Barbara Blomberg — Complete

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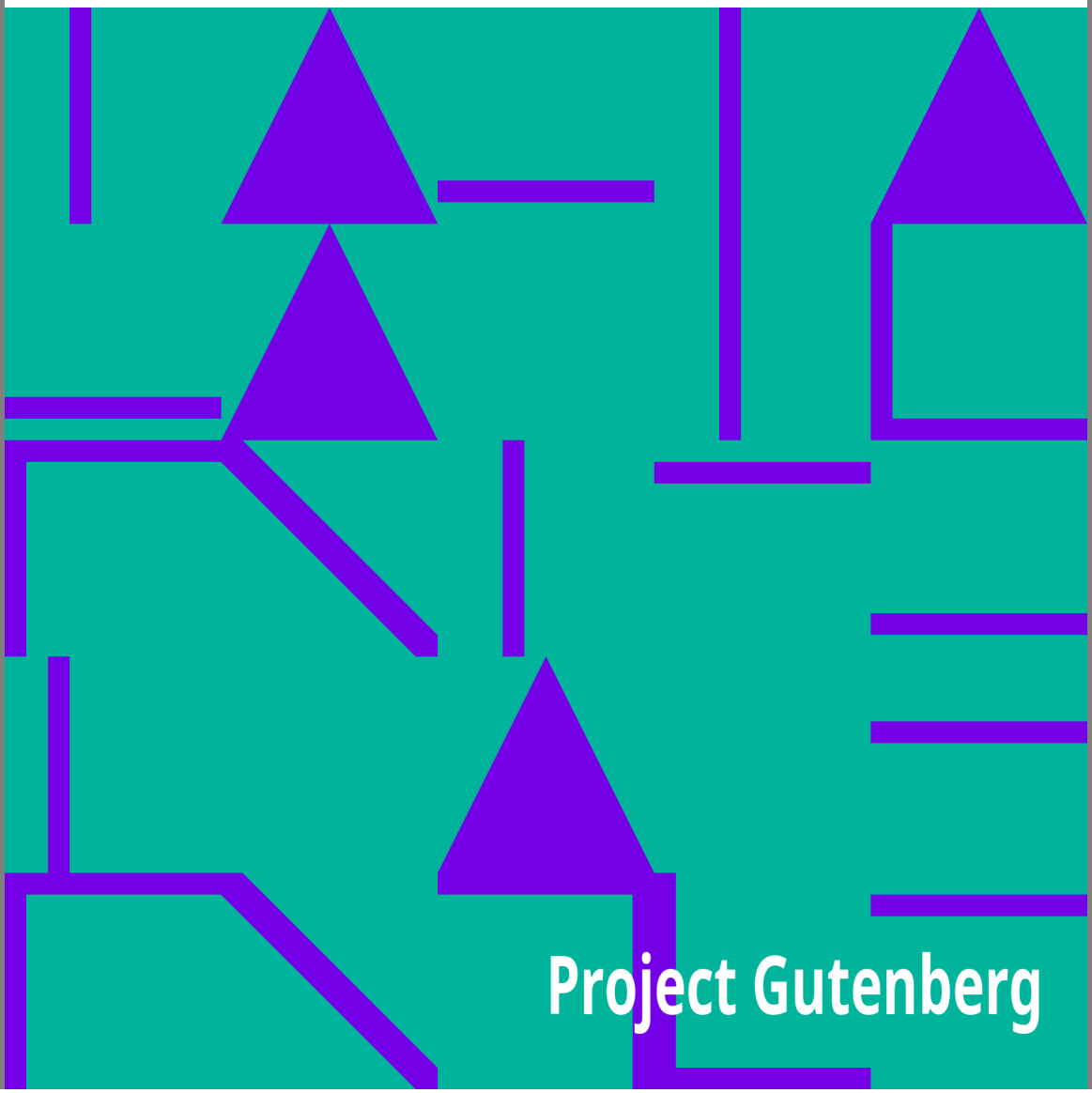

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BARBARA BLOMBERG

By Georg Ebers

Translated from the German by Mary J. Safford

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BOOK 1.

CHAPTER I.

The sun sometimes shone brightly upon the little round panes of the ancient building, the Golden Cross, on the northern side of the square, which the people of Ratisbon call “on the moor”; sometimes it was veiled by gray clouds. A party of nobles, ecclesiastics, and knights belonging to the Emperor’s train were just coming out. The spring breeze banged behind them the door of the little entrance for pedestrians close beside the large main gateway.

The courtiers and ladies who were in the chapel at the right of the corridor started. “April weather!” growled the corporal of the Imperial Halberdiers to the comrade with whom he was keeping; guard at the foot of the staircase leading to the apartments of Charles V, in the second story of the huge old house.

“St. Peter’s day,” replied the other, a Catalonian. “At my home fresh strawberries are now growing in the open air and roses are blooming in the gardens. Take it all in all, it’s better to be dead in Barcelona than alive in this accursed land of heretics!”

“Come, come,” replied the other, “life is life! ‘A live dog is better than a dead king,’ says a proverb in my country.”

“And it is right, too,” replied the Spaniard. “But ever since we came here our master’s face looks as if imperial life didn’t taste exactly like mulled wine, either.”

The Netherlander lowered his halberd and answered his companion’s words first with a heavy sigh, and then with the remark: “Bad weather upstairs as well as down—the very worst! I’ve been in the service thirteen years, but I never saw him like this, not even after the defeat in Algiers. That means we must keep a good lookout. Present halberds! Some one is coming down.”

Both quickly assumed a more erect attitude, but the Spaniard whispered to his comrade: “It isn’t he. His step hasn’t sounded like that since the gout __”

“Quijada!” whispered the Netherlander, and both he and the man from Barcelona presented halberds with true military bearing; but the staves of their descending weapons soon struck the flags of the pavement again, for a woman’s voice had detained the man whom the soldiers intended to salute, and in his place two slender lads rushed down the steps.

The yellow velvet garments, with ash-gray facings, and cap of the same material in the same colours, were very becoming to these youths—the Emperor’s pages—and, though the first two were sons of German and Italian counts, and the third who followed them was a Holland baron, the sentinels took little more notice of them than of Queen Mary’s pointers following swiftly at their heels.

“Of those up there,” observed the halberdier from Haarlem under his breath, “a man would most willingly stiffen his back for Quijada.”

“Except their Majesties, of course,” added the Catalonian with dignity.

“Of course,” the other repeated. “Besides, the Emperor Charles himself bestows every honour on Don Luis. I was in Algiers at the time. A hundred more like him would have made matters different, I can tell you. If it beseemed an insignificant fellow like me, I should like to ask why his Majesty took him from the army and placed him among the courtiers.”

Here he stopped abruptly, for, in spite of the gaily dressed nobles and ladies, priests, knights, and attendants who were passing up and down the corridor, he had heard footsteps on the stairs which must be those of men in high position. He was not mistaken—one was no less a personage than the younger Granvelle, the Bishop of Arras, who, notwithstanding his nine-and-twenty years, was already the favourite counsellor of Charles V; the other, a man considerably his senior, Dr. Mathys, of Bruges, the Emperor’s physician.

The bishop was followed by a secretary clad in black, with a portfolio under his arm; the leech, by an elderly assistant.

The fine features of the Bishop of Arras, which revealed a nature capable of laughter and enjoyment, now looked as grave as his companion’s—a fact which by no means escaped the notice of the courtiers in the corridor, but no one ventured to approach them with a question, although—it had begun to rain again—they stopped before going out of doors and stood talking together in low tones.

Many would gladly have caught part of their conversation, but no one dared to move nearer, and the Southerners and Germans among them did not understand the Flemish which they spoke.

Not until after the leech had raised his tall, pointed hat and the statesman had pressed his prelate's cap closer upon his short, wavy dark hair and drawn his sable-trimmed velvet cloak around him did several courtiers hasten forward with officious zeal to open the little side door for them.

Something must be going wrong upstairs.

Dr. Mathys's jovial face wore a very different expression when his imperial patient was doing well, and Granvelle always bestowed a friendly nod on one and another if he himself had cause to be content.

When the door had closed behind the pair, the tongues of the ecclesiastics, the secular lords, and the ladies in the corridor were again loosed; but there were no loud discussions in the various languages now mingling in the Golden Cross, far less was a gay exclamation or a peal of laughter heard from any of the groups who stood waiting for the shower to cease.

Although each individual was concerned about his own affairs, one thought, nevertheless, ruled them all—the Emperor Charles, his health, and his decisions. Upon them depended not only the destiny of the world, but also the weal and woe of the greatest as well as the humblest of those assembled here.

"Emperor Charles" was the spell by which the inhabitants of half the world obtained prosperity or ill-luck, war or peace, fulfilment or denial of the wishes which most deeply stirred their souls. Even the highest in the land, who expected from his justice or favour fresh good-fortune or the averting of impending disasters, found their way to him wherever, on his long and numerous journeys, he established his court.

Numerous petitioners had also flocked to Ratisbon, but the two great nobles who now entered the Golden Cross certainly did not belong to their number. One shook the raindrops from his richly embroidered velvet cloak and the plumes in his cap, the other from his steel helmet and suit of Milan mail, inlaid with gold. Chamberlain de Praet accosted the former, Duke Peter of Columna, in Italian; the latter, the Landgrave of Leuchtenberg, in a mixture of German and his Flemish native tongue. He had no occasion to

say much, for the Emperor wished to be alone. He had ordered even crowned heads and ambassadors to be denied admittance.

The Duke of Columna gaily begged for a dry shelter until the shower was over, but the Landgrave requested to be announced to the Queen of Hungary.

The latter, however, had also declined to grant any audiences that afternoon. The royal lady, the Emperor's favourite sister, was in her own room, adjoining her imperial brother's, talking with Don Luis Quijada, the brave nobleman of whom the Spanish and the Netherland soldiers had spoken with equal warmth.

His personal appearance rendered it an easy matter to believe in the sincerity of their words, for the carriage of his slender, vigorous form revealed all the pride of the Castilian noble. His face, with its closely cut pointed beard, was the countenance of a true warrior, and the expression of his black eyes showed the valiant spirit of a loyal, kind, and simple heart.

The warm confidence with which Mary, the widow of the King of Hungary, who fell in the Turkish war, gazed into Quijada's finely modelled, slightly bronzed countenance proved that she knew how to estimate his worth aright. She had sent for him to open her whole heart.

The vivacious woman, a passionate lover of the chase, found life in Ratisbon unendurable. She would have left the city long ago to perform her duties in the Netherlands—which she ruled as regent in the name of her imperial brother—and devote herself to hunting, to her heart's content, if the condition of the monarch's health had not detained her near him.

She pitied Charles because she loved him, yet she was weary of playing the sick nurse.

She had just indignantly informed Quijada what an immense burden of work, in spite of the pangs of the gout, her suffering brother had imposed upon himself ever since the first cock-crow. But he would take no better care of himself, and therefore it was difficult to help him. Was it not utterly unprecedented? Directly after mass he had examined dozens of papers, made notes on the margins, and affixed his signature; then he received Father Pedro de Soto, his confessor, the nuncio, the English and the Venetian ambassadors; and, lastly, had an interview with young Granvelle, the Bishop of Arras, which had continued three full hours, and perhaps might be going on still had not Dr. Mathys, the leech, put an end to it.

Queen Mary had just found him utterly exhausted, with his face buried in his hands.

“And you, too,” she added in conclusion, “can not help admitting that if this state of things continues there must be an evil end.”

Quijada bent his head in assent, and then answered modestly:

“Yet your Majesty knows our royal master’s nature. He will listen calmly to you, whom he loves, or to me, who was permitted to remain at his side as a page, or probably to the two Granvelles, Malfalconnet, and others whom he trusts, when they venture to warn him—”

“And yet keep on in his mad career,” interrupted Queen Mary with an angry gesture of the hand.

“Plus ultra—more, farther—is his motto,” observed Quijada in a tone of justification.

“Forward ceaselessly, for aught I care, so long as the stomach and the feet are sound!” replied the Queen, raising her hand to the high lace ruff, which oppressed the breathing of one so accustomed to the outdoor air. “But when, like him, a man must give up deer-stalking and at every movement makes a wry face and can scarcely repress a groan—it might move a stone to pity!—he ought to choose another motto. Persuade him to do so, Quijada, if you are really his friend.”

The smile with which the nobleman listened to this request plainly showed the futility of the demand.

The Queen noticed it, threw her arm aloft as if she were hurling a hunting spear, and exclaimed “I’m not easily deceived, Luis. Whether you could or not, the will is lacking. You shun the attempt! Because you are young yourself, and can still cope with the bear and wild boar, you like the motto, which will probably lead to new wars, and thereby to fresh renown. But, alas! my poor, poor brother, who—how long ago it is!—could once have thrown even you upon the sand, what can he do, with this accursed gout? And besides, what more can the Emperor Charles gain, since there is no chance of obtaining the sovereignty of the world, of which he once dreamed? He must learn to be content! Surely at his age! It is easy to calculate, for his life began with the century, and this is its forty-sixth year. Of course, with you soldiers the years of warfare count double, and he—Duke Alba said so—was born a general. One need not be able to reckon far

in order to number how many months he has spent in complete peace. And then he attained his majority at fifteen, and with what weighty cares the man of the ‘plus ultra’ has loaded his shoulders since that time! You, and many others at the court, had still more to do, but, Luis, one thing, and it is the hardest burden, you were all spared. I know it. It is called responsibility. Compared with this all others are mere fluttering feathers. Its weight may become unendurable when the weal and woe of half the world are at stake. Thus every year of government was equal to three of war; but you, Luis—the question is allowable when put to a man-how old are you?”

“Within a few months of forty.”

“So young!” cried the Queen. “Yet, when one looks at you closely, your appearance corresponds with your years.”

Quijada pointed to the gray locks on his temples, but the Queen eagerly continued:

“I noticed that at Brussels. And do you know what gave you those few white hairs? Simply the responsibility that so cruelly shortened the Emperor’s youth, and which at least grazes you. As I saw him to-day, Luis, many a man of sixty has a more vigorous appearance.”

“And yet, if your Majesty will permit me to say so,” Quijada replied with a low bow, “he may be in a very different condition to-morrow. I heard Dr. Mathys himself remark that the life of a gouty patient was like a showery day in July—gloomy enough while the thunder-storm was raging, but radiant before and afterward until the clouds rose again. Surely your Majesty remembers how erect, how vigorous, and how knightly his bearing was when he greeted you on your arrival. The happiness of having his beloved sister again restored his paralyzed buoyancy speedily enough, although just at present there is certainly no lack of cares pressing upon him, and notwithstanding the disastrous conditions which we found existing among the godless populace here. That this cruel responsibility, however, can mature the mind without harming the body your Majesty is a living example.”

“Nonsense!” retorted the regent in protest. “From you, at least, I forbid idle flattery!”

As she spoke she pointed with the riding whip, which, on account of her four-footed favourites, she carried in her hand, to her own hair. True, so far as it was visible under the stiff jewelled velvet cap which covered her head,

the fair tresses had a lustrous sheen, and the braids, interwoven with pearls, were unusually thick, but a few silver threads appeared amid the locks which clustered around the intellectual brow.

Quijada saw them, and, with a respectful bow, answered.

“The heavy burden of anxiety for the Netherlands, which is not always rewarded with fitting gratitude.”

“Oh, no,” replied the Queen, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. “Yes, many things in Brussels rouse my indignation, but they do not turn my hair gray. It began to whiten up here, under the widow’s cap, if you care to know it, and, if the Emperor’s health does not improve, the locks there will soon look like my white Diana’s.”

Here she hesitated, and, accustomed both in the discharge of the duties of her office and during the chase not to deviate too far from the goal she had in view, she first gave her favourite dog, which had leaped on Don Luis in friendly greeting, a blow with her whip, and then said in a totally different tone:

“But I am not the person in question. You have already heard that you must help me, Luis. Did you see the Emperor yesterday after vespers?”

“I had the honour, your Majesty.”

“And did not the conviction that he is in evil case force itself upon you?”

“I felt it so keenly that I spoke to Dr. Mathys of his feeble appearance, his bowed figure, and the other things which I would so gladly have seen otherwise.”

“And these things? Speak frankly!”

“These things,” replied the major-domo, after a brief hesitation, “are the melancholy moods to which his Majesty often resigns himself for hours.”

“And which remind you of Queen Juana, our unhappy mother?” asked the Queen with downcast eyes.

“Remind is a word which your Majesty will permit me to disclaim,” replied Quijada resolutely. “The great thinker, who never loses sight of the most distant goal, who weighs and considers again and again ere he determines upon the only right course in each instance—the great general who understands how to make far-reaching plans for military campaigns as ably as to direct a cavalry attack—the statesman whose penetration pierces

deeper than the keen intelligence of his famous councillors—the wise law-giver, the ruler with the iron strength of will and unfailing memory, is perhaps the soundest person mentally among all of us at court-nay, among the millions who obey him. But, so far as my small share of knowledge extends, melancholy has nothing to do with the mind. It is dependent upon the state of the spirits, and springs from bile——"

"You learned that from Dr. Mathys," interrupted the royal lady, "and the quacks repeat it from their masters Hippocrates and Galen. Such parrot gabble does not please me. To my woman's reason, it seems rather that when the mind is ill we should try a remedy whose effect upon it has already been proved, and I think I have found it."

"I am still ignorant of it," replied Quijada eagerly; "but I would swear by my saint that you have hit upon the right expedient."

"Listen, then, and this time I believe you will have no cause to repent your hasty oath. Since death robbed our sovereign lord of his wife, and the gout has prevented his enjoyment of the chief pleasures of life—hunting, the tournament, and the other pastimes which people of our rank usually pursue—in what can he find diversion? The masterpieces of painters and other artists, the inventions of mechanicians and clock-makers, and the works of scholars have no place here, but probably——"

"Then it is the noble art of music which your Majesty has in view," Quijada eagerly interrupted. "Admirable! For, since the days of King Saul and the harper David——"

"There is certainly no better remedy for melancholy," said the Queen, completing the exclamation of the loyal man. "But it could affect no one more favourably than the Emperor. You yourself know how keen a connoisseur he is, and how often this has been confirmed by our greatest masters. Need I remind you of the high mass in Cologne, at which the magnificent singing seemed fairly to reanimate him after the defection of the heretical archbishop—which threatens to have a disastrous influence upon my Netherlanders also—had robbed him of the last remnant of his enjoyment of life, already clouded? The indignation aroused by the German princes, and the difficult decision to which their conduct is forcing him, act upon his soul like poison. But hesitation is not in my nature, so I thought: Let us have music—good, genuine music. Then I sent a mounted messenger to order Gombert, the conductor of his orchestra, and the director of my

choir of boys, to bring their musicians to Ratisbon. The whole company will arrive this evening. Dash forward is my motto, and not only while in the saddle during the chase. But, Luis, you must now tell me—"

"That your Majesty's sisterly affection has discovered the only right course," cried Quijada, deeply touched, pressing his lips respectfully to the flowing sleeve of her robe.

The major—domo's assurance undoubtedly sprang from the depths of his heart, yet the doubts which the hasty action of the vivacious sovereign aroused in his mind compelled him to represent to her, though with the courteous caution which his position demanded, that her bold measure might only too easily arouse the displeasure of the person whom it was intended to benefit. The expense it would entail especially troubled Quijada, and the Queen herself appeared surprised when he estimated the sum which would be required for the transportation of the band and the boy choir from Brussels to Ratisbon and back again.

Forty musicians, twelve boy singers, the leaders, and the paymaster must be moved, and in their train were numerous grooms and attendants, as well as conveyances for the baggage and the valuable instruments.

Besides, the question of accommodation for this large number in the already crowded city now arose, for the Queen confessed that, in order to make the surprise complete, no one had been commissioned to find lodgings.

The musicians, who had displayed the most praiseworthy promptness, would arrive three days earlier than she had expected.

The royal lady readily admitted that the utmost haste was necessary. Yet she knew that, if any one could accomplish the impossible, it was Quijada, where the object in view was to serve her and the Emperor.

The influence of this eulogy was doubled by a tender glance from her bright eyes, and the Spaniard promised to do everything in his power to secure the success of her beautiful surprise. There would undoubtedly be difficulties with his Majesty and the treasurer on the score of the expense, for their finances were at the very lowest ebb.

"There is always the same annoyance where money is concerned," cried the Queen irritably, "in spite of the vast sums which my Netherlands pour into the treasury—four times as much as Spain supplies, including the gold

and silver of the New World. You keep it secret, but two fifths of the revenue from all the countries over which Charles reigns are contributed by my provinces. Torrents of ducats inundate your treasury, and yet—yet—it's enough to drive one mad!—in spite of this and the lamentable parsimony with which the Emperor deprives himself of both great and small pleasures—it is simply absurd!—the story is always: The finances are at the lowest ebb—save and save again. To protect the plumes in his new cap from being injured by the rain, the sovereign of half the world ordered an old hat to be brought, and waited in the shower until the shabby felt came. And where are the millions which this excellent economist saves from his personal expenses? The dragon War devours them all. True, he has vanquished foes enough, but the demon of melancholy, that makes even Dr. Mathys anxious, is far worse than the infidels before whom you were compelled to retreat in Algiers—far more terrible than the Turks and heretics combined. Yet what are you and the wise treasurer doing? The idea of lessening the salaries of the physician-in-ordinary and his colleagues has never entered the heads of the estimable gentlemen who call themselves his Majesty's faithful servants. Very well! Then put the musicians' travelling expenses upon the apothecary's bill. They have as much right to be there as the senna leaves. But, if the penny pinchers in the council of finance refuse to advance the necessary funds, why—charge this medicine to my account. I'll pay for it, in spite of the numerous leeches that suck my substance."

"It certainly will not come to that, your Majesty," replied Quijada soothingly. "Our sovereign lord knows, too, that it beseems him to be less rigid in saving. Only yesterday he dipped into his purse deeply enough for another remedy."

"What was that?" asked the Queen in surprise.

"He paid the debts of my colleague Malfalconnet, not less than ten thousand ducats."

"There it is!" exclaimed the regent, striking her hands sharply together. "The baron dispels the Emperor's melancholy by his ready wit, which often hits the nail on the head, and his nimble tongue, but my medicine must provide the fitting mood for Malfalconnet's dearly bought jests and witticisms to exert the proper influence."

"And, moreover," Quijada added gaily, "your Majesty will present the completed deed for the treasurer's action. But now I most humbly entreat

you to dismiss me. I must inform the quartermasters at once, and look after the matter myself if your Majesty's costly magic pills are not to be spoiled by this wet April weather. Besides, many of the musicians are not the strongest of men."

Bowing as he spoke, he prepared to take leave of the Queen, but she detained him with the remark:

"Our invitation went to Sir Wolf Hartschwert also. He is a native of Ratisbon, and can aid you and the quartermasters in assigning lodgings."

"A fresh proof of the wise caution of my august mistress," replied Quijada. "If your Majesty will permit, I should like to talk with my royal patroness about this man shortly. I have something in my mind concerning him which can not be easily explained in a few words, especially as I know that the modest, trustworthy fellow——"

"If what you have in view is for his benefit," the Queen eagerly interrupted, "it is granted in advance."

The promise reached Quijada just as he gained the threshold; ere he crossed it, Queen Mary called to him again, saying frankly: "I will not let you go so, Luis! You are an honest man, and I am ashamed to deceive you. The cure of his Majesty's melancholy is my principal object, it is true, but one half the expense of this medicine ought to be credited to me; for—but do not tell the treasurer—for it will afford me relief also. I can endure these rooms no longer. The forest is putting forth its first green leafage. The birds are returning. Red deer are plenty in the woods along the Danube. I must get out of doors into the open air. As matters are now, I could not leave his Majesty; but when the band and the boy choir are at his disposal, they will dispel his melancholy moods, and I can venture later to leave him to you and Malfalconnet, whose wit will be freshly seasoned by the payment of his debts. O Luis! if only I can get out of doors! Meanwhile, may music do for my imperial brother what we anticipate! And one thing more: Take Master Adrian with you. I released him from attendance upon the Emperor until midnight. It was no easy matter. When you have provided the favourites of Apollo with lodgings, come to me again, however late the hour may be. Sir Wolf Hartschwert must call early to-morrow morning. The nuncio brought some new songs from Rome. The music is too high for my voice, and the knight understands how to transpose the notes for me better than even the leader of the choir, Appenzelder."

CHAPTER II.

The April sun, ere it sank to rest, had won the victory and kindly dried the garments of the horsemen who were approaching Ratisbon by the Nuremberg road.

A young man who had ridden forward in advance of the great train of travellers behind him checked his steed above the village of Kneiting, just where the highway descended in many a curve to the valley of the Danube, and gazed at the landscape whose green spring leafage, freshened by rain, appeared before him.

His heart throbbed faster, and he thought that he had seen no fairer prospect in all the wide tract of earth over which he had wandered during the past five years. Below him were green meadows and fields, pleasant villages, and the clear, full current of the Danube, along whose left bank extended a beautifully formed mountain chain, whose declivity toward the river presented a rich variety to the eye, for sometimes it was clothed in budding groves, sometimes displayed picturesque bare cliffs, and again vineyards in which labourers were working. From the farthest distance the steeples of Ratisbon offered the first greeting to the resting horseman.

What a wealth of memories this pleasant landscape awoke in the mind of the returning traveller! How often he had walked through these charming valleys, climbed these heights, stopped in these villages! It was difficult for him to turn from this view, but he let his bay horse have its way when the companion whom he had left behind overtook him here, and the animal followed the other's black Brabant steed, with which it had long been on familiar terms. He rode slowly at his friend's side into the valley.

Both silently feasted their eyes upon the scene opening with increasing magnificence before them.

As they reached the village of Winzer, the victorious sun was approaching the western horizon, and diffused over it a fan of golden rays. The gray cloud bank above, which a light breeze was driving before it, was bordered with golden edges. The young green foliage, refreshed by the rain, glittered as richly and magnificently as emerald and chrysoprase, and the

primroses and other early spring flowers, which had just grown up along the roadside and in the meadows, shone in brighter colours than in the full light of noon. The big fresh drops on the leaves and blossoms sparkled and glittered in the last rays of the sun.

Now Ratisbon also appeared.

The city, with its throng of steeples, was surrounded by a damp vapour which the reflection of the sun coloured with a faint, scarcely perceptible roseate hue. The notes of bells from the twin towers of the cathedral and the convent of Nieder Munster, from St. Emmeram on the right, and the church of the Dominicans on the left, echoed softly in this hour when Nature and human activity were at rest—often dying away in the distance—to greet the returning citizen.

Obeying an involuntary impulse, Wolf Hartschwert raised his hat. Within the shelter of the walls of this venerable city he had played as a boy, completed his school and student days, and early felt the first quickened throbbing of the heart. Here he had first been permitted to test what knowledge he had won in the schools of poetry and music.

He had remained in Ratisbon until his twenty-first year, then he had ventured out into the world, and, after an absence of five years, he was returning home again.

But was the stately city before him really his home?

When he had just gazed down upon it from the height, this question had occupied his thoughtful mind.

He had not been born on the shore of this river, but of the Main. All who had been dearest to him in Ratisbon—the good people who had reared him from his fourth year as their own child, the woman who gave him birth, and the many others to whom he was indebted for kindnesses—were no longer there.

But why had he not thought first of the mother, who is usually the centre of the circle of love, and whose figure precedes every other, now that he was approaching the place where she rested beneath the turf? He asked himself the question with a faint feeling of self-reproach, but he did not confess the true reason.

When the summons to Ratisbon had reached him in Brussels, he had been joyously ready to obey it—nay, he had felt it a great happiness to see

again the beloved place for which he had never ceased to long. And yet, the nearer he approached it, the more anxiously his heart throbbed.

When, soon after noonday, the rain drenched him, he had experienced no discomfort, because such exquisite sunny visions of the future had hovered before him; but as the sky cleared they had shrivelled and doubt of the result of the decision which he was riding to meet had cast everything else into the shade.

Now the whole city appeared before him, and, as he looked at the cathedral, whose machicolated tower permitted the rosy hue of the sky to shine through, his heart rose again, and he gazed with grateful delight at the verdant spring attire of his home and the magnificence with which she greeted him; her returning son.

“Isn’t it beautiful here?” he asked, suddenly breaking the silence as he turned to Massi, the violinist, who rode at his side, and then was secretly grateful to him when, after a curt “Very pleasant,” he disturbed him with no further speech.

It was so delightful to listen to the notes of the bells, so familiar to him, whose pure tones had accompanied with their charming melody all his wanderings in childhood and youth. At the same time, the mood in which the best musical ideas came to him suddenly overpowered him. A new air, well worth remembering, pressed itself on him unbidden, and his excited imagination showed him in its train himself, and by his side, first, a romping, merry child, and then a girlish figure in the first budding charm of youth. He thought he heard her sing, and old, unforgotten notes of songs swiftly crowded out his own musical creations.

Every tone from the fresh red lips of the lovely fair-haired girl awakened a new memory. The past lived again, and, without his volition, transformed the image of the child of whom he had thought whenever he recalled his youthful days in Ratisbon into that of a lovely bride, with the myrtle wreath on her waving hair, while beside her he beheld himself with the wedding bouquet on his slashed velvet holiday doublet.

He involuntarily seized the saddlebag which contained the handsomest gift he had bought in Brussels for the person who had drawn him back to Ratisbon with a stronger power of attraction than anything else. If all went well, that very day, perhaps, he might have the right to call her his own.

These visions of the future aroused so joyous a feeling in his young soul that Massi, the violinist, read in his by no means mobile features what was passing in his mind. His cheery "Well, Sir Knight!" awakened his ever-courteous colleague and travelling companion from his dream, and, when the latter started and turned toward him, Alassi gaily continued: "To see his home and his family again does, indeed, make any man glad! The sight of yonder shining steeples and roofs seems to make your heart laugh, Sir Wolf, and, by Our Lady, you have good reason to bestow one or more candles upon her, for, besides other delightful things, a goodly heritage is awaiting you in Ratisbon."

Here he paused, for the sunny radiance vanished simultaneously from the sky and from his companion's face. The violinist, as if in apology, added: "Some trouble always precedes an inheritance, and who knows whether, in your case also, rumour did not follow the evil custom of lying or making a mountain out of a molehill?"

Wolf Hartschwert slightly shrugged his shoulders and calmly answered:

"It is all true about the heritage, Massi, and also the trouble, but it is unpleasant to hear you, too, call me 'Sir.' Let it drop for the future, if we are to be intimate. To others I shall, of course, be the knight or cavalier. You know what the title procures for a man, though your saying—

'Knightly Knightly rank with lack of land
More care than joy hath at command,'

is but too true. As for the heritage, an old friend has really named me in his will, but you must not expect that it is a large bequest. The man who left it to me was a plain person of moderate property, and I myself shall not learn until the next few days what I am to receive in addition to his modest house."

"The more it is, the more cordially I shall congratulate you," cried the violinist, and then looked back toward the other travellers.

Wolf did the same, and turned his horse. If he did not urge on the loiterers the gate, which was closed at nightfall, would need to be opened for them, for the five troopers who acted as escort had deemed their duty done when Winzer was reached, and made themselves comfortable in the excellent tavern there.

The carters had used the lash stoutly, yet it had been no easy matter to advance rapidly. The rain had softened the road, and the horses and beasts of burden were sorely wearied by the long trip from Brussels to Ratisbon, which had been made in hurried days' journeys. The train of horsemen and wagons stretched almost beyond the range of vision, for it comprised the whole world-renowned orchestra of the Emperor Charles, and Queen Mary's boy choir.

