaudibly. "There is – – oh what is there upon those thumbs of yours! Horrible, most horrible! Let go, if you do not want me to cry for help!"

The stranger's cheek turned livid; he drew back and looked at the girl, as if she were a ghost who had risen from the grave to tell the dark secrets of the past.–

Then the brutal force, checked for a moment by the girl's lofty purity and firmness of character, rushed back upon the mesmerist, and gnashing his teeth, he cried fiercely:

"Comedian! what do – what <u>can</u> you know of me?"

"I? Nothing that can strictly be called knowing; much, however – But never mind! I only wanted to see which of us is the stronger – and I have proved to you that a woman cannot be hypnotized against her will."

"No!" he exclaimed, stamping his foot, "because you are already hypnotized; because you have surrendered yourself with closed eyes and bound feet to a scheming stager who knew how to pose as your friend and protectress. Poor, deluded, simple hearted girl – Simplicia indeed, as that woman used to call

you on the steamer. I could admire and pity you for your injudicious devotion, if you had not treated me so cruelly from the very beginning. And yet," he continued mournfully, "it might, perhaps, been worth your while to waste ever so little sympathy on such as me. My heart might have become like wax under your hands and I, once more, a better man. But that is passed, my lofty lady! Henceforward I shall not cross your path anymore — not even to warn you further against that brilliant, artful Liska. And now let the comedy of life take its course," he added with a hollow laugh, stepping to a side table as if to examine some photographs, for out in the hall were heard the animated voices of Mrs. Bittersweet and her daughter, and while they entered the front-parlor, Elsa passed out through the back-door.

And Destiny was flapping her wings over all of them, but they did not heed her warnings.

Chapter XI.

There was a great reception at banker Stecker's. His highly cultivated wife belonged to one of the oldest and most aristocratic families of Philadelphia, and so her house was one of the few where Germans and Americans met on an equal footing.

On the approach of night the rooms were filling rapidly, and among the invited guests were Mr. Cornelius with his sister, Dr. Oldenberg and Elsa Heller.

Mrs. Bittersweet had not as yet put in her appearance; it was one of her generally known and much commented upon peculiarities, always to be in a bustle and hurry and never to arrive at the appointed hour —

always to be late, ever to lament and never to mend it.

As in those days there were few Germans of the better class in Philadelphia, the Americans naturally greatly outnumbered them. All the rooms were thrown open, and everybody felt at home with the amiable and hospitable host and hostess, who, without ostensible care for their guests, displayed the rare talent of making every one enjoy himself in his or her own way.

Elsa, however, did not feel less solitary in this large social congregation than she did in smaller ones. After a pleasant little chat with the hostess she withdrew to the bay window in the back parlor, where the Germans formed a group of their own.

Soon afterwards she was joined by Dr. Ahlenberg who had already regaled himself

in the dining-room with some glasses of Johannisberger. He bowed in his heavy way to all present and then dropped in a chair next to Elsa.

"So silent and solitary, dear Fräulein?" he said in the best of spirits; "you do not eat, you do not drink, nor do you play Whist and Pharao. How do you intend to kill time, then? Just wait till you are as old as I am, and then I may convert you to the quintessence of my own worldly wisdom."

Dr. Oldenburg always posed for a cynic, especially in the presence of his dearest opponent, Mr. Cornelius. The latter, however, who was just looking at a Rembrandt reported to be genuine, did not seem to take any notice of his friends challenge; and so Dr. Oldenburg, once more, turned to his neighbor:

"You seem to be in a still less festive mood than usual, my Fräulein! Did you, perhaps, receive unpleasant news from home?"

Elsa answered to the negative and pleaded a headache. For how could she talk about anything so personal as her own melancholy moods and gloomy presentiments.

After a while Mr. Cornelius approached his his countrymen and began a conversation about the great advantages of cold water cures.

Elsa's mouth twitched, and she said with forced hilarity that she daily received the application of a part of that curative method for nothing, as nearly every experience in this uncomfortable world was to her like a bucket full of ice-cold water.

Mr. Cornelius, for a few moments, fixed at her a questioning look, and Elsa knew that she had, again, roused his displeasure.

But why should she care, and of what importance to her was the opinion of a comparative stranger!

Displeased with herself she was much relieved when the attention of the gentlemen was suddenly directed into another channel, as there was much commotion caused by the moving of chairs and the buzzing of voices.

It was Mrs. Bittersweet who, accompanied by the Dutchman, entered upon the scene fussing and fidgeting, belated as usual and making so much noise about it as if it had happened for the first time.

The strange appearance of her cavalier, however, caused much greater astonishment than her striking toilet; for in this respect people had long ago become accustomed to seeing her go to the extreme.

The window was a low-necked, amber

colored satin dress with a long train and garnet colored trimming. Round her unnaturally black hair, arranged on the top of her head, was wound a red and yellow striped kerchief in form of a turban. — Thus attired she smiled to all with the grotesque majesty of a gypsy queen.

"Mother Eve and the Serpent," said Dr. Oldenberg with a sarcastic smile.

Elsa felt very much oppressed at the sight of the couple and would have liked best to creep for the rest of the evening into some crack or crevice like a persecuted little mouse. — Yet good breeding required her to rise and go to meet Mrs. Bittersweet, in spite of a presentiment that the eccentric lady would fling her arms round her neck and kiss her in presence of the company; and so it happened.

Elsa suffered all with the dolorous look of a martyr and did not feel comfortable until Mrs. Bittersweet again put her arm on that of her companion, in order to recommend this uninvited guest to the good will of the host. But when she learned that Mr. Stecher had withdrawn to the smoking-room, she sallied toward the hostess, not remembering that she ought to have done this first.

Mrs. Stecher, in a simple black velvet dress was just then doing the honors in the dining-room on the other side of the large entrance hall.

With the quiet bearing of a well-bred lady she smiled upon the little widow, and her blue clear eyes rested a moment inquiringly upon the Dutchman-who, as usual, had about him that air of shabby genteelness — so depressive in its hollow pretensions

She nodded assent, however, when Mrs. Bittersweet asked permission to present her — who so keenly appriciated everything meritorious — a genius she had been happy enough to discover, a Dutch East-Indian traveller.

The hostess bowed with reserved dignity and immediately turned to Mrs. Bittersweet to inquire for her health, so the Dutchman rightly considering himself dismissed, withdrew.

Soon, however, he was seized upon by Mrs. Bittersweet, who was very eager to introduce her friend to all the haute volée of Philadelphia, among which there were many of her personal friends.

Everyone had a pleasant look and a half benevolent, half compassionate smile for the quicksilvery little lady, yet nowhere could Mrs. Bittersweet procure for her companion a warm reception.

They either seemed to overlook him entirely or to gaze at him distrustfully, a thing that even unsophisticated Mrs. Bittersweet could not help but remark. She hoped, however, that all this coldness and indifference would disappear as soon as she should have succeeded in presenting her protegé at the piano.

Until then she tried to console herself with making Van Der Velten the centre of a group of the young ladies by whispering to each in particular the incomparable qualities of her artist friend. In this way she might, perhaps, have made him pass for an Oriental nabob, if his clothing had been in keeping with this.

Mrs. Bittersweet felt satisfied with the manner in which the Dutchman was received by the young girls, and when she had thus provided for him, she returned to the back

parlor to have a little chat with the Germans there assembled — or rather isolated.

The German American and Anglo-American element did not even amalgamate in such select society, although the family of the host was a proof of how well the two might harmonize.

Mrs. Bittersweet alone seemed to feel at home in either element and not to miss the German open-heartedness and somewhat boisterous bonhomie with the Americans, nor the reserved formality of the latter with her own countrymen.

But Elsa had not the same faculty of adapting herself to all circumstances and surroundings. She had again retired to the bay-window, where the younger Miss Stecker, Miss Slade's pupil, was keeping her company.

In the opposite corner sat Mr. Cornelius between said Miss Slade and his sister,

treating them both to a lecture on philosophy.

He seemed entirely oblivious of his surroundings and every now and then, in slow, deliberate tones, he emphasized some word or name which, then, rang clearly through the whole room, such as: Herbert Spencer, Bunsen, Roscoe, etc.

"Listen, Mr. Cornelius is riding his hobby-horse again, or rather his — donkey," Miss Stecher whispered to Elsa. "Do you wonder that his wife ran away from him!"

"He probably has not lost much," Elsa replied, shrugging her shoulder.

"He is very beautiful," Miss Stecher said, "too beautiful for such a tiresome schoolmaster with his dry chemistry."

"Spectral analysis -- violet light -- chemical bases," came from the other corner.

"There you have it; saisve qui peut!"

cried Miss Stecher triumphantly and betook herself away, leaving Elsa to her own reflections.

But these were soon disturbed by the advent of Dr. Oldenberg who, with long strides and excited gestures was bursting in from the front-parlor.

"How can Frau Bittersweet dare to bring that impudent adventurer here!" he exclaimed with violent gestures.

"You do not believe him, then, to be a rich slave-owner from the Spice Islands?" Elsa asked with a roguish smile.

"No," replied the doctor abruptly, throwing himself in an easy chair; "I rather believe him to be a convict escaped from the Pepper-land.") Have you not noticed how well the fellow speaks French to the Italian consul?"

"No! but why could he not speak many

) Cayenne.

languages and still be an honest man?"

The physician laughed heartily and stretched out his legs.

"There is at all events something very suspicious about him," he continued; "he is a felon, a spy, or — for aught I know — something worse."

Elsa smiled and lifted her finger threateningly. "Concrete science does not jump at conclusions, Herr Doctor! I thought we women alone had the right to judge from intuition, while men considered facts only; in this case you have none at all, I think."

"Humph! I know, of course, that not all the devils run about showing club-feet and horns, nor that all the angels try to attract attention by flapping their wings, and that we are often mistaken in judging from mere appearances. And moreover — I have

no right to speak disrespectfully of a man who enjoys your favor and that of Mrs. Bittersweet."

"Herr Doctor!"

"Never mind!" growled the doctor, without heeding Elsa's deprecating tone. Just then the host came up to them to inquire for the wants and wishes of his German friends.

Mr. Stecher was of portly size; he had a broad open face, with something of business shrewdness in it. His partial baldness indicated the hard working man of middle life, and his mien and bearing that of the prosperous banker.

After he had looked about on all sides and bestowed - here a kindly look, there a pressure of the hand, he invited all the gentlemen into the smoking room to have a private bottle of the famous wine of 1811. But just then

a crowd of young ladies came upon him and irresistibly carried him along with them.

Next appeared Mrs. Bittersweet who, with her usual vehemence, fluttered toward Elsa.

"My dearest Fräulein!" she exclaimed almost breathlessly, "you are sitting here, dreaming, while our glorious friend, Mr. Van Der Velten --"

"Your friend, Mrs. Bittersweet!" broke in the girl.

"All right," the widow retorted good natured-ly, "but even as my friend you owe him some consideration."

"Why so?" interposed Dr. Oldenberg, turning sharply toward the widow.

"But for heaven's sake, Doctorchen! why do you also speak against the good East-Indian- when I was just going to ask you to ac-company him on your violin."

"Does he not also play the jews-harp

and the bag-pipe?" said the imperturbable doctor.

Mrs. Bittersweet laughed hysterically, until the tears gushed from her eyes. Then she raised herself on tiptoe and, with her fan before her mouth, whispered audibly, but so that Elsa could hear it:

"For shame, Dr. Oldenberg! I had no idea you could be so jealous."

Elsa was at a loss of whom the doctor was supposed to be jealous and why he should blush like a school-boy. She was about to turn the subject by putting in a remark, when, without looking up, she felt upon her the piercing eye of the Dutchman who, with feigned indifference, was standing by the mantel-piece in the front parlor.

The girl shuddered as if she had been stung by a scorpion, and with a feeling of helpless indignation she tried to retire behind the

window-curtains from the passionate glances of her persecutor.

Mrs. Bittersweet who could not understand such uncalled for behavior looked at the girl with some astonishment. But immediately afterwards she fluttered away in the opposite direction to say some sweet things to Mr. Cornelius and his acid sister.

Dr. Oldenberg, too, remembering the invitation to the smoking room as well as the delicious lobster-salad in the dining room, took to his heels, avoiding anxiously to be inadvertently seized upon as unclaimed property by an enterprising widow in search of a second husband.——

"Allow me, Sir, to develop my thought uninterruptedly," the cold passionless voice of Mr. Cornelius was heard from the opposite corner.

Elsa wished herself back to her little room,

where she would have felt less solitary than in this crowd, which, with all its pretensions at sociability offered no food for her hungry heart and soul. She sat down again and began to think of home — she did not know for how long a time, — when, all of a sudden, Dr. Ehrenberg came storming and pushing through the crowd and unceremoniously addressed himself to Elsa:

"Fräulein Heller! I am on the point of making a magnificent discovery and I wish to assign to you the rôle of an impartial spectator. Behold the little gentleman yonder with the reddish hair and beard! I just made his acquaintance in the dining-room. He is Mynheer Van der Bosch from Amsterdam who has settled in Colorado and is on a business trip to his native country. I told him about your Van der — pardon

me! in short – about the so-called Dutch man. for you will remember that from the very beginning I have taken him for a Slav. I therefore asked Mynheer Van der Bosch to address his pretended countryman in the Dutch language and to let me know what he thinks of his accent. He then made me describe to him the said adventurer. Age – forty or above, steel-grey piercing eyes, the paws of an elefant – ephemistically called hands, excellent musician and proprietor of several air-castles on the Spice-Islands, etc. And then Mynheer assured me of what I had already been aware – that good musicians are not wont to banish themselves to the colonies if they are not forced by weighty reasons so to do. He himself had been there about ten years ago, but was obliged to come back to Europe on account of the

unhealthy climate. A great musician, however, could be found there as little as in the back-woods of America; but instead of that, a multitude of fugitive criminals who have sought and found a safe shelter on the Dutch steam-ships, before the European authorities could lay hands on them. He himself remembered a similar case that happened in Amsterdam and which had personally concerned him. It involved a well known family with which he stood in close relations and to whom he was going to ally himself still more closely in the near future, being engaged to the daughter.

"The young lady, however, was led astray by her music teacher and -- humph -- well you know the old story of Abelard and Héloïse, translated into modern felony."

Elsa closed up but did not put in a

syllable, and the doctor, with rapid words, continued his recital:

"The furious father caused the rascally musician to be banished from the country, but when it was found out that the latter had taken with him — not only the honor of the daughter but also the diamonds of the mother and ten thousand guldens from the safe of the father, they would gaine have had the felon back again. But gone he was as if the earth had swallowed him up, and all inquiries in Holland and the neighboring countries had been in vain. The impostor was therefore conjectured to have, under a false name and pass, taken refuge on an East-India steamer."

Elsa looked up and responded with a smile:

"For a Dutchman Mynheer seems to have an uncommonly vivid imagination. Did he know

the musician personally, or had he seen his picture?"

"He regrets it to this very day that he has not done so, having been, then, at the University of Leyden to prepare himself for his final examination in Law. It must have been despair at the loss of his fiancée that afterwards drove him away from his country."

"And do you believe a phlegmatic Dutchman capable of such passionate love?"

"Je dense!" exclaimed the physician, "such a bêtise may happen to everybody – Dutchman or Eskimo – once. But he to whom it happens a second time, is a fool, as Heine says maliciously. But never mind, Fräulein Elsa! we are perfectly safe now in unromantic America where every sentimental folly bleeds to death in no time. And Van Der Bosch, too, has, no doubt, long ago recovered from

his violent grief, at least he spoke to me about his little wife in Colorado and how glad he will be to see her again. — But just look, how, with his little deep-set eyes, he is devouring the East-Indian who does not in the least condescend to notice him. And now comes the best of all! Van Der Bosch is pouncing upon his prey and begins a conversation in — Dutch, of course. — But Mynheer Van Der Velten does not seem to be agreeably affected by the sounds of his pretended mother-tongue. He is writhing and kicking like an ensnared vulture. I must go immediately and ask my informer how he was pleased with the accent of his country-man."

And he hastened to the front-parlor, while Elsa, absentmindedly, followed him with her eyes.

Soon afterwards the physician returned

and told the girl triumphantly that his new friend found the East-Indians Dutch pronunciation a foreign one, and that he would surely make inquiries about that Slavonic musician and try to get his photograph as soon as he will reach Amsterdam."

"But may I ask," Elsa said after a pause, "what has inspired you with such a zeal in an affair that personally concerns you so little?"

How it would have warmed her heart if anybody had expressed some anxiety on her own account, although in this case it would have been entirely superfluous.

But the physician responded honestly:

"Why, dear me! as if the matter was not self-evident. — Because I want to prevent my friend, Mrs. Bittersweet, from compromising herself still more with this strange adventurer

than she has already done. He would not be the first who has power enough over her to draw from her her purse and — worse, perhaps, and who, upon his final disappearance, leaves behind him an odor of sulphur and brimstone.

"And then, for a time, her other friends have to be stinted and starved; the Sunday afternoon coffee becomes weaker, the bottles of red-wine lighter, the invitations more and more scarce. Not that Mrs. Bittersweet thus desired or arranged it, nay — she may not even be aware of it: for you know how much she is under the guardianship of her housekeeper. — And Anna is never at rest until she has somewhat repaired such damage."

"I wish that Mrs. Bittersweet had more such good friends," Elsa said softly, casting down her eyes to prevent two rising tears from falling.

The doctor bowed awkwardly as if the compliment was meant for him – and not for Mrs. Bittersweets faithful servant. –

Chapter XII

It was past midnight when Elsa got home accompanied by Mrs. Bittersweet and Dr. Oldenberg. The latter had delayed his departure intentionally in order to deprive the East-Indian of the opportunity of making himself indispensable.

When Elsa had turned up the gas, she noticed on her table a letter which had come for her in the course of evening.

For a moment her heart beat with joyful expectation, thinking the letter would bring her the long expected tidings from her mother. At a second glance, however, she recognized the American stamp and an unknown hand

writing. — She opened the letter and looked first at the beginning and then at the signature. — How strange! "My much respected Fräulein," was the address in German, and "Yours most devotedly, Thomas Rieken" was the ending. This, if she rightly recollected, was the name of her fellow-traveller from Germany, who, she thought, had entirely overlooked and neglected her and who, for that reason, was the last man on earth, from whom she would have expected a letter and an offer of marriage, as she found it to be after she had read the letter.

With a doubtful future before him, he said, he had not dared to reveal to her the state of his feelings on the steamer. —

But on New-Year's day he had been appointed preacher of a German church at Milwaukee, and after that it was his first

concern to make inquiries about her whereabouts.

Liska Krakowitza, however, who had been playing in Milwaukee, claimed not to know anything about Miss Heller – except that she had gone to Philadelphia. Then he had written to Mr. Cornelius and, by return mail, he had received her address.

The letter had slipped from her hand, while a deep blush spread over her face.

Liska had concealed her whereabouts from an honest man and suitor, and Mr. Cornelius had promptly set him on her track. – Was the former love and the latter indifference? – – Oh, how hard it was to thoroughly understand people's motives of action.

Weary and exhausted Elsa prepared for going to bed, but not until she had smoothed the letter carefully and put it away in her

desk. She did not doubt for a moment that she would refuse Mr. Pickens's honorable offer. But why had she to do so? Did she not esteem Mr. Picken very highly, and was her heart not free to choose? —

Uncertain and in discord with herself she finally turned out the gas and went to bed, and in spite of the feverish condition of her nerves she was soon overpowered by sleep. She did not know how long she had been slumbering, nor whether she was waking or dreaming when it suddenly appeared to her as if her fore-head had become transparent and that she was seeing herself lying in bed with closed eyes.

Everything in the room was unchanged, except a brilliant apparition that stood at the head of the bed in the magic gleam of the moon-beams. It was the beloved

form of her mother, dressed in a black cotton
cotton dress with white dots, such as Elsa
remembered from her early childhood. — The delic-
ate countenance, too, was in harmony with
those happier times, and not yet so care-
worn and furrowed as in later years.

"My child," she said with a soft, natural
voice, "why dost thou waste thy beautiful
youth in brooding and weeping? Be comforted,
for ere the year is half over he will lie at thy
feet."

"Who?" the girl exclaimed breathlessly, "there is
none in this city who cares for me."

"Hope and trust in the omnipotence of youth,"
replied the apparition, "and do not look for
blossoms on old decaying trees. Thou wilt see
him again and be happy ever afterwards."

Elsa's heart beat violently, filled with heav-
enly joy. She turned on her bed restlessly

and tried to collect her thoughts for a last and all comprising question. But when she opened her eyes and stretched forth her arms toward the beloved prophetess, the latter had disappeared and on the place where she had stood, only a stray morn-beam died away in the grey dawn.

The girl sprang up and looked behind the chest of drawers and the window curtains. Then she opened the door and listened attentively into the quiet hall; in the distance a clock struck five.

"My mother is dead," Elsa said returning to her room; "how else could she have come to me."

And gently sobbing she knelt down before her bed and buried her head in the pillow.

After having, for a while, wept with suppressed emotion, Elsa got up to light the gas-jet and to dress herself. Then she opened the drawer

of her writing-desk and took from it a little album. She fixed a long, loving look upon her mother's face which, from her widow's crape, smiled upon her sadly.

The girl gazed long and fixedly, as if spell-bound, upon the dear likeness, from which shone forth the sorrow of the wife and the anguish of the mother. — And Elsa's tears gushed forth anew, for the whole past, in ever changing scenes, seemed to pass before her mind's eye, and her soul was torn with self-reproaches, as is ever the case when our dearest ones have been taken from us.

And if her beloved was really gone, as Elsa dared not doubt for a moment, then she was henceforth the only support of her younger sisters, who, without the help of the eldest, would be exposed to all the cruel sufferings of life without a mother's love and care. — There

was no time, then, for the luxury of weeping in fretful inactivity. For what would become of her sisters if she were to make herself ill?

"No, no! anything sooner than be unable to work," she exclaimed, springing up. "I will be very quiet and composed, and think of nothing but how to increase my income and reduce my expenses. This very week will I call on Mrs. Decker and ask her to get me some more pupils. — I would not trouble her on my own account, yet I have no right to let others suffer if I can help it."

After this resolution Elsa became somewhat calmer. She turned the light up and sat down to communicate her fears to her fatherly friend, the Professor, whom she had told some months previous all about her experiences during her voyage.

With nervous haste her pen moved over

the sheet of paper, until the bright light of day peeped through the curtains, and the girl heard someone walk softly down-stairs. Then she lay down once more on her bed to refresh her burning eyes with a belated slumber. — —

After her intended visit at Mrs. Hecker's Elsa, for some days, went about with introverted eyes as if in a dream, answered automatically if someone asked her a question and avoided meeting Mrs. Bittersweet and her daughter whenever she could do so without being impolite. —

And when the post-man, one morning, handed her a letter with a European stamp and a black seal, Elsa received it resignedly with down-cast eyes.

"My mother is dead," she answered to the questioning look of Mrs. Bittersweet; "please do not tell anybody and bear with me a

few days."

After that she rushed away, but Mrs. Bittersweet caught her by the arm with a look of consternation.

"By all means read your letter first!" she said urgingly; "the mournful message may concern a more distant relative."

But Elsa shook her head in silence and staggered up to her room. Her dream had been more real to her than what other people would have called reality. — — —

When the bereaved girl made her appearance again, she was so pale and thin that Anna clasped her hands in amazement.

"How strange you look!" she exclaimed with her usual directness, "and how much has happened since you have been in bed! But, perhaps, you do not yet know that the Dutchman has lodged himself in the second story the day

before yesterday?" And she looked at Elsa furtively to see what impression this news would make upon her.

"Will he stay here?" the girl asked breathlessly and her knees shaking so violently that she had to sit down on the steps.

"To be sure, he will!" Anna replied with a bitter laugh. "He has taken pains enough to become master of Miss Bittersweet. For, to tell the truth, she was very much afraid of you and would fain have the arrangement postponed, but he knew how to get so completely round Minnie by turning her head with the promise to make of her a great musician that now he can twist mother and daughter round his finger."

"And are you so sure of all that, Anna?"

"Why, of course I am!" Anna ejaculated, raising herself from the steps, the carpet of which she was cleaning with tea-leaves.

"Mrs. Bittersweet has promised to give me a dollar more a week, otherwise I should not have given my consent. But crazy as they both are--"

Elsa rose to her feet, but she had to take hold of the banister, so as not to fall.

"Enough, Anna, and more than enough! Tell your mistress that I have gone out to look for a room." And without waiting for an answer she went up-stairs again to put on her hat and jacket and rushed out of the house.

Chapter XIII.

In the street Elsa very unpleasantly felt the humid, foggy air, and a sharp wind that took away her breath and chilled her to the marrow of her bones. She drew her cloak closer about her shoulders and hastened on as if persecuted by the furies.

She had not ventured a single time to lift

her head, from fear that the Dutchman might lurk behind the window curtains and fast upon his offensive gaze. But when she knew herself to be out of sight, she moderated her pace and breathed more freely. And not until then did she become aware of the fact that a fine drizzle was coming down and that the pavement was covered with a crust of ice.

In this moment, however, she felt nothing but the insult done her by Mrs. Bittersweet. But what could she do, and how find a suitable room in a strange place?

Thinking over all these unpleasant things Elsa, unconsciously, had turned into Locust-Street where Dr. Oldenberg had his office.

Quickly resolved she went up the steps and rang the door bell. The doctor's landlady, she knew, had yet some unoccupied rooms, and her place would have been quite suitable, being not too

far from Mrs. Harrison's where, until now, Else had taken her meals, except the few last days when Tommie, the errand girl at Mrs. Bittersweet's, had supplied her with some tea and toast.

The girl would not begin her researches, however, without seeking a friend's advice, and as it was the doctor's consultation hour, she could hardly have chosen a better time.

She sent in her name by the colored boy, and a few moments later the physician appeared in the door of his room and, with a troubled expression on his face, invited her in.

Else could not help becoming somewhat embarrassed herself in making the doctor acquainted with the object of her calling.

When she had finished, Dr. Oldenberg seemed still more uneasy and, absentmindedly, took up a stray match from the little round marble table which stood between them.

Elsa felt more and more as if she would like to disappear like a sunbeam, or to be carried off through the air by a good natured swan.

At last the man's embarrassment became so oppressive for Elsa that she resolved to repair her mistake at once, if it should prove to be one that she had counted the doctor among her friends.

So she commenced to speak of the vacant rooms in the house as an accessory concern, having only come, she said, to ask Dr. Oldenby's advice about boarding places in general.

Whether the physician was sharp enough to see that this was only a subterfuge, was now indifferent to her; enough that he regained his composure at once and invited her with great civility to sit down on the sofa.

Seating himself in an arm-chair covered with serge of rusty black, he began to display

his extensive knowledge of bachelor life, illustrated by incidents of his own experience.

In one of the boarding houses the beef-steaks were too tough, in another the beds too hard, a third was not properly heated, the land-lady of a fourth had been too quarrelsome, etc. And with all that, there was little prospect of finding a room in any of them now in the depth of winter.

So his advice to Elsa would be to stay at Mrs. Bittersweets', without his having asked a single question why she wanted to leave her so suddenly. Nor did Elsa feel inclined to offer an explanation that she was not asked for. She took her departure with a mien of indifference that seemed so genuine that even a less selfish person than Dr. Ahlenberg would hardly have noticed the deep dejection that was in her heart.

The physician whom she had considered so impulsive having been so stiff and reserved with her, Elsa drew her conclusions as to what would be the result of her asking for more advice from other people. She therefore simply explored the ground of that part of Philadelphia which was considered the only genteel quarter where a teacher could live – that, namely, between sixth and Spruce Streets, and not below tenth or ninth.

Having so little choice, however, Elsa was not successful; after a few hours of fruitless effort she again was at her starting-point.

No wonder that she began to realize what would be the unfortunate consequences of her desperate undertaking – the more so as she was already feeling homesick for her little quiet cell at Mrs. Bittersweets.

Nevertheless she was firmly decided not to

return there, be the consequences whatever they might.

But what should, what dared she do if she had not found a shelter at nightfall? — Why she would go to Mrs. Harrison's and ask that kind-hearted lady to let her sleep on the leather sofa of the dining room if it was not already occupied by one of her daughters.

At all events Elsa thought it wise to prepare herself for a refusal, considering all the trials she had already undergone.

Thus armed she rang the bell at Mrs. Harrison's, more faintly by far, than she had done in the morning at Dr. Oldenberg's. —

Mrs. Harrison made her appearance the quicker as she had understood that the German girl had been sick for several days, without wishing any meals to be sent to her, even if it should have been convenient to do so.

"What an undertaking to go out in such weather," said the white-haired old lady, pointing Elsa to a seat in the parlor.

But Elsa felt so faint that she could hardly answer and ventured to ask, first of all, for a cup of tea. — Then she blushed excessively, considering the late hour of the afternoon and felt greatly relieved when Mrs. Harrison, with much less ado than Mrs. Bittersweet's housekeeper should have made under similar circumstances, left the room smilingly.

She soon returned with a servant, bearing a little tea-tray; and when Elsa had refreshed herself she told Mrs. Harrison about her trouble.

"Stop, Miss Heller!" the lady interrupted gently, "a room in my own house has of late been vacated — a hall-room, though, but otherwise pleasant. May I show it to you?"

Elsa shook her head and only asked whether

the little room could be at her disposal in about an hour. Mrs. Harrison answered in the affirmative, and Elsa went away to pack her trunk before darkness should set in.

It was only a short way to Mrs. Bittersweet's, yet the girl's heart was beating so violently as if she was led to a place of execution, from fear of meeting Mrs. Bittersweet or the Dutchman. But how glad she was to hear from Emmie, the errand-girl, that both had gone to the Matinée! -

When Elsa had finished her packing, she quietly went down stairs, at the foot of which she was accosted by Anna, who had apparently been waiting for her.

Elsa handed her the money for the weeks rent and noticing Anna's business mien, she could not help smiling.

"Serves her right," the servant grumbled,

"at this time of the year she may long look out for another lodger. And it would serve you also right, Miss Heller, if you did not find your new home comfortable. I liked you very much, and do not mind telling you so, now," and saying this, Anna took hold of the corner of her apron to wipe her eyes. "You make ten times less trouble than American ladies do", she then continued, "and who knows what follies Mrs. Bittersweet will commit when she no longer needs to be afraid of you. — It is interesting what a fuss she makes over that Dutchman. And let him find out first which of the two suits him the best — the old or the young one — Well, I will say nothing more, Miss Heller, but I am sure, you soon or later will remember my words. — May the good God protect you! And now nothing more; for you see we are busy, and —

myself have no time to lose, as there is yet a duck to be roasted for supper. Yes, indeed, such is the good time they are now having, and I do not think that I shall be able to stand it."

Anna, then, descended groaning to the basement, while Elsa went away, forgetting entirely to leave a friendly greeting for Mrs. Bittersweet. Neither did she think of this omission, until after supper, when she was sitting alone in her cheerless room.

Soon afterwards she was startled by a light knock at the door, and on opening, she saw, in the dim light of the hall, a veiled figure which, according to height and outline, could be no other but Mrs. Bittersweet.

Elsa was as yet too bewildered after all the occurrences of the day to be greatly surprised by this unexpected visitor. She returned the visitor's salute mechanically and showed her to the

only chair in the scantily furnished room, she herself sitting down on the edge of her bed, after having turned up the gas-light. —

"I had no peace of mind," said Mrs. Bitter-sweet with a low voice and down-cast eyes, "before I knew on what pillow you would lay your obstinate little head to-night. At the same time I wanted to return to you two dollars your the four you had given to Anna, for your week is only half over. But dear me! I have forgotten my purse again. Such care-lessness is indeed unpardonable, even if one's name is Bittersweet. Yet the money is not lost to you, my dear Miss Heller, for you know that you were more to me than a lodger and — as I hope — you will be so again, after this our little misunderstanding has been explained.

"Oh, pshaw! to be so hot and hasty when

one intends nothing but your own good. But you will find it out yourself some day how unworthy and unfounded is the suspicion which you have against the most noble-minded man in the world. — Well, yes, I will be silent! And I am very glad indeed that you found a shelter at good Mrs. Harrison's. For that there is no dependence on our German friends, you have yourself experienced this morning. Hie, hie! — How could you believe for a moment that Dr. Adenberg would not bestir himself in your behalf, without having first ascertained what I, his old friend, would say in regard to the matter. And I can very well imagine what an embarrassed face he made, hie, hie! But in spite of all that he thinks the world of you!"

Elsa, who had blushed up to her very temples from shame and indignation, started

up from the bed. – Mrs. Bittersweet rose at the same time and, with gentle force, pressed the girl down again.

"How this little pot of a head is boiling over again!" she exclaimed, trying to remove the girl's hands from her glowing face. Yet Elsa, with quivering lips, took the word from the widow's mouth:

"Tell me first of all, how Dr. Olsenberg, whom I always regarded to be a gentleman – –"

"Which he truly is," interrupted Mrs. Bittersweet on her part. "But mark, before everything else, must lie, and in order to be able to do that, one must be prudent – that is, if one is not called Mrs. Bittersweet. For we daughters of Eve, from times immemorial, have had the privilege of committing follies. But you, Miss Heller, have certainly renounced this privilege, and Dr. Olsenberg would have

acted quite differently to you if he had had the courage. For although he cares little or nothing for me personally, he would not like to lose my Sunday-afternoon coffee - and - some other conveniences. I know my Sappheirner.[1])

"You are, perhaps, astonished how well I am informed in the matter; but you may imagine when I came home and was told by Anna -"

Mrs. Bittersweet stopped abruptly, coughed a little and then resumed, without having even once looked the girl in the face:

"In short, I have run about for you everywhere, until I also came to Dr. Oldenberg. But be calm, my child! When you have lived a little longer in this country you will lose this troublesome sensitiveness and enjoy yourself like other people, whenever you

[1]) A familiar quotation from Schiller's Wallenstein.

may find an occasion. At all events I count upon your going with us next week to the great masquerade ball."

Elsa had tried hard to contain herself during the long talk of Mrs. Bittersweet, the latter's last remark, however, caused her again to blush with indignation.

"You seem to have forgotten, Mrs. Bittersweet," she said with quivering lips, "that only recently the heaviest loss in the world has come upon me——"

She faltered and then stopped short—unable to pronounce the sacred name of mother before this giddy, though well-meaning woman.

"Why, yes," rejoined Mrs. Bittersweet, without heeding Elsa's reproachful tone, "it is quite right to love one's parents and to honor their memory. But life is short, and to mourn away one's youth is foolish. We

all must die sometime, but it is best to think about such things as little as possible and to enjoy what fate may bring us as long as we can."

Several times Elsa opened and again closed her lips as if she were going to say something, yet she was like one paralized, on hearing her visitor give such words to such very worldly views. But although her lips were silent, there lay a protest on her darkened brows that was more eloquent than words, for those who could have understood it.

Mrs. Bittersweet, though not of an observating disposition, surmised from Elsa's silence that she had presumed too far. She moved uneasily on her chair and began to button her cloak with nervous haste.

"It is rather cold, dear Miss Heller," she said rising. "But why do you have no fire?

th, a hall room, I see; yet youth can easily keep warm from its inward fire. Sleep well, then, my child! and do not forget to call on us as soon as possible."

With these words she gave Elsa her hand and would also have embraced her if the girl had not recoiled instinctively.

Chapter XIX.

Elsa was now so utterly alone in the world as she never had been before; and looking about her bare room she felt with satisfaction that her dreary surroundings were a true likeness of her orphaned heart.

There was no curtain at the window, no picture upon the wall, no globe on the gas-jet — nothing indicative of comfort, except a large, although cracked looking-glass which, in a rickety frame, was

fastened to the chest of drawers.

But the girl would have thought it very wrong to go to the least expense in the embellishment of her little chamber.

Immediately after having received the sad news of her mother's death she began corresponding with Marie, the eldest of her sisters, who was being educated for a teacher in an institute at Karlsruhe, for which purpose Elsa had sent her all her available earnings. The younger sisters were sheltered, for the present, in the house of their uncle and guardian in a little country-town.

Elsa had cheerfully declared herself willing to make every possible sacrifice, without even once thinking of her own future, of the long summer-months that were drawing near.

In vain had Mrs. Stecher expostulated

with Elsa in regard to these matters. The girl was deaf to all entreaties regarding her own personal interests, although very grateful to that noble-minded lady, to whom alone she could unburden her heart unreservedly.

Meanwhile spring had announced its arrival, if spring may be called a season in a country where winter and summer follow each other so closely that the short interval is nothing but a recess between the two.—

It was in the first half of May, and the turf and trees in the open squares had donned their green robes, in spite of the yet chilly air and of occasional wind-storms.— Elsa, weakened in body and wholly unstrung, began more and more to think of Lioba and to long for her presence.

The deep sorrow for her departed mother and the keen self reproaches for having

allowed that beloved form to be somewhat
put aside for a younger and fairer one, had,
for a time, taken off Elsa's thoughts from
the actress. Liska's letters, moreover, had
constantly become shorter and less frequent,
and never once contained one of those
sympathetic words that can never be feigned,
but must spring spontaneously from the
innermost recesses of the heart.

But she struggled hard to see in all this
not her friend but only the artist upon
whom so many demands were made.
Nor could she help thinking with delight
that Liska, after a prolonged starring-tour
in the West, would soon return to the East,
and was, perhaps, already on her way. —

And with all this something else had
occurred during the latter days of April which
occupied her thoughts and feelings more

than Elsa could well forgive herself. Frau Medicinalrath Wilden, her motherly friend in Karlsruhe, had written her a long and sympathising letter. She first commended with much delicacy and tenderness on the excellent qualities of Elsa's mother. At the end of her letter she said that, after waiting long and anxiously for news from her son, she had at last heard from him. He had been in those Western border lands where the postal service is far from perfect, where one's undivided attention is required to ward off the dangers threatening both life and property. Having left those inhospitable regions, however, he was intending, ere long, to return to the East.

So he was still living, ~~healthy~~ safe and sound, and Elsa felt as if her vanishing youth had come back to her! For was

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not Heinrich Wilden the only being on this mighty continent whom she had known in her native country! And so he might have long forgotten her, she still could ask his pardon for things she never would forget as long as she lived. She still could claim the title of friend and sister and speak to him about his mother and the dear fatherland. — —

But at the same time she learned the discouraging news that Wilden had called at his former boarding-house in Philadelphia, but that he had been in such a hurry as neither to listen to what his landlady was going to tell him about his countrywoman, nor had he left an address. All that could be gathered from his excited talk was, that he was on his way to New-York. — —

Could he possibly have sailed for Germany without her having had a chance to exchange with him a single word or greeting? —

While the girl was yet brooding over these matters, Liska, one evening at dusk, suddenly entered Elsa's room. — She was excited and preoccupied, and Elsa, in spite of her great joy, could not help noticing it.

Oh, it was of no account, the actress explained smilingly, nothing but her disappointment that her hopes of playing at least once in Philadelphia, her native city, were again frustrated, although she could not as yet explain the reasons.

Liska did not stay long and took her leave promising to come the next day for a longer visit.

Elsa was overjoyed at this prospect. She could hardly await the hour which

would again procure for her the presence of the charming creature.

Liska came as early as two o'clock the following afternoon and invited Elsa for an excursion to Fairmount Park.

The lonely girl assented cheerfully. She quickly exchanged her shabby black dress for a newer one, and soon the park lay spread out before their eyes in the freshest hues of spring green.

The weather being uncommonly mild that day, the friends sat down on a rustic bench on an elevation which Liska said had been her favorite seat in the days of her childhood.

After that she fell into a deep reverie from which she did not rouse herself until her ear was caught by some childrens voices in the distance.

"But you have paid me no compliments as yet in regard to my attire!" she then said to her companion. "Do you not like this dark-red velvet as well as my fur-trimmed winter suit? Mrs. Bittersweet nearly got into hysterics at sight of it. A propos, you sometimes go to see her, I suppose? — When the Dutchman is not at home, you say? — Well, I cannot blame you. If people want to compromise themselves, they should, at least, get better pay for it than foolish Mrs. Bittersweet. Besides you know that I had my own secret plans in regard to your future. — How is Mr. Pomelius? — —. Well, well, you need not blush like that! I know that you are not indifferent to him; for Mrs. Bittersweet is quite jealous of you. If he were free — —."

"Then he is not?" Elsa exclaimed with some surprise.

"Not legally," rejoined the other quietly. "The separation could not be made final as yet, as neither of the parties is willing to relinquish its claim on the child. Monsieur le papa has been too proud to claim his right, not wanting to parade his disgrace before the court of justice. Nor is he inclined to give up his wife's marriage portion. To be sure the ten hundred dollars are not worth speaking of, yet the ideas of value are relative, and Mr. Cornelius does not belong to that class of men who, in the full enjoyment of strength and youth, make little of material interests."

"But you do not wish to intimate, that such an honorable man as Mr. Cornelius would allow himself to be influenced

by pecuniary motives?"

"Oh, according to his and his sister's ideas not at all! For nothing creates such delusions as self-interest, not even love. He certainly believes himself to act entirely in the interest of his little daughter and thus he is not losing in self-respect."

"All this makes the matter very different from what I supposed it to be," Elsa said after a wondering pause. "They always say and write in Germany that money is of little concern here in the marriage question — "

"Tempi passati! Tempi passati!" interrupted the actress in her gracefully imperious manner. "at least in this part of America which adopts European customs daily. Out West things are as yet otherwise; there they ought to have sent your giant Goliath in his younger years — I mean Dr. Ohnsorg — and

perhaps they would have made a man of him!"

"Why, you know him, too?" exclaimed Elsa in growing surprise.

Liska laughed, a blush spreading over her face.

"Has Mrs. Bittersweet never hinted to you—? But no matter! I know that selfish philistine. Parturiunt montes — nascetur — or how does that Latin proverb run about the mountains in labor that bring forth nothing but a ridiculous little mouse. Much ado and little wool, say the Germans — and for such people there is no better tonic than the wild West with its danger and hardships. In one hand the hoe and in the other a pistol — few words and great deeds — One must have seen it ~~to~~ in order to know what a real man is capable of!"

"You seem to have a great liking

for the West!" Elsa gazed at me wonderingly.

"To be sure, I have! For there alone all men as yet able to command a woman's interest - true men, equally great and savage in loving in loving or hating, and not as yet weakened by the night-cap morals of quakers and puritans — men who are capable of squandering in a single hour the earning of years, or to put them on the bosom of their lady-love in shape of a diamond pin. — I could tell you tales, Simplicia, especially of one who followed me from Mexico to Colorado and thence to California — — "

"And why are you hesitating?"

"Because you have such rigorous ideas that you might hate me if you would know more — if you would know all about me. For who, like you, has never experienced the power of love — — "

"And are you so sure of that?" interrupted Else, coloring up to her temples.

Liska eyed her a moment with astonishment, while the corners of her little mouth were twitching suspiciously.

"To be sure," she then replied with an effort at seriousness, "still waters are deep. Is it possible that I never really understood you, Else, and that you have kept from me the secret—"

"I have kept from you nothing that one could reasonably be expected to tell. Yet that I too have had my dreams——"

"Like all German maidens," the artist interrupted with a smile.