Only the leaders were absent. Gombert had left Brussels later than the others, and hastened after them with post-horses, overtaking them about an hour before, when he induced Appenzelder, the leader of the boy choir, to enter his carriage, though the latter was reluctant to leave the young singers who were intrusted to his care. As to the other travellers, the Queen and Don Luis Quijada had made a great mistake in their calculations—the number considerably exceeded a hundred. Neither had thought of the women and children who accompanied the musicians.

Most of the women were the wives of the members of the orchestra, who had availed themselves of this opportunity to see something of the world. Others, from motives of love or jealousy, would not part from their husbands. The little children had been taken because their mothers, who were fond of travelling and, like their husbands, were natives of all countries, possessed no relatives in Brussels who would care for them.

The jealous spouses especially had not joined the party without cogent reasons, for the mirth in the first long wagon, covered with a linen tilt, was uproarious enough.

Wolf and his companion heard shrill laughter and loud shrieks echoing from its dusky interior.

The younger men and the women who liked journeying were sitting in motley confusion upon the straw which covered the bottom of the vehicle, and the boisterous mirth of the travellers gave ample proof that the huge jugs of wine carried with them as the Emperor's provision for the journey had been freely used.

In the second cart, an immense ark, swaying between four wheels and drawn by a team of four horses, grave older artists sat silently opposite to each other, all more or less exhausted by the continual rocking motion of the long ride. These men and the other travellers were joyfully surprised by the news that the goal of the journey was already at hand. Pressing their

heads together, they gazed out of the open linen tilt which arched above the first cart or crowded to the little windows of the coaches to see Ratisbon.

Even the old Neapolitan nurse, who was predicting future events from a pack of cards, dropped them and peered out. But the noise in the second tilted wagon was especially confused, for there the gay shouts of the boy choir, only half of whom were on horseback, mingled with the loud talking of the women, the screams of the babies, and the barking of the dogs.

The groans of two young singers who were seriously ill were drowned by the din and heeded by no one except the old drummer's pitying wife, who sometimes wiped the perspiration from the sufferers' brows or supported their heads.

Other carts, containing the musicians' instruments, followed this tilted wagon. Some members of the orchestra would not part with theirs, and behind the saddle of many a mounted virtuoso or attendant was fastened a violin case or a shapeless bag which concealed some other instrument.

A large number of musicians mounted on horses or mules surrounded the two-wheeled cart in which sat Hernbeize of Ghent, the treasurer of the orchestra, and his fat wife. The corpulent couple, squeezed closely together, silent and out of humour, had taken no notice of each other or their surrounding since Frau Olympia had presumed to drag her husband by force out of the first wagon, where he was paying a visit to a clarionet player's pretty young wife.

Whenever Wolf appeared he urged the horsemen and drivers to greater haste, and thus the musical caravan, with its unauthorized companions, succeeded in passing through the gate ere it closed. Beyond it the travellers were received by Quijada, the imperial valet, Adrian Dubois, and several quartermasters, who meanwhile had provided lodgings.

The major-domo greeted the musicians with dignified condescension, Wolf with familiar friendship. Master Adrian, the valet, also shook hands cordially with him and Massi, the "first violin" of the orchestra. Finally Don Luis rode up to Wolf and informed him that the Queen of Hungary wished to speak to him early the next morning, and that he also had something important to discuss at the earliest opportunity. Then he listened to the complaints of the quartermasters.

These men, who performed their duties with great lack of consideration, had supposed that they had provided for all the expected arrivals, but, after

counting heads, they discovered that the billets were sufficient for only half the number. Their attempt to escape providing for the wives was baffled by the vigorous interposition of the treasurer and by a positive order from Quijada.

Of course, under these circumstances they were very glad to have Sir Wolf Hartschwert return his billet—the room in the Crane allotted to him by the valet was large enough to accommodate half a dozen women.

The nobleman returning to his home had no occasion to find shelter in a tavern.

Yet, as he wished to remove the traces of the long ride ere he entered his own house and appeared before the person for whose sake he had gladly left Brussels, he asked Massi's permission to use his room in the Red Cock for a short time.

Leonhard Leitgeb, the landlord, and his bustling better half received Wolf as a neighbour's son and an old acquaintance. But, after they had shown him and Massi to the room intended for them and gone downstairs again, the landlady of the Cock shook her head, saying:

"He was always a good lad and a clever one, too, but even if a duke's coronet should fall upon the thin locks of the poor knight's son I should never take him for a real nobleman."

"Better let that drop," replied her husband. "Besides, the fine fellow is of more consequence since he had the legacy. If he should come here for our Kattl, I'll wager you wouldn't keep him waiting."

"Indeed I wouldn't," cried the landlady, laughing. "But just hear what a racket those soldiers are making again down below!"

Meanwhile Wolf was hurriedly attending to his outer man.

Massi had stretched himself on the thin cushion which covered the seat of the wooden bench in the bay-window, and thrust his feet far out in front of him.

As he watched the Ratisbon knight diligently use the little hand mirror while arranging his smooth, fair locks, he straightened himself, saying:

"No offence, Sir Knight, but when I think of the radiant face with which you gazed down into the valley of the Danube from the hill where you stopped before sunset, and now see how zealously you are striving to adorn your person, it seems to me that there must be in this good city some one

for whom you care more than for all you left behind in Brussels. At your age, that is a matter of course, if there is a woman in the case, as I suppose. I know very well what I should do if I were in your place. Longing often urges me back to Spain like a scourge. I have already told you why I left my dear wife there in our home. A few more years in the service, and our savings and the pension together will be enough to support us there and lay aside a little marriage dowry for our daughter. When I have what is necessary, I shall turn my back on the orchestra and the court of Brussels that very day, dear as music is to me, and sure as I am that I shall never again find a leader like our Gombert. You do not yet know with how sharp a tooth yearning rends the soul of the man whom Fate condemns to live away from his family. This place is your home, and dearer to you than any other, so build yourself a snug nest here with the person you have in mind."

"How gladly I would do so!" replied the young knight, "but whether I can must be decided within the next few davs."

"Inde-e-ed?" drawled Massi; then he bent his eyes thoughtfully upon the floor for a short time, and, after calling Wolf by name in a tone of genuine friendly affection, he frankly added: "Surely you know how dear a comrade you are to me! Yet precisely for that reason I stick to my counsel. It's not only on account of the homesickness—I am, thinking rather of your position at court—and, let me speak candidly, it is unworthy of a nobleman and a musician of such ability. The regent is graciously disposed toward you, and you praise her liberality, but do you yourself know the name of the office which you fill? More than enough is placed upon you, and yet, so far as I see, nothing complete. They understand admirably how to make use of you. It would be well if that applied solely to the musician. But sometimes she makes you secretary, and you have to waste whole days in writing letters and do penance for having learned so many languages; sometimes you must share in the folly of arranging performances, and your wealth of knowledge is industriously utilized in preparing mythological figures and devising new ideas for the exhibitions at which we have to furnish the music. This affords plenty of labour, but others reap the credit. Recently the Bishop of Arras even asked you to write in German what he dictated in French, although you are in the regent's service, and just at that time you were transposing the old church songs for the boy choir. I regret to see you do such tradesmen's work without adequate reward. Why, even if her Majesty would give you a fat living or appoint you to the imperial council

which directs musical affairs in the Netherlands! Pardon me, Sir Wolf! But give people an inch, and they take an ell, and your ever ready obligingness will injure you, for the harder it is to win a thing the higher its value becomes. You made yourself too cheap at court here people will surely know how to put a higher value upon a man who is equally skilful in Netherland, Italian, and German music. In counterpoint you are little inferior to Maestro Gombert, and, besides, you play as many instruments as you have fingers on your hands. We all like to have you lead us, because you do it with such delicate taste and comprehension, and, moreover, with a vigour which one would scarcely expect from you. You will not lack patrons. Look around you here or elsewhere for a position as leader of an orchestra. Goinbert, to relieve himself a little, would like to have de Hondt come from Antwerp to Brussels. His place would be the very one for you if you find nothing worthy of you here, where you have a house of your own and other things that bind you to the city."

"Here I should probably be obliged to crowd somebody else out of one in order to obtain a position," replied Wolf, "and I am unwilling to do so."

"You are wrong," cried the violinist. "The course of the world causes the stronger—and that you are—to take precedence of the weaker. Learn at last to give up this modest withdrawal and elbow your way forward!"

"Pressing and jostling are not in my nature;" replied Wolf with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "Since I may hope to be relieved of anxiety concerning my daily bread, I am disposed to leave the court and seek quiet happiness in a more definite circle of duties at home. You see, Massi, it is just the same with us human beings as with material things. There is my man cutting the rope from yonder package with his sharp knife. The contents are distributed in a trice, and yet it was tiresome to collect them and pack them carefully. Thus it would need only a word to separate myself from the court; but to join it again would be a totally different affair. There have been numerous changes in this city since I went away, and many a hand which pressed mine in farewell is no longer here, or would perhaps be withdrawn, merely because I am a Catholic and intend to stay here among the Protestants. Besides—lay the roll on the table, Janche—besides, as you have already heard, the final decision does not depend upon myself.—Take care, Jan. That little package is breakable!"

This last exclamation was addressed to Wolf's Netherland servant, who was just unpacking his master's leather bag.

Massi noticed that the articles taken out could scarcely be intended for a man's use, and, pointing to a piece of Flanders velvet, he gaily remarked:

"So my guess was correct. Here, too, the verdict is to be pronounced by beardless lips." Wolf blushed like a girl, but, after the violinist had waited a short time for the confirmation of his conjecture, he continued more gravely:

"It ill befits me to intrude upon your secret. Every one must go his own way, and I have wondered why a person who so readily renders a service to others pursues his own path so unsocially. Will you ever let your friend know what stirs your heart?"

"I should often have confided in you gladly," replied Wolf, "but a certain shyness always restrained me. How can others be interested in what befalls a lonely, quiet fellow like me? It is not my habit to talk much, but you will always find me ready to use hand and brain in behalf of one who is as dear to me as you, Massi."

"You have already given me proof of that," replied the violinist, "and I often marvel how you find time, without neglecting your own business, to do so much for others with no payment except thanks. I thought you would accomplish something great, because you paid no heed to women; but probably you depend on other powers, for if it is a pair of beautiful eyes whose glance is to decide so important a matter——"

"Never mind that," interrupted Wolf beseechingly, raising his hand soothingly. "I confess with Terentius that nothing human is strange to me. As soon as the decision comes, I will tell you—but you alone—several particulars. Now accept my thanks for your well-meant counsel and the use of your room. I'll see you again early to-morrow. I promised Gombert and the leader of the boy choir to lend them a helping hand, so we shall probably meet at the rehearsal.—Go to the stable, Janche, and see that the groom has rubbed the bay down thoroughly. As for the rolls and packages here——"

"I'll help you carry them," said the violinist, seizing his shoes; but Wolf eagerly declined his assistance, and went out to ask the landlord to let him have one of his men.

But the servants of the overcrowded Red Cock all had their hands full, so the nine-year-old son of the Leitgeb couple and the cellar man's two somewhat younger boys, who had not yet gone to bed, were made bearers of the parcels.

How eager they were to do something which suited grown people, and, when Wolf described the place where they were to carry the articles, Fran Leitgeb sympathizingly helped him, and charged the children to hold the valuable packages very carefully. They must not spare the knocker in the second story of the cantor house, for old Ursula's hearing was no longer the best, and since the day before yesterday—Kathl had brought the news home—she had been ill. "Some rare luck," the landlady continued, "will surely follow the knight up to the Blombergs. The same old steep path, leads there; but as to Wawer!—it would be improper to say Jungfrau Barbara—you will surer open your eyes—" Here she was summoned to the kitchen, and Wolf followed his little assistants into the street.

CHAPTER III.

The cantor house was only a few steps from the Red Cock, and Wolf knew every stone in the street, which was named for the tavern. Yet that very circumstance delayed him, for even the smallest trifle which had changed during his absence attracted his attention.

He had already noticed at the familiar inn that the gay image of the Madonna and Cluld, and the little lamp above, were no longer there. The pictures of the saints had been removed from the public rooms, and even the painting which had been impressed upon his memory from boyhood—like a sign of the house—had vanished. A large red cock, crowing with wide-open beak at the Apostle Peter, had been there.

This venerable work of an old artist ought to have been retained, no matter what doctrine the Leitgebs now professed. Its disappearance affected the knight unpleasantly.

It also induced him to see whether the Madonna with the swords in her heart, which, at the time of his departure, had adorned the Ark, the great house at the corner of the Haidplatz, had met with the same fate, and this sacred witness of former days had likewise been sacrificed to the iconoclasm of the followers of the new Protestant faith. This also grieved him, and urged him to go from street to street, from church to church, from monastery to monastery, from one of the chapels which no great mansion in his native land lacked to another, in order to ascertain what else religious fanaticism had destroyed; but he was obliged to hasten if he wished to be received by those in his home whom he most desired to see.

The windows of the second story in the Golden Cross, opposite to the Ark, were brilliantly lighted. The Emperor Charles lodged there, and probably his royal sister also. Wolf had given his heart to her with the devotion with which he had always clung to every one to whom he was indebted for any kindness. He knew her imperial brother’s convictions, too, and when he saw at one of the windows a man’s figure leaning, motionless against the casement with his hand pressed upon his brow, he realized what

deep indignation had doubtless seized upon him at the sight of the changes which had taken place here during the five years of his absence.

But Emperor Charles was not the man to allow matters which aroused his wrath and strong disapproval to pass unpunished. Wolf suspected that the time was not far distant when yonder monarch at the window, who had won so many victories, would have a reckoning with the Smalcalds, the allied Protestants of Germany, and his vivid imagination surrounded him with an almost mystical power.

He would surely succeed in becoming the master of the Protestant princes; but was the steel sword the right weapon to destroy this agitation of the soul which had sprung from the inmost depths of the German nature? He knew the firm, obstinate followers of the new doctrine, for there had been a time when his own young mind had leaned toward it.

Since those days, however, events had happened which had bound him by indestructible fetters to the old faith. He had vowed to his dying mother to remain faithful to the Holy Church and loyally to keep his oath. It was not difficult for one of his modest temperament to be content with the position of spectator of the play of life which he occupied. He was not born for conflict, and from the seat to which he had retired he thought he had perceived that the burden of existence was easier to bear, and the individual not only obtained external comfort, but peace of mind more speedily, if he left to the Church many things which the Protestant was obliged to settle for himself. Besides, as such, he would have missed many beautiful and noble things which the old faith daily bestowed upon him, the artist.

People in Ratisbon held a different opinion. Defection from the Roman Catholic Church, which seemed to him reprehensible, was considered here a sacred duty, worthy of every sacrifice. This threatened to involve him in fresh spiritual conflicts, and, as he dreaded such things as nocturnal birds shun the sunlight, he stood still, thoughtfully asking himself whether he ought not at once to give up the desire of striking new roots into this perilous soil.

Only one thing really bound him to Ratisbon, and that was by no means the house which he had inherited, but a very young girl, and, moreover, a very changeable one, of whose development and life he had heard nothing during his absence except that she had not become another’s wife. Perhaps this girl, whose charm and musical talent, according to his opinion, were

unequalled in Ratisbon, had remained free solely because she was keeping the promise made when, a child of sixteen, she bade him farewell. She had told him, though only in her lively childish fashion, that she would wait for him and become his wife when he returned home a made man. Yet it now seemed that she had been as sincerely in earnest in that youthful betrothal as he himself.

This fair hope crowded every scruple far into the shade. If Barbara had kept her troth to him, he would reward her. Wherever he might build his nest with her, he would be sure of the richest happiness. Therefore he persisted in making his decision for the future depend upon her reception.

The only question was whether it had not already grown too late for him to visit her and her father, who went to bed with the chickens. But the new clock in Jacobsplatz pealed only nine bell-like strokes through the stillness of the evening, and, as he had sent his gifts in advance, he was obliged to follow them.

He might now regard the cantor house, which was quickly gained, as his own. Though it was now in the deepest darkness, he gazed up at the high, narrow building, with the pointed arches of the windows and the bracket which supported the image of St. Cecilia carved from sandstone, as intently as if he could distinguish every defect in the windows, every ornament carved in the ends of the beams.

The second story, which projected above the ground floor into the street, was completely dark; but a faint glimmer of light streamed from the little window over the spurge laurel tree, and—this was the main thing—the bow window in the third story was still lighted.

She whom he sought was waiting there with her father, while beneath it was the former abode of the precentor and organist and his wife, who had reared Wolf, and whose heir, after the old man's death, he had become.

He would take up his quarters in the room which he had occupied as a scholar, where he had studied, practised music, trained himself in the art of composition, and in leisure hours had even drawn and painted a little.

Old Ursula, as he had learned from the legal document which informed him of his inheritance, was taking care of the property bequeathed to him. With what pleasure the old maid-servant, faithful soul, who had come with him—then a little four-year-old boy—and his mother to Ratisbon twenty-

two years ago, would make a bed for him and again cook the pancakes, which she knew to be his favourite dish!

The thought of the greeting awaiting him from her dispelled the timidity with which he had set his foot on the first of the three steps that led up to the threshold of the house. He had no occasion to use the knocker; a narrow, long streak of light showed that, notwithstanding the late hour, the outer door was ajar.

Now he heard an inner door open, and this again aroused the anxiety he had just conquered. Suppose that he should find Wawerl below? Ardently as he yearned for her to whom all the love of his heart belonged, this meeting would have come too quickly. Yet she might very easily happen to be in the lower story, for the lighted window beside the door belonged to the little house chapel, and since her confirmation she had undertaken to sweep it, clean the candlesticks and lamps, and keep them in order, fill the vases on the little altar with blossoms, and adorn the image of the Madonna with flowers on Lady day and other festivals.

How often he had helped the child and heard her father call her “his little sacrist”!

The chapel here had gained greater importance to him when the Blombergs placed above the altar the Madonna and Child which he, who tried all the arts, had copied with his own hand from an ancient painting. This had been in July; but when, on the Virgin’s Assumption day in August, Barbara was twining a beautiful garland of summer flowers around it, and he, with an overflowing heart, was helping her, his head accidentally struck against hers, and to comfort her he compassionately kissed the bruised spot. Only a short time ago she had frankly thrown her arms around his neck if she wanted him to gratify a wish or forgive an offence without ever receiving a response to her affection. This time he had been the aggressor, and received an angry rebuff; during the little scuffle which now followed, Wolf’s heart suddenly grew hot, and his kiss fell upon her scarlet lips. The first was followed by several others, until steps on the stairs parted the young lover from the girl, who offered but a feeble resistance.

Now he remembered the incident, and his cheeks flushed again. Oh, if to-day he should possess the right to have those refractory lips at his disposal!

During the five months spent in Ratisbon after that attack in the chapel he had more than once been bold enough to strive for more kisses, but always

in vain, and rarely without bearing away a sharp reprimand, for Barbara had felt her slight resistance in the chapel as a grave offence. She had permitted something forbidden under the eyes of the Virgin's image, and this had seemed to her so wicked that she had confessed it, and not only been sternly censured, but had a penance imposed.

Barbara had not forgotten this, and had understood how to keep him aloof with maidenly austerity until, on the evening before his departure, he had hung around her neck the big gold thaler his godfather had given him.

Then, obeying an impulse of gratitude, she had thrown her arms around his neck; but even then she would not allow him to kiss her lips again. Instead, she hastily drew back to examine the gold thaler closely, praised its weight and beauty, and then promised Wolf that when she was rich and he had become a great lord she would have a new goblet made for him out of just such coins, like one which she had seen at the Wollers in the Ark, the richest of her wealthy relatives.

As Wolf now recalled this promise it vexed him again.

What had he expected from that parting hour—the vow of eternal fidelity, a firm betrothal, ardent kisses, and a tender embrace? But, instead of obtaining even one of these beautiful things, he had become involved in a dispute with Barbara because he desired to receive nothing from her, and only claimed the right of showering gifts upon her later.

This had pleased her, and, when he urged her to promise to wait for him and become his wife when he returned home a made man, she laughed gaily, and declared that she liked him, and, if it should be he who obtained for her what she now had in mind, she would be glad.

Then his loving heart overflowed, and with her hands clasped in his he entreated her to give up these arrogant thoughts, be faithful to him, and not make him wretched.

The words had poured so ardently, so passionately from the quiet, sedate young man's lips that the girl was thoroughly frightened, and wrenched her hands from his grasp. But when she saw how deeply her struggling hurt him, she voluntarily held out her right hand, exclaiming:

"Only succeed while you are absent sufficiently to build a house like our old one in the Kramgasse, and when the roof is on and your knightly

escutcheon above the door we will move in together, and life will be nothing but music and happiness.”

This was all that gave him the right to consider her as his betrothed bride, for after a brief farewell and a few kisses of the hand flung to him from the threshold, she had escaped to the little bow-windowed room and thereby also evaded from the departing lover an impressive, well-prepared speech concerning the duties of a betrothed couple.

Yet in Rome and Brussels Wolf had held fast to the conviction that a beloved betrothed bride was awaiting him in Ratisbon.

So long as his foster-parents lived he had had news from them of the Blombergs. After the death of the old couple, Barbara’s father had answered in a very awkward manner the questions which he had addressed to him in a letter, and his daughter wrote a friendly message under the old captain’s signature. True, it was extremely brief, but few fiery love letters ever made the recipient happier or were more tenderly pressed to the lips.

The girl he loved still bore the name of Barbara Blomberg.

This outweighed a whole archive of long letters. The captain, who, for the sake of fighting the infidels, had so sadly neglected his property that his own house in the Kramgasse fell into the hands of his creditors, had rented the second story in the cantor house. Barbara at that time was very small, but now she had ceased to be a child, and, after she devoted herself earnestly to acquiring the art of singing, the old warrior had undertaken to keep the little chapel in order.

The task certainly seemed strangely ill-suited to the tall, broad-shouldered man with the bushy eyebrows, long beard, and mustache twisted stiffly up at the ends, who had obtained in Tunis and during the Turkish war the reputation of being one of the most fearless heroes, and carried away severe wounds; but he knew how to make scoffers keep their distance, and did not trouble himself at all about other people.

Regularly every evening he went down the stairs and performed the duty he had undertaken with the punctilious care of a neat housewife.

He was a devout man, and did his work there in the hope of pleasing the Holy Virgin, because the reckless old warrior was indebted to her for more than one deliverance from impending death, and because he trusted that she would repay it to him in his child.

Besides, his income was not large enough for him to keep a maid-servant of his own, and he could not expect old Ursel, who had worked for the precentor and his wife, and performed the roughest labour in the third story for a mere “thank you,” to take care of the chapel also. She had plenty to do, and besides she had been a Protestant three years, and took the Lord’s Supper in a different form.

This would have induced him to break off every connection with his old friend’s maid-servant had not his kind, grateful heart forbidden him to hurt her feelings. Besides, she was almost indispensable to his daughter and himself; it was difficult enough, in any case, for the nobly born captain to meet the obligations imposed by his position.

He now received only a very small portion of the profits of the lumber trade which had supported his ancestors, his father, and himself very handsomely, for he had been compelled to mortgage his share in the business.

Notwithstanding the title of “Captain” with which his imperial commander had honoured him when he received his discharge, the pension he had was scarcely worth mentioning, and, besides, it was very irregularly paid. Therefore the father and daughter had tried to obtain some means of earning money which could be kept secret from their fellow-citizens. The “Captain” busied himself with tracing coats-of-arms, ornaments, and inscriptions upon tin goblets, mugs, tankards, and dishes. Barbara, when she had finished her exercises in singing, washed fine laces. This was done entirely in secret. A certain Frau Lerch, who when a girl had served Barbara’s dead mother as waiting maid, and now worked as a dressmaker for the most aristocratic women in Ratisbon, privately obtained this employment. It was partly from affection for the young lady whom she had tended when a child; but the largest portion of Barbara’s earnings returned to her, for she cut for the former all the garments she needed to appear among her wealthy relatives and young companions at dances, musical entertainments, banquets, and excursions to the country. True, Frau Lerch, who was a childless woman, worked very cheaply for her, and, when she heard that Barbara had again been the greatest beauty, it pleased her, and she saw her seed ripening.

What a customer the vain darling, who was very ambitious, promised to become in the future as the wife of a rich aristocrat! She would undoubtedly

be that. There was absolute guarantee of it in her marvellously beautiful head, with its abundant golden hair, her magnificent figure, which—she could not help knowing it—was unequalled in Ratisbon, and her nightingale voice.

Even old Blomberg, who kept aloof from the meetings of his distinguished fellow-citizens, but, on the other hand, when his supply of money would permit, enjoyed a drinking bout at the tavern with men of the sword all the more, rejoiced to hear his daughter's rare gifts lauded. The use of the graver was thoroughly distasteful and unsuited to his rank; but even the most laborious work gained a certain charm for his paternal heart when, while wiping the perspiration from his brow, he thought of what his diligence would allow him to devote to the adornment and instruction of his daughter.

He preferred to be alone at home, and his reserved, eccentric nature had caused his relatives to shun his house, which doubtless seemed to them contemptibly small.

Barbara endured this cheerfully, for, though she had many relatives and acquaintances among the companions of her own age, she possessed no intimate friend.

As a child, Wolf had been her favourite playmate, but now visits from her aunts and cousins would only have interrupted her secret work, and disturbed her practice of singing.

When Wolf entered the house, the captain had just left the chapel. He did not notice the returning owner, for people must have made their way into the quiet dwelling. At least he had heard talking in the entry of the second story, where usually it was even more noiseless than in his lodgings in the third, since it was tenanted only by old Ursel, who was now confined to her bed.

Wolf saw Barbara's father, whose height surpassed the stature of ordinary men by a head, hurrying up the stairs. It was a strange, and, for children, certainly an alarming, sight—his left leg, which had been broken by a bullet from a howitzer, had remained stiff, and, as he leaped up three stairs at a time, he stretched his lean body so far forward that it seemed as though he could not help losing his balance at the next step. He was in haste, for he thought that at last he could again acquit himself manfully and cope with one or rather with two or three of the burglars who, since the Duke of

Bavaria had prohibited the conveyance of provisions into Ratisbon as a punishment for its desertion of the Catholic Church, had pursued their evil way in the city.

He first discovered with what very small ill-doers he had to deal when he held the little lamp toward them, and, to his sincere vexation, found that they were only little boys, who, moreover, were the children of honest folk, and therefore could scarcely be genuine scoundrels.

Yet it could hardly be any laudable purpose which brought them at so late an hour to the cantor house, and therefore, with the intention of turning the serious attack into a mirthful one; he shouted in a harsh voice the gibberish which he had compounded of scraps of all sorts of languages, and whose effect upon unruly youngsters he had tested to his own amusement.

As his rough "Larum gardum quantitere runze punze ke hi voi la" now reached the little ones, the impression was far deeper than he had intended, for the cellar man's youngest son, a little fellow six years old, first shrieked aloud, and, when the terrible old man's long arms barred his way, he began to cry piteously.

This troubled the kind-hearted giant, who was really fond of children, and, ere the little lad was aware of it, the captain's free left hand grasped the waistband of his little leather breeches and lifted him into the air.

The swift act doubled the terror and anguish of the struggling little wight.

As the strong man held him on his arm he fought bravely with his fat little fists and his sturdy little legs. But though in the unequal conflict the boy pitilessly pulled the powerful monster's grayishy yellow imperial and bushy mustache, and the captain recognised the child from the Red Cock as one of the rascals who often shouted their nickname of "Turkey gobbler" after his tall figure, conspicuous from its height and costume, he strove with honest zeal to soothe the little one.

His deep voice, meanwhile, sounded so gentle and friendly, and his promise to give him a piece of spice cake which he was bringing home to Ursel to sweeten the disagreeable taste of her medicine produced so soothing an influence, that little Hans at last looked up at him trustingly and hopefully.

The cellar man's oldest son, who had violently assaulted the old gentleman to release his little brother, now stood penitently before him, and

the landlord's boy related, in somewhat confused but perfectly intelligible words, the object of their coming, and in whose name they were bringing the roll and yonder little package to old Ursel.

The story sounded humble enough, but as soon as the captain had set little Hans on his feet and bent curiously over the forerunners of the dear friend, which had been placed on the little bench by the door, the three boys dashed down the stairs, and the shrill voice of the landlord's son shrieked from the lowest step one "Turkey gobbler" and "Pope's slave" after another.

"Satan's imps!" shouted the old man; but the outer door, which banged below him, showed that pursuit of the naughty mockers would result to his disadvantage. Then as, with an angry shake of the head, he drew back from the banisters, he saw his daughter's playmate.

How dear the latter was to him, and how fully his aged heart had retained its capacity of feeling, were proved by the reception which he gave the returning knight. The injury just inflicted seemed to have been entirely forgotten. With tears in his eyes and a voice tremulous with deep emotion, he drew Wolf toward him, kissing first his head, which reached only to his lips, then his cheeks and brow. Then, with youthful vivacity, he expressed his pleasure in seeing him again, and, without permitting Wolf to speak, he repeatedly exclaimed:

"And my Wawerl, and Ursel in there! There'll be a jubilee!"

When Wolf had at last succeeded in returning his old friend's greeting and then expressed a wish, first of all, to clasp the faithful old maid-servant's hand, the old gentleman's beaming face clouded, and he said, sighing:

"What has not befallen us here since you went away, my dear Wolf! My path has been bordered with tombstones as poplars line the highway. But we will let the dead rest. Nothing can now disturb their peace. Old Ursel, too, is longing for the end of life, and we ought not to grudge it to her. Only I dread the last hour, and still more the long eternity which will follow it, for the good, patient woman entered the snare of the Satanic Protestant doctrine, and will not hear of taking the holy sacrament."

Wolf begged him to admit him at once, but Blomberg declared that, after the attack of apoplexy which she had recently had, one thing and another might happen if she should so unexpectedly see the man to whom her whole heart clung. Wolf would do better first to surprise the girl upstairs, who had

no suspicion of his presence. He, Blomberg, must look after the old woman now. He would carry those things—he pointed to the parcels which the boys had left—into the young nobleman's old room. Ursel had always kept it ready for his return, as though she expected him daily. This suited Wolf, only he insisted upon having his own way about the articles he had brought, and took them upstairs with him.

He would gladly have greeted the faithful nurse of his childhood at once, yet it seemed like a fortunate dispensation that, through the old man's delay below, his wish to have his first meeting with the woman he loved without witnesses should be fulfilled.

CHAPTER IV.

In spite of the darkness and the zigzag turns of the stairs, Wolf was so familiar with every corner of the old house that he did not even need to grope his way with his hand.

He found the door of the Blomberg lodgings open. Putting down in the anteroom whatever might be in his way while greeting Barbara, and carrying the roll of velvet under his arm and a little box in his pocket, he entered the chamber which the old man called his artist workshop. It was in total darkness, but through the narrow open door in the middle of the left wall one could see what was going on in Barbara's little bow-windowed room. This was quite brightly lighted, for she was ironing and crimping ruffs for the neck, small lace handkerchiefs, and cuffs.

The light required for this purpose was diffused by a couple of tallow candles and also by the coals which heated the irons.

As she bent over the glow, it shone into her beautiful face and upon her magnificent fair hair, which rippled in luxuriant confusion about her round head or fell in thick waves to her hips. The red kerchief which had confined it was lying on the floor. Another had slipped from her neck and was hanging on the corner of the ironing board. Her stockings had lost their fastenings and slipped down to her feet, revealing limbs whose whiteness and beauty of form vied with the round arms which, after holding the iron near her hot cheeks, she moved with eager diligence.