"All right, Liska, like all German maidens then! And my dreams were just as unsubstantial as they generally are at an early time of life. I might, perhaps, have forgotten them long ago if they had not taken

a shape which even now ~~is~~ sometimes causes my heart to beat; for I have made myself guilty of a great wrong."

Liska started up from the bench, but sank back again with a blank expression on her face.

"Can it be true, Elsa, you should — —? But no, it is not possible! No fault is recorded as yet on this pure fore-head, and I will trust my eyes more than my ears."

"It depends on what one regards as wrong."

"Oh, I see! You mean to say that one can just as well do too little as too much in affairs of the heart, and I am sure the former must have been your own case. You have loved too wisely and deliberately, and afterwards you have repented of your rigor. Or is it not so, Simplicia?"

"Indeed, it is," replied the girl softly, "and

as I soon may need your advice as to how far one may venture in trying to make up for such offences, without compromising one's honor and dignity — "

"Well, well, tell me your love-affair! I have time enough to listen to it even though it should take several hours." And she leant back gracefully in the roughly joined bench pulled her jacket round her shoulders, her white steamhat over her fore-head and then looked round expectantly.

Elsa, meanwhile, had made herself comfortable in the opposite corner, and after having drawn a deep sigh, she began her tale:

Chapter XV.

"Once upon a time there was a man — a young man — and his name was — but never mind that, as it has nothing to

do with the matter. He was located for a time in a little country-town, where, though young in years, he had been entrusted by his superiors to superintend the building of a bridge. In order to somewhat beguile the ennui of a winter-sojourn in the country, he joined a dancing class which a noble-man in reduced circumstances used to arrange in the towns every year.

"The young engineer was an excellent dancer who scarcely needed further instruction, and the girls almost quarrelled over him, with the exception of one — and she was just the one for whom he cared the most.

"She was a clergyman's daughter from a neighboring village, on a visit at her uncle's the dean of the little town, and she likewise was an excellent dancer. Only quadrille and française she had still to learn,

in the meanwhile helping the less skilful ones, especially in the ladies-dances.

" The young handsome engineer, however, who was lionized and adored by all the young ladies she never once asked for a dance, although he might be standing next to her.

" But why did she avoid conferring upon him this little favor, as though it were a great one? Why did she look so indignant and even appear to overlook him, when, in spite of all, he constantly asked her to dance with him, two-three times an evening, and would have begged for still more - if he had dared? Why did she hardly ever speak to him, when in the presence of the other young gentlemen she was so full of life?"

" Why?" completed Lisha mockingly, " because you Germans are all fools - and this from the times of Siegfried the dragon-killer

who needed a full year until, for the first time, he could lay eyes on his beloved one, although living with her under one roof — just as if life lasted for ever.

"Yes, I know, you Americans are much more practical in such matters; you never lose sight of your goal, because love with you is not the over-whelming feeling that dims one's eyes, as it does ours. And the girl in question was in matters of the heart even ~~younger~~ more timid than others of her age. I believe that in spite of her seventeen years she had never had a thought of matrimony; for her mother, too, had been thirty when she married. And that period was very distant, thought the girl, and many a drop of water might run down the Rhine before it came.

"At all events she should, first of all, have

a great deal to learn — half a dozen languages at least, especially Latin and Greek; for who would care to have an ignorant village girl for a wife? Certainly not he whom she, at that time, considered the ideal of manliness."

"An old, pedantic professor — was not he that indeed, Simplicia? But they, too, will not demand Latin and Greek on the part of the woman they want to marry, as you may have found out yourself, since then."

Elsa smiled somewhat sadly and then continued her story.

"Then it happened that toward the end of the course of dancing lessons the members had a little ball, and for the first time in her life the young girl was to wear a white dress. Her aunt had made it over for her from one of her own ball-dresses. Elsa, however — " the girl faltered blushing deeply,

but collecting herself immediately she continued with a smile:

"Be it so; for you must have guessed a long time ago who that foolish girl was, and so she may now speak for herself.

"They said that I looked my best that evening and in spite of the prejudice, they have in small places against reddish hair, little there was but little lacking that I became the queen of the ball, this little, however, was something gigantic, i.e. the envy and jealousy of the girls of the town against me who was a stranger.

"To this was added my own reserved bearing, the reason of which was that I considered myself treated disrespectfully. What I was indignant at was that my most ardent admirer, the young engineer, had asked me to dance with him for the fourth time and that, naturally, I felt obliged to refuse

him before everybody.

"After this he immediately left the large hall where the dancing had taken place, and did not put in his appearance again for the rest of the evening. And for me, too, the merry-making had ~~taken place~~ come to a sudden end; for I was attacked by everybody with malicious questions or well meant rebukes — and even my aunt pronounced my behavior as something entirely unheard of.

"But you yourself have told me once that at a ball one must not dance more than three times with a gentleman without being engaged to him" I replied pitiously; for the hard words of my relative had brought the tears to my eyes.

"My aunt eyed me with a half compassionate and half roguish glance and, leading me out of the crowd into the dressing room,

she replied with a gentle reproach which I yet seem to hear distinctly:

"What a foolish child you are, Elsa, to take everything so seriously and literally. Why, this little dancing-bout is no ball at all but a private little gathering, and even if it were otherwise, a decent young man who wants to dance a fourth time with a girl, does not need to be treated like a criminal."

"I looked at my aunt askance to see if she had any idea of the tumult of my feelings which her cruel words had called up in me. Yet her intelligent grey eyes were as mild and calm as if she had forgotten a long time ago how young hearts feel, in which the desire for doing what is right and proper, is paramount. I imagined that I had simply stood on my dignity, and in place of that I had made myself guilty of an offence

and had wounded, perhaps, a noble heart. How could I ever redress such wrong?

"I hardly know how I managed in a befitting and unobtrusive manner to take my leave long before the time, of my associates and their mothers, or how I reached home, for even the friendly encouragements of my aunt had no effect upon the uproar of my thoughts which accused and excused each other.

"In a few days there was to be another dancing lesson. During the short time until it took place nothing would occur to my mind as to how I could undo what had happened.

"I thought and thought and at last I imagined I had found it. I would invite the young gentleman to a ladies-dance, and, even twice, if there should be an opportunity, and how could I prove to him more clearly

that I wished to make good my offence!

"He ardently longed for evening — distant as it had seemed — came at last. I had repaired to the hotel already at half past eight o'clock — i.e. half an hour before the time, yet no sooner did I look around for the injured gentleman. You can hardly imagine my despair at the prospect of having to carry the heavy burden of my conscience home again and then about with me — forever so long, probably! — And little was wanting that I did not ask one of the young men of the town whom I regarded as discreet and reliable, as to the whereabouts of the young stranger. — Yes, I was already going to resort to this desperate step when I noticed the profile of a well known curly head behind the glass door of the adjoining room. The young gentleman must have stood there for a long time already and only then, intentionally or unin-

tentionally, have removed the white curtain a little.

"It was just before the beginning of the last ladies-dance.

"Quickly resolved I walked over the whole breadth of the hall through the couples who were already arranged in dancing order, pushed open the door and asked with a haste that put a stop to every further deliberation, if the "Herr Ingenieur" did not wish to take part in the dance.

"" Not to-day, and probably never more," he declared with a mixture of defiance and melancholy, casting down his eyes; and in the flickering light of the candles I saw a peculiar twitching of his mouth.

"" Then accompany me home," I replied quickly, and I do not even know to-day, how such a bold undertaking could have occurred

to me.

"But the countenance of the young man was all at once overspread with a livid glow, and his warm brown eyes shone with a gleam of joy.

"Without adding another word I stepped toward the ward-robe to put on my wraps. The gentleman, meanwhile, waited for me at the foot of the stairs and then followed me with a calm bering into the street, where he walked on my left side, and expecting me to begin the conversation, looked down at me with sparkling eyes; for he over-towered me by almost a head.

"But when I noticed his now strangely excited mien I began without forethought and intention to talk to him in a very different manner from what I had intended.

"I only wanted to tell him, I said, that my conduct at our little party was the result

of a misunderstanding. I had been told — and this was probably the first conscious lie of which I made myself guilty that he had boasted of his power gaining the good will of my lady he chose. And in order to publicly reprove him I felt myself called upon to punish his presumption. But when I afterwards understood that all was intended merely to tease and to coerce me, I felt sorry to have taken the matter so tragically. Thus I made up my mind to repair the offense if there should have been any and it was his own fault that I had to do now without witnesses what I would have liked to do before everybody's eyes.

"The young man seemed unable to utter a word after this declaration, nor had I counted upon his doing so; for I strode in such a feverish haste through the badly lit streets that my companion could hardly follow me.

"But when we, at last, turned by the church into the broad market-place, he, all of a sudden, caught me convulsively by the arm, in order to make me stand still. For behind the opposite corner of the church the parsonage already came into view.

"Not a single window was bright, not a soul seemed to be waiting for my return; for my notoriously shy behavior to all the young representatives of the male sex may have lulled to sleep my relatives' scruples in regard to my manners and morals.

"And now I came home in the pitch-dark night, accompanied by a man, as if all of a sudden I had changed rôles with our cook or waiting maid.

"I felt my face flush over with a burning glow and my heart beat yet more violently in my breast than it had done before. I tried

to tear myself away and take flight without caring that behind the large fountain in the middle of the market-place the dark outlines of some figures became visible.

"'For heaven's sake, let me go!' I exclaimed excitedly; and in pulling to and fro we had – I do not know how! – constantly drawn nearer the fountain.

"'Indeed?' he replied in a subdued voice through which, nevertheless, a fierce irony was audible. 'At first nothing but coldness and contempt for my most ardent vows, and after you have well-nigh brought me to despair, you want to send me off with empty words without proving to me by a single deed that I do not seem to you indifferent or even despicable.' And he pressed my hands so hard that I felt like crying out from pain and rage.

"'Is it not enough, then!' I exclaimed

indignantly, "that I have allowed you to escort me home? Or do you believe that this permission coming from a girl like I am, was only a trifle?"

"'Oh, a very great favor, to be sure!" he replied laughing and without letting go my hands. "I have already escorted every one of the ladies of the dancing class home, and I might have taken great liberties with them if I had been so inclined."

"He was going to add still more, yet my anger forced me to cut short his speech.

"'Why, then you imagine, perhaps, that you have conferred a great favor upon me?" I cried, and tried again to tear myself away from him.

"'The favor," he replied with sparkling eyes, "to quietly allow you to finish your talk instead of, once for all, to speak to you about myself and

to punish you with a certain kiss for your bad behavior."

"And in order to confirm these audacious words by the deed, he let go my hands to put his arms around my waist.

"My rage at this unheard of insult, as I considered at that time the incomprehensible behavior of the young man, gave me the strength of a giantess. With a single jerk I had withdrawn myself from his embrace, and in doing so I had thrown him so violently against the carved stone-enclosure of the market-fountain that I saw him stagger and with a suppressed curse or cry of pain fall to the ground.

"Almost void of my senses, and without looking about, I flew toward the parsonage. It seemed to me as if over me in the church steeple the alarm-bell was ringing and as if all the people in the surrounding houses were

looking out of the windows which, of course, was only a spook of my excited senses.

"When I, then, had unlocked the door and on entering the house dared to cast a furtive glance toward the market-place, it seemed to me as if the victim of my cruelty was still lying on the ground and as if several figures were bending over him and whispering to each other.

"'He is in a swoon,' said the one, 'and has a bloody,' another voice. 'It is coming from the mouth!' No, from the nose!' — "Tortured with remorse I was about to return to the fountain, no matter what might come of it.

"But then it seemed to me as if the shapeless human evil was unravelling and as if the one lying on the ground had staggered to his feet, or had been taken up and led away by

the others. And while I, racked with despair and anxiety, was staring at the slowly moving gown perplexed as to whether I should follow or not, they had gradually disappeared in the shadows of the houses. I stood alone with my repentance and sorrow, my cowardice and my consciousness of guilt. And yet, at the same time, I felt in the depth of my heart that I could impossibly have acted otherwise and that I should have to do the same thing again under like circumstances, even if, in doing so, I would become a murderess. You are listening, Lisa?"

"Why, of course," replied the actress, turning round. "What makes you ask such a question?"

"It seemed to me as if I had heard you yawning, nor would I have taken it amiss from you; for what does an American woman understand of such——"

"Subtleties of feeling," the actress interrupted

laughingly. "You Germans, heaven knows! are a strange people, and many things in your tale would be incomprehensible to me if my grand-mother had not herself been a German. Therefore go on with your tale; for I hope you did not kill the young nurse — sweet foolish child that you are!"

"No indeed! but I felt as if I had done so when I groped my way up to my room, without being stopped and questioned by anybody. Yet you will believe me willingly that, for the whole night, I was not able to close my eyes. I could hardly wait for the morning, little as it hesitated with its approach, for it was already the middle of March, and so the nights were no longer very long.

"I got up very early and went down to the breakfast room long before the time, in hopes of meeting my aunt alone there

yet that very day she seemed to be much later than usual, and at last I had to send the cook, in order to give her notice that I was waiting.

"What I then told her, and in what words you can easily imagine. But the end of my report was the ardent request that my aunt should make inquiries about the young man as soon as possible and then send me home immediately.

"This time the kind sensible woman did not reproach me, but gave me the promise to fulfil my wish as soon as possible. After that she made several inquiries, but one could learn nothing certain as to what had happened to the young engineer on the market place; for since that night the young stranger had never again been seen in the little town. Some said that his

mother — others that he himself had met with an accident, and others again that he had a quarrel with one of his superiors and had been challenged to fight a duel with him.

"In the dancing-class, however, I had been for the last time one that fated evening and already three days afterwards I returned to my parents. — Thus I had escaped every indelicate joke, nor was I forced to feign ignorance and indifference in regard to anything concerning my admirer."

"And that is all you are guilty of, Elsa, and this the end of your story?" Lisha rejoined, after having, a few times, yawned unreservedly. "Why, I expected something far more interesting, something that makes one laugh or shudder." And she opened her beautiful mouth for a new yawn.

"As though it were not enough that

I was the means of turning a promising young man out of his state-career!" Elsa replied plaintively.

"And you can take that so much to heart up to this very day? How do you know whether the hero of your story ever gives a single thought to that occurrence? Yes, I may decidedly assure you of the contrary little as this may be flattering to your vanity."

"This may be true enough, Liska," replied the girl without sensitiveness. "His mother, however, remembers that time all the more painfully."

"You made her acquaintance later, too?"

"Yes, at Karlsruhe, where, as I told you before, we had settled after the death of my father."

"And even his mother does not know what happened to her son that night and

what afterwards became of him?" And Lisha fixed a searching glance upon her friend.

"He had broken his left arm. He requested the surgeon who set it right to keep the matter secret, and when the physician came on the following morning to look after his patient, the latter had disappeared — and now he is in another country; but let us drop the matter."

Elsa, for the first time, had a dim presentiment that even to our best friend one should not tell everything; but it was as yet only an undefined sensation.

"In another country? — that means — America," Lisha declared, rising to her feet, and with a theatrical pose and tragi-comical expression of face she recited Heine's little poem in German:

"They tenderly loved and yet neither

Would venture the other to move;
They met as if hate were between them
And yet were half dying with love.

They parted, and then saw each other
At times in their visions alone;
They had long left this sad life together,
Yet scarcely to either 't was known.*)

*) Sie liebten sich beide, doch keines
Wollt es dem andern gestehn;
Sie blickten sich an so feindlich
Und wollten vor Liebe vergehn.

Sie trennten sich endlich und sahen
Sich nur noch gweilen im Traum;
Sie waren längst gestorben
Und wussten es selber kaum.

"Thou foolish German maiden, thou! All this comes from not knowing how to make use of one's time and opportunities. We Americans are more practical in such matters and therefore I would like to advise you not to miss a new and more certain happiness in pursuit of a phantom. — The once loved youth may be lost to you, but if now a simple-hearted man of middle age appeals you with love, do not reject him in the same manner. You know I have my own little plans in regard to you. — It's a quid pro quo, however, for the confidence you have shown me to-day. I too would like to make a confession to you, which, until now, I had my reasons for withholding. You know the wife of Mr. Cornelius — yes, she has been, so to speak, the best and dearest friend of my youth. The poor woman is

pining away from such great longing for her little daughter, that I gave her the promise to see the child at all events and then report about her to her mother. But as I am no longer on calling terms with the family I have counted on your assistance in the matter."

"Upon my assistance?" Elsa exclaimed in dismay.

"Yes, indeed, for you are on intimate terms with the little girl and, perhaps, you take her out for a walk, sometimes?"

"Only, when Fräulein Jacobine is with us."

"Would they not trust you alone with the child?"

"Perhaps, yet I do not know, how I could ask them to let me do so."

"Not? Listen then! Next Wednesday, that is the day after to-morrow, the child has her-

fourth birth-day. Consequently you go there very early in the afternoon to bring her a present and to ask Mr. Cornelius to let her go out with you for a walk. And I will take care myself that the child's aunt will not force her company upon you." And her eyes took on a demoniacal expression.

"But how could you prevent that?" asked Elsa startled.

"Oh, nothing easier! I feigned letter under an assumed name – with some appointment –"

"And you could do such a thing, Liska?" the girl asked frightened.

"Why not? I have done more desperate things than that." – But then, as if fearing to have gone too far, she took a childlike harmless mien and continued with gentle persuasiveness:

"Don't be foolish, Simplicia, and not over-scrupulous. There are many things in matters

of feeling where the end justifies the means, especially if no injury results from it to anybody."

"But they are so very careful with the child," answered Elsa still hesitating. "Perhaps they are afraid she might be stolen by her mother."

"Very possible! Yet such a thing could not be called stealing; for the child, first of all, belongs to her who has born it."

"Even if she has deprived herself of that right by a profligate behavior?"

"What do you mean to say?" exclaimed Lisbeth with flaming eyes; but trying immediately to soften their expression, she added softly: "But why this splitting of words, my child? where the question is of so simple a nature? It could certainly do no harm to your little darling if I should look at her and ask her some questions."

Elsa was still hesitating; yet so much were her senses under the spell of her fascinating friend that she found no words to refuse her request.

Liska, however, treated the matter as now entirely finished. She jumped up, embraced and kissed the girl and then drew her coaxingly along the shady gravel-walk.

"I have promised to Mrs. Bittersweet to bring you there by four o'clock," she then said consulting her watch. "Yet do not fear; the Dutchwoman shall not dare to molest you any longer. As matters now seem to stand, your meeting him would not be in the interest of the matrimoniously inclined old lady.

Chapter XVI.

Not long afterwards Liska and Elsa were sitting at Mrs. Bittersweets coffee table. This had been moved into the front parlor before the sofa, and the usual "Sonntag-Nachmittag-Klein-Kinder-Bewahr-Anstalts-Kaffeen," as Dr. Oldenburg had babtized the little cups, had been replaced by large round ones of very fine china.

Mrs. Bittersweet made her appearance in yet lighter colors than usual and wore an astounding number of diminutive frizzles on her fore-head. Her movements, her steps were of such youthful vivacity that Liska often looked at her with a smile that was rather satyrical than good-natured.

Mrs. Bittersweet, to be sure, took it for admiration. She tittered to herself like a shy young maiden, rubbed her short hands contentedly with her knotty finger-tips

and frequently pulled at her fine lace-cuffs. Rising suddenly she then addressed herself to the actress, sitting opposite, with the question whether polonaises would again be the fashion for the coming summer.

"Mrs. Bittersweet," answered Liska with comic seriousness, "you must not become too vain. It is too frivolous an example for a young lady daughter."

"Indeed," answered the widow simpering, "it is not for nothing that a second youth is granted us."

"Dotage you want to say," Liska rejoined.

"No, youth, you naughty girl! For does not the polite Frenchman say that woman is not older than she looks!"

"To be sure! But in order to look younger than one is, one must dress older, and especially in darker colors. If we dress in

light ones, we often look more faded than we are, that is like a shriveled lemon in a fresh garland. But no offense, Mrs. Bittersweet, and please hand me the sugar-bowl."

"But you do not mean to say that I am dressed too gaily?" tittered Mrs. Bittersweet, handing to her the object desired. "If Mr. Van der Velden had his way —"

"He would have made a complete fool of you already, that I do not doubt for a moment," completed Liska coldly.

"What, you too are prejudiced against that noble-hearted gentleman?" And with comical despair she glided back into her easy chair.

"How much money have you lent him by this time?" inquired Liska with the mien of a justice.

"I lent him money? For heaven's sake! If you had heard him playing, you would

rather ask how much I have yet to pay him for his incomparable lessons to my daughter. She has made such progress under his direction, I tell you – such progress – he could impossibly have done more for her if he were her own father."

"That I believe you without your taking an oath on it, Mrs. Bittersweet! It is the way of such people, – first they make themselves indispensible and then they turn out the tyrant. If I had had any idea of such a thing – but why think of that now after it is all done! – – But once more – how much money have you lent him and for how much have you gone security?"

"Heavens! who has told you that?"

"It is true then – you have done so already and caused a mortgage to be taken on your house – – "

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Bittersweet coloring up to her temples, "how could you learn all that, when all concerned have promised the utmost silence?"

"I have known you for many years, my precious one, and I have also seen and heard enough on the steamer of that so-called Van Der Velden, in order to know him sufficiently. The gentlemen said he had tricked at cards; and moreover a golden watch--"

Mrs. Bittersweet had started to her feet. "Liska, Liska!" she cried with a nervous trembling of her hands, "if you say such things against the Hollander you are trampling on my own heart; for I must confess to you -- Enough, I know, how that gifted man is misunderstood and calumniated. Even our gentle and reserved Elsa is prejudiced against him without any cause; and Dr. Wendelez goes out

of the front parlor if he sees the other come in through the back door. — For this, however, there is a reason, since Oldenberg would like to be the only family friend — but that you too, Liska! — —" And she helplessly sank on a chair, crying and sobbing convulsively.

Elsa was frightened and looked at her friend with imploring eyes.

Liska, however, did not seem affected in the least. She smiled contemptuously and then replied:

"If, as I see, you are still so unable to control your feelings, Mrs. Bittersweet, you ought at least, commence to listen to reason. In love there is no reconciliation between the two and still less in marriage. We must either become the slave or the tyrant of a man — I always choose to be the latter. —"

"Because you are young and beautiful and can command," sobbed Mrs. Bittersweet from

behind her pocket-handkerchief.

"In part you may be right. But why do I rule so absolutely over everybody? because I know to rule over myself; - and this self-control is the main-spring of my power, and I could wield it if I were old and ugly."

"Because you are a cold-blooded designing coquette!" Mrs. Bittersweet burst out with an unusual degree of energy.

Lisha smiled and buttered a dainty slice of bread. "That also I will acknowledge," she rejoined equanimiously. "I have long ago discovered the great secret that in order to be idolized by men we must not return their love but only pretend to do so - up to a certain point, of course. And then all of a sudden throw the lasso over their head, set one's foot upon their neck and trample upon them mercilessly. After that they will appreciate our caresses all the more; -

But I see that my sweet Elsie is entirely dismayed at this philosophy of life and love," she then said, turning toward the girl at her left. "But be composed, my child! for all this is only figuratively. Two women of the world like myself and our amiable hostess have many things to discuss among themselves, that does not concern young girls just yet. All this, however, is nothing but fun, or is it not so, Mrs. Bittersweet? Do pour me out another cup of Mokka -- Thank you, thank you, dear! -- And now tell me calmly and in a business like manner how you hope to get your money back again. For you certainly do not intend making the Dutchman your son-in-law?"

This seemed to upset Mrs. Bittersweet anew.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, "Minnie is but a child! If you only knew with what respect

she looks upon her foster-father——"

Liska rose and said frigidly:

"Let us talk the matter over among ourselves in order to spare the delicate feelings of our Else. Will you be home to-morrow afternoon, or will you call on me at the La Tierre House?"

"Certainly I will, if you prefer that. But may I bring Minnie with me?"

"No," Liska replied emphatically. "And if you wish your daughter well, then — I beg your pardon — put her for a year or so into a boarding ~~school~~. You know you are not the best ~~woman~~ sort of a mother for such a daughter."

"Certainly not! And for that very reason I have taken Van Der Velten into my house to act by her as a father; for daughters have more respect for a man than for a woman."

"Nonsense! As if a man would ever

consider himself too old to be a lover! Yet enough for to-day and good-bye! I must devote myself a little more to our amiable Elsa." And saying this she let the bewildered girl out of the parlor.

Chapter XVII.

The conversation between Liska and Mrs. Bittersweet had affected Elsa so painfully that she could not put in a word even when they had escaped the close air of the room and were walking along Spruce-Street.

She had found out herself, that the ever wavering and changeable old lady had to be treated like a child if one did not want to be injured by her; yet that Liska had treated a woman so much older than herself so very disrespectfully, caused Elsa a cold feeling akin to fear to take possession of

Elsa's heart. For the first time she felt as if it might not be well to make an enemy of her adored friend.

Nevertheless she still was very proud of Liska's undisputed superiority. No wonder, the girl said to herself, that this peerless woman treated young and old in such an authoritative manner. One had but to look at her and feel the charm of those wonderful eyes, in order to be spell-bound and have her do with one as she pleased. So it had been on the steamer where they had met, so it had been in New-York where the actress had been surrounded by a circle of distinguished people of every nationality. One could not do otherwise but to give oneself up to her and to cheerfully submit to all her graceful caprices.

While Elsa was thus lost in thought, they had turned into Broad Street, and soon were

standing before Liska's hotel.

"One word more," said the latter when Elsa was on the point of taking her leave. "You must do me the favor to call this very evening on Mr. Cornelius in order to prepare the way for your visit on Wednesday. You may drop a remark to the effect that you had been told of little Lalie's birthday. After that you beat a little about the bush to find out what sort of toys or other things she would like most. I assure you they will not be surprised at this; for people are all so blindly infatuated with their brats that they would receive the homage of the three Magi of the Orient as a matter of course."—

Liska thus treated the whole thing as a trifle. She seemed to have no conception of the repugnance with which an upright character like Elsa's made itself guilty of the least

treachery. Indeed the girl felt already as if everybody would notice that she was pursuing some purpose. Not a moment she dared to think of the cold glassy eyes of Miss Jacobine, so as not to lose beforehand the courage to carry out what she was expected to.

In regard to her success with the little one she was perfectly confident. But she was nevertheless tormented by the thought that her unusual attentions for the child might seem addressed to the father, especially in the eyes of his sister who was watching most jealously over her bread-winner.

And when, about eight in the evening, she rang the door-bell at Mr. Cornelius', she felt with bitter pang that in all Amerika there was not one soul to which she could cling unreservedly and entirely, not even to Lisbeth, for within the last days her friend had

descended several steps from the high pedestal which Elsa had erected for her in her heart, without the latter having as yet realised it. —

Mr. Cornelius and his sister seemed to be somewhat rejoiced at the girl's visit. Elsa, as usual, was dressed in black, relieved at the arms and neck by a white ruffle. It was very becoming to her rosy complexion and her reddish-brown hair, parted simply over her fore-head. In her dark eyes, however, there was an expression of silent sorrow which, more eloquently than words, spoke of secret bereavement and sufferings.

Mr. Cornelius, a few times, looked at her askance, as if he were trying to sound the depth of her thoughts; for she never yet had made a complaint.

It affected her very pleasantly to be for once comprehended without words, and she

hoped the more confidentially to find some pro-
tection against the covert sarcasms of spinster
Jacobine. This confidence made her more unre-
strained than usual, and she cheerfully joined
the little family, moving from the study
to the parlor.

She did, however, had already been informed,
that she was only allowed to say good night
to aunt "Elsie," who had not been there for
a long time. This done, she would have to
go to bed immediately.

At this prospect the little thing broke
out into immoderate weeping. She did
not want to go to bed, she sobbed, unless
aunt Elsie would sit with her and tell
her such a beautiful story as she had already
done at aunt Bittersweet's.

After this Mr. Cornelius began to frown
most threateningly, while Miss Jacobine, with

averted face, busied herself at the mantel-piece and murmured something of spoiling the child and of too great indulgence.

Elsa alone was still young enough to remember how passionately she herself had craved fairy-tales and other stories. So she consoled the little creature by promising her return on the coming birth-day. Then she would not only tell her a beautiful story but also take her out for a walk in the park, provided her father and aunt Theodine had no objections.

And thus pacified the child allowed herself to be led away by her aunt, while Mr. Cornelius fixed his eyes steadfastly on Elsa as if he tried to find out whether her promise was a joke or had been given in earnest.

"Yes indeed," she then said with a blush,

as if she were capable of reading in the man's soul.

"To you I would trust her," he then said slowly, almost solemnly, "and that is more than I would grant to most of my friends."

The girl blushed yet deeper, although she felt an inward shudder on thinking of the enormous responsibility, she was going to take upon herself. She fully realised how shameful it would be to deceive this beautiful and entire confidence.

But as Elsa had no clear idea of the danger the child might be exposed to, she tried hard to turn away her thoughts from the matter. She would surely do nothing wrong in allowing the child to be looked at — especially by Liska, the personification of everything beautiful and good. — And yet there remained a discord in her soul

which she tried in vain to overcome, and she almost repented of having yielded to her friend.

A long time after she had reached home, she turned restlessly upon her bed, listening anxiously out into the night in hopes that the unusually hot weather might be followed by a violent rainstorm. — But no matter how often she would look up to the skies and study the signs of the weather, nothing and nobody was coming to her assistance.

Chapter XVIII.

When the dreaded afternoon had come and Elsa was just returning after having given one of the few lessons that yet remained her, Lisha met her at top of the stairs, saying she had for a long time been waiting impatiently in Elsa's room.

"Oh, a splendid day! Is it not, my darling?"

she then said, trying to hide her anger as best she could. "But you must make great haste now and tell me exactly where I may find you with the child."

"Well, I think on that bench in Fairmount Park where we were sitting the other day," Elsa answered very much depressed.

"And at what hour?"

"About four o'clock; taking it for granted that I can get the child to go with me."

"Oh certainly! as if her papa could refuse you anything! Good luck, then! You have not a minute to lose."

And when Elsa, thus urged, went down stairs, Lisbeth, by her side, continued talking to her most persuasively.

"Who knows," she said with pretended gaiety, "what great devastations you may have already caused in the heart of that externally so self-contained

man! And if, not to mention his sister, he had not that child to take care of, and if he were divorced from his wife – –"

"Then he is not?" Elsa exclaimed surprised, and Lisa rejoiced in the discovery, that this communication had caused in the face and gestures of her friend some excitement.

"Why, no!" she then replied laughing. "He is much too proud and conceited to drag his family affairs into court. But there will yet be means to free him!" And her eyes flashed so wildly that Elsa hardly knew what to think of all these things and of the manner in which they were imparted to her.

"What means?" she then asked with an anxious side-glance; for the omni-science of her friend became somewhat uncanny to her.

But the beautiful woman, as though ~~she~~ afraid of betraying herself before the time,

replied playfully:

"You little fool; how can I know anything about the matter? I was only going to sound the depth of the wounds, which the arrows of the roguish little god might have dealt your heart. – And now good bye and good cheer! I hear your horse-car coming round the corner." – – –

The scene was burning hot on Elsa's head when she arrived with little Lalie at the designated place in the park. No wonder it resembled a desert. But so little did the German girl know as yet of the caprices of the American climate that she felt quite depressed and startled at this general desolation.

She dropped her veil over her dazzled eyes and sat down exhausted on the rustic bench, which was shaded by the large branches of a maple-tree. There she noticed some open carriages driving along the road, and a guard in white cotton

gloves and grey suit sauntering about below the slope on the gravelled foot-path.

Elsa looked musingly upon the parched grounds and thought of a distant grave on which the spring-flowers were already blooming, when the voice of little Lalie brought her back again to reality.

"Won't you tell me the story now, aunt Elsa?" she asked entreatingly from under her large white straw-hat while she stripped a butter-cup with her white-gloved fingers.

"But what shall I tell you, my little fire-brand?"

"Of Hänsel and Gretel!" the child exclaimed commandingly, while her round black eyes sparkled with anticipation of the pleasure before her.

And Elsa commenced to tell her tale, but not without several times being interrupted by her one-headed audience, that is as often as she, consciously or unconsciously, made herself

guilty of the least departure from her previous version of the story.

But when the enchanted little brother got back his human form, the little insatiable one would not as yet be pacified.

"More, more!" she cried, clapping her tiny hands lustily. "Tell me about Little Red-Riding Hood, or Snow-White! Please, please!".

"Will you not eat your sugar-plums first?" replied Elsa, holding up the paper-bag enticingly.

"First the story, and then the sugar-plums!" exclaimed Lalie with the same impetuosity, and Elsa wondered anew in what the off-spring of such a cold blooded family had drived her passionate disposition.—

"Lalie, my own sweet Lalie!" cried at that very moment an equally passionate voice of a woman, and before the child could turn round, she was seized and lifted up from

behind by two trembling arms. Her little feet were staggering on the narrow knotty bench and, overpowered by the sudden fright, she would certainly have lost her equilibrium, if the upper part of her body had not been held so closely.

A moment the two stood fast in a mutual stare, the child the very image of her mother. —

Like a flash of lightening this sudden revelation had come to the German girl and just as suddenly she recognised the danger to which she had exposed the child entrusted to her care. With a wild cry of terror she had thrown herself between mother and child and swept the latter away with the power of a maniac, so that Lisha staggered backwards from the violent onset. But immediately she had collected herself so far as to overlook the lost ground, and rushing toward Elsa she tried a second time to get the child away from her.

The little thing, however, clung to Elsa's neck with all her weight.

"Let me alone! I do not know you!" she cried, kicking violently with her little legs; and Lisbeth, as if she had received a blow on her head, colored up with a glow of anger.

But at the same time she recognised that she alone could not accomplish anything against the two; and resorting to her usual auxiliaries, self-control and dissimulation, she exclaimed with a soft lamenting voice that might have melted a stone:

"Lalie, my own sweet Lalie does not want to know her own mother! Is it, then, so very long since I have locked her in these arms?" And becoming excited again she added half entreatingly and half imperatively:

"Let go, Elsa! How can you dare to keep my own child from me?"

"You have kept yourself from her," replied

Elsa in accents of despair so great that the very ground under her feet seemed to shake. One thing only in this uproar of her soul remained fixed and as if written in types of fire: To be loyal to the child's father whom Liska had treated so disloyally.

The two women, between whom so suddenly an abyss had opened, stood for a second silently confronting each other, each trying to conjecture whether this entirely unforseen trait revealed by the other might not permit of some compromise. Liska, especially, seemed the less able to see her way out of this storm of affairs, as she had been accustomed, with the greatest facility to rule supremely over people and things.

This powerful resistance, however, on the part of the gentle and yielding girl, had come so unexpectedly that Liska had to

think of new means to at least partly re-
gain her lost dominion.

"Ah, Elsa," she then said with her most in-
sinuating accents, in which her suppressed
anger was hardly noticable, "you try in vain
to fight against your own better conviction;
for no one would dare to blame you, if you
would help a mother to get her child for
which she was longing with all her heart."

"May be! You seem to have different notions
about many things which I cannot dis-
cuss with you just now. One thing, however,
is sure, that we have to return a property
that was only lent, not given to us, and
that we have to justify a confidence
with which we have been honored. And
that you have violated my own trust in
this deceitful manner, is no reason why
I should myself become deceitful and

faithless."

"Pernicious hypocrite!" hissed Liska with unbridled violence. "You are afraid to incur the displeasure of the child's father, because you intend to catch him for a husband. And this is the whole pith of your high-flown parlance. Yet do not imagine that your intrigues, hidden under the mask of virtue, would ever succeed, unless you had untold riches to throw into the scales; for otherwise he could not return to me the fortune I brought him. Yet may he keep the mammon and leave me the child. — And if you would know your real advantage you would not have hesitated for a moment to overthrow this barrier between yourself and your designs."

"Very possible that I do not understand my advantage as well as you do yours — the more, however, do I understand the one thing

which is to turn the scales here, and that is honor. And in the name of this honor I charge you not to molest the child any longer, at least not as long as I am responsible for her."

The last words were drowned in a torrent of violently gushing tears: "Oh Liska, Liska! what have I poor, unhappy girl ever done to you that you should have chosen me to be the victim of so base a treason!" she sobbed convulsively.

Liska, believing her vanishing power returning, hurried with feigned sympathy around the desolate girl and tried to put her hand upon her shoulder.

But Elsa recoiled shuddering, as if she had been touched by something poisonous; far rather could she have pardoned the beautiful woman a murder than a treachery.

"Gone, gone!" she exclaimed in despair while

her weakening arms allowed her burden to slip to the ground.

Lisha, quick to discover the favorable moment, tried anew to lay hold of the child. The latter, however, behaved so savagely as if she were going to be murdered, and the noise, at last, attracted the attention of the guard, walking up and down at a little distance.

Elsa was just going to call the man to her assistance, not considering that the young and stately American would rather have taken the part of the native beauty richly dressed, than that of the simply dressed foreigner.

At this moment, however, there came from the opposite direction a yet younger and taller man in a white sombrero and a dark-blue cloth-suit. Unnoticed by Elsa he had alighted from a closed carriage at the foot of the slope and up to now hidden by the shade of the

purple-trees he had almost come within fifty steps of the struggling group.

But all of a sudden he halted and staggered back, as if he had received a blow. And Elsa too could only with the utmost effort refrain from uttering a cry of surprise when she recognized the ~~dark~~ sparkling eyes and the noble cast of the weather-burnt countenance.

"Come on, come on!" exclaimed Liska commandingly.

The handsome young man, however, stood as if entranced, unable to move further than was necessary to lean for support on the trunk of a tree.

"Du come, Wilden!" Liska shouted once more, and her voice was threatening like the peal of distant thunder.

The gentleman, however, stood speechless and immovable as if he had seen a ghost. And

when Liska made a new attempt to get the still violently shrinking child into her power, Elsa, summoning up her last strength, threw back her assailer, clutched the right hand of the little girl with her left and hastened with the quickness of lightening toward the foot-path leading down the slope, almost knocking down the guardsman who was leisurely saountering toward her.

Stupified he looked for a moment after the two fugitives. But when neither Liska, nor her bewildered looking male companion made the least attempt at pursuit, the guard strolled on in his half indifferent, half curious manner, true to the wise maxims of the Americans "not to meddle" — at least not before being asked.

Meanwhile the two fugitives had reached the gate of the park, where Elsa, fortunately

at a little distance, discovered an open carriage, a police-man near by, surmising Elsa's intention from her exhausted aspect, with a soft whistling ordered the sleepy coachman to the spot.

Elsa had just kept consciousness enough to call to the coachman the number of the street and house to which she wished to go, and then she sank back upon the cushions pale and exhausted, without being able to give the least answer to the half anxious, half curious questions of the child. From the convulsive manner, however, with which Elsa still held the little thing embraced, even a less intelligent child would somewhat have divined the grave state of affairs.

Chapter XIX.

Not long afterwards the coachman stopped before the designated house, and Mr. Cornelius, not accustomed to the sound of a carriage

before his door, made his immediate appearance.

"The young lady has probably been overcome by the heat," reported the black-haired coachman in his Irish brogue, while he opened the door of the carriage in his most galant manner, and with the assistance of Mr. Cornelius helped the inmates to alight.

"For heaven's sake, what has happened to you, Fräulein Heller?" Mr. Cornelius whispered supporting her with his arm. His voice betrayed a great concern and anxiety, yet the time was over in which Else would have felt grateful for such a proof of sympathy. Her head was still drooping like a withered flower, while she was slowly led up the stone-steps. — In the hall, however, she looked up a moment with anxiously inquiring eyes into the perturbed face of Mr. Cornelius.

"The child – where is she? – Her mother – park – –" Then some unintelligible words – and a deep swoon cast over the ill-treated girl a soft veil of oblivion.

The child, with her large wondering eyes, had followed her father into the parlor. But when the latter, carefully like a mother, put down the unconscious girl upon the sofa, little Lalie broke out into silent tears.

"That bad woman in the park has done it all," she sobbed softly; "she wanted to take me away with her."

But without troubling himself about the child, Mr. Cornelius had charged the coachman to drive to Locust-Street as quickly as possible and to return with Dr. Ebenberg.

Then he told the maid-servant, emerging from the back-ground, to request Miss Harding to come down to the parlor immediately, and

after that he hastened to the basement, to get a glass of water from the cooler.

As quickly as his angular movements permitted him, he then returned to the parlor, showing anger on not finding Miss Jacobine there, although she could hardly have reached the room in so short a time.

The girl was still paler than he had left her; or was it the greenish twilight of the room that made her appear so? He drew up the blinds at the head of the sofa, without paying attention to the prattling of the child that was cowering at Elsa's feet behind the door.

"Aunt ~~Lizzie~~ Elsie is ill," she said still whimpering. "That bad woman, who wanted to take me away, has made her sick!"

And then, taking pity on herself, she added:

"I am so tired, papa, and so hungry,

too. The sugar-plums which aunt Elsie had brought for me, all fell to the ground, and I could not pick them up, for I had to kick at the bad woman who was trying to snatch me away. It was such an ugly fight."

Meanwhile Mr. Cornelius had sprinkled Elsa's pale face with water and pulled up the cushion under her head.

"Quickly, Lalie!" he then exclaimed, "run up to aunt Jacobine and tell her, will she, please, come down — and at once!"

At this moment the person mentioned entered the room without being the least disconcerted by the aspect of the unconscious girl. On the contrary, she seemed by her cool bearing to put in a silent protest against her brother's conception that the affair was of the least consequence to them. And if,

nevertheless, he wanted to make it appear so — why, then, let him do so at his own risk.

Mr. Cornelius, however, did not allow his warm zeal to be abated by his sister's indifference. — He told her harshly to loosen the girl's dress. Then he hurried away to fetch some spirits from his laboratory.

Miss Jacobine, however, betook herself to carry out her brother's request, equal to an order, without betraying any surprise or pity. But when she tried to open Elsa's dress at the neck the girl shrunk involuntary as if touched by something repulsive. And when the spinster continued to touch the girl's chest and neck with her cold hard fingers, the latter turned away instinctively as if to escape from an insurmountable compulsion.

When Jacobine now continued her work, Elsa suddenly opened her eyes. And when she

recognized the form bending over her, she started up and looked about the room perplexedly, as if trying to remember the circumstances that made her fall into the hands of this unsympathetic lady.

At this moment the master of the house returned from the upper story with some red and yellow liquids. Noticing the girl who was trying to sit up, a faint blush overspread his callous countenance.

"How are you now, Miss Bella?" he asked in joyful embarrassment, while he busied himself in pouring some drops of the liquid into a glass of ice-water.

"Better," she replied in a faint voice, trying to keep together her loosened garment with her convulsively trembling fingers.

"Shall I take your house?" rejoined Miss Celine with unusual alacrity.

Her brother scanned her with a significant look and then, with an almost tender glance, turned toward Elsa.

"Miss Keller will stay here," he declared with great decision, "until Dr. Oldenberg has expressed his opinion as to whether she is well enough to be removed."

"Yes, but——"

"No but!" exclaimed Mr. Cornelius still more decidedly; "so you had better go and prepare the guest-chamber. Miss Keller has brought this accident upon herself in doing what she recognized to be her duty; and what is our — or rather my duty now," he added with an obvious rebuke, "shall be not less clear and sacred to me."

And while Dame Jacobine retired with a cold air without venturing a further opposition, the girl's form shook convulsively

and her eyes slowly filled with tears.