The image of a vivacious, early developed child had impressed itself upon Wolf's mind. Now he stood before a maiden in the full bloom of her charms, whose superb symmetry of figure surprised and stirred him to the depths of his nature.

In spite of her immature youth, he had cherished her in his inmost heart. Youth, she confronted him as an entirely new and doubly desirable creature. The quiet longing which had mastered him was transformed into passionate yearning, but he restrained it by exerting all the strength of will peculiar to him, for a voice within cried out that he was too insignificant for this marvellous maiden.

But when she dipped the tips of her fingers into the dainty little bowl, which he had once given her for a birthday present, sprinkled the linen with water, and meanwhile sang in fresh, clear notes the ‘ut, re, me, fa, sol, la’ of Perissone Cambio’s singing lesson, new wonder seized him. What compass, what power, what melting sweetness the childish voice against whose shrillness his foster-father and he himself had zealously struggled now possessed! Neither songstress nor member of the boy choir whom he had heard in Italy or the Netherlands could boast of such bell-like purity of tone! He was a connoisseur, and yet it seemed as though every tone which he heard had received the most thorough cultivation.

Who in Ratisbon could have been her teacher? To whom did she owe this masterly training? As if by a miracle, he knew not whether from looking or listening, he found a combination of notes which he had long been seeking for the motet on which he was working. When he had registered it, and she sang a few passages from it, what an exquisite delight awaited him! But what should he do now? Ought he to surprise her in this way? It would certainly have been proper to be first announced by her father; but he could not bring himself even to stir a foot. Beads of perspiration stood upon his brow. Panting for breath, he seized his handkerchief to wipe it, and in doing so the roll of velvet which he had held under his arm fell on the floor.

Wolf stooped, and, ere he had straightened himself again, he heard Barbara call in a questioning tone, “Father?” and saw her put down the iron and stand listening.

Then, willing or not, he was obliged to announce his presence, and, with a timid “It is I, Wolf,” he approached the little bow-windowed room and hesitatingly crossed the threshold.

“Wolf, my tame Wolf,” she repeated gaily, without being in the least concerned about the condition of her dress. “I knew that we should soon meet again, for, just think of it! I dreamed of you last night. I was entering a golden coach. It was very high, so I put my foot on your hand, and you lifted me in.”

Then, without the least embarrassment, she held out her right hand, but slapped his fingers smartly when he passionately endeavoured to raise it to his lips.

Yet the blow was not unkindly meant, for even while he drew back she voluntarily clasped both his hands, scrutinized him intently from head to

foot, and said calmly:

"Welcome to the old home, Sir Knight!" Then, laughing gaily, she added: "Why, such a thing is unprecedented! Not a feature, not a look is unlike what it used to be! And yet you've been roaming five years in foreign lands! Changes take place—only look at me!—changes take place more swiftly here in Ratisbon. How you stare at me! I thought so! Out with it! Hasn't the feather-head of those days become quite a charming young lady?"

Now Wolf would gladly have made as many flattering speeches as she could desire, but his tongue refused to obey him. The new meeting was too unlike his expectation. The sight of the self-conscious woman who, in her wonderful beauty, stood leaning with folded arms on the ironing-table stirred his heart and senses too strongly.

Standing motionless, he strove for words, while his eyes revealed plainly enough the passionate rapture which agitated his soul. Barbara perceived what was passing in his thoughts, and also noticed how her dress had become disarranged during her work.

Flushing slightly, she pursed up her lips as if to whistle, and with her head thrust forward she blew into the air in his direction. Then, shaking her finger at him, she hastily sat down on the chest beside the fireplace, wound the kerchief which had fallen off closer around her neck, and, without the least embarrassment, pulled up her stockings.

"What does it matter!" she cried with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "How often we two have waded together in water above our knees, like the storks! And yet such a thing turns the head of a youth who has returned from foreign lands a made man, and closes his bearded lips! Have you given me even a single honest word of welcome? That's the way with all of you! And you? If you stand there already like a dumb sign-post, how will it be when I thoroughly turn your head like all the rest with my singing?"

"I've heard you already!" he answered quickly; "magical, bewildering, magnificent! Who in the world wrought this miracle with your voice?"

"There we have it!" she cried, laughing merrily and clapping her hands. "To make you speak, one need only allude distantly to music. That, too, has remained unchanged, and I am glad, for I have much to ask you in relation to it. I can learn many things from you still. But what have you there in your hand? Is it anything pretty from Brabant?" This question flowed from

her lips with coaxing tenderness, and she passed her soft hand swiftly over his cheek.

How happy it made him!

Hitherto he had been the receiver—nay, an unfair taker—but now he was to become the giver and she would be pleased with his present.

As if relieved from a nightmare, he now told her that he had gone from Rome, through the Papal Legate Contarini, whom he had accompanied to Italy as a secretary skilled in German and music—to the imperial court, where he now enjoyed the special favour of the Regent of the Netherlands, the widowed Queen of Hungary; that the royal lady, the sister of the Emperor Charles, had chosen him to be director of her lessons in singing, and also permitted him to write German letters for her; and what assistance worthy of all gratitude he had enjoyed through the director of the imperial musicians, Gombert, the composer and leader of the royal orchestra, and his colleague Appenzelder, who directed the Queen's boy choir.

At the mention of these names, Barbara listened intently. She had sung several of Gombert's compositions, and was familiar with one of Appenzelder's works.

When she learned that both must have arrived in Ratisbon several hours before, she anxiously asked Wolf if he would venture to make her acquainted with these great masters.

Wolf assented with joyous eagerness, while Barbara's cheeks crimsoned with pleasure at so valuable a promise.

Yet this subject speedily came to a close, for while talking Wolf had ripped the linen cover in which the roll of velvet was sewed, and, as soon as he unfolded the rich wine-coloured material, Barbara forgot everything else, and burst into loud exclamations of pleasure and admiration. Then, when Wolf hastened out and with hurrying fingers opened the little package he had brought and gave her the costly fur which was to serve as trimming for the velvet jacket, she again laughed gleefully, and, ere Wolf was aware of it, she had thrown her arms around his neck and kissed him on both cheeks.

He submitted as if dazed, and did not even regain his senses sufficiently to profit by what she had granted him with such unexpected liberality. Nor did she allow him to speak as she loosed her arms from his neck, for, with a

bewitching light in her large, blue eyes, fairly overflowing with grateful tenderness, she cried:

"You dear, dear, kind little Wolf! To think that you should have remembered me so generously! And how rich you must be! If I had become so before you, I should have given myself a dress exactly like this. Now it's mine, just as though it had dropped from the sky. Wine-coloured Flanders velvet, with a border of dark-brown marten fur! I'll parade in it like the Duchess of Bavaria or rich Frau Fugger. Holy Virgin! if that isn't becoming to my golden hair! Doesn't it just suit me, you little Wolf and great spendthrift? And when I wear it at the dance in the New Scale or sing in it at the Convivium musicum, my Woller cousins and the Thun girl will turn yellow with envy."

Wolf had only half listened to this outburst of delight, for he had reserved until the last his best offering—a sky-blue turquoise breastpin set with small diamonds. It brought him enthusiastic thanks, and Barbara even allowed him to fasten the magnificent ornament with his own fingers, which moved slowly and clumsily enough.

Then she hurried into her chamber to bring the hand-mirror, and when in an instant she returned and, at her bidding, he held the shining glass before her, she patted his cheeks with their thin, fair, pointed beard, and called him her faithful little Wolf, her clear, stupid pedant and Satan in person, who would fill her mind with vanity.

Finally, she laid the piece of velvet over the back of a chair, let it fall down to the floor, and threw the bands of fur upon it. Every graver word, every attempt to tell her what he expected from her, the girl cut short with expressions of gratitude and pleasure until her father returned from the suffering Ursel.

Then, radiant with joy, she showed the old man her new treasures, and the father's admiration and expressions of gratitude were not far behind the daughter's.

It seemed as though Fate had blessed the modest rooms in Red Cock Street with its most precious treasures.

It might be either Wolf's return, the hopes for his daughter which were associated with it in the crippled old warrior's heart, or the unexpected costly gifts, to which Wolf had added for his old friend a Netherland drinking vessel in the form of a silver ship, which had moved the old

gentleman so deeply, but at any rate he allowed himself to be tempted into an act of extravagance, and, in an outburst of good spirits which he had not felt for a long time, he promised Wolf to fetch from the cellar one of the jugs of wine which he kept there for his daughter's wedding.

"Over this liquid we will open our hearts freely to each other, my boy," he said. "The night is still long, and even at the Emperor's court there is nothing better to be tasted. My dead mother used to say that there are always more good things in a poor family which was once rich than in a rich one which was formerly poor."

CHAPTER V.

The captain limped out into the cellar, but Barbara was already standing behind the table again, moving the irons.

“When I am rich,” she exclaimed, in reply to Wolf, who asked her to stop her work in this happy hour and share the delicious wine with him and her father, “I shall shun such maid-servant’s business. But what else can be done? We have less money than we need to keep up our position, and that must be remedied. Besides, a neatly crimped ruff is necessary if a poor girl like me is to stand beside the others in the singing rehearsal early to-morrow morning. Poor folks are alike everywhere, and, so long as I can do no better—but luck will come to me, too, some day—this right hand must be my maid. Let it alone, or my iron will burn your fingers!”

This threat was very nearly fulfilled, for Wolf had caught her right hand to hold it firmly while he at last compelled her to hear that his future destiny depended upon her decision.

How much easier he had expected to find the wooing! Yet how could it be otherwise? Every young man in Ratisbon was probably courting this peerless creature. No doubt she had already rebuffed many another as sharply as she had just prevented him from seizing her hand. If her manner had grown more independent, she had learned to defend herself cleverly.

He would first try to assail her heart with words, and they were at his disposal in black and white. He had placed in the little box with the breastpin a piece of paper on which he had given expression to his feelings in verse. Hitherto it had remained unnoticed and fluttered to the ground. Picking it up, he introduced his suit, after a brief explanation, by reading aloud the lines which he had composed in Brussels to accompany his gifts to her.

It was an easy task, for he had painted rather than written his poetic homage, with beautiful ornaments on the initial letters, and in the most careful red and black Gothic characters, which looked like print. So, with a vivacity of intonation which harmonized with the extravagance of the poetry, he began:

"Queen of my heart wert thou in days of old,
Beloved maid, in childhood's garb so plain;
I bring thee velvet now, and silk and gold
Though I am but a poor and simple swain
That in robes worthy of thee may be seen
My sovereign, of all thy sex the queen."

Barbara nodded pleasantly to him, saying: "Very pretty. Perhaps you might arrange your little verse in a duo, but how you must have taxed your imagination, you poor fellow, to transform the flighty good-for-nothing whom you left five years ago into a brilliant queen!"

"Because, even at that time," he ardently exclaimed. "I had placed you on the throne of my heart, because the bud already promised—Yet no! In those days I could not suspect that it would unfold into so marvellous a rose. You stand before me now more glorious than I beheld you in the most radiant of all my dreams, and therefore the longing to possess you, which I could never relinquish, will make me appear almost insolently bold. But it must be risked, and if you will fulfil the most ardent desire of a faithful heart—"

"Gently, my little Wolf, gently," she interposed soothingly. "If I am right, you mounted our narrow stairs to seek a wife and, when my father returns, you will ask for my hand."

"That I will," the young knight declared with eager positiveness. "Your 'Yes' or 'No,' Wawerl, is to me the decree of Fate, to which even the gods submit without opposition."

"Indeed?" she answered, uttering the word slowly, with downcast eyes. Then suddenly drawing herself to her full height, she added with a graver manner than he had ever seen her wear: "It is fortunate that I have learned the stories of the gods which are so popular in the Netherlands. If any one else should come to me with such pretences, I would scarcely believe that he had honest intentions. You are in earnest, Wolf, and wish to make me your wife. But 'Yes' and 'No' can not be spoken as quickly as you probably imagine. You were always a good, faithful fellow, and I am sincerely attached to you. But have I even the slightest knowledge of what you obtained abroad or what awaits you here?"

"Wawerl!" he interrupted reproachfully. "Would I as an honest man seek your hand if I had not made money enough to support a wife whose expectations were not too extravagant? You can not reasonably doubt that, and now, when the most sacred of bonds is in question, it ought—"

“It ought, you think, to satisfy me?” she interrupted with confident superiority. “But one of two things must follow this sacred bond-happiness or misery in the earthly life which is entered from the church steps. I am tired of the miserable starving and struggling, my dear Wolf. Marriage must at least rid me of these gloomy spectres. My father will not let you leave soon the good wine he allows himself and you to enjoy—you know that. Tell him how you are situated at the court, and what prospects, you have here in Ratisbon or elsewhere; for instance, I would gladly go to the magnificent Netherlands with my husband. Inform yourself better, too, of the amount of your inheritance. The old man will take me into his confidence early to-morrow morning. But I will confess this to you now: The most welcome husband to me would be a zealous and skilful disciple of music, and I know that wish will be fulfilled with you. If, perhaps, you are already what I call a successful man, we will see. But—I have learned that—no happiness will thrive on bread and water, and even a modest competence, as it is called, won’t do for me.”

“But Wawerl,” he interrupted dejectedly, “what could be better than true, loyal love? Just hear what I was going to tell you, and have not yet reached.”

But Barbara would not listen, cutting his explanation short with the words:

“All that is written as distinctly on the tender swain’s face as if I had it before me in black letter, but unfortunately it has as little power to move me to reckless haste as the angry visage into which your affectionate one is now transformed. The Scripture teaches us to prove before we retain. Yet if, on this account, you take me for a woman whose heart and hand can be bought for gold, you are mistaken. Worthy Peter Schlumperger is constantly courting me. And I? I have asked him to wait, although he is perhaps the richest man in the city. I might have Bernard Crafft, too, at any time, but he, perhaps, is as much too young as Herr Peter is too old, yet, on the other hand, he owns the Golden Cross, and, besides, has inherited a great deal of money and a flourishing business. I keep both at a distance, and I did the same—only more rigidly—last year when the Count Palatine von Simmern made me proposals which would have rendered me a rich woman, but only aroused my indignation. I dealt more indulgently with the Ratisbon men, but I certainly shall take neither of them, for they care more for the wine in

the taproom than the most exquisite pleasures which music offers, and, besides, they are foes of our holy faith, and Herr Schlumperger is even one of those who most zealously favour the heretical innovations."

Here she hesitated and her eyes met his with distrustful keenness as she asked in an altered tone:

"And you? Have not you returned to the false doctrines with which your boyish head was bewildered in the school of poetry?"

"I confided to you then," he exclaimed, deeply hurt, "the solemn vow I made to my poor mother ere she closed her eyes in death."

"Then that obstacle is removed," Barbara answered in a more gentle tone, "but I will not take back even a single word of what I have said about other matters. I am not like the rest of the girls. My father—Holy Virgin!—how much too late he was born! Among the Crusaders this fearless hero, whom the pepper-bags here jeer at as a 'Turkey gobbler,' would have been sure of every honour. How ill-suited he is for any mercantile business, on the other hand, he has unfortunately proved. Wherever he attempted anything, disappointment followed disappointment. To fight in Tunis against the crescent, he let our flourishing lumber trade go to ruin! And my mother! How young I was when her dead body was borne out of the house, yet I can still see the haughty woman—whose image I am said to be—in her trailing velvet robe, with plumes waving amid the curls arranged in a towering mass upon her head. She was dressed in that way when the men came to sell our house in the Kramgasse at auction. She must have been one of the women under whose management, as a matter of course, the household is neglected."

"How can you talk so about your own mother?" Wolf interrupted in a somewhat reproachful tone.

"Because we are not here to flatter the dead or to speak falsely to each other, but to understand how matters are between us," she answered gravely. "How you are constituted is best known to yourself, but it seems to me that while far away you have formed a totally false opinion of me, whom you placed upon the throne of your heart, and I wish to correct it, that you may not plunge into misfortune like a deluded simpleton and drag me with you. Where, as in my case, so many things are different from what the good and humble would desire them to be, it is not very pleasant to open one's whole heart to another, and there is no one else in the world for

whom I would do it. Perhaps I shall not succeed at all, for often enough I am incomprehensible to myself. I shall understand myself most speedily if I bring before my mind my father's and my mother's nature, and recall the ancient saying that young birds sing like the old ones. My father—I love him in spite of all his eccentricities and weaknesses. Dear me! he needs me so much, and would be miserable without me. Though he is a head taller than you, he has remained a child."

"But a good, kind-hearted one!" Wolf interrupted with warm affection.

"Of course," Barbara eagerly responded; "and if I have inherited from him anything which is ill-suited to me, it is the fearless courage which does not beseem us women. We progress much farther if we hold back timidly. Therefore, often as it impels me to resistance, I yield unless it is too strong for me. Besides, but for your interruption, I should have said nothing about my father. What concerns us I inherited from my mother, and, as I mean kindly toward you, this very heritage compels me to warn you against marrying me if you are unable to support me so that I can make a good appearance among Ratisbon wives. Moreover, poor church mouse though I am, I sometimes give them one thing and another to guess, and I haven't far to travel to learn what envy is. In my present position, however, compassion is far more difficult to bear than ill-will. But I by no means keep out of the way on that account. I must be seen and heard if I am to be happy, and I shall probably succeed so long as my voice retains the melting tone which is now peculiar to it. Should anything destroy that, there will be a change. Then—I know this in advance—I shall tread in the footsteps of my mother, who had no means of satisfying her longing for admiration except her pretty face, her beautiful figure, and the finery which she stole from the poverty of her husband, and her only child. How you are staring at me again! But I can not forget that now; for, had it not been so, we should still be living in our own house as a distinguished family of knightly rank, and I should have no need to spend my best hours in secretly washing laces for others—yes, for others, Wolf—to gain a wretched sum of which even my father must be ignorant. You do not know how we are obliged to economize, and yet I can only praise the pride of my father, who induced me to return the gifts which the Council sends to the house by the town clerk when I sing in the Convivium musicum. But what a pleasure it is to show the bloated fellow the door when he pulls out the linen purse! True, many things must be sacrificed to do it, and how hard that often is can not be described. I would

not bear it long. But, if I were your wife and you had only property enough for a modest competence, you would scarcely fare better, through my fault, than my poor father. That would surely be the result"—she raised her voice in passionate eagerness as she spoke:

"I know myself. As for the immediate future, I feel that the ever-increasing longing for better days and the rank which is my due will kill me if I do not satisfy it speedily. I shall never be content with any half-way position, and I fear you can not offer me more. Talk with my father, and think of it during the night. Were I in your place, I would at once resign the wish to win a person like me, for if you really love me as ardently as it seems, you will receive in exchange only a lukewarm liking for your person and a warm interest in what you can accomplish; but in other respects, far worse than nothing—peril after peril. But if you will be reasonable and give up your suit, I shall not blame you a moment. How bewildered you still stare at me! But there comes father, and I must finish my work before the irons get cold."

Wolf gazed after her speechlessly, while she withdrew behind the table as quietly as if they had been discussing the most commonplace things.

CHAPTER VI.

The old captain blew the dust from the wine flagon and carefully removed the seal. His presence prevented Wolf from renewing the interrupted conversation.

Reflection doubtless warned him that it would be a dangerous venture to enter the same life-boat with this woman, yet how bewitchingly beautiful she had seemed to him in her proud superiority, in the agitation of soul aroused by the yearning for a fairer fate! Have her he must, even though he was permitted to call her his own but for a year, a month, an hour.

Many of her words had been harsh and apparently unfeeling, yet how noble must be the soul of this young creature who, for the sake of being loyal to truth, the pure source of everything grand and lofty, paid no heed to much that is usually sacred to human beings!

But Barbara's conduct during the next hour appeared to belie this opinion of the man who loved her, for scarcely had her father sat down with the knight before the venerable wine flagon than she flung down the smoothing iron, hastily piled the finished articles one above another, and then, without heeding the parchment on which Wolf's verses were written, rolled up the ruby velvet. Directly after, with the package under her arm, she wished the men a merry drinking bout, and added that poor Ursel might need her. Besides, she wanted to show her the beautiful material, which would please the faithful soul.

Then, without even pausing at the rooms in the second story, she hurried swiftly down the stairs into the street.

She was carrying Wolf's gift to Frau Lerch, her dressmaker.

The Grieb, where the latter lived as wife of the keeper of the house, was only a few steps distant. If the skilful woman, who was indebted to her for many a customer, began the work of cutting at once, her cousins, the Wollers, could help her the next day with the sewing. True, these were the very girls who would "turn yellow with rage" at the sight of the velvet, but precisely because these rich girls had so many things of which she was

deprived she felt that, in asking their aid, she was compelling Fate to atone for an injustice.

Haste was necessary for, at the first glance at the velvet, she had determined to wear it at the next dance in the New Scales, and she also saw distinctly in imagination the person whose attention she desired to attract.

True, the recruiting officer sent to Ratisbon, of whom she was thinking, was by no means a more acceptable suitor, but a handsome fellow, a scion of a noble family, and, above all, an excellent dancer.

She did not love him—nay, she was not even captivated by him like so many others. But, if his heart throbbed faster for any one, it was Barbara. Yet perhaps his glances strayed almost as frequently to one other maiden. The velvet gown should now decide whether he gave the preference to her or to pretty Elspet Zohrer—of course, only in the dance—for she would never have accepted him as a serious suitor.

Besides, the young noble, Pyramus Kogel, himself probably thought of no such folly.

It was very different with Wolf Hartschwert. She had been told the small amount of his inheritance long before, and on that account she would have been obliged to refuse him positively at once, yet the affectionate relations existing between them must not be clouded. He might still become very useful to her and, besides, the modest companion of her childhood was dear to her. She would have sincerely regretted an irreparable breach with him.

Her father indulged her in every respect, only he strictly forbade his beautiful child to leave the house alone after sunset. Therefore Barbara had not told him the real object of her visit. She now had no occasion to fear his following her.

Yet she made all possible haste, and, as she found Frau Lerch at home, and the skilful little woman was instantly at her service, she crowded into the space of an hour the many points about the cutting which were to be discussed.

Then she set out on her way home, expecting to traverse the short distance swiftly and without delay; but, when she had gone only a few paces from the Grieb, a tall man came toward her.

To avoid him she crossed nimbly to the other side of the dark little street, but just where it turned into Red Cock Street he suddenly barred her way.

She was startled, but the oft-proved courage of the Blomberg race, to which she had just alluded, really did animate her, and, with stern decision, she ordered her persecutor to stand aside.

He, however, was not to be intimidated, but exclaimed as joyously as though some great piece of good fortune had befallen him:

“Thanks for accosting me, Jungfrau Barbara, for, though the words are harsh, they prove that, in spite of the darkness here, my eyes did not deceive me. Heaven be praised!”

Then the girl recognised the recruiting officer and excellent dancer of whom she had just been thinking in connection with the velvet upper robe, and answered sharply:

“Certainly it is I; but if you are really a nobleman, Sir Pyramus, take care that I am not exposed by your fault to evil gossip, and can not continue to hold my head erect as I now do.”

“Who will see us in this little dark street?” he asked in low, persuasive tones. “May all the saints guard me from assailing the honour of a modest maiden, fairest Barbara; yet, if you fear that I might prevent your remaining in the future what the favour of the Most High permits you to be, I shall rather accuse you of having inflicted upon me what you fear may befall you; for, since the last dance, I am really no longer myself, and can never become so until I have received from your beautiful lips the modest consolation for which this poor, tortured, loyal soul is yearning. May I not linger at your side long enough to ask you one question, you severe yet ardently beloved maiden?”

“Certainly not,” replied Barbara with repellent harshness. “I never gave you a right to speak to me of love; but, above all, I shall not seek the sharer of a game of question and answer in the street.”

“Then name a place,” he whispered with passionate ardour, trying meanwhile to clasp her hand, “where I may be permitted, in broad sunlight and before the eyes of the whole world, to say to you what robs me of rest by day and sleep by night. Drop the cruel harshness which so strangely and painfully contradicts the language of your glances the evening of the last dance. Your eyes have kindled these flames, and this poor heart will consume in their glow if I am not suffered to confess to you that I love you with more ardour than was ever bestowed on any maiden. This place—I will admit that it is ill-chosen—but what other was open to me? After all,

here, too, a bit of the sky with its many stars is looking down upon us. But, if you still unkindly refuse me, or the dread of crossing the barrier of strict decorum forbids you to listen to me here, you can mercifully name another spot. Allow me to go to your father and beg him for the clear hand which, in a happier hour, by not resisting the pressure of mine, awakened the fairest hopes in my heart."

"This is too much," Barbara indignantly broke in. "Make way for me at once, and, if you are well advised, you will spare yourself the visit to my father; for, even if you were in earnest with your love and came as an honest suitor to our modest house, it might easily happen that you would descend the staircase, which is very steep and narrow, in as sorrowful a mood as you climbed it secure of victory."

Then Pyramus Kogel changed his tone, and said bitterly:

"So your victorious eyes were only carrying on an idle game with my unsuspecting heart? You laugh! But I expected to find in my German native land only girls whose chaste reserve and simple honesty could be trusted. It would be a great sorrow if I should learn through you, Jungfrau Barbara, that here, too, it would have been advisable to arm myself against wanton deception. True, the French chansons you sing sound unlike our sincere German songs. And then you, the fairest of the fair, can choose at will among men; but the Emperor's service carries me from one country to another. I am only a poor nobleman—"

"I care not," she interrupted him here with icy coldness; "you might be just good enough for the daughter of another nobleman, who has little more to call his own than you, Sir Knight, but nevertheless far too little for me to grant you permission to load me with unjust reproaches. Besides, you wholly lack the one advantage which the man to whom I am willing to betroth myself must possess."

"And what is that?" he asked eagerly.

"Neither gold nor lands, rank nor splendour," she answered proudly, "but changeless fidelity of the heart. Remember your fluttering from lovely Elspet Zohrer to me, and from me to Elspet, Sir Pyramus, and ask yourself what reason you would give me to expect the fulfilment of such a demand. Your fine figure and gay manner please us girls very well at a dance, but, though you should possess the wealth of the Fuggers and the power of the Sultan, it would be useless trouble to seek my consent. Stand out of my path

at once! There come the Emperor's body guards, and, if you do not obey me, as surely as I hope for salvation I will call them!"

The last words had escaped her lips in a raised voice, and vibrated with such honest indignation that the recruiting officer yielded; but a triumphant smile flitted over her beautiful face.

Had she known before how complete a victory he had already won over pretty Elspet Zohrer, her most dangerous rival, this late errand would have been unnecessary.

Yet she did not regret it; true, she cared no more for Pyramus Kogel than for any one else—the certainty that he, too, had succumbed to the spell of her beauty was associated with a feeling of pleasure whose charm she knew and valued.

CHAPTER VII.

Every one in Ratisbon or at the court who spoke of Sir Wolf Hartschwert called him an excellent fellow. In fact, he had so few defects and faults that perhaps it might have been better for his advancement in life and his estimation in the circle of society to which he belonged if more of them had clung to him.

Hitherto the vice of avarice was the last with which he could have been reproached. But, when his old friend filled his glass with wine, the desire that the property left to him might prove larger than he had expected overpowered every other feeling.

Formerly it had been welcome mainly as a testimonial of his old friend's affection. He did not need it for his own wants; his position at court yielded him a far larger income than he required for the modest life to which he was accustomed. For Barbara's sake alone he eagerly hoped that he had greatly underestimated his foster parents' possessions.

Ought he to blame her because she desired to change the life of poverty with her father for one which better harmonized with her worth and tastes? He himself, who had lived years in a Roman palace, surrounded by exquisite works of the gloriously developed Italian art, and then in the one at Brussels, furnished with imperial splendour, did not feel perfectly content in the more than simple room which Blomberg called his "artist workshop."

A few rude wooden chairs, a square table with clumsy feet, and an open cupboard in which stood a few tin cups, were, the sole furniture of the narrow, disproportionately long room, whose walls were washed with gray. The ceiling, with its exposed beams, was blackened by the pine torches which were often used for lights. Pieces of board were nailed over the defective spots in the floor, and the lines where the walls met rarely showed a right angle.

The window disappeared in the darkness. It was in the back of the niche formed by the unusually thick walls. During the day its small, round panes gave the old gentleman light while he guided his graving tool. A wooden tripod supported the board on which his tools lay. The stool, which usually

stood on a wooden trestle opposite to it, now occupied a place before the table bearing the flagon of wine, and was intended for Barbara.

After the torches had ceased to burn, a single tallow candle in a wrought-iron candlestick afforded the two men light, and threatened to go out when, in the eagerness of their conversation, they forgot to use the snuffers.

Neither curtain, carpet, nor noteworthy work of art pleased the eye in this bare, strangely narrow room. The weapons and pieces of armour of the aged champion of the faith, which hung high above the window, made no pretension to beauty. Besides, the rays of the dim candle did not extend to them any more than to the valueless pictures of saints and virgins on the wall.

The door of Barbara's little bow-window room stood open. Nothing but a small oil lamp was burning there. But the articles it contained, though dainty in themselves, were standing and lying about in such confusion that it also presented an unpleasant aspect.

Yet Barbara's beauty had shed such radiance upon this hideous environment that the scene of her industry had seemed to Wolf like an Eden.

Now he could scarcely understand this; but he found it so much the easier to comprehend that these wretched surroundings no longer suited such a pearl, and that it behooved him to procure it a worthier setting.

Still, it was by no means easy to ask the captain what he desired to know, for during the young knight's absence a great many important things had happened which Blomberg was longing to tell.

He was in such haste to do this that he detained Wolf, who wanted to speak to old Ursel before he began to drink the wine, by the statement that she suffered from wakefulness, and he would disturb her just as she was falling asleep.

The account of the property bequeathed to the young knight was only too quickly completed, for, though the precentor's will made his foster son the sole heir, the legacy consisted only of the house, some portable property, and scarcely more than a thousand florins.

Yet perhaps something else was coming to Wolf; early yesterday Dr. Hiltner, the syndic of the city, had asked his place of residence, and added that he had some news for him which promised good fortune.

After these communications Blomberg hoped to be able to mention the important events which had occurred in Ratisbon during his young friend's absence; but Wolf desired with such eager curiosity to hear the syndic's news first that it vexed the captain, and he angrily told him that he would bite off his tongue before he would even say "How are you?" to that man, and to play eavesdropper to any one was not at all in his line.

Here his companion interrupted with the query, What had caused the learned scholar, whom every one, as well as the precentor, had highly esteemed, to forfeit his friend's good opinion?

Blomberg had waited for such a question.

He had been like a loaded culverin, and Wolf had now touched the burning match to the powder. To understand why he, Blomberg, who wished only the best fortune to every good Christian, would fain have this thorough scoundrel suffer all the torments of hell, the young knight must first learn what had happened in Ratisbon since the last Reichstag.

Until then the good city had resisted the accursed new religious doctrines which had gained a victory in Nuremberg and the other cities of the empire.

Here also, as Wolf himself had probably experienced, there had been no lack of inclination toward the Lutheran doctrine. It was certainly natural, since it suited the stomach better to fill itself, even during Lent, than to renounce meat; since there were shameless priests who would rather embrace a woman than to remain unmarried; since the Church property bestowed by pious souls was a welcome morsel to princes and to cities, and, finally, because licentiousness was more relished than wholesome discipline. The wicked desires inspired by all the evil spirits and their tool, the Antichrist Luther, had gained the upper hand here also, and Dr. Hiltner, above all others, had prepared the way for them in Ratisbon. Even at the last Reichstag his Majesty the Emperor had earnestly, but with almost too much gracious forbearance, endeavoured to effect a union between the contending parties, but directly after his departure from the city rebellion raised its head with boundless insolence. The very next year the Council formally introduced the evil which they called ecclesiastical reformation. The blinded people flocked to the new parish church to attend the first service, which they called "Protestant." Then the mischief hastened forward with gigantic strides.