"Then you know already — ?" she stammered, raising herself entirely from the sofa.

"As much as I could gather from a child's prattling, I know the main thing, indeed!" he answered quietly. "And the rest I can easily guess at. That — person who tried to gain possession of the child, is without doubt your enthusiastically adored friend of whom Miss — — of whom I have been told before," he added collecting himself; his great discretion would not allow him to mention a name — even in matters of little or no account.

"Can you pardon me?" the girl whispered with anxious voice and fell back with drooping arms.

Tears came to the man's eyes.

"I pardon you," he said fervently, "for having fought so bravely in order to bring back to

me any greatest treasure! And your opponent was a siren, whose artfully entwining charms I have experienced myself. Oh my friend! Henceforth we are fellow sufferers, and I thank you with all my heart for having returned my child to me. For once in the hands of that woman, she would have been lost to me for ever and — things more precious than her own life. — The gold of millionaires weighs heavier in the scales of Themis than the tears of a father."

"The gold of millionaires!" repeated Elsa to herself; for not until now she thought again of the tall handsome man with the sparkling eyes and the brownish complexion, whom she had seen as if through a veil. How could he have got so much money in such a short time? — Nor did he render any assistance to Lisha, as she had doubtlessly planned and

expected. — —

And through her sorrowful soul this recollection passed like a ray of happiness and confidence. The actress might have made a fool of him but not an accomplice. Her once beloved friend had to grant her this little satisfaction, sad though it was, to think that she had led the girl's first and only true love to the edge of the precipice — disgrace and corruption. —

"I am well," she then declared rising up suddenly, but contradicted by the weakness of her limbs, she had to sit down again; and in order to avert the attention of Mr. Cornelius from herself, she asked for little Lalie.

"Oh, she is all right, and I am sure she has already forgotten her fright." Speaking thus Mr. Cornelius sat down in the other corner of the sofa and with a smile pointed toward the back-parlor, behind the dark-

red curtains of which little Elsie was just re-
lating her adventure to her favorite doll.

At this moment a carriage stopping outside announced the return of the coachman, and Mr. Cornelius hastened to the window and drew a deep sigh of relief, when he saw his friend Oldenburg emerge from the interior of the vehicle.

Chapter XXI.

Since Elsa, with unusual energy, had insisted on being brought home as soon as possible, Dr. Oldenburg, in spite of her critical condition, considered it best to comply with her request. He probably had noticed that the presence of Miss Jacobine, who had entered the room with Irene, had an calming effect on the nerves of the exhausted girl, and Miss Cornelius also did not fully regain her equanimity until she knew that " brother

Martine," as Dr. Oldenburg would call him playfully, had no objection to Else's removal.

The coachman, meanwhile, had turned his horses; and visibly elated by the importance he had attained, he carefully arranged the cushions upon which the girl was to lie.

Mrs. Harrison was just coming from the basement, and after having saluted the suffering girl, she was informed by the German doctor that Miss Keller, in consequence of the unwonted heat, was slightly indisposed. And when, after a look at the girl, the landlady had convinced herself that the indisposition was not quite so slight as the physician tried to represent it, she whispered to him whether the hospital was not a better place for the invalid.

But after the doctor had bluntly put in a "No" Mrs. Harrison did not venture a further objection. She silently followed the physician

who, carrying rather than leading, took Elsa up the three flights of narrow stairs – so narrow as not to allow two persons to walk side by side.

Once in Elsa's room Mrs. Harrison began to make herself useful, and while Dr. Oldenberg stepped back into the hall, she helped the girl into bed. – This done, the old lady told the doctor that all was ready, while she herself withdrew to the window. The physician, however, did not prescribe anything for the present, except some dietaries – the same to be carried out strictly, which the landlady promised to do conscientiously.

And when Dr. Oldenberg had taken his leave, to make his other professional calls, Mrs. Harrison sat down by the bed-side of the apparently slumbering girl and thought about all the care and trouble she had been charged

with. —

When Elsa opened her eyes again, the darkness of the room, or her own weakened nerves of sight, prevented her from observing the objects about her. She did not know how long she had been thus lying, and whether it was early morning or late in the evening. — But try as she might to get a clear idea of her condition, she could not keep her heavy eyelids open a second — not even then when she heard from the hall carefully approaching steps and low whispering.

Then the door was opened just as carefully, and it seemed to her, as if someone was striking a match. Yet she felt unable to utter a sound.

"Still the same leaden unconsciousness," said Dr. Oldenberg in German, bending over her. She felt his warm breath upon her face and the soft pressure of his fingers, feeling

for her pulse.

"If "brother Martin" had not told me," the physician continued, speaking to some one behind him, "that it was in consequence of a severe shock, I would take her somnolent condition for a certain bilious coma. At all events I now hope the best, especially as she has not much fever. Nevertheless I do not judge it advisable to leave her alone for the rest of the night. And if she should get worse, you would do me a favor by taking her into your own house."

"I would very gladly do so," whined Mrs. Bittersweet, and it sounded as if her voice was coming from the foot of the bed where Elsa's trunk was standing; yet I can do the least thing without Elsa's permission, and she would not even suffer a sick young man to stay in the house and stop

less a sick girl. "Oh doctor, doctor! we all are serfs and slaves, you know!" And the widow burst into a low weeping.

Elsa felt like raising herself up and crying out loudly, that she wanted by no means to go to Mrs. Bittersweet's, but far, far away where nobody wanted to make her the foil of a base intrigue. — But in spite of her greatest efforts her limbs and tongue continued to refuse to obey, although she could hear distinctly that the physician again took up the conversation:

"Yes indeed, Mrs. Bittersweet! We all are slaves — slaves of our habits and necessities, and I am punished severely now for having become an old bachelor — that is a confirmed gourmet and gobbemouche."

"But there is no need of your remaining so," replied Mrs. Bittersweet with an actually suppressed impetuosity. "Many a girl are more

has been wedded and a sick-bed."

"Nay Le! But do not believe for a moment that this meek but head-strong girl — this Wolf's lamb — would at the mere allusion of such a wish whisper "yes" immediately and sink blushing in to my arms. You may know many women, Mrs. Bittersweet, but the woman you do not seem to know at all — at least not the one who was the dream of my youth and the longing of my riper years. But now it is too late, too late! — A girl like this is not taken by storm. I was a fool to let the time pass by, without making use of it." And he heaved a sigh that seemed to come from a heavy heart.

"There will be nothing left, then," replied Mrs. Bittersweet, "but to have her removed to a hospital, in case she should get worse."

"Never!" declared Dr. Eldenberg emphatically, while he drew back a few steps. "Never!

to take a private room, one must have money in heaps. In the great hall, however, one of the inmates may be suffering from delirium tremens, and another from the consequences of a dissolute course of life. One must have seen this, to wish every pure woman to be spared such a trial. Let her rather stay here, then, Mrs. Bittersweet, and we shall divide the care of her amongst ourselves as best we can."

"Very cheerfully," the widow replied in a tone of conviction. "I formerly have sacrificed many a night for next to half as good a purpose. And if my Anna has any objection, let her object then; it makes no difference."

"Bravo, Mrs. Bittersweet! Hurrah for freedom, hurrah——!" He stopped suddenly; for Elsa had at last succeeded, to attract his attention by a movement of her arm.

The physicians hastened to take the medicine—

bottle from the cabinet, while Mrs. Bittersweet stepped to the bed.

"How are you feeling, Fräulein?" she whispered, pushing back the hair from Else's forehead.

"Very well," the latter replied with a faint cry. "But, please, go home now; I am not so ill as to need any care. Can you tell me what time it is?"

Mrs. Bittersweet inquired from the doctor who busied himself in counting the drops of a reddish liquid he was pouring into a large silver spoon.

"Ten," he said, without seeming to hear the question.

"Not more than ten o'clock?" cried Mrs. Bittersweet surprised.

"I did not mean that! Ten drops of medicine, I mean. It's for the time, I suppose it is almost midnight, now. Beg, Miss Fuller, lift up your head a little."

Elsa, however, was again lying still and motion-
less. The sounds, whizzing about her head, became
gradually unutteringrinshable and were finally
drowned in the roaring and raging in her head.
The nebulous forms of her own fancy were
taking the place of the outside world.

She felt as if she were again on the ocean
and tossed hither and thither by the waves. —
Then again it was still and peaceful around
her as on the blooming meadows of her native
village in the evening-twilight. And finally
past and present came together in indescribable
images not to be expressed in human words
and human colors, and in her spasmodic
endeavors to at least grasp part of her visions,
she lost herself still more in a chaos of kaleid-
oscopically changing thoughts and pictures.

Very hard she struggled to keep conscious
of her own identity as well as of her sur-

roundings. Why always that horrid dream that she was not home at all in her native village, but far, far away in a strange country among strange and cold-hearted people! But this was not so; for among all these white and black faces there emerged for ever the beloved forms of her mother – smiling friendly, and again pale and care-worn.

And then all of a sudden the scene changed again; it was no longer her mother she saw but a monstrously disfigured Medusa – face which, now with grinning friendliness, now with features distorted with rage, tried to snatch away from Elsa her little sister. – Is this at last thy true face – thou false, treacherous sorceress! What hast thou done with the child? Willt thou kill her and cook her for thy supper? – – But what child! – – It was no longer her fair-haired little sister,

but a black curly head — beautiful like the angels one a painting by Murillo. —

"Help, mother, help!" she screamed practically. I am not dead, I am still living! Away, away with these hard clods which weigh so heavily upon my breast! — Do you not see, there, how painfully I am breathing, how the big drops are running from my poor head!

"For heaven's sake! they do not want to hear nor believe me, because my eyes are closed. — Oh, that I could open them — only once more open them, before they have buried me entirely.

"Ah, God be thanked! I have succeeded at last. — And the terrible spectres of night vanished away before the light of day. —

Elsa saw indeed the still grey morning peeping through the closed blind of her window — a desolate, uncomfortable reality, but nothing like the horror of her fever-dreams.

She was alone. Upon the cane-bottomed chair near her bed stood a large earthen dish, from which came cold air — it was a large lump of ice. From Elsa's fore-head, however, the redeeming drops of perspiration were flowing, and on her head she felt something damp and tepid — a leaking bladder filled with ice.

She took it off and put it on the ice-dish. Then she raised herself up a little and, supported on her right elbow, she tried to recall the occurrences of the previous evening.

No, it could not have been a mere vision that Dr. Oldenberg and Mrs. Bittersweet had been in her room. Too — distinctly she remembered their half whispered conversation which, however flattering it might have been, had not left an echo in her heart. On the contrary it affected her rather painfully that they, all of a sudden, made so much

of her physical sufferings, after having been so cold and indifferent of the much greater sufferings of her soul.

Had only, if this was only a slight attack of fever, should she need any care at all? Mrs. Harrison would certainly come sometimes and see if she needed fresh water and a little hot broth — — Truly there she was knocking already in the early morning!

But it was not the land-lady but Anna, the servant — or rather the mistress of Mrs. Bitterswet, who entered.

But how disturbed and unkempt she looked, her long black hair hanging down over her shoulders, and a loose wrapper which, at other times, she would scarcely have worn in the kitchen, and much less in the street.

'Mrs. Bitterswet! Where is Mrs. Bitterswet?' she asked almost breathlessly, looking about

in the half darkened room: "I beg your pardon Miss Heller! I thought she had been with you last night."

"Very possibly, Anna! I am not very sure about it. – I have – slept so soundly that I did not hear her go away. But what has happened? There is bad news in your face."

"Nothing, oh nothing, Fräulein!" Anna replied with an intelligent look at the ice-dish near the bed and the medicine-bottle upon the cabinet. "Forgive this early disturbance and – I wish you a good morning, Miss Heller, and a speedy recovery." And without waiting for an answer she had passed out.

Chapter XXI.

Elsa was again alone with her thoughts. How gladly would she have requested Anna to draw up the curtains in order to air the room.

But why should she not try to do it herself?

She attempted to raise herself up, but it seemed as if instead of rising she was sinking down deeper — ever deeper with her head foremost! She never had felt so weak and dizzy in all her life. Was she ill then — really ill? —

Exhausted from the effort she had made she sank back again upon her pillow. She came to the conclusion that she would probably have to keep her bed that day. So she had best keep quiet and sleep if possible. — Quiet? — Why, she felt no longer excited in the least and there was no need of that admonition — It rather seemed to her as if the events of the preceding day had happened long ago — so long ago that they almost seemed to her like a dream.

But no doubt — all this was a great turning point in her life — and as such

she must regard her illness and be patient. It even seemed a blessing not to be forced to come to some quick resolution, to be allowed to give herself time to recover from the shock of all her disappointments.

The sun was high above the house-tops when Elsa opened her eyes again awakened by whispering voices. Dr. Oldenberg had entered her room, accompanied by Mrs. Harrison.

"Well, how are you to-day, Miss Heller?" he said in English as always when the landlady was present. "Oh what an infernal heat this is!" and he hastened to the window to raise it.

"Ninety degrees in the shade yesterday, and to-day it will certainly be more than that. No wonder that people are overcome by such heat."

And while Mrs. Harrison busied herself with removing the dish that had contained the

ief and mopping up the water, Dr. Oldenburg repeatedly wiped his forehead from which the perspiration was running down; after that he threw his broad-rimmed black felt hat and his cane upon the cabinet.

"But please, Dr. Oldenburg, what is the matter with me?" asked Elsa with a gleam of roguishness in her eyes.

"I — do not know as yet; we must wait," replied the physician hesitatingly, rolling up his large pocket-handkerchief of china-silk and putting it in his pocket.

"You are mistaken in believing that I could not bear the truth," continued the girl with great earnestness. "Nothing is so injurious to me as hypocrisy and falsehood. So once more I pray you — —"

The physician smiled contentedly.

"Ho, ho! then we are not so very ill

after all. Mrs. Harrison, you may make the broth a fifty percent stronger. But first a cup of barley-water."

"Also some pure water, if you please," added Elsa.

"Yes," interrupted the physician, "very small pieces to be kept in the mouth till they have melted."

"I suppose, I have typhoid fever," inquired Elsa anew.

"For the present only a slight attack of such — the so-called gastric; but if you do not take care of yourself — "

"Well, well, I shall be careful if you and Mrs. Harrison will promise me not to send me to a hospital."

"No, to be sure!" replied the physician in German, Mrs. Harrison having meanwhile withdrawn in her noiseless manner.

"But I do need a nurse."

"you can hardly get along without one."

"But Mrs. Harrison has no time."

"Then perhaps Mrs. Bittersweet," Dr. Oldenburg replied with a faint smile.

"Ah, a falsehood again! You know very well that Mrs. Bittersweet is probably more in need of all possible care and attention than I myself."

"A fact! Did Anna let it out so soon?" and he sank down on the trunk breathing heavily.

"By no means! It is not necessary to give me very broad hints in order to make me understand, the more so since I learned a lesson yesterday that has opened my eyes most astonishingly. Anna was hardly with me a minute, but I could easily read in her face the whole story — or rather the end of it."

"And that is?"

"That the Dutchman has gone off, taking

with him everything in the house of his friend that was not clinched or riveted. And may heaven grant that I myself have not indirectly been the cause of all this."

"How so, Fräulein Heller?"

"Because Mrs. Bittersweet spent the night with me!"

"Not the entire night, toward four o'clock she came to me to report about your condition."

"Then I was right," sighed Elsa and sank back exhausted.

"Nonsense! As if everybody had not foreseen that the adventurer would one day vanish thus. The "when" and "where" are entirely without consequence. There was nothing at all surprising, except — —"

"Except?"

"That he also carried off the daughter. And for that, I hope, you will not take the blame

upon yourself." And he laughed scornfully. "But we have chattered enough now, so, please, let me feel your pulse."

"Not until you have told me whether the rascal also got Mrs. Bittersweet's beautiful diamond-comb."

"Yes, indeed; yes! And all that in a moment when the police was already on his track on account of another crime! It is enough to make one crazy."

"The poor woman! I wish it had not happened during the time she was here."

The doctor laughed and rubbed his hands.

"I see with pleasure that you are not entirely ~~easily~~ free from egotism as I thought you were. Yet be comforted, my Fräulein! The fugitive disappeared as early as eight o'clock yesterday evening. And Mrs. Bittersweet herself prepared the way for them, by presenting them with

with two expensive opera-tickets."

Elsa heaved a deep sigh and closed her eyelids for a few seconds. There was a pause which the physician filled up by looking attentively at the girl as if he was wondering whether he could risk to tell her more.

"It does not seem to affect her much," he said to himself, "and who knows whether she would not soon learn all by some busy-body," stood he added.

"Fräulein Heller, you do not even want to know why your fellow-traveller is prosecuted by the police?"

"I suppose he committed a murder somewhere," answered Elsa coldly.

"Clairvoyante! — I too from the very beginning saw it from his thumbs — at least that he would be capable of committing such a crime."

"Poor Mrs. Bittersweet!" Elsa lamented.

"The chastisement is much too great for her wrong-doing; it goes beyond the mark. For her guilt is nothing more than innate weakness of character."

"Just so; and that is likewise revealed by her short thick baby-thumbs. But why censure others! We all suffer from the defects of our characters; and the majority of humanity should be either shut up in a prison or in an insane-asylum — I myself, perhaps, not excepted, since phlegme and hypocondria are capital crimes. — Yet to return to our Dutchman," he continued rising heavily. "Several days ago I was informed by Mynheer Van der Boschwhom you remember, I suppose, that his gestures in regard to his pseud-countryman have been confirmed, and that he found the latters picture in the rogues-gallery at Amsterdam. — —"

"Go on, go on!" Elsa interposed, when the doctor stopped.

"But since the fact that he ruined the daughter of his employer and stole the diamonds of the letters wife happened so long ago that it is now outlawed, the adventurer could only be punished morally by being unmasked. — To this effect Van der Bosch had already written to Mr. Fischer, hoping to furnish him soon the proves of his accusation.

"I immediately went with my letter to Mrs. Bittersweet — but it is a fine reception I met with there! Base calumnies, selfish jealousies — and I do not remember what other accusations she may have favored me with; for nobody is so blind as those who willfully shut their eyes. But now she has her kettle of fish, and she may consider herself lucky if she can retain a decent roof

over her head."

"Even mortgaged her house," murmured Elsa. "How will she be able to bear it all? See to it, Herr Doctor, that they do not sell her any poison at the drug-store."

The physician glanced at her with admiration. So sick and helpless herself and yet so thoughtful of others! — High time, indeed, that Mrs. Hassler should come with some refreshments and cut short the long conversation. —

And she came and placed herself at the foot of the bed, waiting that the cup should be taken from her. And when Elsa tried again to raise herself up and to ask a question, she was, with gentle force, pressed down upon her pillow.

"Silence now! I command it. I shall come again to-morrow, and if you are better we will further discuss the matter."

"But I shall have to think of it — especially

of the murder which the East-Indian has committed. So you had better tell me at once, please."

The physician, however, reproaching himself of having said too much already, — remained inexorable and went away quickly. Yet below in the hall he waited for Mrs. Harrison to give her some directions. — —

Another day had passed by as if it had only been an hour. For Elsa it was neither sleep nor waking, neither day nor night, only a dreaming away in the sea of time, from which her short conversations with Mrs. Harrison emerged like green little islands.

Towards evening, however, the girls' fever had become so high, that her landlady thought it desirable to send for the doctor. But he did not show any uneasiness in regard to his patient.

"Everything must have its course," he said in

passing out, to Mrs. Harrison. "The girl has a strong mind which will operate where the physicians art is powerless."

And Mrs. Harrison was soon convinced that the doctor was right. — —

"Here we are, then!"

With these words Elsa received the doctor the following morning.

"Where?" he replied with a significant upward moving of his thick, dark eye-brows.

"In the midst of a typhoid fever," completed Elsa, reaching to him her hand that he might feel her pulse, without waiting to be asked.

"We must procure a nurse now, for I would not like Mrs. Harrison to be troubled any longer."

"Has she complained?" and the doctor frowned still more.

"Dear me, no! But I know myself how much the poor woman has to do, and how little one

care depend upon servants."

And then the matter was discussed in detail until Mrs. Harrison appeared in the door carrying a dish of ice. And from behind her shoulders there emerged another face - but no delicate looking white one like that of the landlady, but one of ebony black, Ethiopic, ugly beyond discription, but with an expression of canine affection and candor.

"Lavinia with your laundry, Miss Keller!" explained Mrs. Harrison with a motion toward the negress. "Shall I take the bundle and pay the bill?"

"Do come in, Lavinia!" exclaimed the girl with sparkling eyes. "You have come ~~at~~ in the nick of time."

And turning to the physician at the foot of the bed, Edna continued:

"Here is my nurse, Dr. Oldenberg! Is she here.

in the neighborhood she can come over a few times a day; not too often, though, for she also must attend to her business.

The physician was going to raise an objection, yet Else interrupted him:

"She is not very intelligent but as faithful as a poodle. And I assure you, Herr Doctor, that I need sympathy much more than your drugs. This woman, I know, will be faithful to me."

The physician looked at her, surprised that she could not even now forget her treacherous friend. For Mr. Conclius had meanwhile informed him of what had happened in the park.

But as Else, with closed eyes, leant back upon the pillow, the doctor considered the matter settled and told the negress to wait below for his instructions in regard to her new office.

When the woman had retired and the girl

seemed to have fallen asleep, the doctor stepped on tip-toe to the window to take his own straw hat from the cabinet.

"I am not asleep, Herr Doctor!" Elsa said, opening her eyes. "I have only been thinking how Mama would take it if she were to learn that the man she has run away with, is also a murderer. Do you believe she would return to her mother?"