“Last year,” cried the old gentleman, hoarse with indignation, striking the table with his clenched fist as if he were in camp, “I saw them with my own eyes throw down and drag away, I know not where, the pillar with the beautiful image of Mary, the masterpiece of Erhard Heydenreich, the architect of the cathedral, which stood in front of the new parish church. Songs had been composed in her honour, and she was dear and precious to you from early childhood, as well as to every native of Ratisbon; the precentor—God rest his soul!—read to me from your letter from Rome what exquisite works of art you saw there every day, but that you still remembered with pleasure the beautiful Virgin at home.

“But what do these impious wretches care about beautiful and sacred things? The temple desecrators removed and destroyed one venerable, holy image after another. True, they did not venture into the cathedral, probably from fear of his Majesty the Emperor, and whoever had undertaken to lay hands upon the altar painting and the Madonna in our chapel would have paid for it—I am not boasting—with his life. Though ‘the beautiful Mary,’ in her superabundant mercy, quietly endured the affront offered, our Lord himself punished it, for he inspired the illustrious Duke of Bavaria to issue an edict which forbids his subjects to trade with Ratisbon. Whoever even enters the city must pay a heavy fine. This set many people thinking. Ursel will tell you what sinful prices we have paid since for butter and meat. Even the innocent are obliged to buckle their belts tighter. Those who wished to escape fasting are now compelled by poverty to practise abstinence. It is said the Roman King Ferdinand is urging the revocation of the order. If I were in his place, I would advise making it more stringent till the rebels sweat blood and crept to the cross.”

Then Blomberg bewailed the untimely leniency of the Emperor, for there was not even any rumour of a serious assault upon the Turks. And yet, if only he, Blomberg, was commissioned to raise an army of the cross, Christianity would soon have rest from its mortal foe! But if it should come to fighting—no matter whether against the infidels or the heretics—in spite of Wawerl and his lame leg, he would take the field again. No death could be more glorious than in battle against the destroyer of souls. The scoundrels were flourishing like tares among the wheat. At the last Reichstag the Electors of Brandenburg and Saxony, as well as the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, brought their own preachers, whose sermons turned many heads, even the pastor of St. Emmeran’s, Zollern, who was a

child of Ratisbon. At Staufferhof Baron von Stauff, formerly a man worthy of all honour, had opened his chapel of St. Ann to all the citizens to permit them to participate in the Lutheran idolatry. Two Protestant ministers, one of whom, Dr. Forster, Luther himself had brought to Ratisbon, were liberally paid by the Council. Whether Wolf believed it or not, Father Hamberger, whom he surely remembered as Prior of the Minorites, and who at that time enjoyed universal esteem, had taken a wife, and the rest of the monks had followed the iniquitous example. Many other priests had married if it suited them, and, instead of the cowl, wore secular garments. The instruction given in the school of poets was perfectly abominable, as he heard from Councillor Steuerer, who was faithful to the Catholic Church, and strove to induce the Duke of Bavaria to adopt still sterner measures against all this disorder.

Very recently men hitherto blameless, like Andreas Weinzierl and Georg Seidl, had sent their eighteen-year-old sons to the University of Wittenberg, where the Lutheran heresies were flourishing most luxuriantly.

But the worst of all was that even faithful sons and daughters of Holy Church could not keep themselves wholly untouched by such mischief. Among these, alas! were he and his Wawerl, for he had been obliged to allow the girl to join the choristers who sang in the Convivium Musicum, which the Council had established in the summer three years before. Two councillors were assigned to each Convivium, and thus these arrangements were in Protestant hands.

“Of course,” he added dejectedly, “I wished to forbid her taking part in them, but, though with me it is usually bend or break, what can a man do when a woman is pestering him day and night, sometimes begging with tears, sometimes with caresses?

“Besides, many a good Catholic entreated me to give up my opposition. They, do not grudge the girl her progress, and how much she already owes to the music teacher who now directs the Collegium Musicuin! Singing is everything to her, and what else can I give the poor child? At any rate, the Netherlander whom the Council brought here three years ago—so connoisseurs say—scarcely has his equal anywhere in knowledge and ability. The man came to me and frankly said that he needed the girl’s voice for the Convivium, and, if I refused to let Wawerl take part, he would stop

teaching her. As he is a just man of quiet temperament and advanced in years."

"Where is he from, and what is his name?" Wolf eagerly interrupted.

"Damian Feys," replied the captain, "and he is a native of Ghent in the Netherlands. Although he is in the pay of the city, he has remained—he told me so himself—a good Catholic. There was nothing to be feared for the child on the score of religion. The anxieties which are troubling me on her account come from another source."

Then, with a mischievous mirthfulness usually foreign to his nature, Wolf raised his goblet, exclaiming:

"Cast them upon me, Father Blomberg! I will gladly help you bear them as your loyal son-in-law."

"So that's the way of it," was the captain's answer, his honest eyes betraying more surprise than pleasure.

Yet he pledged Wolf, and, touching his glass to his, said:

"I've often thought that this might happen if you should see how she has grown up. If she consents, nothing could please me better; but how many lovers she has already encouraged, and then, before matters became serious, dismissed! I have experienced it. If you succeed in putting an end to such trifling, may this hour be blessed! But do you know the huge maggots she keeps under her golden hair?"

"Both large and small ones," cried Wolf, with glowing cheeks. "Truthful as she is, she did not conceal from the playmate of her youth a single impulse of her ambitious soul."

"And did she give you hope?" asked the captain, thrusting his head eagerly forward.

"Yes," replied the youth firmly; but he quickly corrected himself, and, in a less confident tone, added, "That is, if I could offer her a care-free life."

"There it is," sighed the old man. "She knows what she wants, and holds firmly to it. You are the son of a knight, and on account of the music which you can pursue together—With her everything is possible and little is impossible. In any case, you will have no easy life with her, and, ere you order the wedding ring——" Here he suddenly stopped, for a bird-song, high, clear, and yet as insinuatingly sweet as though, on this evening in late April, the merriest and most skilful feathered songsters which had recently

found their way home to the fresh green leafage on the shore of the Danube had made an appointment on the steps of the gloomy house in Red Cock Street, rose nearer and nearer to the two men who were sitting over their wine.

It was difficult to believe that this whistling and chirping, trilling and cuckoo calling, came from the same throat; but when the bird notes ceased just outside the door, and Barbara, with bright mirthfulness and the airiest grace, sang the refrain of the Chant des Oiseaux, ‘Car la saison est bonne’, bowing gracefully meanwhile, the old enemy of the Turks fairly beamed with delight.

His eyes, wet with tears of grateful joy, sought the young man’s, and, though he had just warned him plainly enough against courting his daughter, his sparkling gaze now asked whether he had ever met an equally bewitching marvel.

“The deuce!” he cried out to his daughter when she at last paused and extended her hand to him. He leaned comfortably farther back in his arm-chair as he spoke, but she kissed him lightly on the forehead, while her large blue eyes shone with cheerful content.

She had gained her object.

When she sang this song she was safe from any troublesome questions. Besides, Gombert, of Bruges, the director of the imperial orchestra, who had arrived in Ratisbon that very day, was the composer of the charming bird-song, and she knew from her singing master that, though her voice was best adapted to solemn hymns, nothing in the whole range of secular music suited it better than this “Car la saison est bonne.” She longed for the praise of such a musician, and Wolf must accompany her to him.

The young knight had not only been joyfully surprised, but most deeply delighted by the bewitching execution of this most charmingly arranged refrain.

Maestro Gombert and his colleague Appenzelder, the conductor of the boy choir, must hear it on the morrow. And how gladly Barbara consented to fulfil this wish!

She had received the greatest praise, she said, in the motet of the Blessed Virgin, by Josquin de Pres, in the noble song ‘Ecce tu pulchra es’. Her

teacher specially valued this master and his countryman Gombert, and his exquisite compositions were frequently and gladly sung at the Convivium.

This pleased Wolf, for he had a right to call himself, not only the pupil, but the friend of the director of the orchestra. As, seizing the lute, he began Gombert's Shepherd and Shepherdess, Barbara, unasked, commenced the song.

When, after Barbara's bell-like, well-trained voice had sung many other melodies, the young knight at last took leave of his old friends, he whispered that he had not expected to find home so delightful.

She, too, went to rest in a joyous, happy mood, and, as she lay in her narrow bed, asked herself whether she could not renounce her ardent longing for wealth and splendour and be content with a modest life at Wolf's side.

She liked him, he would cherish her, and lovingly devote the great skill which he had gained in Italy and the Netherlands to the final cultivation of her voice. Her house would become a home of art, her life would be pervaded and ennobled by song and music. What grander existence could earth offer?

Before she found an answer to this question, sleep closed her weary eyes. But when, the next morning, the cobbler's one-eyed daughter, who, since old Ursel's illness, had done the rough work in the chambers and kitchen, waked her, she speedily changed her mind. It was hard to rise early after the day's ironing and the late hour at which she had retired, and, besides, when Barbara returned from mass, the maid reported that Frau Lerch had been there and left the message that Fran Itzenweck wanted the laces which had been promised to her early that day.

So Barbara was obliged to go to work again immediately after the early breakfast. But, while she was loosening the laces from the pins and stirring her slender white fingers busily for the wretched pittance, her soul was overflowing with thoughts of the most sublime works of music, and the desire for success, homage, and a future filled with happiness and splendour.

Vehement repugnance to the humble labour to which necessity forced her was like a bitter taste in her mouth, and, ere she had folded the last strips of lace, she turned her back to the work-table and pressed both hands upon her bosom, while from the inmost depths of her tortured soul came the cry: "I

will never bear it! In one way or another I will put an end to this life of beggary."

Thanks to old Ursel's care, Wolf had found his bed made and everything he needed at hand in his foster parents' deserted lodging. To avoid disturbing the sick woman, he removed his shoes in the entry, and then glided into his former little room. Weariness had soon closed his eyes also, but only for a few hours. His fevered blood, fear, and hope drove him from his couch at the first dawn of morning.

Ere returning to the two men the evening before, Barbara had hastily spoken to Ursula, and brought her whatever she preferred to receive from her hands rather than those of the one-eyed maid who spent the night with her—her Sunday cap and a little sealed package which she kept in her chest. When Wolf tapped at her door early the next morning, she was already up, and had had her cap put on. This was intended to give her a holiday appearance, but the expression of her faithful eyes and the smile upon her sunken mouth showed her darling that his return was a festival to her.

The stroke of apoplexy which had attacked the woman of seventy had been slight, and merely affected her speech a little. But she found plenty of words to show Wolf how happy it made her to see him again, and to tell him about his foster parents' last illness and death.

The precentor and organist, aided by Bishop Pangraz Sinzenhofer and Blasius, the captain of the city guard, had endeavoured to collect the papers which proved Wolf's noble birth. The package that Barbara handed to her the evening before contained the patent of nobility newly authorized by King Frederick at Vienna and the certificate of baptism which proved him to be the only son of the Frank Knight Ullmann Hartschwert and the Baroness Wendula Sandhof.

His mother's family died with her; on his father's side, as the precentor had learned, he still had an uncle, his father's older brother, but his castle had been destroyed during the Peasant War. He himself had commanded for several years a large troop of mercenaries in the service of the Queen of England, and his three children, a son and two daughters, had entered monastic and conventual life.

The contents of the package confirmed all these statements. Moreover, the very Dr. Hiltner, of whom Barbara's father had spoken so disagreeably,

had paid a visit the day before to Ursel, who had won the esteem of the preceptor's old friend, and told her that he wished to talk with Wolf about an important matter.

It afforded the young man genuine pleasure to wait upon the faithful old woman and give her her medicine and barley-gruel. His mother had brought him to Ratisbon when he was a little boy four years old, and Ursel at that time had been his nurse. She had clung more closely to him than the woman to whom he owed his life, for his mother had deserted him to take the veil in the convent of the Sisters of St. Clare, but her maid-servant Ursel would not part from him. So she was received by his foster parents when they adopted him, and had served them faithfully until their deaths.

The wrinkled countenance of the old woman, who, even on her sick-bed, retained her neat appearance, expressed shrewdness and energy.

Wolf's services were a pleasure and an honour. A grateful, affectionate glance acknowledged each, and meanwhile he became clearly aware of the treasure which he, the orphaned youth, possessed in this faithful old friend.

If he saw aright, she might yet live a long time, and this gave him heartfelt joy. With her he would lose the last witness of his childhood, the chronicle, as it were, of his earliest youth. He could not understand why he had never before induced her to tell him her recollections.

During his boyhood, which was crowded with work, he had been content when she told him in general outlines that, during the Peasant War, fierce bands had attacked his father's castle, that one of his own bondmen had slain him with an axe, and that his mother had fled with Wolf to Ratisbon, where her brother lived as provost of the cathedral. He had invited her, at the outbreak of the peasant insurrection, to place herself under his protection.

The old woman had also described to him how, amid great hardships, they had reached the city in midwinter, and finally that his mother found Baron Sandhof, her brother, at the point of death, and, after her hope of having a home with the provost of the cathedral was baffled, she had taken the veil in the convent of the Dominicans, called here the Black Penitents. Wolf's foster father, the organist Stenzel, who was closely connected with his uncle, had rendered this step easier for the deserted widow by receiving the little boy in his childless home.

Ursel must give him more minute particulars concerning all these things.

His mother, who knew that he was well cared for, had troubled herself very little about him, and devoted her life to the care of her own salvation and that of her murdered husband, who had died without the benefit of the holy sacrament.

When he was fifteen, she closed her eyes on the world, and the hour when, on her death bed, she had asked of him a vow to be faithful to the Catholic Church and shut his heart against heresy, was as vividly before his memory as if she had just passed away.

He did not allude to these things now, for his heart urged him to confide to the faithful old woman what he thought of Barbara, and the beautiful hopes with which he had left her.

Ursel closed her eyes for a while and twirled the thumb of the hand she could use around the other for some time; but at last she gently nodded the little head framed in her big cap, and said carelessly:

"So you would like to seek a wife, child? Well, well! It comes once to every one. And you are thinking of Wawerl? It would certainly be fortunate for the girl. Marriages are made in heaven, and God's mills grind slowly. If the result is not what you expect, you must not murmur, and, above all things, don't act rashly. But now I can use my heavy tongue no longer. Remember Dr. Hiltner. When duty will permit, you'll find time for another little chat with old Ursel."

Casting a loving farewell glance at Wolf as she spoke, she turned over on the other side.

As his footsteps receded from her bedside, she pressed her lips more firmly together, thinking: "Why should I spoil his beautiful dream of happiness? What Wawerl offers to the eyes and ears of men is certainly most beautiful. But her heart! It is lacking! Unselfish love would be precisely what the early orphaned youth needs, and that Wawerl will never give him. Yet I wish no heavier anxieties oppressed me! One thing is certain —the husband of the girl upstairs must wear a different look from my darling, with his modest worth. The Danube will flow uphill before she goes to the altar with him! So, thank Heaven, I can console myself with that!"

But, soon after, she remembered many things which she had formerly believed impossible, yet which, through unexpected influence, had happened.

Then torturing uneasiness seized her. She anxiously clasped her emaciated hands, and from her troubled bosom rose the prayer that the Lord would preserve her darling from the fulfilment of the most ardent desire of his heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wolf's first walk took him to the Golden Cross, the lodgings of the Emperor Charles and his court. The sky had clouded again, and a keen northwest wind was blowing across the Haidplatz and waving the banner on the lofty square battlemented tower at the right of the stately old edifice.

It had originally belonged to the Weltenburg family as a strong offensive and defensive building, then frequently changed hands.

The double escutcheon on the bow-window was that of the Thun and Fugger von Reh families, who had owned it in Wolf's childhood.

Now he glanced up to see whether young Herr Crafft, to whom the building now belonged, had not also added an ornament to it. But when Wolf's gaze wandered so intently from the tower to the bow-window, and from the bow-window to the great entrance door, it was by no means from pleasure or interest in the exterior of the Golden Cross, but because Barbara had confessed that the nineteen-year-old owner of the edifice, who was still a minor, was also wooing her.

What was the probable value of this stately structure, this aristocratic imperial abode? How rich its owner was! yet she, the brilliant young beauty who had grown up in poverty, disdained young Crafft because her heart did not attract her to him.

So, in this case, faithful Ursel must deceive herself and misjudge the girl, for the old woman's strangely evasive words had revealed plainly enough that she did not consider Barbara the right wife for him.

The good people of Ratisbon could not understand this rare creature! Her artist nature gave her peculiar, unusual traits of character, which were distasteful to the ways of German burghers. Whatever did not fit the usual forms, whatever surpassed ordinary models, was regarded with distrust. He himself had scarcely been able to understand how a girl so free and independent in her feelings, and probably also in her actions, such a mistress of the art of singing, whose performances fulfilled the highest demands, could have bloomed and matured in this environment.

Old Ursel's evasion had wounded and troubled him; the thoughts associated with the double escutcheon on the bow-window, however, revived the clouded feeling of happiness, and, with head erect, he passed the guards at the entrance and went into the corridor, which was again crowded with lords and ladies of the court, priests of all ranks, knights, pages, and servants.

His position gave him access to the Queen of Hungary's apartments without delay—nay, he might hope to be received by her Majesty sooner than many of the knights, lords and ladies, ecclesiastical and secular dignitaries who were waiting there; the stewards, chamberlains and heralds, the ladies of the court, pages, and lackeys knew that the royal lady not only summoned Sir Wolf Hartschwert frequently, but welcomed his presence.

Nearly all were Spaniards or natives of the Netherlands, and it was fortunate for Wolf, on the one hand, that he had learned their language quickly and well in Italy and Brussels, and, on the other, that his birth entitled him to a place with nobles who had the rank of knights.

How formal and stiffly precise everything was here! How many backs bowed low, how softly bombastic, high-sounding words were murmured! It seemed as if every free, warm impulse would lapse into stiffness and coldness; moreover, those assembled here were not the poor petitioners of other antechambers, but lords and ladies who belonged to the most illustrious and aristocratic families, while among the waiting ecclesiastics there was many a prelate with the dignified bearing of a bishop.

Some of the Netherlanders alone frequently threw off the constraint which fettered all, and one even turned with the gayest ease from one person to another. This was Baron Malfalconnet, one of the Emperor's major-domos. He was permitted to do what no one else ventured, for his cheerfulness and wit, his gift of story-telling, and sharp tongue often succeeded in dispelling the clouds of melancholy from the brow of his imperial master.

At Wolf's entrance the baron greeted him with merry banter, and then whispered to him that the regent was expecting him in her private room, where the leaders of the newly arrived musicians had already gone. As Wolf belonged to the "elect," he would conduct him to her Majesty before "the called" who were here in the waiting room.

As he spoke he delivered him to the Emperor's confidential secretary, Gastelu, whom Wolf had often aided in the translation of German letters, and the latter ushered him into the Queen's reception room.

It was the royal lady's sleeping apartment, a moderately wide, unusually deep chamber, looking out upon the Haidplatz. The walls were hung with Flanders Gobelin tapestry, whose coloured pictures represented woodland landscapes and hunters. The Queen's bed stood halfway down the long wall at the right.

Little could be seen of her person, for heavy gold-embroidered damask curtains hung around the wide, lofty bedstead, falling from the canopy projecting, rootlike, above the top, where gilded child genii bore a royal crown. On the side toward the room the curtains were drawn back far enough to allow those who were permitted to approach the regent to see her head and the upper portion of her body, which was wrapped in an ermine cape.

She leaned in a sitting posture against a pile of white satin pillows, and her thick locks, interwoven with strings of pearls, bore witness to the skill of the maid who had combed and curled them so artistically and adorned them with a heron's plume. Two beautiful English pointers and a slender hound were moving about and sometimes disturbed the repose of the two Wachtersbach badger dogs, who were trained to keep side by side everywhere—in the room as well as in hunting. When the door opened they only raised their sagacious little heads with a low growl.

The other living beings who had obtained admittance to the Queen's chamber at so early an hour were constrained by etiquette to formal, silent quiescence. Only the ladies in waiting and the chamberlains moved to and fro unasked, but they also stepped lightly and graduated the depth of the bow with which they greeted each individual to suit his or her rank, while the pages used their nimble feet, whose tread silken shoes rendered noiseless, lightly and carelessly.

The features of most of the persons present expressed reverence and expectation. But although, on account of the clouded sky and the small window panes, the rear of the deep apartment especially was only dimly lighted, the impression produced was neither gloomy nor depressing. This was prevented by the swift movements of the pages, the shrill screams of the gay parrots at the window, the paraphernalia of the chase hung on the

wall, and especially by the regent herself, whose clear voice broke the silence with gay unconcern, and exerted a redeeming influence upon the constraint of the listeners.

She had just received the Bishop of Hildesheim, the Prince of Savoy, and the Countess Tassis, but gave each only a brief audience, for the entrance of the conductor of the orchestra had not escaped her attention.

Several other personages of the highest rank were still among the waiting group, and her chamberlain, Count Hochstraaten, asked in a low tone whether she would deign to receive the Count Palatine von Simmern; but she was determined to close the audience, for Wolf Hartschwert had entered the room, and the subjects which she desired to discuss with him and the musicians would permit no witnesses.

So, without answering Hochstraaten's question, she turned her face toward the chamber, and said, loudly enough to be heard by all present:

"This reception must suffice for to-day! Whoever does not know that I used last night in his Majesty's service for a better purpose than sleep will deem me a lazy sluggard. Would to Heaven I had no worse fault! The rising sun sees me more frequently at my station in the hunting grounds than it does many of you, my honoured friends, at the breakfast table. So, Hochstraaten, be kind enough to tell the ladies and gentlemen who have given me the pleasure of their visits, that their patience shall be less severely tried this evening before vespers."

While speaking, she beckoned to the Marquise de Leria, her oldest lady in waiting, and, as the latter bent her aged back to adjust the pillows, the Queen whispered to her to detain the conductor of the orchestra and Sir Wolf Hartschwert.

The order was instantly obeyed, but some time elapsed ere the last of those who had sought an audience left the room, for, although the regent vouchsafed no one a glance, but turned the pages of a note-book which had been lying on the little table at the head of her bed, each person, before crossing the threshold, bowed toward the couch in the slow, formal manner which etiquette dictated.

As soon as Queen Mary found herself alone with the musicians and the marquise, she beckoned graciously to the former, but with familiar kindness to Wolf, and asked for a brief account of his journey. Then she confessed that the Emperor's sufferings and melancholy mood had induced her to

subject them to the discomforts of the trip to Ratisbon. His Majesty was ignorant of their presence, but she anticipated the most favourable result upon her royal brother, who so warmly loved and keenly appreciated music, if he could hear unexpectedly the finest melodies, sometimes inspiring, sometimes cheering in tone.

Her inquiry whether his Majesty's orchestra and her own boys would be able to give a performance that evening was eagerly answered in the affirmative by Maestro Gombert, the conductor of the orchestra, and Benedictus Appenzelder, conductor of the boy choir, who was in her personal service. She expressed her pleasure in the knowledge, and then proposed to surprise the Emperor at the principal meal, about midnight, with Jacob Hobrecht's Missa Graecorum, whose magnificent profundity his Majesty especially admired.

Gombert forced himself to keep silence, but the significant smile on his delicate, beardless lips betrayed what he thought of this selection. The conductor of the boy choir was franker. He slightly shook his ponderous head, whose long, gray hair was parted in the middle, and then honestly admitted, in his deep tones, that the Missa Graecorum seemed to him too majestic and gloomy for this purpose. Wolf, too, disapproved of the Queen's suggestion for the same reason, and, though she pointed out that she had chosen this composition precisely on account of its deep religious earnestness, the former persisted in his opposition, and modestly mentioned the melody which would probably be best suited for a surprise at his imperial Majesty's repast.

Maestro Gombert had recently composed a Benedictio Mensae for four voices, and, as it was one of his most effective creations, had never been executed, and therefore would be entirely new to the Emperor, it was specially adapted to introduce the concert with which the monarch was to be surprised at table.

The Queen would have preferred that a religious piece should commence the musical performance, but assented to Wolf's proposal. Gombert himself dispelled her fear that his composition would be purely secular in character, and Wolf upheld him by singing to the musical princess, to the accompaniment of the lute, snatches of the principal theme of the Benedictio, which had impressed itself upon his faithful memory.

Gombert assisted him, but Appenzelder stroked his long beard, signifying his approval by nods and brief exclamations of satisfaction. The Queen was now sincerely glad that this piece of music had been brought to her notice; certainly nothing more suitable for the purpose could have been found. Besides, her kindly nature and feminine tact made her grateful to Wolf for his hint of distinguishing, by the first performance of one of his works, the able conductor and fine composer upon whom she had imposed so fatiguing a journey.

She would gladly have given Appenzelder also some token of her favour, but she could not have used any of his compositions—the most famous of which was a dirge—upon this occasion, and the blunt long-beard frankly admitted this, and declared unasked that he desired nothing better than to offer his Majesty, with the Benedictio, the first greeting of Netherland music.

Gombert's bearing was that of an aristocrat, his lofty brow that of a thinker, and his mobile mouth rendered it easy to perceive what a wealth of joyous mirth dwelt within the soul of this artist, who was equally distinguished in grave and gay moods.

Queen Mary was by no means blind to these merits, and lamented the impossibility of being on more familiar terms of intercourse with him and his colleague of the boy choir. But both were of humble birth, and from childhood custom had prohibited her, as well as the other female members of her family, from associating with persons who did not belong to the nobility. So there was no place for either in her household.

Rough Appenzelder regarded this as fortunate; Gombert thought it a matter of course because custom so ordained.

The stimulus which the Queen could expect from Wolf Hartschwert was certainly far less deep and varied; yet to him who, as a knight, belonged to her train, she granted many favours which she denied the famous Gombert. Besides, Wolf's musical knowledge was as remarkable as his usefulness as a secretary. Lastly, his equable disposition, his unerring sense of propriety, and his well-proved fidelity had gained the full confidence of the royal lady.

By the side of the two composers and leaders of the musicians he looked almost boyish, yet, as the regent was overburdened with affairs of state, she confided to him alone the care of the further success of the surprise.

He was familiar with the rooms of the Golden Cross, and before midnight would have posted the singers and musicians so that his Majesty would first learn through his ears the pleasure which they intended to bestow upon him.

CHAPTER IX.

The Queen's commission imposed upon Wolf a long series of inspections, inquiries, orders, and preparations, the most important of which detained him a long time at the Golden Cross.

After he had done what was necessary there, he hastily took a lunch, and then went to the house of the Golden Stag. The steward of the Schiltl family, to whom the house belonged, but who were now in the country, had given the boy choir shelter there, and Wolf was obliged to inform the leader of his arrangements. Appenzelder had intended to practise exercises with his young pupils in the chapel belonging to this old house, familiar to all the inhabitants of Ratisbon, but Wolf found it empty. On the other hand, young, clear voices echoed from a room in the lower story.

The door stood half open, and, before he crossed the threshold, he had heard with surprise the members of the boy choir, lads ranging from twelve to fifteen, discussing how they should spend the leisure time awaiting them.

The ringleader, Giacomo Bianchi, from Bologna, was asserting that "the old bear"—he meant Appenzelder—"would never permit the incomplete choir to sing before the Emperor and his royal sister."

"So we shall have the afternoon," he exclaimed. "The grooms will give me a horse, and after dinner I, and whoever cares to go with me, will ride back to the village where we last stopped. What do I want there? I'll get the kiss which the tavernkeeper's charming little daughter owes me. Her sweet mouth and fair braids with the bows of blue ribbon—I saw nothing prettier anywhere!"

"Yes, these blondes!" cried Angelo Negri, a Neapolitan boy of thirteen, rolling his black eyes upward enthusiastically, and kissing, for lack of warm lips, the empty air.

"Sweet, sweet, sweet," sighed Giacoma Bianchi.

"Sweet enough," remarked little thick-set Cornelius Groen from Breda, in broken Italian. "Yet you surely are not thinking of that silly girl, with her flaxen braids, but of the nice honey and the light white pastry she brought us. If we can get that again, I'll ride there with you."

“I won’t,” protested Wilhelm Haldema, from Leuwarden in Friesland. “I shall go down to the river with my pole. It’s swarming with fish.”

Wolf had remained concealed until this moment. Now he entered the huge apartment.

The boys rushed toward him with joyous ease, and, as they crowded around him, asking all sorts of questions, it was evident that he possessed their affection and confidence.

He kindly motioned to them to keep silence, and asked what induced them to expect leisure time on that day, when, by the exertion of all their powers, they were to display their skill in the presence of their mistress and the Emperor.

The answer was not delayed—nay, it sprang from many young lips at the same time. Unfortunately, its character was such that Wolf scarcely ventured to hope for the full success of the surprise.

Johann of Cologne and Benevenuto Bosco of Catania, in Sicily, the two leaders and ornaments of the choir, were so very ill that their recovery could scarcely be expected even within the next few days. The native of Cologne had been attacked on the way by a hoarseness which made the fifteenyear-old lad uneasy, because signs of the approaching change of voice had already appeared.

The break meant to the extremely musical youth, who had been distinguished by the bell-like purity of his tones, the loss of his well-paid position in the boy choir, which, for his poor mother’s sake, he must retain as long as possible. So, with mingled grief and hope, he dipped deeply into his slender purse when, at Neumarkt, where the travelling musicians spent the night just at the time the annual fair was held, he met a quack who promised to help him.

This extremely talkative old man, who styled himself “Body physician to many distinguished princes and courts,” boasted of possessing a secret remedy of the famous Bartliolomaus Anglicus, which, besides other merits, also had the power of bestowing upon a harsh voice the melody of David’s harp.

Still, the young native of Cologne delayed some time before using the nostrum. Not until the hoarseness increased alarmingly did he in his need take the leech’s prescription, and Benevenuto Bosco, whom he had

admitted to his confidence, and who also felt a certain rawness in his throat, since beyond Nuremberg one shower of rain after another had drenched the travellers, asked him to let him use the medicine also.

At first both thought that they felt a beneficial result; but soon their condition changed for the worse, and their illness constantly increased.

On reaching Ratisbon they were obliged to go to bed, and a terrible night was followed by an equally bad morning.

When Appenzelder returned from the audience at the Golden Cross, he found his two best singers in so pitiable a condition that he was obliged to summon the Emperor's leech, Dr. Mathys, to the sufferers.

The famous physician was really under obligations to remain near the sovereign at this time of day. Yet he had gone at once to the Stag, and pronounced the patients there to be the victims of severe poisoning.

A Ratisbon colleague, whom he found with the sufferers, was to superintend the treatment which he prescribed.

He had left the house a short time before. Master Appenzelder, Wolf heard from the choir boys, was now with the invalids, and the knight set off to inquire about them at once.

He had forbidden the idle young singers who wanted to go with him to follow, but one had secretly slipped after, and, in one of the dark corridors of the big house, full of nooks and corners, he suddenly heard a voice call his name. Ere he was aware of it, little Hannibal Melas, a young Maltese in the boy choir, whose silent, reserved nature had obtained for him from the others the nickname Tartaruga, the tortoise, seized his right hand in both his own.

It was done with evident excitement, and his voice sounded eagerly urgent as he exclaimed:

"I fix my last hope on you, Sir Knight, for you see there is scarcely one of the others who would not have an intercessor. But I! Who would trouble himself about me? Yet, if you would only put in a good word, my time would surely come now."

"Your time?" asked Wolf in astonishment; but the little fellow eagerly continued:

"Yes, indeed! What Johann of Cologne or at least what Benevenuto can do, I can trust myself to do too. The master need only try it with me, and,

now that both are ill, put me in place of one or the other."

Wolf, who knew what each individual chorister could do, shook his head, and began to tell the boy from Malta for what good reason the master preferred the two sick youths; but little Hannibal interrupted by exclaiming, in tones of passionate lamentation:

"So you are the same? The master having begun it, all misjudge and crush me! Instead of giving me an opportunity to show what I can do in a solo part, I am forced back into the crowd. My best work disappears in the chorus. And yet, Sir Wolf, in spite of all, I heard the master's own lips say in Brussels—I wasn't listening—that he had never heard what lends a woman's voice its greatest charm come so softly and tenderly from the throat of a boy. Those are his own words. He will not deny them, for at least he is honest. What is to become of the singing without Johann and Benevenuto? But if they would try me, and at least trust a part of Bosco's music to me—"

Here he stopped, for Master Appenzelder was just coming from the door of the sick-room into the corridor; but Wolf, with a playful gesture, thrust his fingers through the lad's bushy coal-black hair, turned him in the direction from which he came, and called after him, "Your cause is in good hands, you little fellow with the big name."

Then, laying his hand on the arm of the deeply troubled musician, and pointing to the boy who was trotting, full of hope, down the corridor, he said: "'Hannibal ante portas!' A cry of distress that is full of terror; but the Maltese Hannibal who is vanishing yonder gave me an idea which will put an end to your trouble, my dear Maestro. The sooner the two poisoned lads recover the better, of course; yet the Benedictio Mensae need not remain unsung on account of their heedlessness, for little Hannibal showed me the best substitute."

This promise flowed from Wolf's lips with such joyous confidence that the grave musician's sombre face brightened; but it swiftly darkened again, and he exclaimed, "We don't give such hasty work!" When the knight tried to tell him what he had in mind, the other brusquely interrupted with the request that he would first aid him in a more important matter. Wolf was acquainted with the city, and perhaps would spare him a walk by informing him where the sick lads would find the best shelter. The Stag was overcrowded, and he was reluctant to leave the poor fellows in the little

sleeping room which they shared with their companions. The Ratisbon physician had ordered them to be sent to the hospital; but the boy from Cologne opposed it so impetuously that he, Appenzelder, thought it his duty to seek another shelter for the sufferers.

When Wolf with the older man entered the low, close chamber, he found the lad, a handsome, vigorous boy, with his fair, curling hair tossed in disorder around his fevered face, standing erect in his bed. While the doctor was trying to compel him to obey and enter the litter which stood waiting for him, he beat him back with his strong young fists. He would rather jump into the open grave or into the rushing river, he shrieked to the corpulent leech, than be dragged into the hospital, which was the plague, death, hell.

He emphasized his resistance with heavy blows, while his Italian companion in suffering, livid, ashen-gray, with bowed head and closed lids, permitted himself to be placed in the litter without moving.

At Wolf's entrance the German youth, like a drowning man who sees a friend on the shore, shrieked an entreaty to save him from the murderers who wanted to drag him to death. The young knight gazed compassionately at the lad's flushed face, and, after a brief pause of reflection, proposed committing the sufferers to the care of the Knights Hospitallers.

This removed the burden from the young Rhinelander's tortured soul, yet he insisted, with passionate impetuosity, upon having his master and the nobleman accompany him, that the physician whom, in his fevered fancy, he regarded as his mortal foe, should not drag him to the pest-house after all.

Both musicians yielded to his wish. On the way Appenzelder held the lad's burning hand in his own, and never wearied of talking affectionately to him. Not until after he had seen his charges, with the physician's assistance, comfortably lodged, and had left the house of the Hospitallers, did he permit himself to test the almost incredible news which Sir Wolf Hartschwert had brought him.

With what fiery zeal Wolf persuaded him, how convincing was his assurance that a substitute for Johann of Cologne, and a most admirable one, was actually to be found here in Ratisbon!

He had no need to seek for fitting words in the description of Barbara Blomberg, the melody of her voice, and her admirable training. The fact that she was a woman, he protested, need not be considered, nay, it might

be kept secret. The Church, it is true, prohibited the assistance of women, but the matter here was simply the execution of songs in a private house.

At first Appenzelder listened grumbling, and shaking his head in dissent, but soon the proposal seemed worth heeding; nay, when he heard that the singer, whose talent and skill the quiet, intelligent German praised so highly, owed her training to his countryman, Damian Feys, whom he knew, he began to ask questions with, increasing interest. But, ere Wolf had answered the first queries, some one else made his appearance on the Haid, and the very person who was best fitted to give information about Barbara —her teacher, Feys, who had sought Gombert, his famous Brussels companion in art, and was just taking him to a rehearsal of the Convivium musicum. At this meeting the leader of the boy choir, in spite of his pleasure at seeing his valued countryman and companion in art, showed far less patience than before, for, after the first greeting, he at once asked Feys what he thought of his pupil Barbara. The answer was so favourable that Appenzelder eagerly accepted the invitation to attend the rehearsal also. So the four fellow-artists crossed the Haidplatz together, and Maestro Gombert was obliged to remind his colleague of the boy choir that people who occupied the conductor's desk forgot to run on a wager.

Wolf's legs were by no means so long as those of the tall, broad musician, yet, in his joyous excitement, it was an easy matter to keep pace with him. In the happy consciousness of meriting the gratitude of the woman whom he loved, he gazed toward the New Scales, the large building beneath whose roof she whose image filled his heart and mind must already have found shelter.

Did she see him coming? Did she suspect who his companions were, and what awaited her through them?

Yet, sharply as he watched for her, he could discover no sign of her fair head behind any of the windows.

Yet Barbara, from the little room where the singers laid aside their cloaks and wraps, had seen Wolf, with her singing master Feys and two other gentlemen, coming toward the New Scales, and correctly guessed the names of the slender, shorter stranger in the sable-trimmed mantle and the big, broad-shouldered, bearded one who accompanied her friend. Wolf had described them both, and a presentiment told her that something great awaited her through them.

Gombert was the composer of the bird-song, and, as she remembered how the refrain of this composition had affected Wolf the day before, she heard the door close behind the group.

Then the desire to please, which had never left her since she earned the first applause, seized upon her more fiercely than ever.

Of what consequence were the listeners before whom she had hitherto sung compared with those whose footsteps were now echoing on the lowest stairs? And, half animated by an overpowering secret impulse, she sang the refrain "Car la saison est bonne" aloud while passing the stairs on her way into the dancing hall, where the rehearsal was to take place.

What an artless delight in the fairest, most pleasing thing in Nature to a sensitive young human soul this simple sentence voiced to the Netherland musicians! It seemed to them as if the song filled the dim, cold corridor with warmth and sunlight. Thus Gombert had heard within his mind the praise of spring when he set it to music, but had never before had it thus understood by any singer, reproduced by any human voice.

The excitable man stood as if spellbound; only a curt "My God! my God!" gave expression to his emotion. The blunter Appenzelder, on the contrary, when the singer suddenly paused and a door closed behind her, exclaimed: "The deuce, that's fine!—If that were your helper in need, Sir Wolf, all would be well!"

"It is," replied Wolf proudly, with sparkling eyes; but the honest old fellow rushed after Barbara, held out both hands to her in his frank, cordial way, and cried:

"Thanks, heartfelt thanks, my dear, beautiful young lady! But if you imagine that this drop of nectar will suffice, you are mistaken. You have awakened thirst! Now see—and Gombert will thank you too—that it is quenched with a fuller gift of this drink of the gods."

The Netherlanders found the table spread, and this rehearsal of the Convivium musicum brought Barbara Blomberg the happiest hours which life had ever bestowed.

She saw with a throbbing heart that her singing not only pleased, but deeply stirred the heart of the greatest composer of his time, whose name had filled her with timid reverence, and that, while listening to her voice,

the eyes of the sturdy Appenzelder, who looked as if his broad breast was steeled against every soft emotion, glittered with tears.

This had happened during the execution of Josquin de Pres's "Ecce tu pulchra es'."

Barbara's voice had lent a special charm to this magnificent motet, and, when she concluded the "Quia amore langueo"—"Because I yearn for love"—to which she had long given the preference when she felt impelled to relieve her heart from unsatisfied yearning, she had seen Gombert look at the choir leader, and understood the "inimitable" which was not intended for her, but for his fellow-artist.

Hitherto she had done little without pursuing a fixed purpose, but this time Art, and the lofty desire to serve her well, filled her whole being. In the presence of the most famous judges she imposed the severest demands upon herself. Doubtless she was also glad to show Wolf what she could do, yet his absence would not have diminished an iota of what she gave the Netherlanders. She felt proud and grateful that she belonged to the chosen few who are permitted to express, by means of a noble art, the loftiest and deepest feelings in the human breast. Had not Appenzelder been compelled to interrupt the rehearsal, she would gladly have sung on and on to exhaustion.

She did not yet suspect what awaited her when, in well-chosen yet cordial words, Gombert expressed his appreciation.

She neither saw nor heard the fellow-singers who surrounded her; nay, when Dr. Hiltner, the syndic's, daughter, seventeen years old, who had long looked up to her with girlish enthusiasm, pressed forward to her side, and her charming mother, sincerely pleased, followed more quietly, when others imitated their example and expressed genuine gratification or made pretty speeches, Barbara scarcely distinguished the one from the other, honest good will from bitter envy.

She did not fully recover her composure until Appenzelder came up to her and held out his large hand.

Clasping it with a smile, she permitted the old musician to hold her little right hand, while in a low tone, pointing to Wolf, who had followed him, he said firmly:

“May I believe the knight? Would you be induced to bestow your magnificent art upon an ardent old admirer like myself, though to-day only as leader of the voices in the boy choir—”

Here Wolf, who had noticed an expression of refusal upon Barbara’s lips, interrupted him by completing the sentence with the words, addressed to her, “In order to let his Majesty the Emperor enjoy what delights us here?”

The blood receded from Barbara’s cheeks, and, as she clung to the window-sill for support, it seemed as though some magic spell had conveyed her to the summit of the highest steeple. Below her yawned the dizzy gulf of space, and the air was filled with a rain of sceptres, crowns, and golden chains of honour falling upon ermine and purple robes on the ground below.

But after a few seconds this illusion vanished, and, ere Wolf could spring to the assistance of the pallid girl, she was already passing her kerchief across her brow.

Then, drawing a long breath, she gave the companion of her childhood a grateful glance, and said to Appenzelder:

“Dispose of my powers as you deem best,” adding, after a brief pause, “Of course, with my father’s consent.”

Appenzelder, as if rescued, shook her hand again, this time with so strong a pressure that it hurt her. Yet her blue eyes sparkled as brightly as if her soul no longer had room for pain or sorrow. After Barbara had made various arrangements with the choir leader, it seemed to her as though the sunny, blissful spring, which her song had just celebrated so exquisitely, had also made its joyous entry into the narrow domain of her life.

On the way home she thanked the friend who accompanied her with the affectionate warmth of the days of her childhood, nay, even more eagerly and tenderly; and when, on reaching the second story of the cantor house, he took leave of her, she kissed his cheek, unasked, calling down the stairs as she ran up:

“There is your reward! But, in return, you will accompany me first to the rehearsal with the singing boys, and then—if you had not arranged it yourself you would never believe it—go to the Golden Cross, to the Emperor Charles.”

CHAPTER X.

The Emperor's table was laid in one of the lower rooms of the Golden Cross. The orchestra and the boy choir had been stationed in Saint Leonhard's chapel. A wide door led from the consecrated chamber, spanned by a vaulted roof, into the dining-room. When it was opened, the music and singing would pour in a full flood to those seated around the board.

Shortly before midnight everything in kitchen and cellar was ready for the royal couple. The wax candles and lamps were already lighted when Queen Mary prepared to bring her imperial brother to the surprise which she had planned, and whose influence she eagerly anticipated.

The Emperor had received the last report half an hour before, and then commissioned his physician, who had again warned him against the excess of work, to protect him from interruption—he desired to have an hour alone.

Dr. Mathys had fulfilled this order with the utmost strictness. Even the English ambassador was dismissed. The members of the royal household and the nobles who during their stay in Ratisbon crowded around the royal brother and sister, and even at this late hour filled the rooms and corridors of the spacious building with busy life, had been commanded to step lightly and keep silent.

The lord chamberlain, Count Heinrich of Nassau, saw that nothing was stirring near the apartment of his imperial master, and the stewards, Quijada and Malfalconnet, aided him. But they could not prevent the barking of Queen Mary's hunting dogs, and when their royal mistress followed them to accompany her illustrious brother to the dining-hall, Malfalconnet ventured to remark that the lion, when he retires to solitude, sometimes values rest more than the presence of even the most beloved and adorable member of his noble race; but the regent quickly retorted that she had not yet reached lion hunting, but she knew that even the king of beasts possessed a stomach, and would be glad to have rest seasoned with dainty food.

"The banquet is ready," added Count Buren, and Malfalconnet, with a low bow, said:

“And a portion of it is the covered chiming dish with which your Majesty’s love and wisdom intends to surprise the illustrious epicure.”

While speaking, he cautiously opened the door of the royal apartment, but the dogs were held back by the pages who had carried the train of the festal robe. Two others zealously aided her to throw the trailing brocade across her arm, and in this manner she entered her distinguished brother’s chamber.

This was so deep that a short walk was necessary to reach the window near which the Emperor sat. The office of lighting the vast room was assigned to a dozen wax candles in a silver candelabrum, but they were so inadequate to the task that neither the mythological scenes on the Brabant Gobelin curtains with which the walls were hung, nor the very scanty furniture of the remainder of the long chamber could be seen from the door.

Thus the prevailing dusk concealed the surroundings of the great monarch who was resting there, and the only object visible to the entering Queen was his figure illumined by the light. In her soul everything else receded far behind the person, welfare, and pleasure of this mighty sovereign. Yet she had already crossed half the room, and her entrance still remained unnoticed.

The Emperor Charles, with his forehead resting on his hand, sat absorbed in thought before the papers which had occupied his attention. How mournful he looked, what sorrowful thoughts were doubtless again burdening that anxious brain! Never before had he seemed to his sister so old.

Perhaps it was the ceaseless planning and pondering of the statesman and general which, during the last few years, had thinned the light-brown hair at the corners of the brow.

The resting ruler now seemed to have brought his mind to repose also, for every emotion had vanished from his pallid face. Even the sharply cut nostrils of the long nose, which usually moved swiftly, were perfectly still. The heavy chin, framed by a thin, closely clipped beard, had sunk upon the high ruff as if for support, and the thick, loosely hanging lower lip appeared to have lost its elasticity.

In this hour of rest and relaxation this tireless and successful sovereign, utterly exhausted, had even relinquished seeming what he was; his brown hair framed his brow and temples in a tangled, disordered mass; the lacings

of his velvet doublet were loosened; a shabby woollen coverlet of anything but imperial appearance was wound around his lower limbs, and the foot in which the gout throbbed and ached rested on his sleeping hound, and was wrapped in the cloths which his valet Adrian found at hand after the Venetian ambassador, the confessor, and the leech had left his master.

It pierced his sister to the heart to see her mighty brother, upon whose dominions, it was said, the sun never set, in this guise.

Her glance rested sorrowfully upon him a long time, but even when she moved several paces nearer he retained the same motionless rigidity which had seized upon him and even communicated itself to the dog. The animal knew the regent, and did not let her disturb its repose.

Then a terrible fear assailed her, and the image of the Cid Campeador who, mounted on horseback, went swaying on his steed to meet the foe, rose before her.

"Your Majesty," then again "Your Majesty," she called in a low tone, that she might not startle him; but the answer for which she waited in breathless suspense did not come, and now the anxious dread that filled her sisterly heart forced from her lips the cry, "Carlos!" and once more "Carlos!"

The dog stirred, and at the same time the Emperor raised his bowed head and turned toward his sister.

Drawing a long breath, as if relieved from a heavy burden, she hastened to his side, and, clasping his delicately formed hand, kissed it with passionate tenderness; but the Emperor withdrew it, saying with a mournful smile, which gave his rigid countenance a new and more winning expression, in the Castilian language in which he always addressed her:

"Why are you so agitated, Querida? Did the sight of the silent brother alarm the sister? Ay, darling, there are some things more terrible than the wild boar at which the brave huntress hurls her spear. Our mother's bequest ____"

Queen Mary, with hands outstretched beseechingly, bowed the knee before him; but he raised her with more strength than would have been expected from him just before, and, sighing faintly, continued:

"There are hours, Mary, when the demon that overpowered the mother stretches his talons toward the son also. But, in spite of his satanic origin, he is a cowardly wight, and a loving face, a tender word, drives him away."

“Then may my coming be blessed!” she answered warmly. “Yet it can scarcely be a demon or any being of mortal mould that is spoiling the life happiness of my beloved brother and sovereign lord. After all, they are tolerably alike in the main point, and what semblance would the son of hell wear that dares to assail the most powerful and vigorous mind of all the ages, and yet is seized with panic terror at the glance of a feeble woman? Whoever knows the anxieties which have recently burdened your Majesty, and the wide range of the decision to which the course of events is urging you, can not wonder if, as just now, your cheerful spirits desert you. No demons or evil creatures of that sort, Heaven knows, are needed to accomplish it.”

“Certainly not,” replied the Emperor. “Yet it does not matter what name is borne by the unconquerable power which poisons with horrible images the few hours of repose allotted to the solitary man who is bereft of love and joy. But let us drop the subject! When you appear and raise your voice, it seems as though all gloomy thoughts heard the view hallo which drives your stags and roes back into their coverts, Mary. I suppose you have come to summon me to the table?”

The Queen assented, and now he could not prevent her kissing his hand. Then she seized the dainty little bell on the table to ring for the valet Adrian; but the Emperor Charles stopped her with the exclamation:

“Never mind him. I will go with you as I am, if you do not object to sharing your meal with such a scarecrow of a man. Only permit me to lock up these papers.”

“From Rome?” asked the regent eagerly.

“That is easily discerned,” replied the Emperor. “New and amazingly favourable promises. Nothing is required of me except the trifling obligation to allow the Protestants nothing in religious affairs which the Pope or the Council do not approve. If I agree to accept the promises, every one will think that I have the advantage, and yet, if the contract is made, it is tearing from the sky the political polestar of many a lustrum, and burying one of my clearest, ripest, most sacred hopes.”

Here the startled Queen interrupted him: “That would surely, inevitably be the evil fruit which would grow from such a treaty. It would deliver to the Pope, with fettered hands, this very Council which your Majesty so confidently expected would remove or diminish, in orderly methods, the

abuses which are urging so many Christians to abandon the Catholic Church. How often I have heard even her most faithful sons acknowledge that such abuses exist! But if you make the alliance, the self-interest of the hierarchy will know how to prevent the introduction of even a single vigorous amendment, and, instead of the conqueror of the hydra of abuse, your Majesty will render yourself its guardian."

"And," added the Emperor affectionately—he still retained his seat at the writing table—"this alliance, moreover, would force me to the painful necessity of opposing the earnest wish of the dearest, fairest, and wisest of my sisters."

"Because it would render war with the evangelical princes inevitable," cried the Queen excitedly. "Oh, your Majesty, you know that the heretical movement, which is making life a burden to me in my provinces, is going much too far for me, as well as for you here in Germany; nay, that it is hateful to me, because I value nothing more than our holy Church, her greatness and unity. But would it really redound to her welfare if the schism now existing, and which you yourself expected to heal through the Council, should by this very Council be embittered and even perhaps perpetuated? For a long time nothing has seemed to me more execrable than this war. Your Majesty knows that, and therefore my lord and brother can not be vexed with me if I remind him of the hour when, a few months ago, he promised to avoid it and do all in his power to bring what relates to religious matters in these German countries to a peaceful conclusion."

The Emperor looked his sister full in the face, and, while struggling to his feet, said with majestic dignity:

"And I have never given your Highness occasion to doubt my word." Then, changing his tone, he continued kindly: "No means—I repeat it—shall remain untried to preserve peace. I am in earnest, child, though there are now many reasons for breaking the promise. I put them together on the long list yonder, and the Spaniards at the court add new ones every hour. If you care to know them——"

Here he hesitated, because the gout in his foot gave him a sharper twinge; but the Queen availed herself of the pause to exclaim: "I think I am aware of them. It is especially hard just now for the statesman and soldier to keep the sword in the sheath, because Rome offers more than ever, because at the present time no serious opposition is to be feared from the most important

states, and because the princes of the empire have neglected nothing which could rouse the resentment of my imperial brother. I know all this, and yet it is as firmly established as Alpine mountains——”

Here a low laugh escaped the Emperor’s lips.

“The political course which could be thus firmly established is to be found, you experienced regent, only in one place—the strong imagination of a high hearted woman, who desires to accomplish what she deems right. I, too, you may believe me, am opposed to this war, and, as matters stand now, the German renegades, rather than we, may expect a glorious result. But, nevertheless, it may happen that I shall be compelled to ask you to give me back my promise.”

“I should like to see the person who could compel my august brother to undertake anything against his imperial will,” the Queen passionately interrupted.

“We will hope that this superior being may not appear only too soon,” replied the Emperor, smiling bitterly. “The invincible oppressor bears the name of unexpected circumstances; I encountered one of his harbingers to-day. There lie the documents. Do you know to what those miserable papers force me, the Emperor?—ay, force, I repeat it. To nothing less, Mary, than consciously to deal a blow in the face of justice, whose defender I ought and desire to be. I am not exaggerating, for I am withdrawing a fratricide from the courts, nay, am paving the way for him to evade punishment.”

“You mean Alfonso Diaz, who had his brother murdered by a hired assassin because he abandoned the holy Church and accepted the Lutheran religion,” said the Queen sorrowfully. “Malvenda was just telling me——”

“He was the instigator of the crime,” interrupted the Emperor. “Now he rejoices in it as a deed well pleasing to God, and many thousands, I know, agree with him. And I? Had Juan Diaz been a German Johannes or Hans, the Emperor Charles would have made Alfonso expiate his crime upon the block this very day. But the brothers were Spaniards, and that alters the case.”

With this sentence, which fell from his lips in firm, resolute tones, his bearing regained its old decision, and his eyes met his sister’s with a flashing glance as he continued:

“The seed which here in the North, in carefully prepared soil and under the fostering care of men only too skilful and ready for conflict, took deep root in the domain of religion, which we were obliged to tolerate because it grew too rapidly and strongly for us to extirpate or crush it without depopulating a great empire and jeopardizing other very important matters, would mean ruin to our Spain. Whoever dared to transplant the heresy to her soil would be the most infamous of the corrupters of a nation, for the holy Church and the kingdom of Spain are one. The mere thought of a Juan Diaz, who had absorbed the heretical Lutheran doctrine here, returning home to infect the hearts of the Castilians with its venom, makes my blood boil also. Therefore, for the sake of Spain, a higher justice compels me to offend the secular one. The people beyond the Pyrenees shall learn that, even for the brother, it is no sin, but a duty, to shorten the life of the brother who abandoned the holy Church. Let Alfonso Diaz strive to obtain absolution. It will not be difficult. He can sleep calmly, so far as the judges are concerned who dispense justice in the name of Charles V.”

As he spoke he waved his hand to repel the hound which, when he raised his voice, had pressed closer to him, and glanced at the artistically wrought Nuremberg clocks on the writing table, two of which struck the hour at the same time. Then he himself seized the little bell, rang it, and permitted the valet Adrian to brush his hair and make the necessary changes in his dress.

Then he invited his sister to accompany him to the table.

Walking without a shoe was difficult, and, when he saw the Queen look down sorrowfully at the cloths which swathed the foot, he said while toiling on:

“Imagine that we have been hunting and the boot remained stuck in the mud. I am sure of indulgence from you. As to the others, even with only one shoe I am still the Emperor.”

He opened the door as he spoke, and, while the valet held the hound back, the Emperor, with chivalrous courtesy, insisted that his sister should precede him, though she resisted until Baron Malfalconnet, with a low bow to the royal dame, said:

“The meal is served, your Majesty, and if you lead the way you will protect our Emperor and sovereign lord from the unworthy suspicion of wishing to be first at the trencher.”

He motioned toward the threshold as he uttered the words, but Charles, who often had a ready answer for the baron's jests, followed his sister in silence with a clouded brow.

Leaning on her arm and the crutch which Quijada had mutely presented to him, Charles cautiously descended the stairs. He had indignantly rejected the leech's proposal to use a litter in the house also, if the gout tortured him.

CHAPTER XI.

Majesty, whose nature demands that people should look up to it, shuns the downward glance of compassion. Yet during this walk the Emperor Charles, even at the risk of presenting a pitiable spectacle, would gladly have availed himself of the litter.

He, who had cherished the proud feeling of uniting in himself, his own imperial power, the temporal and ecclesiastical sovereignty over all Christendom, would now willingly have changed places with the bronzed, sinewy halberdiers who were presenting arms to him along the sides of the staircase. Yet he waved back Luis Quijada with an angry glance and the sharp query, "Who summoned you?" when, in an attitude of humble entreaty, he ventured to offer him the support of his strong arm. Still, pain compelled him to pause at every third step, and ever and anon to lean upon the strong hip of his royal sister.

Queen Mary gladly rendered him the service, and, as she gazed into his face, wan with anxiety and suffering, and thought of the beautiful surprise which she had in store, she waved back, unnoticed by her royal brother, the pages and courtiers who were following close behind. Then looking up at him, she murmured:

"How you must suffer, Carlos! But happiness will surely follow the martyrdom. Only a few steps, a few minutes more, and you will again look life in the face with joyous courage. You will not believe it? Yet it is true. I would even be inclined to wager my own salvation upon it."

The Emperor shook his head dejectedly, and answered bitterly:

"Such things should not be trifled with; besides, you would lose your wager. Joyous courage, Querida, was buried long ago, and too many cares insure its having no resurrection. The good gifts which Heaven formerly permitted me to enjoy have lost their zest; instead of bread, it now gives me stones. The best enjoyment it still grants me—I am honest and not ungrateful in saying so—is a well-prepared meal. Laugh, if you choose! If moralists and philosophers heard me, they would frown. But the

consumption of good things affords them pleasure too. It's a pity that satiety so speedily ends it."

While speaking, he again descended a few steps, but the Queen, supporting him with the utmost solicitude, answered cheerily:

"The baser senses, with taste at their head, and the higher ones of sight and hearing, I know, are all placed by your Majesty in the same regiment, with equal rank; your obedient servant, on the contrary, bestows the commissions of officers only on the higher ones. That seems to me the correct way, and I don't relinquish the hope of winning for it the approval of the greatest general and most tasteful connoisseur of life."

"If the new cook keeps his promise, certainly not," replied Charles, entering into his sister's tone. "De Rye asserts that he is peerless. We shall see. As to the senses, they all have an equal share in enabling us to receive our impressions and form an opinion from them. Why should the tongue and the palate—But stay! Who the devil can philosophize with such twinges in the foot?"

"Besides, that can be done much better," replied the Queen, patting the sufferer's arm affectionately, "while the five unequal brothers are performing the duties of their offices. The saints be praised! Here we are at the bottom. No, Carlos, no! Not through the chapel! The stone flags there are so hard and cold."

As she spoke she guided him around it into the dining-room, where a large table stood ready for the monarch's personal suite and a smaller one for his sister and himself.

The tortured sovereign, still under the influence of the suffering which he had endured, crossed himself and sat down. Quijada and young Count Tassis, the Emperor's favourite page, placed the gouty foot in the most comfortable position, and Count Buren, the chamberlain, presented the menu. Charles instantly scanned the list of dishes, and his face clouded still more as he missed the highly seasoned game pasty which the culinary artist had proposed and he had approved. Queen Mary had ordered that it should be omitted, because Dr. Mathys had pronounced it poison for the gouty patient, and she confessed the offence.

This was done with the frank affection with which she treated her brother, but Charles, after the first few words, interrupted her, harshly forbidding any interference, even hers, in matters which concerned himself

alone, and in the same breath commanded Count Buren to see that the dish should still be made. Then, as if to show his sister how little he cared for her opposition, he seized the crystal jug with his own hand, without waiting for the cup-bearer behind him, filled the goblet with fiery Xeres wine, and hurriedly drained it, though the leech had forbidden him, while suffering from the gout, to do more than moisten his lips with the heating liquor.

The eyes of the royal huntress, though she was by no means unduly soft-hearted, grew dim with tears. This was her brother's gratitude for the faithful care which she bestowed upon him! Who could tell whether her surprise, instead of pleasing him, might not rouse his anger? He was still frowning as though the greatest injury had been inflicted upon him, and his sister's tearful eyes led him to exclaim wrathfully, as if he wished to palliate his unchivalrous indignation to a lady:

"I am deprived of one pleasure after another, and the little enjoyment remaining is lessened wherever it can be. Who has heavier loads of anxiety to endure?—yet you spoil my recreation during the brief hours when I succeed in casting off the burden."

Here he paused and obstinately grasped the golden handle of the pitcher again. The Queen remained silent. Contradiction would have made the obdurate sovereign empty another goblet also. Even a look of entreaty would have been out of place on this occasion. So she fixed her eyes mutely and sadly upon her silver plate; but even her silence irritated the Emperor, and he was about to give fresh expression to his ill-humour, when the doors of the chapel opposite to him opened, and the surprise began.

The signal for the commencement of the singing had been the delivery of the first dish from the steward to one of the great nobles, who presented it to their Majesties.

The Queen's face brightened, and tears of heartfelt joy, instead of grief and disappointment, now moistened her eyes, for if ever a surprise had accomplished the purpose desired it was this one.

Charles was gazing, as if the gates of Paradise had opened before him, toward the chapel doors, whence Maestro Gombert's Benedictio Mensae, a melody entirely new to him, was pouring like a holy benediction, devout yet cheering, sometimes solemn, anon full of joy.

The lines of anxiety vanished from his brow as if at the spell of a magician. The dull eyes gained a brilliant, reverent light, the bent figure

straightened itself. He seemed to his sister ten years younger. She saw in his every feature how deeply the music had affected him.

She knew her imperial brother. Had not his heart and soul been fully absorbed by the flood of pure and noble tones which so unexpectedly streamed toward him, his eyes would have been at least briefly attracted by the dish which Count Krockow more than once presented, for it contained an oyster ragout which a mounted messenger had brought that noon from the Baltic Sea to the city on the Danube.

Yet many long minutes elapsed ere he noticed the dish, though it was one of his favourite viands. Barbara's song stirred the imperial lover of music at the nocturnal banquet just as it had thrilled the great musicians a few hours before. He thought that he had never heard anything more exquisite, and when the Benedictio Mensa: died away he clasped his sister's hand, raised it two or three times to his lips, and thanked her with such affectionate warmth that she blessed the accomplishment of her happy idea, and willingly forgot the unpleasant moments she had just undergone.

Now, as if completely transformed, he wished to be told who had had the lucky thought of summoning his orchestra and her boy choir, and how the plan had been executed; and when he had heard the story, he fervently praised the delicacy of feeling and true sportsmanlike energy of her strong and loving woman's heart.

The court orchestra gave its best work, and so did the new head cook. The pheasant stuffed with snails and the truffle sauce with it seemed delicious to the sovereign, who called the dish a triumph of the culinary art of the Netherlands. The burden of anxieties and the pangs inflicted by the gout seemed to be forgotten, and when the orchestra ceased he asked to hear the boy choir again.