"Perhaps yes, perhaps no! Many a precocious girl gets only the more infatuated with a man like that, because her moral inclinations are awfully perverted. The greater the rascal, the greater also her admirations, as we almost daily can gather from news-paper reports, especially if his previous victim was also a woman."

"And has the East-Indian's victim been a woman?"

"I think so; an old Dutch widow whom

he first sought to fool and then to rob."

"Over Java or over the Spice-Islands?"

"I do not know exactly. The news did not come by way of Europe but by way of California. And that he himself did not take this shorter route is a proof of his sharpness. It took several months before the authorities could ascertain that he did not land in the West but probably in the East of America. He first had to be tracked from East-India to Brest and from there by land to Bremen, before they could pursue him further.

"But now it is enough, my Fräulein! I am very glad indeed that from the very beginning you did not care for the fellow. Of this I no longer entertain any doubt - for dissimulation of this kind could not stand the test of a sick bed."

Else smiled and turned to the wall. For

there was one thing yet about which she could neither ask the physicians, nor anybody else — a painfully sweet secret which the insatiable Loreley Lisha had stripped of its freshness, but not of its charm. —

Chapter XXII.

Three weeks had gone by since Elsa's illness, and the city had meanwhile taken on a yet more deserted aspect. For it was already about the middle of June, most of the leading people had either gone to the country or to Europe.

Elsa was sitting by the window in an old rocking-chair which Mrs. Harrison had good-naturedly placed at her disposal. But there was so little room for such an article of luxury, that the ends of the runners were for ever knocking against the cabinet whenever she rocked.

Not the slightest breeze was stirring, in spite of the half raised window; for the glaring sunlight was pouring in, there being no shutters to keep it out. — Scattered rays were falling on the worn-out carpet, and little flashes now and then lit up the darker background.

Again and again Elsa had to move out of the sun-light and turn away her wearied eyes from the dazzle. Still she was less conscious of the heat than of the heaviness of the air, which oppressed her. She had been promised if the weather were favorable on the morrow she might be allowed to take her first walk. Bravely had she struggled and wrestled with her illness, and she had come out victorious, there remaining nothing except a painful heaviness in the limbs and an almost constant beating of the heart.

There was a knock on the door — perhaps

Dr. Oldenburg. Or could it possibly be Mrs. Bittersweet whom she had not seen for so long a time? — And Elsa hardly knew whether she should be glad or sorry if it were that lady.

Yet it was not the sorely tried widow but Anna, her housekeeper, who had been told, she said, by Dr. Oldenburg that the Fräulein was allowed to receive visitors again.

And then she eyed the convalescent with unfeigned joy while Elsa invited her to the only chair near the window.

"And how is it now with Mrs. Bittersweet?" asked Elsa, hardly daring to raise her eyes; as if she had to feel ashamed for the mistress in presence of the servant.

Anna made a meaning gesture toward her fore-head and wiped away a tear with the hem of her pelerine.

"There no news as yet from the fugitives?"

"They will take care not to give such, the vagabonds! Doctor Oldenberg thinks they have gone to some state in South- or Central America from which there is no extradition. That sly rat-catcher has certainly thought it all out beforehand; for I often heard him speak at meal-times of those countries to the miss, when her mother was not present. — And then he talked of starring-tours and of their triumphs, of silk and satin gowns, of roses and even of diamonds.

"Ha, ha! thought I, the spider is weaving his net. But Minnie listened to him as if he were speaking Gospel truth. — And Mrs. Bittersweet so blind — so very blind, as if she had on eye-blinkers! — It often seemed to me as if it were my duty to open her eyes. Yet how could I, a servant, dare to do this, when she was deaf to the warnings of her best friends.

To her daughter she never spoke of the rascal otherwise than as her "foster-father", and when she was alone with him — Well, well, I will be silent —" she added, seeing the frown on Edi's brow. "But to hear her talk of her wedding apparel and the refurnishing of her house — it was enough to make one sick!

"To be sure that dissembling scoundrel could have even deceived a cleverer woman than Mrs. Bittersweet — with the exception of you, Fräulein — inexperienced as you are. — And Mrs. Bittersweet, therefore, will be more embarrassed in meeting you than anybody else."

"Am I her judge?" asked the girl. "I will never utter a word that will remind her of what has happened. But do tell me what has become of the mortgage?"

"That is not so bad as we feared. She had some difficulty in getting the sum, which

she intended to raise on it. Mr. Stecker, who, as you know, is her banker, put her off from week to week with one pretext and another; for he seems not to have trusted the Dutchman from the very beginning.

"Mrs. Bittersweet, having finally lost all patience, threatened to go to some other banker. Then the crash – I mean the elopement took place. It was then that Mrs. B. realized that it is only due to Mr. Stecker that she still has a decent roof over her head. And yet she had been warned also by Dr. Wenberg and even by that other intriguer – " she blushed and added quickly: "and even by Mrs. Barnekow."

There was a pause; then Elsa said with a slight reproach in her trembling voice:

"Did you know her true name when I was living at Mrs. Bittersweets?"

"Of course I did! And heaven knows, I would have liked best to tell you the truth at once – although I had been forbidden to do so. But you never wanted to hear anything against your friend, and you may consider yourself lucky to have gotten rid of her without greater harm than befell you. For that beautiful devil is capable of anything."

"Teena, you must not go too far!" Elsa remonstrated with suppressed emotion, while a deep blush spread over her pale countenance.

The servant looked at her for a moment in surprise, as if she were unable to realize so much charity.

"Just as you wish," she then said. "I only happened to think of it because the lady has honored us with one of her rare visits this morning. She only comes when

when she has a design on somebody; and Mrs. Bittersweet has had too much to do with herself of late, as to have any suspicion."

Elsa felt her heart throb in her throat.

"Did she also ask for me — express any sympathy for me in my illness — try to excuse herself?"

She did not give utterance to these thoughts but controlled herself in time by summoning up her pride. She even succeeded in assuming an expression of unconcern and, changing the subject, she asked her visitor whether Mrs. Bittersweet had not been ill and obliged to keep her bed.

"Not an hour," was Anna's reply; "but mentally and morally she has been all out of joints. She even wanted to throw herself into the Delaware, as she could not get any poison without a description. You

know the affair was discussed in the news-papers. But we all watched her constantly - I mean Fr. Oldenburg, Mr. Cornelius and I myself. Many a night I did not sleep a wink; ~~until~~ now the poor woman is somewhat restored to her senses and has given up the idea of committing suicide. But while she was in such great misery she would sit for hours in a corner of her bed-room and upon the floor like a maniac. Or she would talk such foolish things, that I should have liked to run away too, if I had not been so sorry for her.

"Fortunately most of her acquaintances had left town already. And when they will return in autumn, grass will have grown over the whole affair - and if not, Mrs. Stockes will set everything right again. You can hardly imagine, Fräulein Keller, what a good

lady she is and how she took care of our domestic affairs! I often did not know where to get the money to buy a loaf of bread, for Mrs. Bittersweet had nothing left, and I myself had taken all I owned out of the savings-bank."

Elsa's eyes grew moist. How many people are so much better than they appear, and how many so much worse! So things are evenly balanced after all. — This poor consumptive creature gives up all her precious little to help her mistress, and the rich lady also gives what is most precious to her — her time and her thoughts. For only a few days ago she had sent to Elsa a beautiful bouquet together with such a friendly, encouraging letter, that Elsa was quite encouraged and hoped to find some work during the dull summer-season.

"But now I must go home," said Anna interrupting the girl's quiet musing, rising

slowly to her feet and at the same time looking furtively at her image in the looking-glass. Her new, turned up summer-hat with its gigantic poppies seemed as yet not to have accustomed itself to its place on the flat back of her head.

After that she continued, turning to Elsa: "Mrs. Bittersweet expects me to give her information as to your condition and then, if I am not mistaken, she will call on Mr. Cornelius, for the first time since you have -- been taken ill. Beautiful Lisha seems to have done wonders by my mistress - of course to make a tool of her one way or another; except for such purpose, she never seems to have a minute to spare for Mrs. Bittersweet.

"But I will hold my tongue and wish you a good afternoon, Miss Heller! If you wish you may before autumn be Mrs. -. - Ah, now you are frowning exactly as you used to do

before your illness; that is a good sign, I think!" and laughing she left the room.

When the sound of Anna's foot-steps had died away, Elsa, for a moment, sat down upon her travelling trunk. She felt with pain that her quiet Day-dreams of the past weeks had come to an end, and that stern reality had again roughly seized her and she was once more struggling for existence.

She stepped to the window and pulled up the shade to let in the full day-light. She had to work and — fight again if such were necessary — fight for what was right and true. —

It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and on the corner opposite the street-lamp was lit. —

The supper which Mrs. Harrison had sent up stood almost untouched untouched upon the rickety little table, — poultry and asparagus

and large red straw-berries for dessert. – How strange that she had not a good appetite like other convalescents. Had she not been so ill, then, as they tried to make her believe?

She turned up the gas and then began to put her small room in order. It was sadly in need of it, for there had been no room for the many things necessary during her illness, and everything had been thrown about topsy-turvy. –

There was a gentle knock at the door – probably Mary the errand-girl, coming to take away the dishes. – The maid, however, announced a visitor and said she had brought him up with her as Miss Heller was not yet allowed to go down-stairs.

And while Elsa was yet pondering over this strange occurrence, a man of medium height and narrow shoulders came in from the dimly lit hall, hat in hand, with flushed face and

awkward bearing like a school-boy. It was Mr.

"You wished to see me, my Fräulein?" he stammered, standing in apparent embarrassement in the open door, while Mary retreated hesitatingly.

"I?" answered Elsa in a tone which she recognized immediately as betraying an almost impolite astonishment. "Why, yes," she added slowly. "I am glad you came at last to inquire about me. — How is little Lalie and your respected Fräulein sister? It cheerless room, you see. Please, the rocking-chair or the rush-chair?" And saying this she busied herself at the window to let in some fresh air.

But there came such a gush of wind that the door closed with a loud crash and the gas-light flickered hither and thither.

Mr. Cornelius, after having advanced a few steps into the room, started back in fright.

"You really did not send for me?" he asked

nervously.

"Of course not," Else answered piqued; the gentleman's confusion seemed to her wholly unwarranted.

"Then excuse my intrusion! I must go immediately and ask for an explanation from — — Oh, that I should have been so blind and credulous! Good evening, Fräulein Heller! —" And away he was, as if all had been a dream of a second - without Else having found any time to ask the uncommonly excited man for an explanation of his strange behavior. — —

She was looking after him wonderingly, when the corner at the other end of the hall was thrown open which, as Else remembered, took up the whole back-side of the house. Before her illness it had been occupied by a lady of retired habits of whose means of existence nothing definite was known. But as she paid promptly

and the landlady therefore not objecting to her, she had to be endured, although she was by no means popular.

Now, however, two men unknown to Elsa stepped out from the room. But they were so absorbed in their animated conversation, that they seemed to take no notice of her, nor of the quickly descending Mr. Cornelius.

Elsa did not know whether the men were inmates of the house, or whether they had only called upon the lady opposite; for she neither talked with Mrs. Harrison, nor with her little waitress Mary about the other boarders.

So she did not pay any more attention to the matter, but with a half bitter, half mocking smile went back into her room. The behavior of her guest who had come against his will seemed to her very little heroic and by no means even manly. He ought to have called

long ago, she thought, it would have been nothing but simple politeness, if not duty. And did he not act more as if he had taken a false and unbecoming step? Was he afraid to incurr the blame of his ever jealously watchful sister to whom he had to render account of all his doings?

Absorbed in these and similar thoughts Elsa had bolted the door and turned out the light to undress in the dark. And when she lay down to rest, she once more saw with her minds eye the stooping bent figure of her visitor, and involuntarily she compared him with the form of a young man who constantly claimed a more prominent place in her heart. Would she ever see him again, she asked, — and then she sighed.

Chapter XXIII.

Several days had passed without anything happening to make the cheerless hours go by more quickly. Even care, the ever watchful one, seemed to have abandoned Elsa. – It had become so oppressively hot, that it seemed as though all the other tormentors had resigned their power to the one supreme tyrant – the glowing summer within the monstrous brick ones, called an American metropolis.

Else, however, being constantly in doors, had not yet suffered much of the excessive heat; to her it was an agreeable langor, banishing all necessity of thinking and acting. But at the same time she remained conscious of the fact, that this condition would soon have to come to an end, as she had to find some means of existence for the summer-months.

She was busy in going over her little ward-

robe and found it was very incomplete, there being scarcely any thin summer gowns. — At that moment Mary came into the room with a curious looking letter in her hand. — Else took it silently. Before opening it she had to sit down a minute, for she was still so weak, that the least little excitement caused her knees to tremble and her pulses to beat.

She soon made out that it was a judicial summons she had received and that she was wanted in court at eleven o'clock that very forenoon. — So the letter must have come much earlier and had been mislaid, if her appearance in court had been counted upon that day.

Was this, perhaps, the reason, why Mary had left the room so quickly as though her conscience troubled her? — No matter! There was still time to comply with the strange order, especially as the court-house was not far from

where she lived.

Perhaps it would have been wiser to first ask the advice of Dr. Aberley as to whether she could risk such fatigues, for his refusal would have been sufficient to save her the walk and the excitement incidental with such summonses as these. Yet what could they do to her, since she had not had any relations with the East-Indian? And what she knew of him would be said in few words.

It did not enter her mind for a moment that the summons might possibly be about something else.

She was undecided, however, whether she should go to Mrs. Bittersweet first, or whether she should meet the poor humiliated woman at the court-room.

Elsa, meanwhile, had finished her toilet and then she set out for the court of justice.

On entering the dismal looking building and

softly opening the half closed door in the back-
ground of the vestibule, she was dazzled by the glaring
sun-light of the street that, for a moment, she could
hardly distinguish anything. — She only felt the ex-
cessive sultriness of the hall, crowded mostly by
women, and exhausted she sank down upon the
last bench of the left of the entrance. A wooden
pillar in front partly concealed from her the
view of the plat-form which was probably the
reason that she found this place unoccupied.

She was very glad of the circumstance, for,
being unobserved, she could close her eyes for
a few seconds. After that she would inquire
from one of her neighbors, or from the passing
beadle what those jurors or judges might pos-
sibly want her for.

She could hardly say afterwards how much time
she had thus dreamt away in a half dazed
condition, when her attention was all of a sudden

attracted by a voice which dragged her back into reality.

The speaker was Liska Krakowitza, or rather Mrs. Cornelius, to whose words Else once had listened with jubilant delight. — But now hard sharp tones reached her ear, such as Else had heard it only once before — at their last meeting in Fairmount-park. — But what could she have to say about the East-Indian, whom she knew so little, that would call forth so much bitterness and irony?

If now Else should be obliged to give, in presence of her treacherous friend, an account of their joint experiences on the steamer, as if their relations were unchanged — — — Oh that she could gain the door at once and fly away far away from so much misery! But the hall was so densly crowded, that there was not room for a pin to fall.

"Did you notice Liska's gorgeous dress?" Elsa heard one of her neighbors ask.

"Oh, certainly! It is of white, thick puffed crêpe-de-Chine with light green embroidery — beautiful indeed!"

"Yes! handsome is that handsome does," the former said sententiously, while Elsa again looked about for an exit and asked herself whether she could possibly climb over the back of her bench and gain the door.

But also behind her there was pushing and crowding, subdued scolding and mutual giving way, — and there she felt that a hand was grasping her shoulder gently but firmly — a hand so white and beautiful, that she knew its possessor without turning around.

"For heaven's sake, come away from here!" whispered Dr. Oldenburg trying his best to modify his lion-voice. "I have just been

at your house to advise you not to come here, but unfortunately, I myself was informed of the matter too late. But it is still time to go away; so, please, come with me as quickly as possible. You must not be put to the test of a cross-examination in any case."

The girl heard these words distinctly, without being able to make out their meaning, nor to move from the spot. It seemed to her as if she heard her name on the platform, at first by Liska Cornelius, and then by the latter's husband.

And now some one asked across the hall whether Miss Elsa Heller was present and ready to defend herself against the accusation she had been charged with.

But what should she have done that her false friend dared to impute to her in public?

No matter! There was no time now for thinking or for hesitating where her honor per-

haps was concerned.

"Let go, Herr Doctor!" the girl exclaimed, rising to her feet and forcing her way toward the entrance of the bench, while the delicate color of her cheeks turned into a lurid glow. — Rushing along she heard on the platform the voice of another man:

"Your Honor, I protest against such violence. — Miss Keller has recently been seriously ill; not knowing why she was summoned here, it would be a crime to subject her to such an ugly trial."

It was the voice of Mr. Cornelius — and yet it seemed to belong to another, — so firm and loud and decided had it suddenly become, so entirely oblivious as to whether some one tried to interrupt him or whether he was interrupting somebody else.

"Miss Elsa Keller!" a voice called once more across the hall, and "present!" the girl answered with a firm voice. Her dreaming and musing

had come to an end; she now saw clearly what was before her.

"Fräulein, I warn you once more!" she heard Dr. Oldenberg say behind her in German, yet without paying any attention to his warning she stepped along through the long rows of spectators and up the steps of the platform, without looking a single time towards Mr. Cornelius and his wife.

Then she took the seat assigned to her and looked so candidly and modestly toward the jurors that in spite of her simple attire she looked very superior.

There was a commotion in the hall and amongst the judges, and after the customary formalities had been gone through, Mr. Cornelius stepped forth from the group of witnesses and asked politely to be allowed a word, before proceeding. Then he said that

it was a grave error, that the witness, Miss Elsa Keller, who was a stranger to matters of law, had not been informed, first of all, that she had the right to refuse each and every answer and to leave the room if she chose. "Such an arbitrary method," he continued in agitated tones, "is not excusable, not even by the impending close of the sessions; for the trial could just as well have been put off until autumn."

He was going to say still more, yet the president called him to order. Grumbling he withdrew to his seat with an attitude that plainly indicated his readiness, to take up the fight anew as soon as he had a chance to.

He seemed completely transformed and changed. It must have been a severe blow that had lashed the man's very soul, and that had thus brought him out of himself.

Elsa rather felt than thought so; for there

was no time now for clear deliberation. The trial went on in a mad hurry, before she could grasp, or even divine the beginning, connection and aim of the proceeding. It seemed to her as if she was surrounded by soaring waters, and mechanically she held up her head, so as not to sink hopelessly into the abyss.

"And what is your reply to this impeachment brought against you by Mrs. Cornelius?" she now heard a voice address her.

"What impeachment?" asked the girl while she convulsively clutched the back of the chair for support.

"Step forth, Mrs. Cornelius!" commanded the judge.

Instead of Mrs. Cornelius, however, who, to judge from the speaker's look, was just sitting behind Elsa, a thick-set man with bristly greyish hair and beard and penetrating eyes stepped to the front; he was known as

one of the sweetest, but also the most unscrupulous lawyers of the quaker-city.

"The impeachment does not refer to Miss Keller," he said, "but to Mr. Cornelius. What is to be proved against him is that, not being legally separated from his wife, he has made himself guilty of adultery, and thus forfeited the right to keep his child after the consummation of a separation. Whether this adultery has been committed by the complicity of Miss Keller, or another woman, is entirely necessary to the matter in question — provided the guilt of Mr. Cornelius be ascertained in proper form and the proceedings conducted on that basis. For the past has already been sufficiently discussed and lawfully sworn to, — it is that Mr. Cornelius in the evening of June the seventeenth, between eight and nine o'clock, was seen to come out of this young lady's bedroom —"

"Villain!" the voice of Mr. Cornelius was heard from a little distance.

"Without taking heed, however, of this energetic exclamation the judge took up the question again by asking whether Miss Elsa Keller would admit this to be true, or whether she could say anything in defence of her honor.

The young girl was speechless with indignation, yet only a moment. Then she made some steps toward the centre of the plat-form, and with proudly raised head, though glowing cheeks, she cried:

"Who is so base as to say, that I could have any reason to conceal the visit of Mr. Cornelius or any other gentleman?"

"There you have the confession! What more do you want?" the lawyer interposed with a scornful smile and in great haste, as if he were afraid of the unmistakably favorable

impression the girl had made on the jurors and spectators.

"For shame! Mr Atkinson!" was heard again the voice of Mr. Cornelius, and this time with such a pronounced German accent as Elsa had never heard from him before. The indignation of the man seemed to have done away with the habits of many years. — And turning to the jurors Mr. Cornelius continued:

"Gentlemen, I must once more make a motion for the dismissal of Miss Heller; for ~~it is entirely out of place here~~ that an attorney be given to her. For an innocent German girl can impossibly imagine that in this country her honor is only safe as long as nobody thinks it worth his trouble to set her a trap by penal detectives and lawyers. Mrs. Cornelius has succeeded in proving by two witnesses that, at a certain hour of the evening, I have been seen coming out

of the room of a girl and that is sufficient— But everybody here knows what to think of this reprehensible procedure!"

"Mr. Cornelius, I have been obliged to call you to order several times already to-day!" the judge said rebukingly. "Miss Heller, as it seems to me, is fully capable of pleading her own cause in case she should not prefer to withdraw without answering at all."

"By no means!" Elsa exclaimed with blazing eyes. "But I ~~will~~ should like to ask the gentlemen jurors to find out how long Mr. Cornelius—"

But without being able to finish her sentence she buried her face in her hands and sank down upon her seat, exhausted by the efforts she had made.

"I too, must make a motion to have the trial postponed, and Miss Heller dismissed," said Dr. Eldenberg stepping forth from the

front ranks of the spectators.

"Have we dismissed under the weight of such an enormous calumniation?" cried Elsa, collecting herself.

"She is right," affirmed Mr. Cornelius. "Mr. Judge! Let the spies of Mrs. Cornelius, first of all, render the proof of how long I remained in Miss Heller's room. Not that a longer stay with her would prove aught against me, I only want to keep anyone from thinking that I was so utterly stupid as not to immediately detect the snare that was laid for me."