This time it gave the most beautiful portion of Joscluin de Pres's hymn to the Virgin, "Ecce tu pulchra es"; and when Barbara's "Quia amore langueo" reached his ear and heart with its love-yearning melody, he nodded to his sister with wondering delight, and then listened, as if rapt from the world, until the last notes of the motet died away.

Where had Appenzelder discovered the marvellous boy who sang this "Quia amore langueo"? He sent Don Luis Quijada to assure the leader and the young singer of his warmest approbation, and then permitted the Queen also to seek the choir and its leader to ask whom the latter had succeeded in

obtaining in the place of the lad from Cologne, whom he had often heard sing the “tu pulchra es,” but with incomparably less depth of feeling.

When she returned she informed the Emperor of the misfortune which had befallen the two boys, and how successful Appenzelder had been in the choice of a substitute. Yet she still concealed the fact that a girl was now the leader of his choir, for, kindly as her brother nodded to her when she took her place at the table again, no one could tell how he would regard this anomaly.

Besides, the next day would be the 1st of May, the anniversary of the death of his wife Isabella, who had passed away from earth seven years before, and the more she herself had been surprised by the rare and singular beauty of the fair-haired songstress, the less could she venture on that day or the morrow to blend with the memories of the departed Queen the image of another woman who possessed such unusual charms. The Emperor had already asked her a few questions about the young singers, and learned that the bell-like weaker voice, which harmonized so exquisitely with that of the invalid Johannes’s substitute, belonged to the little Maltese lad Hannibal, whose darling wish, through Wolf’s intercession, had been fulfilled. His inquiries, however, were interrupted by a fresh performance of the boy choir.

This again extorted enthusiastic applause from the sovereign, and when, while he was still shouting “Brava!” the highly seasoned game pasty which meanwhile, despite the regent’s former prohibition, had been prepared, and now, beautifully browned, rose from a garland of the most tempting accessories, was offered, he waved it away. As he did so his eyes sought his sister’s, and his expressive features told her that he was imposing this sacrifice upon himself for her sake.

It was long since he had bestowed a fairer gift. True, in this mood, it seemed impossible for him to refrain from the wine. It enlivened him and doubled the unexpected pleasure. Unfortunately, he was to atone only too speedily for this offence against medical advice, for his heated blood increased the twinges of the gout to such a degree that he was compelled to relinquish his desire to listen to the exquisite singing longer.

Groaning, he suffered himself—this time in a litter—to be carried back to his chamber, where, in spite of the pangs that tortured him, he asked for the letter in which Granvelle informed his royal master every evening what he

thought of the political affairs to be settled the next day. Master Adrian, the valet, had just brought it, but this time Charles glanced over the important expressions of opinion given by the young minister swiftly and without deeper examination. The saying that the Emperor could not dispense with him, but he might do without the Emperor, had originally applied to his father, whose position he filled to the monarch's satisfaction in every respect.

The confessor had reminded the sovereign of the anniversary which had already dawned, and which he was accustomed to celebrate in his own way.

Very early in the morning, after a few hours spent in suffering, he heard mass, and then remained for hours in the sable-draped room where he communed with himself alone.

The regent knew that on this memorable day he would not be seen even by her. The success of the surprise afforded a guarantee that music would supply her place to him on the morrow also, and ere she left him she requested a short leave of absence to enjoy the hunting for which she longed, and permission to take his major-domo Quijada with her.

An almost unintelligible murmur from the sufferer told her that he had granted the petition. It was done reluctantly, but the Queen departed at dawn with Don Luis and a small train of attendants, while the Emperor retired into the black-draped chamber.

The gout would really have prohibited him from kneeling before the altar, whence the agonized face of the crucified Redeemer, carved in ivory by a great Florentine master, gazed at him, but he took this torture upon himself.

Even in the period of health and happiness when, at the age of twenty-three, besides the great boon of health, besides fame, power, and woman's love, he had enjoyed in rich abundance all the gifts which Heaven bestows on mortals, his devout nature had led him to retreat into a gloomy, solitary apartment.

The feeling that constantly drew him thither again was akin to the dread which the ancients had of the envy of the gods, and, moreover, the admonition of his pious teacher who afterward became Pope Adrian, that the less man spares himself the more confidently he can rely upon the forbearance of God.

And, in truth, this mighty sovereign, racked by almost unendurable pain, dealt cruelly enough with himself when he compelled his aching knee to bend until consciousness threatened to fail under the excess of agony.

Nowhere did he find more complete calmness than here, in no spot could he pray more fervently, and the boon which he most ardently besought from Heaven was that it would spare him the fate of his insane mother, hold aloof the fiend which in many a gloomy hour he saw stretching a hand toward him.

Here, too, he sought to penetrate the nature of death. In this room, clothed with the sable hue of mourning, he felt that alreadv, while on earth, he had fallen into its all-levelling power. Here his mind, like that of a dying man's, grasped for brief intervals what life had offered and what awaited him beyond the confines of this short earthly existence, in eternity.

While thus occupied, the sovereign, accustomed to speculation, encountered many a dangerous doubt, but he only needed to gaze at the crucified Saviour to find the way again to the promises of his Church.

The last years had deprived him of so large a portion of the most valuable possessions and the best ornaments of his life, and inflicted, both in wardly and outwardly, such keen suffering, that it was easy for him to perceive what a gain death would bring.

What it could take from him was easily lost; the relief it promised to afford no power, science, or art here on earth could procure for him—release from cruel suffering and oppressive cares.

While he was learning the German language the name "Friend Hein," which he heard applied to death, perplexed him; now he thought that he understood it, for the man with the scythe wore to him also the face of a friend, who when the time had come would not keep him waiting long. As he thought of his wife, of whose death this day was the anniversary, he felt inclined to envy her. What he had lost by her decease seemed very little to others who were aware of the long periods of time during which, separated from each other, they had gone their own ways; but he knew that it was more than they supposed, for with Isabella he had lost the certainty that the sincere, nay, perhaps affectionate interest of a being united to him by the sacrament of marriage accompanied his every step.

His pleasure in life had withered with the growth of the harsh conviction that he was no longer loved by any one for his own sake.

In this chamber, draped with sable hangings, his own heart seemed dead, like dry wood from which only a miracle could lure green leafage again. With the only real pity which was at his command, compassion on himself, he rose from the kneeling posture which had become unbearable.

With difficulty he sank into the arm-chair which stood ready for him, and, panting for breath, asked himself whether every joy had indeed vanished. No!

Music still stirred his benumbed heart to swifter throbbing. He thought of the pleasure which the previous evening had afforded, and suddenly it seemed as if he again heard the “Quia amore langueo”—“Because I long for love”—that had touched his soul the day before.

Yes, he, too, still longed for love, for a different, a warmer feeling than the lukewarm blood of his royal mother had bestowed upon her children, or the devotion of the sister to whom the chase was dearer than aught else, certainly than his society.

But such thoughts did not befit this room, which was consecrated to serious reflections. The anniversary summoned him to far different feelings. Yet, powerfully as he resisted them, his awakened senses continued to demand their rights, and, while he closed his eyes and pressed his brow against the base of the altar covered with black cloth, changeful images of happier days rose before him. He, too, had rejoiced in a vigorous, strong, and pliant body. In the jousts he had been sure of victory over even dreaded opponents; as a bull-fighter he had excelled the matador; as a skilful participant in riding at the ring, as well as a tireless hunter, he had scarcely found his equal. In the prime of his youth the hearts of many fair women had throbbed warmly for him, but he had been fastidious. Yet where he had aimed at victory, he had rarely failed.

The sensuous, fair-haired Duchess of Aerschot, the dark-eyed Cornelia Annoni of Milan, the devout Dolores Gonzaga, with her large, calm, enthusiastic eyes, and again and again, crowding all the others into the background, the timid Johanna van der Gheynst, who under her delicate frame concealed a volcano of ardent passion. She had given him a daughter whose head was now adorned by a crown. In spite of the brief duration of their love bond, she had been clearer to him than all the rest—clearer even than the woman to whom the sacrament of marriage afterward united him. And she of whom seven years ago death had bereft him?

At this question a bitter smile hovered around his full lips. How much better love than hers he had known! And how easy Isabella had rendered it not to weary of her, for during his long journeys and frequent dangerous campaigns, instead of accompanying him, she had led in some carefully guarded castle a life that suited her quiet tastes.

A sorrowful smile curled his lips as he recalled the agreement which they had made just before a separation. At that time both were young, yet how willingly she had accepted his proposal that, when age approached, they should separate forever, that she in one cloister and he in another might prepare for the end of life!

What reply would a woman with true love in her heart have made to such a demand?

No, no, Isabella had felt as little genuine love for him as he for her! Her death had been a sorrow to him, but he had shed no tears over it.

He could not weep. He no longer knew whether he was able to do so when a child. Since his beard had grown, at any rate, his eyes had remained dry. The words of the Roman satirist, that tears were the best portion of all human life, returned to his memory. Would he himself ever experience the relief which they were said to afford the human heart?

But who among the living would he have deemed worthy of them? When his insane mother died, he could not help considering the poor Queen fortunate because Heaven had at last released her from such a condition. Of the children whom his wife Isabella and Johanna van der Gheynst had given him, he did not even think. An icy atmosphere emanated from his son Philip which froze every warm feeling that encountered it. He remembered his daughter with pleasure, but how rarely he was permitted to enjoy her society! Besides, he had done enough for his posterity, more than enough. To increase the grandeur of his family and render it the most powerful reigning house in the world, he had become prematurely old; had undertaken superhuman tasks of toil and care; even now he would permit himself no repose. The consciousness of having fulfilled his duty to his family and the Church might have comforted him in this hour, but the plus ultra—more, farther—which had so often led him into the conflict for the dream of a world sovereignty, the grandeur of his own race, and against the foes of his holy faith, now met the barrier of a more powerful fate. Instead of advancing, he had seemed, since the defeat at Algiers, to go backward.

Besides, how often the leech threatened him with a speedy death if he indulged himself at table with the viands which suited his taste! Yet the other things that remained for him to enjoy scarcely seemed worth mentioning. To restore unity to the Church, to make the crowns which he wore the hereditary possessions of his house, were two aims worthy of the hardest struggles, but, unless he deceived himself, he could not hope to attain them. Thus life, until its end—perhaps wholly unexpectedly—arrived within a brief season, offered him nothing save suffering and sacrifice, disappointment, toil, and anxieties.

With little cheer or elevation of soul, he looked up and rang the bell. Two chamberlains and Master Adrian appeared, and while Baron Malfalconnet, who did not venture to jest in this spot, offered him his arm and the valet the crutch, his confessor, Pedro de Soto, also entered the black-draped room.

A single glance showed him that this time the quiet sojourn in the gloomy apartment, instead of exerting an elevating and brightening influence, had had a depressing and saddening effect upon the already clouded spirit of his imperial penitent. In spite of the most zealous effort, he had not succeeded in finding his way into the soul-life of this sovereign, equally great in intellect and energy, but neither frank nor truthful, yet, on the other hand, his penetration often succeeded in fathoming the causes of the Emperor’s moods.

With the quiet firmness which harmonized so perfectly with a personal appearance that inspired confidence, the priest now frankly but respectfully expressed what he thought he had observed.

True, he attributed the Emperor’s deep despondency to totally different causes, but he openly deplored the sorrowful agitation which the memories of the beloved dead had awakened in his Majesty.

In natural, simple words, the learned man, skilled in the art of language, represented to the imperial widower how little reason he had to mourn his devout wife. He was rather justified in regarding her death hour as the first of a happy birthday. For the sleeper whose dream here on earth he, Charles, had beautified in so many ways, a happy waking had long since followed in the land for which she had never ceased to yearn. For him, the Emperor, Heaven still had great tasks in this world, and many a victory awaited him. If his prayer was heard, and his Majesty should decide to battle for the

holiest cause, sorrowful anxieties would vanish from his pathway as the mists of dawn scatter before the rising sun. He well knew the gravity of the demands which every day imposed upon his Majesty, but he could give him the assurance that nothing could be more pleasing to Heaven than that he, who was chosen as its champion, should, by mastering them, enjoy the gifts with which Eternal Love set its board as abundantly for the poorest carter as for the mightiest ruler.

Then he spoke of the surprise of the night before, and how gratefully he had heard that music had once more exerted its former magic power. Its effect would be permanent, even though physical suffering and sorrowful memories might interrupt it for a few brief hours.

"That," he concluded, "Nature herself just at this season teaches us to hope. This day of fasting and sadness will be followed by a series of the brightest weeks—the time of leafage, blossom, and bird songs, which is so dear to the merciful mother of God. May the month of May, called by the Germans the joy month, and which dawns to-day with bright sunshine and a clear, blue sky, be indeed a season of joy to your Majesty!"

"God grant it!" replied the Emperor dully, and then, with a shrug of the shoulders, added: "Besides, I can not imagine whence such joy should come to me. A boy's bell-like voice sang to me yesterday, 'Quia amore langueo.' This heart, too, longs for love, but it will never find it on earth."

"Why not, if your Majesty sends forth to seek it?" replied the confessor eagerly. "The Gospel itself gives a guarantee of success. 'Seek, and ye shall find,' it promises. To the heart which longs for love the all-bountiful Father sends that for which it longs to meet it halfway."

"When it is young," added the Emperor, shrugging his shoulders impatiently. "But when the soul's power of flight has failed, who will bestow the ability to traverse the half of the way allotted to it?"

"The omnipotence which works greater miracles," replied the priest in a tone of the most ardent conviction, pointing upward.

Charles nodded a mournful assent, and, after a sign which indicated to the confessor that he desired the interview to end, he continued his painful walk.

He had waved aside the litter which the lord chamberlain, Count Heinrich of Nassau, had placed ready for him, and limped, amid severe

suffering, to his room.

There the Bishop of Arras awaited him with arduous work, and the Emperor did not allow himself a moment's rest while his sister was using the beautiful first of May to ride and hunt. Charles missed her, and still more the faithful man who had served him as a page, and whom he had been accustomed since to have in close attendance upon him.

To gratify his sister's passion for the chase he had given Quijada leave of absence, and now he regretted it. True, he told no one that he missed Don Luis, but those who surrounded him were made to feel his ill-humour plainly enough. Only he admitted to the Bishop of Arras that the radiant light which was shining into his window was disagreeable. It made too strong a contrast to his gloomy soul, and it even seemed as though the course of the sun, in its beaming, unattainably lofty path, mocked the hapless, painful obstruction to his own motion.

At noon he enjoyed very little of the meal, prepared for a fast day, which the new cook had made tempting enough.

In reply to the Count of Nassau's inquiry whether he wished to hear any music, he had answered rudely that the musicians and the boy choir could play and sing in the chapel for aught he cared. Whether he would listen to the performance was doubtful.

Single tones had reached his ears, but he did not feel in the mood to descend the stairs.

He went to rest earlier than usual. The next morning, after mass, he himself asked for Josquin's "Ecce tu pulchra es." It was to be sung during the noonday meal. But when, instead of the Queen and Quijada, a little note came from his sister, requesting, in a jesting tone, an extension of the leave of absence because she trusted to the healing power of the sun and the medicine "music" upon her distinguished brother, and the chase bound her by a really magic spell to the green May woods, he flung the sheet indignantly away, and, just before the beginning of the meal, ordered the singing to be omitted.

Either in consequence of the fasting or the warm sunshine, the pangs of the gout began to lessen; but, nevertheless, his mood grew still more melancholy, for he had believed in the sincere affection of two human beings, and Queen Mary left him alone in his misery, while his faithful Luis, to please the female Nimrod, did the same.

CHAPTER XII.

During the singing in the chapel on the fast day Barbara had waited vainly for a word of appreciation from the Emperor. The Queen of Hungary had gone to the chase, and the monarch had remained in his apartments, while she had done her best below. A few lords and ladies of the court, several priests, knights, and pages had been the only listeners.

This had sorely irritated her easily wounded sensitiveness, but she had appeared at the rehearsal in the New Scales on the following morning. Again she reaped lavish praise, but several times she met Appenzelder's well-founded criticisms with opposition.

The radiant cheerfulness which, the day before yesterday, had invested her nature with an irresistible charm had vanished.

When the tablatures were at last laid aside, and the invitation to sing in the Golden Cross did not yet arrive, her features and her whole manner became so sullen that even some of the choir boys noticed it.

Since the day before a profound anxiety had filled her whole soul, and she herself wondered that it had been possible for her to conquer it just now during the singing.

How totally different an effect she had expected her voice—which even the greatest connoisseurs deemed worthy of admiration—to produce upon the music-loving Emperor!

What did she care if the evening of the day before yesterday the Queen of Hungary had paid her fine compliments and assured her of the high approval of her imperial brother, since Appenzelder had informed her yesterday that it was necessary to conceal from his Majesty the fact that a woman was occupying the place of the lad from Cologne, Johannes. The awkward giant had been unfriendly to women ever since, many years before, his young wife had abandoned him for a Neapolitan officer, and his bad opinion of the fairer sex had been by no means lessened when Barbara, at this communication, showed with pitiless frankness the anger and mortification which it aroused in her mind. A foul fiend, he assured Gombert, was hidden in that golden-haired delight of the eyes with the siren

voice; but the leader of the orchestra had interceded for her, and thought that her complaint was just. So great an artist was too good to fill the place of substitute for a sick boy who sang for low wages. She had obliged him merely to win the applause of the Emperor and his illustrious sister, and to have the regent turn her back upon Ratisbon just at this time, and without having informed his Majesty whose voice had with reason aroused his delight, would be felt even by a gentler woman as an injury.

Appenzelder could not help admitting this, and then dejectedly promised Barbara to make amends as soon as possible for the wrong which the regent, much against his will, had committed.

He was compelled to use all the power of persuasion at his command to keep her in the boy choir, at least until the poisoned members could be employed again, for she threatened seriously to withdraw her aid in future.

Wolf, too, had a difficult position with the girl whom his persuasion had induced to enter the choir. What Appenzelder ascribed to the devil himself, he attributed merely to the fervour of her fiery artist temperament. Yet her vehement outburst of wrath had startled him also, and a doubt arose in his mind as to what matrimonial life might be with a companion who, in spite of her youth, ventured to oppose elderly, dignified men so irritably and sharply. But at the very next song which had greeted him from her rosy lips this scruple was forgotten. With sparkling eyes he assented to Gombert's protestation that, in her wrath, she had resembled the goddess Nemesis, and looked more beautiful than ever.

In spite of his gray hair, she seemed to have bewitched the great musician, like so many other men, and this only enhanced her value in Wolf's sight.

Urgently, nay, almost humbly, he at last entreated her to have patience, for, if not at noon, his Majesty would surely desire to hear the boy choir in the evening. Besides, he added, she must consider it a great compliment that his Majesty had summoned the singers to the Glen Cross the evening before at all, for on such days of fasting and commemoration the Emperor was in the habit of devoting himself to silent reflection, and shunned every amusement.

But honest Appenzelder, who frankly contradicted everything opposed to the truth, would not let this statement pass. Nay, he interrupted Wolf with the assurance that, on the contrary, the Emperor on such days frequently

relied upon solemn hymns to transport him into a fitting mood. Besides, the anniversary was past, and if his Majesty did not desire to hear them to-day, business, or the gout, or indigestion, or a thousand other reasons might be the cause. They must simply submit to the pleasure of royalty. They was entirely in accordance with custom that his Majesty did not leave his apartments the day before. He never did so on such anniversaries unless he or Gombert had something unusual to offer.

Barbara bit her lips, and, while the May sun shone brilliantly into the hall, exclaimed:

"So, since this time you could offer him nothing 'unusual,' Master, I will beg you to grant me leave of absence." Then turning swiftly upon her heel and calling to Wolf, by way of explanation, "The Schlumpergers and others are going to Prufening to-day, and they invited me to the May excursion too. It will be delightful, and I shall be glad if you'll come with us."

The leader of the choir saw his error, and with earnest warmth entreated her not to make his foolish old head suffer for it. "If, after all, his Majesty should desire to hear the choir that noon, it would only be because——"

Here he hesitated, and then reluctantly made the admission—"Because you yourself, you fair one, who turns everybody's bead, are the 'unusual' something which our sovereign lord would fain hear once more, if the gout does not——"

Then Barbara laughed gaily in her clear, bell like tones, seized the clumsy Goliath's long, pointed beard, and played all sorts of pranks upon him with such joyous mirth that, when she at last released him, he ran after her like a young lover to catch her; but she had nimbler feet, and he was far enough behind when she called from the threshold:

"I won't let myself be caught, but since your pretty white goat's beard bewitches me, I'll be obliging to-day."

She laughingly kissed her hand to him from the doorway as she spoke, and it seemed as though her yielding was to be instantly rewarded, for before she left the house Chamberlain de Praet appeared to summon the choir to the Golden Cross at one o'clock.

Barbara's head was proudly erect as she crossed the square. Wolf followed her, and, on reaching home, found her engaged in a little dispute with her father.

The latter had been much disgusted with himself for his complaisance the day before. Although Wolf had come to escort Barbara to the Emperor's lodgings, he had accompanied his child to the Golden Cross, where she was received by Maestro Appenzelder. Then, since he could only have heard the singing under conditions which seemed unendurable to his pride, he sullenly retired to drink his beer in the tap-room of the New Scales.

As, on account of the late hour, he found no other guest, he did not remain there long, but returned to the Haidplatz to go home with Barbara.

This he considered his paternal duty, for already he saw in imagination the counts and knights who, after the Emperor and the Queen had loaded her with praise and honour, would wish to escort her home. Dainty pages certainly would not be deprived of the favour of carrying her train and lighting her way with torches. But he knew courtiers and these saucy scions of the noblest houses, and hoped that her father's presence would hold their insolence in check. Therefore he had endeavoured to give to his outer man an appearance which would command respect, for he wore his helmet, his coat of mail, and over it the red scarf which his dead wife had embroidered with gold flowers and mountains-his coat-of-arms.

In spite of the indispensable cane in his right hand, he wore his long battle sword, but he would have been wiser to leave it at home.

While pacing up and down before the Golden Cross in the silent night to wait for his daughter, the halberdiers at the entrance noticed him.

What was the big man doing here at this late hour? How dared he venture to wear a sword in the precincts of the Emperor's residence, contrary to the law, and, moreover, a weapon of such unusual length and width, which had not been carried for a long while?

After the guards were relieved they had suddenly surrounded him, and, in spite of his vigorous resistance, would have taken him prisoner. But fortunately the musicians, among them Barbara and Wolf, had just come out into the street, and the latter had told the sergeant of the guards, whom he knew, how mistaken he had been concerning the suspicions pedestrian, and obtained his release. Thus the careful father's hopes had been frustrated. But when he learned that his daughter had not seen the Emperor at all, and had neither been seen nor spoken to by him, he gave—notwithstanding his reverence for the sacred person of his mighty commander—full expression to his indignation.

Fool that he had been to permit Barbara to present herself at court with a troop of ordinary singing boys! Even on the following day he persisted in the declaration that it was his duty, as a father and a nobleman, to protect his daughter from further humiliations of this sort.

Yet when, on the day of fasting, the invitation to sing came, he permitted Barbara to accept it, because it was the Emperor who summoned her. He had called for her again, and on the way home learned that neither his Majesty nor the regent had been among the listeners, and he had gone to rest like a knight who has been hurled upon the sand.

The next morning, after mass, Barbara went to the rehearsal, and returned in a very joyous mood with the tidings that the Emperor wished to hear her about noon. But this time her father wanted to forbid her taking part in the performance, and Wolf had not found it easy to make him understand that this would insult and offend his Majesty.

The dispute was by no means ended when the little Maltese summoned her to the New Scales. Wolf accompanied her only to the Haidplatz, for he had been called to the Town Hall on business connected with his inheritance; but Barbara learned in the room assigned to the musicians that the noon performance had just been countermanded, and no special reason had been given for the change.

The leader of the orchestra had been accustomed to submit to the sovereign's arrangements as unresistingly as to the will of higher powers, and Barbara also restrained herself.

True, wrath boiled and seethed in her breast, but before retiring she only said briefly, with a seriousness which revealed the contempt concealed beneath:

"You were quite right, Maestro Appenzelder. The Emperor considered my voice nothing unusual, and nothing else is fit for the august ears of his Majesty. Now I will go to the green woods."

The leader of the boy choir again did his best to detain her, for what the noon denied the evening would bring, and Gombert aided him with courteous flatteries; but Barbara listened only a short time, then, interrupting both with the exclamation, "I force myself upon no one, not even the highest!" she left the room, holding her head haughtily erect.

Appenzelder fixed his eyes helplessly upon the ground.

“I’d rather put a hoarse sailor or a croaking owl into my choir henceforward than such a trilling fair one, who has more whims in her head than hairs on it.”

Then he went out to look for Wolf, for he, as well as Gombert, had noticed that he possessed a certain degree of influence over Barbara. What should he say to their Majesties if they ordered the choir for the late meal and missed the voice about which the Queen had said so many complimentary things in the Emperor’s name?

Wolf had told him that he was summoned to the Town Hall. The maestro followed him, and when he learned there that he had gone to the syndic, Dr. Hiltner, he inquired the way to this gentleman’s house.

But the knight was no longer to be found there. For the third time the busy magistrate was not at home, but he had been informed that the syndic expected him that afternoon, as he wished to discuss a matter of importance. Dr. Hiltner’s wife knew what it was, but silence had been enjoined upon her, and she was a woman who knew how to refrain from speech.

She and her daughter Martina—who during Wolf’s absence had grown to maidenhood—were sincerely glad to see him; he had been the favourite schoolmate of her adopted son, Erasmus Eckhart, and a frequent guest in her household. Yet she only confirmed to the modest young man, who shrank from asking her more minute questions, that the matter concerned an offer whose acceptance promised to make him a prosperous man. She was expecting her Erasmus home from Wittenberg that evening or early the next morning, and to find Wolf here again would be a welcome boon to him.

What had the syndic in view? Evidently something good. Old Ursel should help counsel him. The doctor liked her, and, in spite of the severe illness, she had kept her clever brain.

He would take Barbara into his confidence, too, for what concerned him concerned her also.

But when he turned from the Haidplatz into Red Cock Street he saw three fine horses in front of the cantor house. A groom held their bridles. The large chestnut belonged to the servant. The other two-a big-boned bay and an unusually wellformed Andalusian gray, with a small head and long sweeping tail—had ladies’ saddles.

The sister of rich old Peter Schlumperger, who was paying court to Barbara, had dismounted from the former. She wanted to persuade the young girl, in her brother's name, to join the party to the wood adjoining Prfifening Abbey.

At first she had opposed the marriage between the man of fifty and Barbara; but when she saw that her brother's affection had lasted two years, nay, had increased more and more, and afforded new joy to the childless widower, she had made herself his ally.

She, too, was widowed and had a large fortune of her own. Her husband, a member of the Kastenmayr family, had made her his heiress. Blithe young Barbara, whose voice and beauty she knew how to value, could bring new life and brightness into the great, far too silent house. The girl's poverty was no disadvantage; she and her brother had long found it difficult to know what to do with the vast wealth which, even in these hard times, was constantly increasing, and the Blomberg family was as aristocratic as their own.

The widow's effort to persuade the girl to ride had not been in vain, for Wolf met Frau Kastenmayr on the stairs, and Barbara followed in a plain dark riding habit, which had been her mother's.

So, in spite of Maestro Appenzelder, Miss Self-Will had really determined to leave the city.

Her hasty information that the Emperor did not wish to hear the choir at noon somewhat relieved his mind; but when, in answer to his no less hasty question about the singing at the late meal, the answer came, "What is that to me?" he perceived that the sensitiveness which yesterday had almost led her to a similar step had now urged her to an act that might cause Appenzelder great embarrassment, and rob her forever of the honour of singing before their Majesties.

While the very portly Frau Kastenmayr went panting down the narrow stairs, Wolf again stopped Barbara with the question why she so carelessly trifled with what might be the best piece of good fortune in her life, and shook his head doubtfully as, tossing hers higher, with self-important pride she answered low enough not to be heard by the widow, "Because a ride through the green woods in the month of May is pleasanter than to sing into vacancy at midnight unheeded."

Here the high, somewhat shrill voice of Frau Kastenmayr, who felt jealous in her brother's behalf at hearing Barbara whispering with the young knight, interrupted them.

Her warning, "Where are you, my darling?" made the girl, with the skirt of her riding habit thrown over her arm, follow her swiftly.

Wolf, offended and anxious, would have liked to make her feel his displeasure, but could not bring himself to let her go unattended, and, with some difficulty, first helped Frau Kastenmayr upon her strong steed, then, with very mingled feelings, aided Barbara to mount the noble Andalusian. While she placed her little foot in his hand to spring thence with graceful agility into the saddle, the widow, with forced courtesy, invited the young gentleman to accompany her and her brother to Prufening. There would be a merry meal, which she herself had provided, in the farmhouse on the abbey lands.

Without giving a positive answer, Wolf bowed, and his heart quivered as Barbara, from her beautiful gray horse, waved her riding whip to him as a queen might salute a vassal.

How erect she sat in her saddle! how slender and yet how well rounded her figure was! What rapture it would be to possess her charms!

That she would accept the elderly Schlumperger for the sake of his money was surely impossible. And yet! How could she, with laughing lips, cast to the wind the rare favour of fortune which permitted her to display her art to the Emperor, and so carelessly leave him, Wolf, who had built the bridge to their Majesties, in the lurch, unless she had some special purpose in view; and what could that be except the resolution to become the mistress of one of the richest houses in Ratisbon? The words "My darling," which Frau Kastenmayr had called to Barbara, again rang in his ears, and when the two ladies and the groom had vanished, he returned in a very thoughtful mood to the faithful old maid-servant.

Every one else who was in the street or at the window looked after Barbara, and pointed out to others the beautiful Jungfrau Blomberg and the proud security with which she governed the spirited gray. She had become a good rider, first upon her father's horses, and then at the Wollers in the country, and took risks which many a bold young noble would not have imitated.

Her aged suitor's gray Andalusian was dearer than the man himself, whom she regarded merely as a sheet-anchor which could be used if everything else failed.

The thought of what might happen when, after these days of working for her bread ended, still more terrible ones followed, had troubled her again and again the day before. Now she no longer recollected these miserable things. What a proud feeling it was to ride on horseback through the sweet May air, in the green woods, as her own mistress, and bid defiance to the ungrateful sovereign in the Golden Cross!

The frustration of the hope that her singing would make the Emperor desire to hear her again and again had wounded her to the depths of her soul and spoiled her night's rest. The annoyance of having vainly put forth her best efforts to please him had become unendurable after the fresh refusal which, as it were, set the seal upon her fears, and in the defiant flight to the forest she seemed to have found the right antidote. As she approached the monarch's residence, she felt glad and proud that he, who could force half the world to obey him, could not rule her.

To attract his notice by another performance would have been the most natural course, but Barbara had placed herself in a singular relation toward the Emperor Charles. To her he was the man, not the Emperor, and that he did not express a desire to hear her again seemed like an insult which the man offered to the woman, the artist, who was ready to obey his sign.

Her perverse spirit had rebelled against such lack of appreciation of her most precious gifts, and filled her with rankling hatred against the first person who had closed his heart to the victorious magic of her voice.

When she refused Appenzelder her aid in case the Emperor Charles desired to hear the choir that evening, and promised Frau Kastenmayr to accompany her to Prufening, she had been like a rebellious child filled with the desire to show the man who cared nothing for her that, against her will, he could not hear even a single note from her lips.

They were to meet the other members of the party at St. Oswald's Church on the Danube, so they were obliged to pass the Golden Cross.

This suited Barbara and, with triumphant selfconfidence, in which mingled a slight shade of defiance, she looked up to the Emperor's windows. She did not see him, it is true, but she made him a mute speech which ran: "When, foolish sovereign, who did not even think it worth while

to grant me a single look, you hear the singing again to-night, and miss the voice which, I know full well, penetrated your heart, you will learn its value, and long for it as ardently as I desired your summons."

Here her cheeks glowed so hotly that Frau Kastenmayr noticed it, and with maternal solicitude asked, from her heavy, steady bay horse:

"Is the gray too gay for you, my darling?"

CHAPTER XIII.

Shortly after sunset Appenzelder received the order to have the boy choir sing before the Emperor.

During the noon hour, which the monarch had spent alone, thoughts so sad, bordering upon melancholy, had visited him, although for several hours he had been free from pain, that he relinquished his resentful intention of showing his undutiful sister how little he cared for her surprise and how slight was his desire to enjoy music.

In fact, he, too, regarded it as medicine, and hoped especially for a favourable effect from the exquisite soprano voice in the motet “Tu pulchra es.”

He still had some things to look over with Granvelle, but the orchestra and the boy choir must be ready by ten o’clock.

Would it not have been foolish to bear this intolerable, alarming mood until the midnight meal? It must be dispelled, for he himself perceived how groundless it was. The pain had passed away, the despatches contained no bad news, and Dr. Mathys had permitted him to go out the next day. When Adrian already had his hand on the door knob, he called after him, “And Appenzelder must see that the exquisite new voice—he knows—is heard.”

Soon after, when Granvelle had just left him, the steward, Malfalconnet, entered, and, in spite of the late hour—the Nuremberg clock on the writing table had struck nine some time before—asked an audience for Sir Wolf Hartschwert, one of her Highness the regent’s household, to whom she committed the most noiseless and the most noisy affairs, namely, the secret correspondence and the music.

“The German?” asked Charles, and as the baron, with a low bow, assented, the Emperor continued: “Then it is scarcely an intrigue, at any rate a successful one, unless he is unlike the usual stamp. But no! I noticed the man. There is something visionary about him, like most of the Germans. But I have never seen him intoxicated.”

“Although he is of knightly lineage, and, as I heard, at home in the neighbourhood of the Main, where good wine matures,” remarked

Malfalconnet, with another bow. “At this moment he looks more than sober, rather as though some great fright had roused him from a carouse. Poor knight!”

“Ay, poor knight!” the Emperor assented emphatically. “To serve my sister of Hungary in one position may be difficult for a man who is no sportsman, and now in two! God’s death! These torments on earth will shorten his stay in purgatory.”

The Emperor Charles had spoken of his sister in a very different tone the day before, but now she remained away from him and kept with her a friend whom he greatly needed, so he repaid her for it.

Therefore, with a shrug of the shoulders expressive of regret, he added, “However badly off we may be ourselves, there is always some one with whom we would not change places.”

“Were I, the humblest of the humble, lucky enough to be in your Majesty’s skin,” cried the baron gaily, “I wouldn’t either. But since I am only poor Malfalconnet, I know of nobody—and I’m well acquainted with Sir Wolf—who seems to me more enviable than your Majesty.”

“Jest, or earnest?” asked the Emperor.

“Earnest, deep, well-founded earnest,” replied the other with an upward glance whose solemn devotion showed the sovereign that mischief was concealed behind it. “Let your Majesty judge for yourself. He is a knight of good family, and looks like a plain burgher. His name is Wolf Hartschwert, and he is as gentle as a lamb and as pliant as a young willow. He appears like the meek, whom our Lord calls blessed, and yet he is one of the wisest of the wise, and, moreover, a master in his art. Wherever he shows himself, delusion follows delusion, and every one redounds to his advantage, for whoever took him for an insignificant man must doff his hat when he utters his name. If a shrewd fellow supposed that this sheep would not know A from B, he’ll soon give him nuts to crack which are far too hard for many a learned master of arts. Nobody expects chivalric virtues and the accompanying expenditure from this simple fellow; yet he practises them, and, when he once opens his hand, people stare at him as they do at flying fish and the hen that lays a golden egg. Appreciative surprise gazes at him, beseeching forgiveness, wherever he is known, as surely as happy faces welcome your Majesty’s entry into any Netherland city. Fortune, lavish

when she once departs from her wonted niggardliness, guards this her favourite child from disappointment and misconstruction."

"The blessing of those who are more than they seem," replied the Emperor.

"That is his also," sighed Malfalconnet. "That man, your Majesty, and I the poorest of the poor! I was born a baron, and, as the greatest piece of good fortune, obtained the favour of my illustrious master. Now everybody expects from me magnificence worthy of my ancient name, and a style of living in keeping with the much-envied grace that renders me happy. But if your Majesty's divine goodness did not sometimes pay my debts, which are now a part of me as the tail belongs to the comet—"

"Oho!" cried the Emperor here. "If that is what is coming—"

"Do I look so stupid," interrupted the baron humbly, "as to repeat to-day things which yesterday did not wholly fail to make an impression upon your Majesty?"

"They would find deaf cars," Charles replied. "You are certainly less destitute of brains than of money, because you lack system. One proceeds in a contrary direction from the other. Besides, your ancient name, though worthy of all honour, does not inspire the most favourable impression. Malfalconnet! Mal is evil, and falconnet—or is it falconnelle?—is a cruel, greedy bird of prey. So whoever encounters no evil from you, whoever escapes you unplucked, also enjoys a pleasant surprise. As for not being plucked, I, at least, unfortunately have not experienced this. But we will not cloud by too long waiting the good fortune of the gentleman outside who was born under such lucky stars. What brings the Wolf in sheep's clothing to us?"

"One would almost suppose," replied the baron with a crafty smile, "that he was coming to-day on a useless errand, and meant to apply to your Majesty for the payment of his debts."

Here the Emperor interrupted him with an angry gesture; but Malfalconnet went on soothingly: "However, there is nothing to be feared from lambs in sheep's clothing. Just think, your Majesty, how warm they must be in their double dress! No; he comes from the musicians, and apparently brings an important message."

“Admit him, then,” the Emperor commanded. A few minutes later Wolf stood before the sovereign, and, in Appenzelder’s name, informed him in a tone of sincere regret, yet with a certain degree of reserve, that the performance of the choir boys that day would leave much to be desired, for two of the best singers had not yet recovered.

“But the substitute, the admirable substitute?” Charles impatiently interrupted.

“That is just what troubles us,” Wolf replied uneasily. “The magnificent new voice wishes to desert the maestro to-night.”

“Desert?” cried the Emperor angrily. “A choir boy in the service of her Majesty the Queen of Hungary! So there is still something new under the sun.”

“Certainly,” replied Wolf with a low bow, still striving, in obedience to the regent’s strict command, not to reveal the sex of the new member of the choir. “And this case is especially unusual. This voice is not in her Majesty’s service. It belongs to a volunteer, as it were, a native of this city, whose wonderful instrument and rare ability we discovered. But, begging your Majesty’s pardon, the soul of such an artist is a strange thing, inflammable and enthusiastic, but just as easily wounded and disheartened.”

“The soul of a boy!” cried Charles contemptuously. “Appenzelder does not look like a man who would permit such whims.”

“Not in his choir, certainly,” said the young nobleman. “But this voice—allow me to repeat it—is not at his disposal. It was no easy matter to obtain it at all, and, keenly as the maestro disapproves of the caprices of this beautiful power, he can not force it—the power, I mean—to the obedience which his boys——”

Here the Emperor laughed shrilly. “The power, the voice! The songstress, you should say. This whimsical volunteer with the voice of an angel, who is so tenderly treated by rough Appenzelder, is a woman, not a refractory choir boy. How you are blushing! You have proved a very inapt pupil in the art of dissimulation and disguise in my royal sister’s service. Really and truly, I am right!”

Here another bow from Wolf confirmed the Emperor’s conjecture; but the latter, highly pleased with his own penetration, laughed softly, exclaiming to the baron: “Where were our ears? This masquerade is surely

the work of the Queen, who so dearly loves the chase. And she forbade you too, Malfalconnet, to give me your confidence?" Again a silent bow assented.

The Emperor bent his eyes on the ground a short time, and then said, half in soliloquy: "It was not possible otherwise. Whence could a boy learn the ardent, yearning longing of which that 'Quia amore langueo' was so full? And the second, less powerful voice, which accompanied her, was that a girl's too? No? Yet that also, I remember, had a suggestion of feminine tenderness. But only the marvellously beautiful melody of one haunted me. I can hear it still. The irresistible magic of this 'Amore langueo' mingled even in my conversation with Granvelle."

Then he passed his hand across his lofty brow, and in a different tone asked Wolf, "So it is a girl, and a native of this city?"

"Yes, your Majesty," was the reply.

"And, in spite of the praise of the gracious mother of God, a Protestant, like the other fools in this country?"

"No, my lord," replied the nobleman firmly; "a pious Catholic Christian."

"Of what rank?"

"She belongs, through both parents, to a family of knightly lineage, entitled to bear a coat-of-arms and appear in the lists at tournaments. Her father has drawn his sword more than once in battle against the infidels—at the capture of Tunis, under your own eyes, your Majesty, and in doing so he unfortunately ruined the prosperity of his good, ancient house."

"What is his name?"

"Wolfgang Blomberg."

"A big, broad-shouldered German fighter, with a huge mustache and pointed beard. Shot in the leg and wounded in the shoulder. Pious, reckless, with the courage of a lion. Afterward honoured with the title of captain."

Full of honest amazement at such strength of memory, Wolf endeavoured to express his admiration; but the imperial general interrupted him with another question, "And the daughter? Does her appearance harmonize with her voice?"

"I think so," replied Wolf in an embarrassed tone.

“Wonderfully beautiful and very aristocratic,” said the baron, completing the sentence, and raising the tips of his slender fingers to his lips.

But this gesture seemed to displease his master, for he turned from him, and, looking the young Ratisbon knight keenly in the face, asked suspiciously, “She is full of caprices—I am probably right there also—and consequently refuses to sing?”

“Pardon me, your Majesty,” replied Wolf eagerly. “If I understand her feelings, she had hoped to earn your Majesty’s approval, and when she received no other summons, nay, when your Majesty for the second time countermanded your wish to hear the boy choir, she feared that her art had found no favour in your Majesty’s trained ears, and, wounded and disheartened—”

“Nonsense!” the Emperor broke in wrathfully. “The contrary is true. The Queen of Hungary was commissioned to assure the supposed boy of my approval. Tell her this, Sir Wolf Hartschwert, and do so at once. Tell her—”

“She rode to the forest with some friends,” Wolf timidly ventured to interpose to save himself other orders impossible to execute. “If she has not returned home, it might be difficult—”

“Whether difficult or easy, you will find her,” Charles interrupted. “Then, with a greeting from her warmest admirer, Charles, the music lover, announce that he does not command, but entreats her to let him hear again this evening the voice whose melody so powerfully moved his heart.—You, Baron, will accompany the gentleman, and not return without the young lady!—What is her name?”

“Barbara Blomberg.”

“Barbara,” repeated the sovereign, as if the name evoked an old memory; and, as though he saw before him the form of the woman he was describing, he added in a low tone: “She is blue-eyed, fairskinned and rosy, slender yet well-rounded. A haughty, almost repellent bearing. Thick, waving locks of golden hair.”

“That is witchcraft!” the baron exclaimed. “Your Majesty is painting her portrait in words exactly, feature by feature. Her hair is like that of Titian’s daughter.”

“Apparently you have not failed to scrutinize her closely,” remarked the Emperor sharply. “Has she already associated with the gentlemen of the

court?”

Both promptly answered in the negative, but the Emperor continued impatiently: “Then hasten! As soon as she is here, inform me.—The meal, Malfalconnet, must be short-four courses, or five at the utmost, and no dessert. The boy choir is not to be stationed in the chapel, but in the dining hall, opposite to me.—We leave the arrangement to you, Sir Wolf. Of course, a chair must be placed for the lady.—Have the larger table set in another room, baron, and, for ought I care, serve with all twenty courses and a dessert. Old Marquise de Leria will remain here. She will occupy Queen Mary’s seat at my side. On account of the singer, I mean. Besides, it will please the marquise’s vanity.”

His eyes sparkled with youthful fire as he gave these orders. When the ambassadors were already on the threshold, he called after them:

“Wherever she may be, however late it may become, you will bring her. And,” he added eagerly, as the others with reverential bows were retiring, “and don’t forget, I do not command—I entreat her.”

When he was alone, Charles drew a long breath, and, resting his head on his hand, his thoughts returned to the past. Half-vanished pictures unconsciously blended with the present, which had so unexpectedly assumed a bright colouring.

“Barbara,” he murmured, almost inaudibly. Then he continued in soliloquy: “The beautiful Jungfrau Groen in Brussels was also called Barbara, and she was the first. Another of this name, and perhaps the last. How can this ardent yearning take root in my seared soul and grow so vigorously?”

Meanwhile he fancied that the “Quia amore langueo” again greeted him yearningly in the sweet melody of her voice.

“How powerfully the ear affects the heart!” he continued, pursuing the same train of thought. “Slender, well-rounded, golden-haired. If she should really resemble the Brussels Barbara! Malfalconnet is a connoisseur. Perhaps, after these gloomy days and years, a semblance of sunlight may return. It is long enough since politics and war have granted me even the slightest refreshment of the heart. And yet, methinks Heaven might feel under obligation to do something for the man who has made it his life-task to hold its enemies in check.”

He rose quickly as he spoke, and, while moving forward to ring the little bell whose peal summoned the valet, not the slightest trace of the gouty pain in his foot was perceptible.

Adrian saw with joyful surprise that his master approached without a crutch the door through which he had come, and the faithful servant expressed his astonishment in terms as eager as his position permitted.

On reaching his sleeping-room, the Emperor interrupted him. He wished to be dressed for dinner.

Master Adrian would not believe his own ears. He was to bring one of the new reception robes, and yet to-day not even the Queen of Hungary was to share his Majesty's repast. One of the costliest new costumes! What had come over his lord, who for months, when no distinguished guests were present, had worn only the most comfortable and often very shabby clothes at table, saving the better new garments like an economical housekeeper?

But Charles was not satisfied even with these, for, when Adrian hung over the back of a chair a handsome black court dress, slashed with satin, his master signed to him to take it away, and asked for one of the newest works of art of his Brussels tailor, a violet velvet garment, with slashes of golden yellow sill: on the breast, in the puffed sleeves and short plush breeches. With this were silk stockings tightly incasing the feet and limbs, as well as a ruff and cuffs of Mechlin lace.

Shaking his head, the valet took these articles of dress from the chest; but before he put them on his master, the latter sat down to have his hair and beard carefully arranged.

For weeks he had performed this slight task himself, though with very ill success, for his hair and beard had seemed to his visitors rough and unkempt. This time, on the contrary, mirror in hand, he directed the work of the skilful servant with many an objection, showing as much vanity as in his youth.

After Adrian had put on the new costume, the Emperor shook off the large, warm boot, and held out his gouty foot to the valet.

The faithful fellow gazed beseechingly into his master's face, and modestly entreated him to remember the pain from which he had scarcely recovered; but the Emperor imperiously commanded, "The shoes!" and the

servant brought them and cautiously, with grave anxiety, fitted the low-cut violet satin shoes on his feet.

Lastly, the sovereign ordered the Golden Fleece, which he usually wore on a hook below his neck, to be put on the gold chain which, as the head of the order, he had a right to wear with it, and took from the jewel case several especially handsome rings and a very costly star of diamonds and rubies, which he had fastened in the knot of the bow of his ruff. The state sword and sheath, which Adrian handed to him unasked, were rejected.

He needed no steel weapons to-day; the victory he sought must be won by his person.

When the servant held the Venetian mirror before him, he was satisfied. The elderly, half-broken-down man of the day before had become a tall, stately noble in the prime of life; nay, in spite of his forty-six years, his eyes sparkled far more brightly and proudly than many a young knight's in his train.

His features, even now, did not show beautiful symmetry, but they bore the stamp of a strong, energetic mind. The majestic dignity which he knew how to bestow upon it, made his figure, though it did not exceed middle height, appear taller; and the self-confident smile which rested on his full lips, as he was sure of a speedy triumph, well beseemed a general whose sword and brain had gained the most brilliant victories.

Adrian had seen him thus more than once after battles had been won or when he had unhorsed some strong antagonist in the tournament, but it was many a long year ago. He felt as though a miracle was wrought before his eyes, and, deeply loved, kissed his master's sleeve.

Charles noticed it, and, as if in token of gratitude, patted him lightly on the shoulder. This was not much, but it made the faithful fellow happy. How long it was since the last time his imperial aster had gladdened him by so friendly a sign of satisfaction!

Were the days to return when, in the Netherlands, Charles had condescended to treat even humble folk with blunt familiarity?

Adrian did not doubt that he should learn speedily enough what had caused this unexpected change; but the discovery of the real reason was now far from his alert mind, because he was still confident that the Emperor's heart had for years been closed against the charms of woman.

Nevertheless, the experienced man told himself that some woman must be connected with this amazing rejuvenation. Otherwise it would surely have been one of the wonders which he knew only from legends.

And lo! Chamberlain de Praet was already announcing a lady—the Marquise de Leria.

If Master Adrian had ever permitted himself to laugh in his master's presence, it would certainly have happened this time, for the curtseying old woman in velvet, silk, and plumes, whose visit his Majesty did not refuse, was probably the last person for whose sake Charles endured the satin shoe on his sensitive foot.

How oddly her round, catlike head, with its prominent cheek bones, and the white wig combed high on the top, contrasted with the rouged, sunken cheeks and eyebrows dyed coal black!

Adrian hastily calculated that she was not far from seventy. But how tightly she laced, how erect was her bearing, how sweet the smile on her sunken mouth! And how did her aged limbs, which must have lost their flexibility long ago, accomplish with such faultless grace the low curtseys, in which she almost touched the floor?

But the valet, who had grown gray in Charles's service, had witnessed still more surprising things, and beheld the presence of royalty bestow strength for performances which even now seemed incomprehensible. The lame had leaped before his eyes, and feeble invalids had stood erect long hours when the duties of the court, etiquette, the command of royalty, compelled them to do so.

What a mistress in ruling herself the marquise had become during her long service at the French and Netherland courts! for not a feature betrayed her surprise at the Emperor's altered appearance while she was thanking him fervently for the favour of being permitted to share the meal with the august sovereign, which had bestowed so much happiness upon her.

Charles cut this speech short, and curtly requested her to take under her charge, in his royal sister's place, a young lady of a noble family.

The marquise cast a swift glance of understanding at the Emperor, and then, walking backward with a series of low bows, obeyed the sovereign's signal to leave him.

Without any attempt to conceal from the valet the strong excitement that mastered him, Charles at last impatiently approached the window and looked down into the Haidplatz.

When his master had turned his back upon him, Adrian allowed himself to smile contentedly. Now he knew all, and therefore thought, for the first time, that a genuine miracle had been wrought in the monarch. Yet it gave him pleasure; surely it was a piece of good fortune that this withering trunk was again putting forth such fresh buds.

CHAPTER XIV.

Wolf Hartschwert had asked the guards who were stationed at the end of Red Cock Street whether any riders had passed them.

Several horses always stood saddled for the service of the court. Malfalconnet mounted his noble stallion, and Count Lanoi, the equerry, gave his companion a good horse and furnished two mounted torch-bearers.

But the Emperor's envoys had not far to ride; halfway between the abbey of Prufening and Ratisbon, just outside the village of Dcchbetten, they met the returning excursionists.

Barbara's voice reached Wolf from a considerable distance.

He knew the playmate of his childhood; her words never sounded so loud and sharp unless she was excited.

She had said little on the way out, and Herr Peter Schlumperger asked what had vexed her. Then she roused herself, and, to conquer the great anxiety which again and again took possession of her, she drank Herr Peter's sweet Malmsey wine more recklessly than usual.

At last, more intoxicated by her own vivacity than by the juice of the grape, she talked so loudly and freely with the other ladies and gentlemen that it became too much even for Frau Kastenmayr, who had glanced several times with sincere anxiety from her golden-haired favourite to her brother, and then back to Barbara.

Such reckless forwardness ill beseemed a chaste Ratisbon maiden and the future wife of a Peter Schlumperger, and she would gladly have urged departure. But some of the city pipers had been sent to the forest, and when they began to play, and Herr Peter himself invited the young people to dance, her good humour wholly disappeared; for Barbara, whom the young gentlemen eagerly sought, had devoted herself to dancing with such passionate zest that at last her luxuriant hair became completely loosened, and for several measures fluttered wildly around her. True, she had instantly hastened deeper into the woods with Nandl Woller, her cousin, to fasten it again, but the incident had most unpleasantly wounded Frau Kastenmayr's strict sense of propriety.

Nothing unusual ought to happen to a girl of Barbara's age, and the careless manner in which she treated what had befallen her before the eyes of so many men angered the austere widow so deeply that she withdrew a large share of her favour. This was the result of the continual singing.

Any other girl would fasten her hair firmly and resist flying in the dance from one man's arm to another's, especially in the presence of a suitor who was in earnest, and who held aloof from these amusements of youth.

Doubtless it was her duty to keep her brother from marriage with a girl who, so long as her feet were moving in time to the violins and clarionets, did not even bestow a single side glance upon her estimable lover.

So her displeasure had caused the early departure.

Torch-bearers rode at the head of the tolerably long train of the residents of Ratisbon, and some of the guests carried cressets. So there was no lack of light, and as the lantern in her neighbour's hand permitted the baron to recognise Barbara, Malfalconnet, according to the agreement, rode up to the singer, while Wolf accosted Herr Peter Schlumperger, and informed him of the invitation which the steward, in the Emperor's name, was bringing his fair guest.

The Ratisbon councillor allowed him to finish his explanation, and then with quiet dignity remarked that his Majesty's summons did not concern him. It rested entirely with jungfrau Blomberg to decide whether she would accept it at so late an hour.

But Barbara had already determined.

The assent was swift and positive, but neither the light of the more distant torches nor of the lantern close at hand was brilliant enough to show the baron how the girl's face blanched at the message that the Emperor Charles did not command, but only humbly entreated her to do him a favour that evening.

She had with difficulty uttered a few words of thanks; but when the adroit baron, with flattering urgency, besought her to crown her kindness and remember the saying that whoever gives quickly gives doubly, she pressed her right hand on her throbbing heart, and rode to Frau Kastenmayr's side to explain briefly what compelled her to leave them, and say to her and her brother a few words of farewell and gratitude.

Herr Peter replied with sincere kindness; his sister with equally well-meant chilling displeasure. Then Barbara rode on with the two envoys, in advance of the procession, at the swiftest trot. Her tongue, just now so voluble, seemed paralyzed. The violent throbbing of her heart fairly stopped her breath. A throng of contradictory thoughts and feelings filled her soul and mind. She was conscious of one thing only. A great, decisive event was imminent, and the most ardent wish her heart had ever cherished was approaching its fulfilment.

It is difficult to talk while riding rapidly; but Malfalconnet was master of the power of speech under any circumstances, and the courtier, with ready presence of mind, meant to avail himself of the opportunity to win the favour of the woman whose good will might become a precious possession.

But he was not to accomplish this, for, when he addressed the first question to Barbara, she curtly replied that she did not like to talk while her horse was trotting.

Wolf thought of the loud voice which had reached him a short time before from the midst of the Ratisbon party, but he said nothing, and the baron henceforward contented himself with occasionally uttering a few words.

The whole ride probably occupied only a quarter of an hour, but what a flood of thoughts and feelings swept in this short time through Barbara's soul!

She had just been enraged with herself for her defiance and the reckless haste which perhaps had forever deprived her of the opportunity to show the Emperor Charles her skill as a singer. The cruel anxiety which tortured her on this account had urged her at Prufening to the loud forwardness which hitherto she had always shunned. She had undoubtedly noticed how deeply this had lowered her in Frau Kastenmayr's esteem, and the discovery had been painful and wounded her vanity; but what did she care now for her, for her brother, for all Ratisbon? She was riding toward the great man who longed to see her, and to whom—she herself scarcely knew whence she gained the courage—she felt that she belonged.

She had looked up to him as to a mountain peak whose jagged summit touched the sky when her father and others had related his knightly deeds, his victories over the most powerful foes, and his peerless statesmanship. Only the day before yesterday she had listened to Wolf with silent

amazement when he told her of the countries and nations over which this mightiest of monarchs reigned, and described the magnificence of his palaces in the Netherlands, in Spain, and in Italy. Of the extent of his wealth, and the silver fleets which constantly brought to him from the New World treasures of the noble metal of unprecedented value, Barbara had already heard many incredible things.

Yet, during this ride through the silent night, she did not even bestow the lightest thought upon the riches of the man who was summoning her to his side. The gold, the purple, the ermine, the gems, and all the other splendours which she had seen, as if in a dream, hovering before her at the first tidings that she was invited to sing before the Emperor Charles, had vanished from her imagination.

She only longed to display her art before the greatest of men, whose "entreaty" had intoxicated her with very different power from the Malmsey at Herr Peter's table, and show herself worthy of his approval. That the mightiest of the mighty could not escape pain seemed to her like a mockery and a spiteful cruelty of Fate, and at the early mass that day she had prayed fervently that Heaven might grant him recovery.

Now she believed that it was in her own hands to bring it to him.

How often had she been told that her singing possessed the power to cheer saddened souls! Surely the magic of her art must exert a totally different influence upon the man to whom her whole being attracted her than upon the worthy folk here, for whom she cared nothing. She, ay, she, was to free his troubled spirit from every care, and if she succeeded, and he confessed to her that he, too, found in her something unusual, something great in its way, then the earnest diligence which Master Feys had often praised in her would be richly rewarded; then she would be justified in the pride which, notwithstanding her poverty, was a part of her, like her eyes and her lips, and for which she had so often been blamed.

She had always rejected coldly and unfeelingly the young men who sought her favour, but with what passionate yearning her heart throbbed for the first person whom she deemed worthy of it, yet from whom she expected nothing save warm sympathy for the musical talents which she held in readiness for him, earnest appreciation which raised her courage, and also, perhaps, the blissful gift of admiration!

Never had she rejoiced so gleefully, so proudly, and so hopefully in the magic of her voice, and she also felt it as a piece of good fortune that she was beautiful and pure as the art with which she expected to elevate and cheer his soul.

Transported out of herself, she did not heed the starry heavens above her head, at which she usually gazed with so much pleasure—Wolf had taught her to recognise the most beautiful planets and fixed stars—nor at the night birds which, attracted by the torches of the horsemen riding in advance, often darted close by her, nor the flattering words to which she was wont to listen willingly, and which few understood how to choose better than the well-trained breaker of hearts at her side.

The envoys had taken care that the city gate should be kept open for them. Not until the hoofs of her gray horse rang upon the pavement did Barbara awake from the dream of longing which had held her captive. She started in alarm, raised her little plumed cap, and drew a long breath. The ancient, well-known houses along the sides of the streets brought her back to reality and its demands.

She could not appear before the Emperor just as she was, in her riding habit, with disordered hair. Besides, her head was burning after the dancing and the wine which she had drunk. She must calm herself ere entering the presence of the royal connoisseur whose approval could render her so happy, whose dissatisfaction or indifference would make her wretched.

Quickly forming her resolution, she turned to Malfalconnet and explained that she could not appear before his Majesty until after she had allowed herself a short period of rest; but the baron, who probably feared that some feminine caprice would spoil, even at the twelfth hour, the successful issue of his mission, thought that he must deny this wish, though in the most courteous manner and with the assurance that he would procure her an opportunity to collect her thoughts quietly in the Golden Cross.

Barbara unexpectedly wheeled her horse, struck him a blow with the whip, and called to the astonished gentlemen, “In front of the Golden Cross in a quarter of an hour. You, Wolf, can wait for me at the Grieb.”

The last words were already dying away as she clashed swiftly up the street and across the Haidplatz. Bright sparks flashed from the paving stones struck by her horse’s hoofs.

“Confounded witch!” cried Malfalconnet. “And how the unruly girl wheels her horse and sits erect in her wild career over the flagstones! If the gray falls, it will do her no harm. Such rising stars may drop from the skies, but they will leap up again like the cats which I threw from the roof when a boy. His Majesty will get something to trouble him if he continues his admiration. Sacre Dieu! What a temperament!—and a German!”

Hitherto both had ridden on at a walk, gazing after Barbara, although she had already vanished in the darkness, which was illumined only by the stars in the cloudless sky. Now the clock struck half-past ten, and Malfalconnet exclaimed, half to the young knight, half to himself, “If only the wild bird does not yet escape our snare!”

“Have no fear,” replied Wolf. “She will keep her promise, for she is truthfulness itself. But you would oblige me, Herr Baron, if in future you use a tone less light in speaking of this young lady, who is worthy of every honour. Her reputation is as faultless as the purity of her voice, and, obstinate as she may be——”

“So this masterpiece of the Creator finds much favour in your eyes and your keen ears, Sir Knight,” Malfalconnet gaily interrupted. “From any one else, my young friend, I should not suffer such a warning to pass; but we are now riding in the Emperor’s precincts, so it would cause me sore embarrassment if my steel pierced you, for my neck, which is very precious to me, would then probably fall under the rude axe of the executioner. Besides, I wish you well, as you know, and I understand you German pedants. Henceforward—I swear it by all the saints!—I will utter no disrespectful word of your lovely countrywoman until you yourself release my tongue.”

“That will never be done!” Wolf eagerly protested, “and the mere supposition would force me to bare my sword, if it were not you——”

“If it were not sheer madness for your thumb-long parade dagger to cross blades with my good sword,” laughed Malfalconnet. “Ere you drew your rapier, I think your lust for murder would have fled. So let us leave our blades in their sheaths and permit my curiosity, to ask just one more question: What consideration induces you, Sir Knight, to constrain yourself to discreet peaceableness toward me, who, Heaven knows, excited your ire with no evil intent?”

“The same which restrains you from the duel with me,” replied Wolf quietly; and then, in a warmer tone, continued: “You are dear to me because you have shown me kindness ever since I came to the court. But you are the last person who would admit that gratitude should fetter the hand which desires to defend itself. In comparison with you, Baron, I am but an insignificant man, but noble blood flows in my veins as well as in yours, and I, too, am no coward. Perhaps you suspect it because I have accepted many things from you which I would overlook from no one else. But I know that, however your jesting tongue sins against me, it has nothing to do with your disposition, whose kindness has ever been proved when the occasion offered. But you are now denying respect to a lady—”

“From that, too, my heart is as far removed as the starry sky above our heads from the wretched pavement of this square,” Malfalconnet interrupted.

“Yes, Sir Knight, you judged me aright, and God save me from thinking or speaking evil of a lady who is so dear to the heart of a friend!”

As he spoke he held out his right hand to his companion with gay yet stately cordiality.

Wolf eagerly clasped it, and directly after both swung themselves from their horses in the courtyard of the Golden Cross, Malfalconnet to inform the Emperor of the successful result of his ride, the Ratisbon knight to arrange for the proper stationing of the boy choir, and then, obedient to Barbara’s injunction, to go to the Grieb.

He knew the baron, and was aware that any one whom this chivalrous gentleman assured of his friendship might rely upon it, but that he did not spare even the most sacred things if he might hope thereby to win the approval and arouse the mirth of his imperial master.

In the glad conviction that he had done his best for the woman he loved, and yet had not forfeited the favour of the influential man to whom he owed a debt of gratitude, whose active mind he admired, and who had, moreover, won his affection, he went to the neighbouring Grieb.