The judge frowned again and reminded the speaker of his obliviousness of all customs and juridical traditions.

"The detectives have already said that they do not know how long you remained with Miss Heller," he then replied slightly impatient.

"There only remains for the witness, Elsa Heller, to prove that she did not entertain any criminal relations with the defendant. – How long, Miss Heller, did Mr. Cornelius stay in your room on the evening of the seventeenth of June? According to the statement of Mrs. Harrison's waiting girl it may have been an hour, or even two."

"She lies! It was not two minutes," the agitated voice of a man with a German accent was heard to say from the benches of the spectators.

At look in that direction, a cry — and Elsa had sunk on the floor beside her chair.

In the hall and on the platform a low murmuring, mixed with violent pushing and jostling of elbows had risen immediately, for they all wanted to see the tall handsome young man who had testified for the girl in such a courageous manner.

Elsa had immediately collected herself; only

her limbs had failed her for a moment, but her spirit remained strong and clear, — inspired and lifted up by an undreamt of thrill of bliss because her countryman had defeated the vile machinations of her accuser whom she had once looked upon as her dearest friend.

Still she did not dare to look at her brave knight — not even when, supported by the arm of Dr. Oldenberg, she allowed herself, like an obedient child, to be quietly led out of the hall of sessions.

Murmurings of approbation were whispered around her, and she felt instinctively that in that moment she was the object of a hundredfold sympathy and admiration.

When the terrible excitement of her nerves began to abate, her former weakness returned, aggravated by the unnatural mental tension in which she had been in the last half

hour. — And if her escort had not been prevented by his awkwardness, he would have taken her like a helpless child upon his arms and carried her to the nearest coach, — so nervously did she tremble.

Fortunately the horse-cars passed by quite near, and without further mishaps Else soon reached her home.

There Dr. Oldenburg ordered some strong broth for her, and after that he made her promise that for the rest of the day, she would stay in her room quietly and not to commit any more follies.

Chapter XXIV.

Darkness had already set in, and Else, after a light supper which had been sent up by Mrs. Harrison, had fallen asleep. — After she had dozed for a few minutes, Mrs. Bittersweet, deeply vexed

with a soft gliding step, entered the room.

The girl, starting up quickly, tried to raise herself up, but Mrs. Bittersweet, with gentle force, prevented her from doing so.

After that the latter, in an uncommonly quiet way, moved the chair to the head of the bed and sat down just as noiselessly, her face turned toward the window.

"Now you see, my dear Fräulein, the caprices of which an American summer is capable," Mrs. Bittersweet, lightly coughing, began the conversation. "Oh, such heat! especially under the roof. — Yet heaven be thanked that you are not worse, and that you have given me your hand ungrudgingly. Believe me I am even independent and silly than malignant and selfish." And she sighed.

"There is no need of assuring me of your goodness of heart!" replied the girl in a

trembling voice. "And what could there be for me to forgive you that has not injured you much more than me."

"Heavens! then you do not know as yet that it was I who brought this last calamity upon you! As though I had not had misfortune enough without that."

"I really do not understand you, Mrs. Bittersweet."

The latter, however, continued without heeding the interruption.

"I, I alone in my incomprehensible stupidity brought it about that Mr. Rawlins called on you that evening. — And I assure you it has cost me a deal of trouble! — Not that he then had an idea of the trap they laid for him! But you know he is so very cautious in regard to us women, exactly like a young priest who has just received the unction.

Therefore I had to make him believe that you wanted to ask his advice in a matter of importance which admitted of no delay. — Ted G. was very angry that he made me take such an unbecoming step, for, in my opinion, he ought to have called upon you long ago — and this was still more his sister's duty.

"But Lisha, — Mrs. Cornelius I mean, although they may already be divorced, — has succeeded to make me believe that this apparent coldness of Mr. Cornelius was the sign of a repressed feeling for you — — Yes, she even said — may I go on, Miss Heller?"

"I even pray you to do so, Mrs. Bittersweet! After what I have gone through to-day without any preparation, an explanation can only be desirable. For that you yourself have only played the part of the deceived and not of the deceiver, goes without saying. For have I

not come near enough myself of being the cause of a similar misfortune!"

"Yes, you are good and forgiving and always trying to see the true motive of things."

"Provided I have no bandage over my eyes," Elsa interposed with a sad smile.

"Why, of course! But love has always the privilege of blindness, and without this arrangement very few people would get a share of love. God or Nature must have ordered this, so that there may be a little warmth and sunshine in human life and not mere calculation and selfishness. And consequently I have not been at all surprised that, as Lisha has assured me, you should have a warm feeling for Mr. Cornelius, in spite of his coldness and lack of resolution."

"I — have a warm feeling for — for Mr. Cornelius?"

"Certainly, but let me proceed! — Mrs. Lisha pretended to be very repentant on account of the treachery which she had planned against you, and I myself felt unfeigned repentance that I, in a certain measure, had been her accomplice from sheer thoughtlessness.

"And when she then spoke of her readiness to repair the wrong by bringing two such shy and reserved lovers together, I again lent her my ear and promised her my help, and allowed myself to become her tool in helping her to realize an even more infernal scheme; — for such is my weakness, or rather my weak-mindedness. — Thus I allowed myself to be persuaded to call on Mr. Cornelius and his sister that very forenoon and turn the conversation on you and your illness, — that you are not indifferent to him, even a less clear-sighted eye than mine would

have discovered at the very mentioning of your name. – I was all the more vexed that Mr. Cornelius had not the manliness to speak out – especially as you for him – – but let that be as it may, now.

" At all events he ought to have shown you some attention from mere politeness, I thought, and to have called upon you long ago. It also seemed to me as if he himself felt this, for he sought for all sorts of excuses without, however, improving the matter. He had, for several days, expected a visit from you, he said, having heard from Dr. Oldenburg that you were allowed to go out again.

" " Indeed?" I answered angrily, " then I might have spared myself the trouble of coming such a distance in such hot weather. I came because Fräulein Heller asked me to say she hopes you will call upon her this very evening.

It is probably on account of some family affair; the poor girl seems to have more confidence in you than you deserve.

"Then he became red in the face and was so embarrassed that in spite of my misfortune I felt tempted to burst out laughing.

"'She wants to see me – me!' he repeated somewhat incredulously; yet his voice trembled as if he were to appear before his supreme judge. – "And she knows nothing of my own perplexities, my impending suit for divorce?"

"'Probably not! But even if she did, Miss Heller would certainly not allude to the matter."

"'Very well! I shall not fail to call upon Fräulein Heller, since she desires it, although I may have to come a little late. Will you, please, tell her so?"

"But I had resolved," Mrs. Bittersweet continued with a new impetus, not to let you know

anything beforehand, so as to let the surprise operate upon you all the stronger — in hopes, of course, that the mutual embarrassment might at last bring about an explanation. — Yes, my dear Fräulein, that is exactly the way I reasoned, for I would have congratulated you with all my heart, if, after the difficulties you have encountered in this country, you would have found at last a friend and protector for life-time. And I was all the more confident, since I had already had my own thoughts in regard to the motives which might have induced that ordinarily so slow and diffident man to hand in his suit for divorce so shortly before the close of the sessions. For I knew too well that he would never offer his heart to another, without being able to dispose of his hand at the same time.

" And also in regard to Miss. Cornelius I had

my own views. I believed that in spite of all her reawakened interest for you, she yet pursued some selfish designs in regard to her child, as I had guessed from the very beginning of your arrival in this city. She hoped to obtain her child the more readily from its father if he had any prospect of having other children. — And she certainly for a time entertained these thoughts, unless your slowness made her try to gain her end by a shorter road; for she never has been able to wait patiently for the fulfilment of her desires.

"And so, after her attempt at abduction had failed, there was nothing left for her to do but to ascribe to her husband an infidelity and thus force him to give up the child. Disloyal, is it not, especially with the character of the man. But things in this world depend on appearance and not on the essence,

and in order to create such an appearance she had her husband surrounded by spies — one of which is even said to live in this house.

"Stupid and silly, as I am, I had not the slightest idea of these plottings and went into the trap even more unsuspiciously than Mr. Cornelius. For you will certainly remember how quickly he managed to extricate himself. And if he should have been generous enough to entertain any doubts as to the correctness of his conclusions, they would have been put to flight by any full confession.

"Never had I seen the gentle man so excited, so entirely beside himself! And what a fright I had when he knocked at my door at so late an hour, and on entering used the precaution to have Anna present during our whole interview. Still I hoped that Liska for consideration of you would not carry things

to the extreme.

"But when yesterday morning dr. Akenley came to me too — — oh my Fräulein! if you knew how hard he was on me, you would feel more compassion than these men have done! Yet no matter, it served me right; I am good for nothing in the world but to commit follies and to spoil my own life and that of others."

Here Elsa could no longer contain herself.

"Dear, dear Mrs. Bittersweet!" she exclaimed raising herself up and supporting herself on her left elbow; "as far as I am concerned, you may drop the whole matter with a quiet conscience. How could I be so unjust as to bear you a grudge where you have entertained neither evil intentions nor selfish motives. You may be sure that I can forgive you the more readily as I myself have succumbed to the charm of Lisha's personality and have voluntarily

given myself up to it – bound hand and foot. Yet by no means would I change parts with that – – lady. She has outwitted me less by her cleverness than by her bad heart. It takes more wickedness than courage to waylay and knock down an unsuspicious guest who has been invited to our house for a merry feast, and who has laid aside his arms before entering. Her first plot I might, perhaps, have excused with the passions of a mother for her child – but what she has done to me to-day – –" Her voice was stifled by tears, and she turned towards the wall to weep quietly for a few minutes.

Meanwhile it had become entirely dark in the room, and Mrs. Bitterswest rose to light the gas.

"Only for a little while," she explained; "for as I now have made my confession and received your absolution, I would like to read again

look into your wonderfully beautiful eyes. — No flattery, my Fräulein!" she added returning to her seat. "You have the eyes of a mermaid, but not until now did anybody know how deep is the sand behind them. — If I only could be as discreet as you are, my child, I might have saved myself many a painful hour in my life."

She sighed; and Elsa, for the first time, noticed how thin and hollow her cheeks were. Also her toilet was somewhat darker and therefore more distinguished; and in place of the black locks her natural hair had appeared — which, although not thin, was rather grey. ~~However~~ It was almost entirely concealed by the round sum-mer hat.

Elsa could not help congratulating the lady in her mind upon this favorable change, when, all of a sudden, Mrs. Bittersweet moved ner-vously to and fro on her chair, while she,

furtively, touched her head and fore-head.

"There you see," she then continued with a courageous resolution worthy of a better object, "how much I must have been stirred up that I could forget — th, bah! you will, perhaps, have noticed before that my natural hair is no longer quite so black and glossy as that I left behind. But that it once was so I could even now prove to you by — witnesses. But I beg you for heaven's sake not to give away this secret to Dr. Oldenberg and others, although you of course have as yet no idea how sad it is for a woman to become old."

Elsa, indeed, had no idea of such a calamity, still she assured the widow of her utmost discretion. But the corners of her mouth were twitching suspiciously, as she remembered the standing joke of the physicians in regard to the black wig of Mrs. Bittersweet.

"You wonder that I am still so vain," Mrs. Bittersweet said after a pause; "you consider it unpardonable —"

"Not at all, Mrs. Bittersweet!" Elsa replied with earnestness and emphasis; "what is false hair compared with false hearts! For to feign love and practice hatred — the father of lies himself is not so black as that; for if he makes a contract with some-one, the latter always knows what will be the end of it and can choose. But to tread this earth in the forme of an angel and be a monster — it is enough to make one despair of God and Humanity!"

"I can well imagine what you must have suffered," answered Mrs. Bittersweet soothingly. "But believe me, it is not malignity that governs Mrs. Lisha's actions but simply her mad egotism. —

"You wonder perhaps whence I, blind as I am, have

derived this insight into character. Yet I will give honor to truth and confess that they are not my own feathers in which I have been parading just now. I have often been warned against Lisbeth, and not alone by Dr. Adenberg, but also by — another," she added softly, casting down her eyes.

"It is truly astonishing how he understood that that intriguing woman — even in regard to her child; for if the little girl were not so handsome as to do for a show, her mother would not have cared a straw for her. But you may be glad, Fräulein Keller, that you were deceived only in one and not also in another of your travelling companions." And she paused, as if the recollection of her loss was overpowering her.

"Oh there is no merit in that," the girl replied, "since antipathy has much sharper eyes than love."

"There you are again wholly right, my dear Fräulein! But what really preserved you from danger was,

perhaps, less your antipathy than the image of a younger man in your heart. I seem still to see you before me, trembling all over — when, on Christmass Eve, I announced to you the visit of the one you would like best to see. You became pale as if you had seen a spirit and then blushed like a rose. "Is he young, tall, dark-brown?" I almost believed it was coquetry, and not, until to-day I understood the true meaning of that question.

"Your lover is said to be an uncommonly handsome gentleman, which I believe all the more since another of your admirers is my authority. But now you must not blush again. You may acknowledge before all the world the man who thus has testified for you. Yet that you have been so very discreet in the matter — —"

"But dear Mrs. Bittersweet! For years I have neither exchanged a word nor a greeting with

the young man and did not even know whether he was still living. Even now it is a mystery to me how he knew that Mr. Cornelius only staid with me so short a time."

Mrs. Bittersweet laughed aloud, but it sounded so hollow as if it came from a broken heart. Then she coughed until the tears were trickling down her cheeks, and, exhausted by the double exertion, she sank back in her chair and, for a few moments, closed her eyes.

Elsa could not help noticing, that the trouble in her chest had made alarming progress since she last had seen her.

"To morrow, my child," replied the widow in a gentle voice, "you may read the answer to your question in every news-paper, for Mr. Wilden was asked the same thing by the judge. Now do you know what he replied? That he stood sentinel before your house nearly every evening.

And as he, in order to escape observation, usually placed himself hard against the wall, he heard Miss Cornelius ask for you in the open door. No doubt his heart beat, until your visitor came out again! — And that in spite of his excitement the time seemed so short to him, must have been to all who know anything about the human heart, an additional proof of his not having exaggerated.

"There could hardly have been devised a greater punishment for your accuser; and I am sure that you not only had all the women to your side, but also most of the men.

"But now enough for to-day! It has done me good to talk to you thus at length. And now good night and pleasant dreams, Fräulein Heller! There must be plenty of happiness in store for you, as you yourself are so good and forgiving." And she disappeared as suddenly

as she had entered.

And just as softly a name was uttered by the lips of the girl that remained behind and then — tenderly and sadly — came the words of the poet:

"War alles nur ein wesenloser Traum,
Er war so schön, er war so selig doch!"

Chapter XXV.

In better health than was to be expected after so eventful a day, Elsa, the next morning, arose and went down to breakfast.

After that she meant to make the long planned call at Mrs. Fischer's and, on the way, to buy a new parasol.

When Elsa had eaten her oat-meal, she went to the front-parlor to put on her hat before the looking-glass, but on her way she was stopped by Mary, the treacherous errand girl, who again handed her a letter. However it was no sus-

suspicious looking visit of Sabers-corpus but a dainty note, which a black waiter had left for her.

On recognising the handwriting of Mrs. Stecher, Else's cheeks became colored with joy. For from that quarter nothing but good had ever come to her, and this time, too, she was not disappointed.

Mrs. Stecher expressed her regret of not having seen Miss Heller before going to the country. For on calling the previous fore-noon, she learned that Fräulein Heller was not at home. She hoped, however, to have reason to believe that the Fräuleins future was assured, as she had recommended her to a prominent family that was about to sail for Europe and intended to previously engage a teacher and companion for their young daughters.

If, therefore, Miss Heller felt strong enough to accept such a responsible position she had best

not lose any time in presenting herself to the party in question that had engaged passage for the following week. — Then were added the name, street and number of the family and the probable hour in which to find them at home.

This unexpected piece of good news was even a greater shock for Elsa than the exciting events of the previous day. She had to sit down a moment and close her eyes, as if her soul, so long accustomed to darkness only, could not bear this sudden sunshine. — Dear Europe, her own native land, to think that she would set foot on its shores in a few months or even weeks! What a comfort after so many sorrows!

Even the thought of the friend of her youth could, for the present, not moderate the exultation of her heart. Besides she had to say to herself that she had no claims whatever on him. For what could it have been but

a generous emotion which, for a moment, had gained mastery over him in the park and in the court-room! The bondage, in which that enticing woman no doubt still held him, was was certainly not to be broken so easily as the ropes with which the philistines had bound Samson. — And if, finally, he should tear himself away, or be cast away by his enslaver, what then would be left of him would scarcely be worth having.

Here the musings of the girl, floating between hopes and doubts, were suddenly cut short by the appearance of Mrs. Bittersweet's housekeeper. — She came to bring a German news-paper to Elsa together with the verbal message from Mrs. Bittersweet to the effect, that, after so rare a triumph, Fräulein Heller might consider herself, for a while, the most popular person in Philadelphia.

"For heaven's sake!" Elsa murmured turning

suddenly pale, "then they will not give me that beautiful position." Trembling, she took the paper from Anna's hands, to stare automatically at the columns which Mrs. Bittersweet had marked with a pencil.

"Thank you, Anna!" she then said with a depressed voice, "but I have no time just now to read the paper. I shall send it to you later, or bring it myself."

"There is no hurry, Fräulein Heller! We have all read it — myself included; and first of all Dr. Oldenberg who came to us quite early. Ah, Miss Heller! it has gladdened our heart to hear poor Mrs. Bittersweet laugh once more after so much sorrow — and that was when Dr. Oldenberg read to her the testimony of your countryman."

"Of my — countryman?"

"Why, to be sure! Of the handsome young gentleman whom Liska had ensnared out West

and led with her as a captive. She, certainly, did not fling him against a stone – wall when he asked her for the first kiss – ha, ha! Even the jurors are said to have laughed in their sleeves, and you ought to have heard Dr. Oldenberg!

"'That is just like her!' he said; 'I would never have dared to ask such a favor of her.'"

"And all that – is – here – – in this very paper? Oh how horrible!" And she buried her face in both her hands.

"Why, of course! As a witness the young gentleman had to tell the court exactly his relation to you in former times. – And I believe that after that the beautiful woman would rather have broken his arm than give him another kiss!"

Now Elsa, who was still unable to speak, pointed Anna to a chair and then sank down upon another, her knees trembling visibly.

"I thank you, Fräulein!" replied Anna, without

heeding the silent invitation. "I must hurry to the market, as to-morrow is Sunday. We hope to see you once more take coffee with us in the afternoon; but Mrs. Bittersweet will probably invite you herself before that. — Good bye, then, Miss Keller! What strange things may happen in this country; but such is America!" — And with this philosophical conclusion Anna had talked herself out of the parlor.

Elsa, still holding the paper in her hand, returned with a strange oppression of her heart. She hardly knew whether it was joy or sorrow that moved her so deeply. She felt as if her holiest feelings had been trampled into the dust, since her secret had been unveiled before so many profane eyes. And yet she felt a great satisfaction that Lisha had been unable to keep her hold on her ardent admirer; at all events he wanted to be useful to his country-woman;

Elsa could not doubt of this, nor refuse him her unbounded gratitude.

Still, her feelings were deeply hurt; and the fact that she had been dragged into publicity, was so painful to her, that she would have liked best to leave the city immediately, never more to return.

But before she could do so, there were many things to attend to. First of all she had to call on the family, about to sail for Europe. – Elsa, who was conscious of the dislike of all notoriety, which is peculiar to Philadelphians, feared that the party who had desired her services, might now no longer want them.

But there was hardly any time, now, for these anxious reflections. For the street-door bell was ringing again, and by the frantic beating of her heart Elsa felt more than she knew that the turning point in her life was

near at hand.

"Do go in, Sir!" she heard Mr. Cornelius say outside in the hall. "After yesterday's events you will hardly need an introduction. I shall meanwhile go for a moment to Dr. Oldenberg. I expect you this evening so that I may introduce you to my sister."

"Oh, Mr. Mr. Cornelius, please stay near me!" another voice was heard to say which caused the anxiously listening girl to color up still more. "You do not know Fräulein Heller, as I know her ---"

Then Elsa suddenly threw open the door and thus cut short any further discussions.

"Please, come in gentlemen!" she said with that peculiar self-control which was at her command in decisive moments. And how could she have acted otherwise than encouragingly to the two equally embarassed looking visitors.

"How much we have to tell one another, my

Fräulein!" said Mr. Cornelius hesitatingly. "But my young friend here, having older rights than I, I must needs ask to be excused until later."

And then he withdrew with a very respectful but somewhat awkward bow and closed the door.

Chapter XXVI.

For the first time the two young people saw each other without witnesses. — He, every inch a man stately and handsome — but turning his white straw-hat in his hands as shy and embarrassed as a school-boy — — she blushing up to her temples, and, to conceal her agitation, arranging a white bow on her black alpaca-dress, which was by no means in need of readjustment.

Then she stepped aside and sat down on the sofa, inviting her visitor to sit down in the other corner.

"You have been ill, Fräulein Keller," the young

man said with down-cast eyes. "May I ask how long you have been in this country?"

"Since last October, Mr. Wilden," she answered; "but before speaking of myself you must allow me to deliver to you the greetings of your mother." And her voice trembled as if from a suppressed reproach. "It is not my fault," she continued, "that I have not been able to transmit these to you until to-day; for when, on my arrival in autumn, I called at your former boarding-house, you had gone away long ago without leaving the slightest trace."

"Unfortunately I had not learned that until you had fallen ill," he said; "and the address, which you gave to my landlady, was not your present one. But in spite of all difficulties I have known how to find you."

And a warm light was breaking from his eyes, as if these simple words contained

the most ardent declaration of love.

"I, too, have been ill during the past months - morally ill. And it is to - that is to our strange meeting in the park, that I am indebted for such speedy recovery after so violent a crisis."

And as if by this confession a burden had been lifted from his soul, he now, fully and freely, raised his passionate brown eyes, which entered Else's heart like warm sun-beams. Yet she tried hard not to succumb to the sweet enchantment of those flashes and to resist the old spell when resistance was yet possible.

"You too have been - ill?" she then said, voluntarily misunderstanding him, while she looked at him inquiringly. What she saw in his face did more to moderate her jealous indignation than words could have done, and her compassion was aroused.

"Yes," she answered gloomily, "I was the

Tannhäuser of old, beguiled into the mountain of Venus; and the short intoxication robbed me in a few months of the earnings of five hard years of labor. This very summer I hoped to visit my mother in Germany, but all has come to naught now — youth and strength, money and position — and all that had remained to me of courage and self-confidence." — He sighed and then continued with painfully contracted eye-brows:

"I hoped, however, that holy Elisabeth would obtain my pardon from my mother, for a modern Tannhäuser does not care for that of the church — —"

"You forget that you are talking to me in riddles," interrupted the girl with a sad smile; "there is no need of the intercession of saints with a mother — as she is herself a saint in long-sufferance and

loving forgiveness. And in order to make her forget her sufferings, there is need of nothing but your own manly resolution, to repair the past as much as possible. Everyone must work out his own salvation."

"That I will try to do indeed," replied the young man with a firm voice. "And I hope that the poison has not so wholly penetrated my system that the pure hand of a girl could not heal me. I did not appreciate true womanhood, until I lay in the dust before its unworthy caricature."

"To vacillate between two idols!" You ought to know, however, that it depends less on the worth of the beloved object than on the depth and truth of ones own feelings. What can now prevent you from giving to yourself the sanction of the laws?"

"All that makes a man a man:

Honor, pride and self respect. Ah, my Fräulein! least of all you have the right to reproach me with my lucky disenchantment. For it was Liska's attack upon you in the park which, with the rapidity of lightning, opened my eyes to the steepness of the road, on which I was gliding down to destruction. Yes, that Liesel came very near making a — beast of me, and that is much worse than to become a stone; for a stone, at least, has no recollection of its degradation. Happily my eyes were opened at the moment of greatest danger; I have, at least, retained my humanity, although not an unblemished character."

"A mother who fights for the possession of her child," Elsa said earnestly, almost solemnly, "by no means deserves of such contemptuous comparison — least of all from a woman on whose protection and help she has counted."

"Protection and help?" And he laughed so bitterly that it sounded like a curse, while the veins of anger were swelling up on his forehead: "I was a plaything in her hands – at least in the beginning, and then a useful tool, such as she hoped to make of you and of dozens of others; for intriguing and plotting are the conditions of her life. –

"I struggled long against this conviction, but finally I was forced to recognize the truth: She was as little faithful to me as she was to her husband. – And of what other use could I be to her after she had ruined me financially? Yes, my Pauline, that very evening, when I stopped at my former boarding-house a moment without leaving my address, I was going to New-York to try my last chance at gambling and – to lose my last dollar. – The tool was worn out and could therefore be thrown away.

"How and where I have lived since – no matter! I shall recover, if you will lend me a helping hand and lift me up into your pure altitude."

He stretched forth his arms entreatingly, but he dropped them again, as if he feared to be ejected anew.

But it was not anger that might be read in Elsa's countenance, but gentle commiseration and a sweet bashful womanly affection.

"What can a poor girl like I do for your recovery?" she whispered with a lovely blush.

"Tell me that I may remain with you in friendly correspondence, if I should return to the West to try my luck there again."

"I even ask you for it, dear Wilden! For I, too, have wrongs to repair."

He understood her allusion and answered cheerfully:

"By no means, my Fräulein! I have long

ago ceased to be that foolish boy who believed himself insulted for life – time because a girl had given him a box on the ear. On the contrary, the recollection of that reserved truly maidenly bearing was in later years my safe-guard and protection against many temptations. But the consciousness of my defeat on that night after the ball preserved me from priding myself on my other victories, won all too easily. And on the other hand, my ambition became ever greater to prove to you one day – –"

He stopped and then continued – softly and with averted countenance:

"The spirit was willing enough, but the horrible isolation in an almost uninhabited desert – the want of books, of art, of every mental and moral encouragement – in short of everything that makes life worth living, at last became unbearable. – And when that wonderfully

enticing woman crossed my path of life -- I after a ride of thirty miles, undertaken in order to go to a theatre where I had not been for so long a time - - - Yet why tell you what you surely have divined long ago!

"The very first evening when I introduced myself to her with a bouquet of the rarest and most beautiful flowers, she succeeded so entirely to chain me to her triumphal chariot that I immediately gave up my situation and plans for the future in order to follow her from town to town. - At first we went to San-Francisco, then back again to Chicago and from there to the East, where, after the recovery of her child, I intended to make her my wife. For that she had not yet been legally separated from her husband and that she was the guilty party - that I did not know until I came here.

He paused to draw a deep breath, and after

that pushed back his thick wavy hair from his forehead. — Another hot day had risen over the red brick sea, and the maid-servant had just entered the room to let down the blinds.

Elsa looked at her watch.

"Almost half past ten," she said rising. "I have an important engagement and must therefore beg you to excuse me."

"You wish to get rid of me, to give me my dismissal," said the young man, rising likewise.

"By no means! But I must not be tardy and unpunctual where my whole material existence is at stake. I have some hopes of getting a position as travelling companion."

"To Europe?" and it sounded like a cry of terror.

"To Europe — and possibly still further," she replied with quiet composure.

"Now, after I have just found you again, after you have just pledged yourself to lay your healing hand upon my wounds!" And he looked at her reproachfully.

"If the thought of your mother is not the most powerful remedy, Mr. Wilden!" she answered, "then everything else will be of no avail."

"What? — you cast me off a second time? Be careful, my Fräulein! The first time it was only my arm that was hurt, to-day it might be something more valuable. — But no matter! You are just as inapproachable now as ever, and you enshroud yourself in the mantle of your virtue exactly as you did when first I met you."

And without looking at her he took up his hat and came from the chair, and then he stood before her — frowning and, as it were, in defiance, as if he expected to hear

a word that would make it impossible ever to return to her.

He was very handsome in his light-grey summer-suit, and it seemed to Elsa as if his stately figure had become a few inches taller, so far did it he seem to tower above her. — She, too, was feeling that something decisive was coming to her lips, yet she trembled so as hardly to be capable of articulating a sound. She was near crying and declined herself to be sinking into the ground from anger and shame at so much weakness.

The young man, however, did not seem to notice her great agitation, as if the greenish twilight of the room, or his own emotion, prevented him from reading in her face.

"Herr Wilden!" came at last from her quivering lips, "I am not vain enough to regard your confidence in my efficiency at

healing, as anything but an enormous responsibility — and this at a moment when the care for my younger sisters claims my undivided attention."

"For your younger sisters?"

"Yes; they are orphans now, at the mercy of the whims of relatives and acquaintances, and upon me, the eldest, they look as they would upon a second mother. Judge for yourself if I would be justified in abandoning them and thus making them orphans a second time."

Her voice was stifled by sobs. Oppressed Nature had finally broken her fetters.

Never had he seen her so gentle, so weak, and the sight of her utter loss of self-control seemed entirely to overpower him. Dropping her hand he caught her clasped both her hands in his, without meeting with any resistance on her part.

"I, too, shall be a support to them, provided you will grant me the right to do so. Yes, certainly, I swear it to you, although, just now, I am little more than a beggar. Yet I am young, and – heaven be thanked! – still healthy and hale enough to commence a new life. And if you will follow me to the West where the courageous and industrious may acquire home and wealth – you will see what you – and you alone, are able to make of me.

The girl was deeply moved by the passionate but respectfully reserved bearing of her friend; yet she only wept the more, shaking her head deprecatingly as if it were a sin to believe in so much happiness.

"The welfare of my sisters must not be at the mercy of chance," she said gently and sadly. "Yet I shall never forget your kindness and generosity and I will try to be near you

in spirit even though in reality I be far away. And if it be true indeed that I have some influence over you, you must prove it by accepting this our spiritual companionship and be yourself strong and courageous as is becoming to a man and a good son."

"Oh, you can never realize the terrible loneliness of life on the frontier of civilization! or you would try to make it endurable for one from mere pity, if from nothing else."

"For to-day I must beg you to leave me!" the girl whispered, trembling lest her courage should fail her under the spell of his appealing accents.

"Only for to-day?"

"Certainly! For why should I go away without a word or greeting, that is provided I get the position and go to Europe."

"Then we shall never see each other again!"

"Then we shall never see each other again, unless you yourself no longer care for it."

"That will never happen, I assure you! Oh that I still had the earnings of my five years labor and could follow you."

"How your poor mother would rejoice at this!"

She felt how much she hurt him by her last remark and suffered herself from it.

"Poor, good mother! he whispered and did not try to check the tears that trickled down his sunburnt cheeks. "But I shall try to repair the loss! And Heaven will have mercy on me and not let it be too late."

"That is a manly word," rejoined the girl with beaming eyes, while she gave him both her hands for a fare-well.

"Then a speedy success to you, Herr Wilden!"

"And a speedy revoir," he supplemented smiling. "May I come again this afternoon to take

you to the park?"

"Yes," she whispered with down-cast eyes. And the young man took his leave with a firm step and proudly uplifted head.

Chapter XXVII.

Else was very much surprised when, on calling on the family to whom Mrs. Hecker had recommended her, she was received by the little quakeress who, the previous winter, had sympathised with Else, when the latter had tried to give her first lesson at Miss Slade's boarding school.

Else was delighted when she heard that Miss Slade, too, had spoken in her favor when Mrs. Thompson, the mother of the little quakeress, had asked her advice as to the expediency of engaging a governess and travelling companion for her trip to Europe, neither she, nor her eldest daughter Julia, knowing German enough to get along.

Besides Julia, Miss Slade's pupil, there were three younger children in the family, ranging from seven to fourteen years. — It would be hard work and a great deal of responsibility, Elsa thought to herself, but she was not afraid of it and took the more readily to her future patroness, as she was spared all disagreeable discussions about money matters, Mrs. Thompson having told her at once what she was willing to pay for the services required; and Elsa, although little experienced in matters of finance, found the offered remuneration very generous. — —

It was a beautiful afternoon which Elsa and her friend spent in the park, making plans for their joint future, playfully quarrelling and making up again. — Elsa sometimes feared she had was promising too much; but was it not right she should give her hand to the man who had held her heart for five years

without being aware of it? And her lover, the man to whom she was now engaged, was not slow to make the best of the occasion and urge Elsa on to set, approximatively at least, the time for their marriage.

This, however, the girl would and could not do, before returning to America, the time of which she could not fix since it did not depend upon her but upon the family to whom she had promised her services. – –

Thinking these matters over, Elsa, the next day, was sitting once more in her little room, when a visitor was announced. – One moment her cheeks became flushed, thinking it might be her friend, although she had forbidden him to call in the fore-noon. But asking the servant as to the visitors name and looks, she was told he was a stranger and begged Miss Heller's excuse for not sending up his

card. —

Going down to the parlor, Elsa, at once, recognised Mr. Swinton, the theatrical manager, although she had long forgotten him, or only remembered him like a vision in a dream, neither the man, nor her momentary fancy for the stage having left a lasting impression.

Seeing by her manner that she was neither agreeably nor disagreeably surprised at meeting him again, Mr. Swinton spoke first on general topics — the weather, the early heat, the approaching end of the business season. — Yes, life was a struggle for everybody, especially as people often had to make the greatest effort to make up for miscalculations and blunders. He, too, had been guilty of such blunders, especially last December, for then a star had appeared before him, and he had been too blind to recognize it; nor was

be aware of this, until he again had seen Miss Heller, i.e. on the plat-form of the court-room.—

"Why, she had had the look and bearing of a heroine of tragedy, the more unmistakably, as it was entirely unstudied and natural.

He had gone there to see Liska, his former pupil; but when Miss Heller appeared on the scene he heard and saw nothing but her, feeling deeply grieved he had not before had an occasion of seeing her in such a queenly attitude. In short, would she once more consider her former request to him to becoming an actress under his tuition and management, and if so, he hoped she would find his propositions as to the pinancial part highly satisfactory.

Else smiled as she remembered her agitation in presence of this magnate, and in feeling gratefully the serene calm of her soul and the henceforward unmistakable path of duty

she had to wander.

Eyeing the manager, who seemed to have changed sides with her and to have come more like a solicitor than a patron, she said affably:

"I thank you very much, Mr. Swinton, for your kind intentions, but having been in the public eye so much against my will and inclination, I hope to be spared a similar ordeal in the future, be it in play or be it in earnest. Besides this I have no more talent for the stage now than I had last winter, and the world is already bountiful of mediocrities of all kinds."

"Ah, then it is true that the young gentleman, who put himself forward so gallantly in vindication of your honor, has prevailed upon you to unite your fate to his in the future," Mr. Swinton said with a slight mockery in his tone and mien. "But Lisha also was married before she went on the stage.

stud as for you, you may be sorry some day for having given up the chance you now have, the more so since such a starring tour as I intended to arrange for you by next September, may not present itself a second time."

"I do understand you, Mr. Swinton, and know full well that having missed this chance, I never shall get another; for it is not my doubtful talent, which you wished to recall, but the unfortunate popularity I have attained during the past week. — You see, Mr. Swinton, that I am no longer the inexperienced girl that I was at our first interview, although it is not long since I have learnt to know more of the world and the motives underlying human action, but by suffering. — As it is, however, I mean to profit by all the hard and harsh lessons I received from nearly everybody and I am thankful for my schooling."

"Well, Miss Keller, as you seem to have gained judgement and wisdom beyond your years, I will be frank and candid with you. — Yes, it was your popularity I was seeking first of all, thinking it great enough to carry you safely, for a season at least, over that slippery ground, the stage. — By that time you might have had sufficient training to stand on your own merit, and so, perhaps, to reach distinction apart from notoriety. — At all events I offer you 200 dollars a week, all travelling expenses paid, beginning next September if you will consent to make with me the tour of the United States and, perhaps, of Canada."

"I thank you, Mr. Swinton; it is a splendid offer; and considering what I might do with the money, it would have been a great temptation to me but a little while ago; now, however, it is so no longer. I have

pledged my future to hard work with only a moderate, but probably more permanent remuneration and — — "

"I will give you two hundred and fifty, if you will but accept it, or state your own conditions, Miss Keller!"

"Enough, enough, Mr. Swinton. I shall sail for Europe on Wednesday next, and as I have yet a great many preparations to make, I must beg you to excuse me and not to discuss the matter any further."

Mr. Swinton rose, and eying the girl admiringly, he said slowly:

"You can think the matter over for a day or two. I will not consider your decision final as yet."

"You had better do so," Elsa answered firmly; "but I thank you just the same for your kind intentions and wish you a

prosperous season."

"I am sorry, Miss Heller, to have found you so inaccessible; but having tried my best and that to no avail, there remains for me but one thing to say, and that is that I admire your character and envy the man who will win such a jewel."

Elsa blushed but said nothing, and the manager bowed politely and was gone the next moment.

Chapter XXVIII.

It was not merely shame, as Elsa probably believed, that the events hurried one another toward the end of the season. — Since she was obliged to be on board the North German Lloyd Steamer the following Wednesday, her time and attention were fully taken up by the necessary preparations. — All further news of

Mr. Cornelius's suit for divorce that reached her, affected her only like distant heat-lightening, without making any impression upon her. She was fully occupied with all her sewing and packing and besides she had many farewell letters to write and visitors to receive. — If some of these were curious to see how the recent occurrances had affected the girl, they did not get the satisfaction of detecting anything to satisfy their curiosity, neither on mentioning Mr. Cornelius, nor when they spoke of Lisha Krakowitza, the actress.

Mr. Cornelius succeeded in proving not only that his wife had run away with a rich New-York banker, but that she had been on more than intimate terms with the same, and squandered truly fabulous sums that he had placed at her disposition for her toilet and intrigues.

Thus Mr. Cornelius was now not only legally free, but also allowed to keep his child, a right which he could only have forfeited in case of adultery. – –

It was Miss Cornelius herself who had imparted this news to Elsa Heller. For since the spinster no longer had any fear of losing her bread-winner she had become by far more communicative and amiable to the young girl. She even went so far as to pay her some compliments before taking her leave from her.

Elsa, for some seconds, looked after her with sad feelings, and then felt much relief from the thought that the time was now over when in the loneliness of her heart, she had tried to gather roses from a thorn-bush.

But she thought with great anxiety of Mrs. Bittersweet. She would have been glad to learn, before her departure, something as to the

whereabouts of the widow's daughter — not to speak of the diamonds and bank-notes, which the afflicted woman seemed to have already forgotten.

Unfortunately the two fugitives had not left the slightest trace behind them; yet it seemed probable that they intended to make the tour of the Central-American Isles and the states of South-America during the following autumn. For anybody, who had heard Minnie Eugenie play the piano shortly before her disappearance, doubted the great progress she had made under the direction of the talented Slav.

Mrs. Bittersweet would never speak otherwise of the abductor of her child as of her foster-father, as if she wanted to remove every suspicion in regard to improper relations between them. She also repeatedly

expressed her hope that her daughter, tired of the tyrannies and jealousies of the elderly musicians, would one day return to her mother.

When Elsa, on the eve of her departure, was driven to the depot, she was joyfully surprised to find there nearly all her German acquaintances, although of some she had already taken her leave before starting. Besides Mr. Cornelius and his little daughter, Miss. Bittersweet and Dr. Oldenberg, there was also the youngest Miss Stecher with a friendly farewell greeting from her father. Touched Elsa and misted her joy, and little Lalie presented her with a large bouquet of red and yellow rose-buds, at the same time expressing her hope that "aunt Elsie" would bring her from Europe a book full of the most wonderful fairy-tales.

Elsa's eyes filled with tears, and also-

her friends seemed deeply moved, especially the two gentlemen who, according to the laws of human nature, did not recognize the value of anything until another had taken possession of it.

This "other", it is true, was not among them, but all were aware of his modestly observing the scene from a distance, and Elsa felt it without having a single time looked in his direction.

And after the signal for boarding the train had been given, Mr. Wilden, first of all, left his place to enter the car nearest him. The others, however, after a final farewell, retreated slowly, waving their handkerchiefs and crying: "Glückliche Reise!"

Mrs. Bittersweet was sobbing aloud, and the gentlemen once more lifted their hats before the train carried away their friend. — Dr.

Ohlenberg spoke even louder and more emphatically than he usually did – and Mr. Cornelius had a far away, dreamy look, as if he were oblivious to all that was going on.

The parting girl looked after them a few seconds and then turned away to find a place for herself and her hand-baggage.

Honestly and conscientiously as she was in the habit of not only examining others but also herself, she had to admit that among all these loud or quiet manifestations of friendship, there were some grains of a true and lasting sentiment. Many painful experiences had she had in the Quaker-City, but despite of them she had learned to value a great many things which, in the beginning, had been repulsive to her on account of their unattractive form.

This knowledge made her more lenient and forgiving than she would have thought

possible a short while ago. Even of her treacherous friend she could not think without a pang of longing; for the charm of beauty often operates after all esteem and confidence has gone. Thinking of her once adored Lisha, she could not help seeking for all sorts of excuses and mitigating circumstances, especially by underrating her own value in the same degree as she was wont to overrate the thoughts and motives of other people.

Even the passionate adoration of the friend of her youth, had not been able to give Elsie a truer estimation of her own worth. Wilden felt warm and fervently, but it yet remained to be seen whether he was faithful too. —

Hardly had she thought this, when he already stood before her, cheerful and manly, looking at her with eyes sparkling with

love and life, so that hers began to shine from blissful confidence, like the sun rising over storm-beaten spring-flowers.

So happy was she in his presence, that she hardly noticed the stopping of the train, its taking in new passengers and gradually rolling off again.

"Now you are going after all I did and said to keep you back," the young man said, sitting down beside her.

"Because you are a foolish child" she replied smiling, "unable to understand that only in our temporary separation lies the way to our future union."

"Oh, it is easy enough for you to preach," he panted; "for you cannot understand what it is to take up again the yoke of work and intellectual deprivation out West."

"You ought not to talk so, Heinrich! for

work is salvation as long as we remain conscious of a good end! — But if some siren should again approach you to lure you with her singing into the abyss — —"

"Never!" he declared with the confidence of an immovable conviction; "even though I should have to wait a year for your return."

"And if it were two — if it were — five?" she interposed with a roguish smile.

"Yes, even if it were five years! Yet I shall do my best that it will not last half as long; for you must bring your sisters back with you and we both shall take care of them."

"We shall at all events," she rejoined with moist eyes; "but first of all you must promise me to constantly keep your good mother informed as to your whereabouts and doings and to justify all the fine things that I am going to tell her about you, your

Circe

Circe — episode excepted, of course." And she playfully threatened with her finger.

"Jane may tell her all," he answered gravely. "For he who has never known what it is to go astray, should not consider himself proof against danger. I cannot be thankful enough that I have been delivered from my shameful enchantment, by the "Unvergeßliche," the pure love of a true maiden, such love as can make one feel at home in every country — drawing us onward — onward and upward to where there is no parting."

And then they clasped each others hands in perfect confidence, which, being the essence and not a mere semblance of things, is sure of the present and the future and not subject to the limitations of space and time.—

So they felt and so it was; for when Else returned to America the following spring,

Heinrich Wilden had meanwhile been so successful in his enterprises that he, in part, was owner of a silver-mine in Arizona, the management of which enabled him to offer to Elsa a hearth and home and to come himself to New-York to take her West with him — his wedded wife.

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