The favour which the Emperor showed Barbara seemed to him not only a piece of great good fortune for her, but also for himself. He knew Charles’s delicate appreciation of music, and could confidently anticipate that her voice would satisfy him and win his interest. But if this occurred, and the sovereign learned that Wolf wished to marry the singer to whom their

Majesties owed such great pleasure, it would be an easy matter for the Emperor to place him in a position which could not fail to content the just desire of the girl whom he loved for an existence free from want. The interview with the monarch, to which he was to lead Barbara at once, therefore seemed to him like a bridge to her consent, and when he met at the Ark the court musician, Massi, followed by a servant carrying his violin case, he called to him: “Just look at the shining stars up above us, Massi! They are friendly to me, and, if they keep their promise, the journey here will be blessed.”

“Amen!” replied the other as he pressed his hand cordially and asked for further particulars; but Wolf put him off until the next day, exclaim ing: “Jungfrau Blomberg, whose voice and execution bewitched you also, is now to sing before his Majesty. Wish her the best luck, for on her success depend many things for her, and perhaps for your friend also. Once more, uphold us!”

He turned toward the Grieb as he spoke, and the longing for Barbara quickened his pace.

The fear that the gouty monarch could cherish any other wishes concerning the young girl than to enjoy her singing was farthest from his thoughts.

Who would ever have seen an aspirant for woman’s favour in the suffering Emperor, bowed during the last few years by the heaviest political cares, and whose comparative youthfulness was easily overlooked?

At the main entrance of the Grieb Wolf was accosted by the master of the house.

The wife of this obedient husband, Frau Lerch, known throughout all Ratisbon as “Lerch, the mantuamaker,” had told him to keep watch, and impressed it upon him to let no one, no matter who it might be, enter her rooms on the ground floor except the cantor knight, as she called Wolf.

Barbara had had little time for reflection as she fled from the Emperor’s envoys, but a clever woman’s brain thinks quickly when an important decision is to be made, and while turning the gray she had decided that it would be better for her purpose, and the haste connected with it, to go to Frau Lerch than to her own home.

In the Grieb she was sure of finding admittance at once if she knocked at Frau Lerch's window, while the cantor house was closed early, and a long time might pass before the door opened to her. Besides, she did not know how her father, who could never be depended upon in such matters, would regard the honour that awaited her; thirdly—and this alone was decisive—the white dress, which she meant to wear instead of the riding habit, was at Frau Lerch's, and what good service the skilful, nimble fingers of her mother's ex-maid could render in this hurried change of garb.

Besides, it had also darted into her mind that the baron might accompany her to her shabby abode, and that would have seemed like a humiliation. Why should the court know what indigent circumstances had been the portion of the artist to whom the Emperor, through no less a personage than Baron Malfalconnet, sent an "entreaty" for her appearance?

All this had been clear to her in the course of a few seconds, and her choice had proved fortunate, for the gate of the Grieb was still unlocked, and the old hostler Kunz, who had been in the service of the Gravenreuths, the former owners of the Grieb, and had known "Wawerl" from childhood, was just coming out of the tavern, and willingly agreed to take the gray back to Peter Schlumperger's stable.

When Barbara entered the huge building a ray of light shone from the private chapel at the left, dedicated to Saint Dorothea.

This seemed to her like a sign from heaven, and, before knocking at Frau Lerch's door, she glided into the sanctuary, threw herself upon her knees before the image of the saint, and besought her to bestow the most melting sweetness and the deepest influence upon her voice while singing before his Majesty.

Then it seemed as though the face of the kindly saint smiled assent, and in hurried words Barbara added that the great monarch was also the most thorough connoisseur, and the altar here should lack neither candles nor flowers if she would bestow upon her the power to win his approval. While speaking, she raised her clasped hands toward the Virgin's image, and concluded her fervent prayer with the passionate exclamation: "Oh, hear me, hear me, thou inexhaustible fountain of mercy, for if I do not fulfil what he expected when he entreated me to sing before him, and I see that he lets me go disappointed, the peace of this heart will be destroyed! Hear, oh, hear me, august Queen of Heaven!"

Relieved and strengthened, she at last sprang up, and a few minutes after Frau Lerch, with loud exclamations of admiration, was combing her long, thick, waving locks of fair hair.

Overflowing with delight at such beauty, the thin little woman then helped her "darling Wawerl," her "wonderfully sweet nightingale," to change her dress.

Wolf's gift, the velvet robe with the marten border, would have been too heavy and oppressive for singing, and, besides, was not yet finished. Barbara, she declared, had done right to choose the white one, which was intended for the next dance at the New Scales. Nothing could be more becoming to her enchanting little princess, and Barbara yielded herself entirely to the experienced assistant, who had all the laces and ribbons she needed close at hand. She could even supply her with new and dainty satin shoes.

While Frau Lerch was working with wonderful dexterity, she also permitted her nimble tongue no rest. In the tenderest accents of faithful maternal solicitude she counselled her how to conduct herself in his Majesty's presence. Hurriedly showing Barbara how the stiff Spanish ladies of the court curtsied, she exclaimed: "And another thing, my darling pet: It is important for all ladies, even those of royal blood, to try to win the favour of so great a monarch when they meet him for the first time. You can use your eyes, too, and how effectually! I saw you a short time ago, and, if I had been a young gentleman, how gladly I would have changed places with the handsome recruiting officer Pyramus at the New Scales! That was a flaming fire! Now, isn't it true, darling—now we no longer have even a single glance for such insignificant fellows! Consider that settled! But things of that sort have no effect upon his august Majesty. You must cast down your sparkling blue eyes in modest embarrassment, as if you still wore the confirmation wreath. All the fashionable sons of the burghers complain of your repellent coldness. Let his Majesty feel it too. That will pour oil on the flames, and they must blaze up high; I'd stake both my hands on it, much as I need them. But if it results as I expect, my darling, don't forget old Lerch, who loves you even more than your own mother did. How beautiful and stately she was! But she forgot her little Wawerl only too often. I have a faithful nature, child, and understand life. If, sooner or later, you need the advice of a true, helpful friend, you know where to find little old Lerch."

These warnings had sounded impressive enough, but Barbara had by no means listened attentively. Instead, she had been anticipating, with torturing impatience, her appearance before the great man for whom she was adorned and the songs which she would have to sing. If she was permitted to choose herself, he would also hear the bird-song, with the “Car la saison est bonne,” which had extorted such enthusiastic applause from the Netherland maestro.

But no!

She must choose something grander, more solemn, for she wished to make a deeper, stronger, more lasting impression upon the man who was now to listen to her voice.

Mere lukewarm satisfaction would not content her in the case of the Emperor Charles; she wished to arouse his enthusiasm, his rapture. What bliss it would be if she was permitted to penetrate deeply into his soul, if it were allotted to her to make the ruler’s grave eyes sparkle with radiant delight!

In increasing excitement, she saw herself, in imagination, lowering the sheet of music, and the sovereign, deeply moved, holding out both hands to her.

But that would have been too much happiness! What if the violent throbbing of her heart should silence her voice? What if the oppressive timidity, which conquers every one who for the first time is permitted to stand in the presence of majesty, should cause her to lose her memory and be unable to find the mood which she required in order to execute her task with the perfection that hovered before her mind?

Yes, that would happen! With cruel self-torture she dwelt upon the terrible dread, for she thought she had noticed that the best success often followed when she had expected the worst result. Fran Lerch perceived what was passing in her mind, and instilled courage until she had finished her work and held up the mirror before Barbara.

The girl, whether she desired to do so or not, could not help looking in. She did it reluctantly, and, after hastily assuring herself that she was presentable, she turned the glittering disk away and would not glance at it again.

She feared that the contemplation of her own image might disturb her; she wished to think only of the worthy execution of her task, and the shorter time she kept the Emperor waiting the less she need fear having an ill-humoured listener.

So she hurriedly ejaculated a few words of gratitude to the old attendant and seized the kerchief for her head, which she had taken to Prufening with her; but the dressmaker wound around her hair a costly lace veil which she had ready for a customer.

“The valuable article may be lost,” she thought. “But if, sooner or later, something happens which my lambkin, who thinks only of her sweet babble, does not dream, it will return to me with interest. Besides, she must see what maternal affection I feel for her.” Then, with tender caution, she kissed the girl’s glowing cheeks, and the blessing with which she at last dismissed her sounded devout and loving enough.

Wolf had not waited long; it was just striking eleven when Barbara met him at the door talking with Herr Lerch, the owner of the house.

Before leaving the Grieb, she again glanced into the chapel in the courtyard dedicated to Saint Dorothea, and uttered a swift though silent prayer for good success, and that her singing might have a deep influence upon the august hearer.

Meanwhile she scarcely heeded what her friend was saying, and, while walking at his side the short distance through a part of Red Cock Street and across the Haidplatz, he had no words from her lips except the request that he would tell her father of the great honour awaiting her.

Wolf, too, had imposed silence upon himself; it was necessary for the singer, on the eve of this important performance, to refrain from talking in the night air.

CHAPTER XV.

Baron Malfalconnet possessed the gift of lending Time wings and using the simplest incident as the foundation for an entertaining story.

He knew that his Majesty did not like waiting, and the quarter of an hour which Barbara had mentioned might easily become a longer period. So he adorned the description of his ride as an envoy most generously with many partially invented details. Wolf, Herr Peter Schlumperger, Frau Kastenmayr, his estimable sister, and the party of Ratisbon excursionists, upon whom he had scarcely bestowed a passing glance, all played a large and by no means enviable part.

But he gained his object, for the impatient monarch listened gladly, and all the more willingly in proportion to the more brilliant eloquence with which the clever connoisseur of mankind placed Barbara in contrast to all the obscure, insignificant, and ridiculous personages whom he pretended to have met. The peculiar charm which her individuality thus obtained corresponded with the idea which the monarch himself had formed of the expected guest, and it flattered him to hear his conjecture so remarkably confirmed.

A few questions from the monarch followed the baron's report. While the latter was still answering the last one, Chamberlain de Praet announced the singer's arrival, and Count Bueren escorted the aged Marquise de Leria to the monarch.

The Emperor went at once to the table, and as he descended the stairs, leaning lightly on Malfalconnet's arm, it was scarcely perceptible that he used the left foot less firmly than the other.

According to his command, only the small table at which he was to sit with the marquise had been laid in the dining-room. The boy choir had taken a position opposite to it.

At his entrance Barbara rose quickly from the chair, into which she had sunk by no means from weariness.

With a throbbing heart, and still heavily oppressed by anxiety, she awaited the next moments and what they would bring.

The Benedictio Mensae was again to open the concert. She needed no notes for this familiar music. Yet she looked toward Appenzelder, who had thanked her for her appearance as if she had done him a great favour.

Now the orchestra behind her was silent. Now she saw the lackeys and attendants bow profoundly. Now Appenzelder raised his arm.

She saw it, but he had not yet touched the desk with the little ebony staff, and she availed herself of the pause to glance toward the anxiously expected sovereign, whose presence she felt.

There he stood.

Barbara scarcely noticed the old lady at his left; he, he alone captivated her eyes, her heart, her senses, her whole being.

What a happy surprise!

How Wolf, Maestro Gombert, and others had described the Emperor, and how he stood before her!

This chivalrous, superb, almost youthful gentleman and hero, whose haughty, self-assured bearing so admirably suited the magnificence of his rich-hued garments, was said to be a gouty old man, bowed by the weight of care! Had it not been so abominable, it would have tempted her to laugh.

How petty men were, how cruel was the fate of the great, to whom envy clings like their own shadow, and whose image was basely distorted even by those who knew the grandeur of their intellect and their deeds, and who owed to them their best success in life!

Her heart beat for this man, not only with the artist's desire to satisfy the connoisseur, no, but with stormy passion—she felt it now; yet, though the god of love was called a blind boy, she had retained the full, clear strength of vision and the absolute power of discernment.

No one, not even the handsomest young knight, could compare in her eyes with the mature, powerful guide of the destiny of many millions, whose lofty brow was illumined by the grandeur of his intellect, and with whose name the memory of glorious victories was associated. The pride justified by his birth had led him from one lofty deed to another, and he could not help carrying his head so high, for how far all the rest of mankind lay beneath him! There was no living mortal to whom the Emperor Charles would have been obliged to look up, or before whom he need bow his head at all.

She would fain have been able to stamp his image deeply, ineffaceably upon her soul. But, alas!

Just at that moment a short, imperious sound reached her ear. Appenzelder had struck the desk with his baton. The Benedictio must begin at once, and now her breath was really coming so quickly that it seemed impossible for her to sing in this condition.

Deeply troubled, she pressed her hand upon her bosom.

Then the cruel, tyrannical baton struck the wood a second time, and——

But what did this mean?

The Emperor had left his elderly companion after she was seated at the table, and was advancing—her eyes, clouded by anxious expectation, did not deceive her—and was walking with stately dignity toward the boy choir; no, not to it, but directly toward herself.—Now it seemed as though her heart stood still.

At no price could she have produced even a single note.

But it was not required, for the wave of the imperial hand which she saw was to Appenzelder, and commanded him to silence his choir.

The unexpected movement concerned her alone, and ere Barbara found time to ask herself what brought him to her, he already stood before her.

How friendly and yet how chivalrously stately as the slight bow which the monarch bestowed upon her; and he had scarcely done so when, in peculiar German, whose strange accent seemed to her extremely charming and musical, he exclaimed: “we welcome you to the Golden Cross, fairest of maidens. You now behold what man can accomplish when he strives for anything with genuine zeal. The wisest among the wise declare that even gods fail in the conflict against the obstinacy of beautiful women, and yet our longing desire succeeded in capturing you, lovely fugitive.”

Barbara alternately flushed and paled as she listened to these words.

She had not heard Frau Lerch’s counsel, and yet, obedient to a secret impulse, she timidly lowered her blue eyes. But not a word of the sovereign had escaped her, and, though she still lacked the power of speech, she found courage to smile and shake her head in denial.

The Emperor did not miss a single change of feature, and, swiftly understanding her mute contradiction, went on gaily: “Look! look! So,

fairest of the fair, you refuse to acknowledge our glorious victory? That bears witness to a specially independent comprehension of things. But we, how are we to explain such a denial of an accomplished fact?"

Then Barbara summoned up courage and answered, still with downcast eyes, "But, your Majesty, how can I regard myself as conquered and captured when I voluntarily yielded to your Majesty's wish?"

"And may I perhaps also hope that it gives you pleasure to grant my entreaty?" asked the sovereign in a subdued tone, gazing as he spoke deep into the eyes which the young girl had just raised to his.

Barbara did not instantly find the reply she sought, and only bent her head in assent, but the Emperor was not satisfied with this mute answer, and eagerly desired to learn whether it was so difficult for her to admit what he so ardently wished to hear.

Meanwhile her quick intellect had found the fitting response, and, with a look which told the questioner more than she intended to betray, she answered softly: "Why should I not have fulfilled your Majesty's request gladly and proudly? But what followed the walk here, what befell me here, is so much more beautiful and greater—"

"And may we know," interrupted the Emperor urgently, "what you find here that affords your heart so much pleasure?

"You and your favour," she answered quickly, and the flush which suddenly crimsoned her cheeks showed him how deeply she was moved.

Then Charles went close to her and whispered: "And do you wish to know, most bewitching woman, how he, in whose presence you confess that you are glad to remain, looked forward to your coming? As he would greet happiness, spring. And note that I look you in the face, it seems as though Easter bells were pealing the resurrection of a love long buried in this breast. And you, maiden, you will not belie this hope?"

Barbara clung to the back of the chair for support, while from her deeply agitated soul struggled the exclamation: "This poor heart, my lord, belongs to you—to you alone! How it mastered me, who can describe? But here, my lord, now——"

Then the monarch whispered warmly: "You are right. What we have to say to each other requires a more fitting time and a different place, and we will find them."

Then he stepped back, drew himself up to his full height, waved his hand to her with gracious condescension, and in a loud, imperious tone commanded Appenzelder to begin the Benedictio.

"It rests with the lovely artist yonder," he added, glancing kindly at Barbara, "whether she will now ennoble with her wonderful voice the singing of the boy choir. Later she will probably allow us to hear the closing melody of the 'Ecce tu pulchra es', which, with such good reason, delighted the Queen of Hungary, and myself no less."

He seated himself at the table as he spoke, and devoted himself to the dishes offered him so eagerly that it was difficult to believe in the deep, yearning emotion that ruled him. Only the marquise at his side and Malfalconnet, who had joined the attendant nobles, perceived that he ate more rapidly than usual, and paid no attention to the preparation of the viands.

The aged eyes, of the Emperor's watchful companion, to whom up to the close of the repast he addressed only a few scattered words, also detected something else. Rarely, but nevertheless several times, the Emperor glanced at the boy choir, and when, in doing so, his Majesty's eyes met the singer's, it was done in a way which proved to the marquise, who had acquired profound experience at the French court, that an understanding existed between the sovereign and the artist which could scarcely date from that day. This circumstance must be considered, and behind the narrow, wrinkled brow of the old woman, whose cradle had stood in a ducal palace, thronged a succession of thoughts and plans precisely similar to those which had filled the mind of the dressmaker and ex-maid ere she gave Barbara her farewell kiss.

What the marquise at first had merely conjectured and put together from various signs, became, by constant assiduous observation, complete certainty when the singer, after a tolerably long pause, joined in Josquin's hymn to the Virgin.

In the Benedictio Mensae she remained silent, but at the first effective passage joined in the singing of the boys.

Not until the 'Tu pulchra es' did she display the full power of her art.

From the commencement she took part in the execution of this magnificent composition eagerly and with deep feeling, and when the closing bars began and the magic of her singing developed all its heart-

thrilling power, the watchful lady in waiting perceived that his Majesty forgot the food and hung on Barbara's lips as though spellbound.

This was something unprecedented. But when the monarch continued for some time to display an abstemiousness so unlike him, the marquise cast a hasty glance of inquiry at Malfalconnet. But the affirmative answer which she expected did not come. Had the baron's keen eye failed to notice so important a matter, or had his Majesty taken him into his confidence and commanded him to keep the secret?

That Malfalconnet was merely avoiding making common cause with the old intriguer, was a suspicion which vanity led her to reject the more positively the more frequently her countryman sought her to learn what he desired to know.

Besides, she soon required no further confirmation, for what now happened put an end to every doubt.

Barbara had to sing the "Quia amore langueo" again, and how it sounded this time to the listening hearer!

No voice which the Emperor Charles had ever heard had put such pure, bewitching melody into this expression of the deepest yearning. It seemed as though the longing of the whole world was flowing to him from those fresh, young, beautifully formed red lips.

A heart which was not itself languishing for love could not pour forth to another with such convincing truth, overwhelming power, and glowing fervour the ardent longing of a soul seized by the omnipotence of love.

The mighty pressure of rising surges of yearning dashed against the monarch's heart, and with tremendous impetuosity roused on all sides the tender desires which for a long time had been gathering in his soul. It seemed as though this "Because I long for love" was blending with the long-repressed and now uncontrollable yearning that filled his own breast, and he was obliged to restrain himself in order not to rush toward this gifted singer, this marvellously lovely woman, whose heart was his, and, before the eyes of all, clasp her in his embrace.

The master of dissimulation forgot himself, and—what a delight to the eyes of the marquise!—the Emperor Charles, the great epicure and thirsty drinker, left the pasty and the wine, to listen standing, with hands resting on the table and outstretched head, to Barbara's voice.

It seemed as though he feared his ear might miss a note of this song, his eye a movement of this source of melody.

But when the song ceased, and Barbara, panting for breath, returned the ardent look of gratitude and delight which beamed upon her from his eyes, the Emperor left the table, and, without noticing Count Krockow, who was just lifting the silver cover from the roast capon, the last of the five dishes ordered, went up to Barbara.

Would he really end the meal now? The old marquise thought it impossible, but if the incredible event occurred, then things were to be expected, things——

But ere she had imagined how this unprecedented event could take place, the Emperor himself informed her, for, half addressing Barbara, half the lady in waiting, he exclaimed in a slightly muffled tone: “Thanks, cordial thanks for this great pleasure, my dear Jungfrau! But we wish to add to words another token of appreciation, a token of more lasting duration.—Do us the favour, Marquise de Leria, to conduct this noble artist to the upper rooms, that she may receive what we intended for her.”

He left the hall as he spoke; but the marquise beckoned to Barbara, detained her with words of sweet flattery a short time and then, with the young girl, ascended the stairs up which the Emperor had preceded them.

Meanwhile the old noblewoman continued to talk with her; but Barbara did not listen. While following her guide, it seemed as though the steps her light foot trod were a heavenly ladder, and at their end the gates of Paradise would open.

She felt with inexpressible delight that she had never before succeeded so well in expressing a strong feeling in music, and what her song endeavoured to tell the Emperor—no, the man whom she loved—had been understood, and found an echo in his soul.

Could there be a greater happiness?

And yet, while she was approaching him, he must be awaiting her.

She had wished to arouse his attention, his approval, his delight in her singing. All three had become hers, and now new wishes had mastered her, and probably him also. She desired his love, he hers, and, fearing herself, she felt the great peril into which her aged companion was conducting her.

The Emperor was indeed the greatest and noblest of men! The mere consciousness that he desired not only her singing, but her heart, inspired the deepest bliss. Yet it seemed as if she ought not to cross the threshold of the room which opened before her; as if she ought to rush down the stairs and fly from him, as she had dashed away when his messengers wished to lead her to his presence.

But he was already advancing from the end of the large apartment, and the mere sight of him put an end to every further consideration and crushed her will.

Obedient to a glance from the Emperor's eyes, the marquise, bowing reverently, retreated into the corridor whence they had come and closed the door.

The clang against the jambs told Barbara that she was alone with the ruler of half the world, whom she dared to love.

But she was not granted a moment to collect her thoughts; the Emperor Charles already stood before her, and with the exclamation, "Quia amore langueo!" opened his arms.

She, too, was longing for love, and, as if intoxicated by the lofty feeling of being deemed worthy of the heart of this mighty sovereign, she yielded to his kisses; and as she herself threw her arm around his neck and felt—that she had a right to do so, it seemed as though an invisible hand was placing a royal crown upon her brow.

The joy which filled her little heart appeared too rich and great for it when, repeating the "Amore langueo" with her head upon his breast, he whispered sweet love phrases and confessed that those words, since she had sung them for the first time, had echoed through his hours of reflection, through the cares of business, through the brief hours of repose which he allowed himself, and so it must continue, and her love, her voice, and her beauty render the downward path of life the fairest portion which he had traversed.

Then Barbara, with the low exclamation, "Because I, too, long for love," again offered him her lips, and he accepted the sweet invitation with impetuous passion.

Already, for the second time since her entrance, the clock on Charles's writing-table struck the quarter of an hour, and, as if startled from a deep

slumber, she withdrew from his embrace and gazed, as if bewildered, toward the door. Directly after it opened, and Don Luis Quijada with firm step entered the room.

The trusted favourite of the Emperor was always free to seek his presence. He had returned to Ratisbon in advance of the Queen of Hungary, who would not arrive until the following morning, and, after a brief conversation with Malfalconnet and Master Adrian, the loyal nobleman had gone without delay, and at the risk of angering him, to his imperial master. Without even rising from the divan, and still clasping the hand which Barbara attempted to withdraw as Don Luis advanced, Charles asked with stern rebuke what had caused his entrance at so late an hour. Quijada requested a brief audience, but Charles replied that he had nothing to conceal from this companion.

A low bow followed this remark; then, with quiet dignity, the major-domo reported that the leaders of the orchestra and the boy choir had been waiting below—and with them Sir Wolf Hartschwert and an old gentleman, the father of this lady—a considerable time for her return. So it seemed to him advisable, unless his majesty wished to reveal this sweet secret to the world, to part from his beautiful friend, at least for a short space.

The Emperor Charles did not permit such suggestions even from those who were nearest and dearest to him, and he was already starting up indignantly to thrust Don Luis back behind the barriers through which he had broken, when Barbara with tender persuasion entreated her lover, for her sake, to exercise caution. Charles at last consented to part from her for a time. He was sure of her; for he read in the dewy brightness of her eyes how hard it was for her also to release herself from his embrace.

Then, removing the diamond and ruby star from the lace at his neck, he pinned it on Barbara’s bosom, with the exclamation, “In memory of this hour!”

He afterward added, as if in explanation, that the star might show to those below what had detained her here, and asked earnestly whether he might hope to see her again in an hour, if a faithful man—here he motioned to Quijada—accompanied her hither, and later escorted her home again?

A silent nod promised the fulfilment of this request.

The Emperor then carried on a short conversation with Quijada, which was unintelligible to Barbara; and after he had retired to summon the

marquise, Charles profited, like an impetuous youth, by the brief period in which he was again alone with his love, and entreated her to consider that, if she remained absent long, the “amore langueo” would rob him of his reason.

“Your great intellect,” she replied, with a faint sigh. “My small wits—Holy Virgin!—flew far away at the first word of love from the lips of my royal master.”

Then, drawing herself up to her full height, she passed her hand across her brow and defiantly exclaimed: “And why should I think and ponder? I will be happy, and make you happy also, my only love!”

As she spoke she again threw herself upon his breast, but only for a few brief moments. Don Luis Quijada reappeared with the marquise, and conducted both ladies out of the imperial apartment.

Outside the door the major-domo detained Barbara, and had a tolerably long conversation with her, of which the marquise vainly endeavoured to catch even a few words.

At last he committed the girl to the old nobleman’s charge and returned to the Emperor.

The marquise received Barbara with the assurance that she had found in her a warm, nay, a maternal friend.

If this beautiful creature was not alreadv the object of the Emperor’s love, the experienced old woman told herself, she must very soon become so.

Yet there had never been a favourite at this monarch’s court, and she was curious to learn what position would be assigned to her.

After accompanying the girl intrusted to her care down the stairs with flattering kindness, she committed her to the musicians and Wolf, who, with old Blomberg, were awaiting her in the chapel with increasing impatience. The captain had obtained admittance through Wolf.

At her first glance at Barbara the eyes of the old marquise had rested on the glittering star which the Emperor had fastened on the lady of his love.

The men did not notice it until after they had congratulated the singer upon her exquisite performance and the effect which it had produced upon his Majesty.

Maestro Gombert perceived it before the others, and Captain Blomberg and Wolf rejoiced with him and Appenzelder over this tangible proof of the imperial favour.

A conversation about the Emperor's judgment and the rarity with which he bestowed such costly tokens of his regard was commencing in the chapel, but Barbara speedily brought it to a close by the assurance that she was utterly exhausted and needed rest.

On the way home she said very little, but when Wolf, in the second story of the house, held out his hand in farewell, she pressed it warmly, and thanked him with such evident emotion that the young man entered his rooms full of hope and deep secret satisfaction.

After Barbara had crossed the threshold of hers, she said good-night to her father, who wished to learn all sorts of details, alleging that she could scarcely speak from weariness.

The old gentleman went to rest grumbling over the weakness of women in these days, to which even his sturdy lass now succumbed; but Barbara threw herself on her knees beside the bed in her room, buried her face in the pillows, and sobbed aloud. Another feeling, however, soon silenced her desire to weep. Her lover's image and the memory of the happy moments which she had just experienced returned to her mind. Besides, she must hasten to arrange her hair again, and—this time with her own hands—change her clothing.

While she was loosening her golden tresses and gazing into the mirror, her eyes again sparkled with joy. The greatest, the loftiest of mortals loved her. She belonged to him, body and soul, and she had been permitted to call him "her own."

At this thought she drew herself up still more haughtily in proud self-consciousness, but, as her glance fell upon the image of the Virgin above the priedieu, she again bowed her head.

Doubtless she desired to pray, but she could not.

She need confess nothing to the august Queen of Heaven. She knew that she had neither sought nor desired what now burdened her heart so heavily, and yet rendered her so infinitely happy. She had obeyed the Emperor's summons in order to win approval and applause for her art, and to afford the monarch a little pleasure and cheer, and, instead, the love of the greatest

of all men had flamed ardently from the earth, she had left her whole heart with him, and given herself and all that was in her into his power. Now he summoned her—the Holy Virgin knew this, too—and she must obey, though the pure face yonder looked so grave and threatening.

And for what boon could she beseech the Queen of Heaven?

What more had the woman, to whom the Emperor's heart belonged, to desire?

The calmness of her soul was at an end, and not for all the kingdoms Charles possessed would she have exchanged the tumult and turmoil in her breast for the peace which she had enjoyed yesterday.

Obeying a defiant impulse, she turned from the benign face, and her hands fairly flew as, still more violently agitated, she completed the changes in her dress.

In unfastening the star, her lover's gift, she saw upon the gold at the back Charles's motto, "Plus ultra!"

Barbara had known it before, but had not thought of it for a long time, and a slight tremor ran through her frame as she said to herself that, from early childhood, though unconsciously, it had been hers also. Heaven—she knew it now—Fate destined them for each other.

Sighing heavily, she went at last, in a street dress, to open the bow-window which looked upon Red Cock Street.

Barbara felt as if she had outgrown herself. The pathos which she had often expressed in singing solemn church music took possession of her, and left no room in her soul for any frivolous emotion. Proud of the lofty passion which drew her with such mighty power to her lover's arms, she cast aside the remorse, the anxiety, the deep sense of wrong which had overpowered her on her return home.

What was greater than the certainty of being beloved by the greatest of men? It raised her far above all other women, and, since she loved him in return, this certainty could not fail to make her happy also, when she had once fully recovered her composure and ventured to look the wonderful event which had happened freely in the face.

The stars themselves, following their appointed course in yonder blue firmament—his device taught that—made her belong to him. If she could have forced herself to silence the desire of her heart, it would have been

futile. Whoever divides two trees which have grown from a single root, she said to herself, destroys at least one; but she would live, would be happy on the highest summit of existence. She could not help obeying his summons, for as soon as she listened to the warning voice within, the “Because I long for love” with which he had clasped her in his arms, urged her with irresistible power toward the lover who awaited her coming.

The clock now struck two, and a tall figure in a Spanish cloak stood outside the door of the house. It was Don Luis Quijada, the Emperor’s majordomo.

It would not do to keep him waiting, and, as she turned back into the room to take the little lamp, her glance again fell upon the Virgin’s image above the priedieu and rested upon her head.

Then the figure of her imperial lover stood in tangible distinctness before her mind, and she imagined that she again heard the first cry of longing with which he clasped her in his arms, and without further thought or consideration she kissed her hand to the image, extinguished the little lamp, and hurried as fast as the darkness permitted into the entry and down the stairs.

Outside the house Wolf returned to her memory a moment.

How faithfully he loved her!

Yet was it not difficult to understand how she could even think of the poor fellow at all while hastening to the illustrious sovereign whose heart was hers, and who had taught her with what impetuous power true love seizes upon the soul. Barbara threw her head back proudly, and, drawing a long breath, opened the door of the house. Outside she was received by Quijada with a silent bend of the head; but she remembered the far more profound bows with which he greeted the monarch, and, to show him of how lofty a nature was also the woman whom the Emperor Charles deemed worthy of his love, she walked with queenly dignity through the darkness at her aristocratic companion’s side without vouchsafing him a single glance.

Two hours later old Ursula was sitting sleepless in her bed in the second story of the cantor house. A slight noise was heard on the stairs, and the one-eyed maid-servant who was watching beside her exclaimed: “There it is again! just as it was striking two I said that the rats were coming up from the cellar into the house.”

“The rats,” repeated the old woman incredulously; and then, without moving her lips, thought: “Rats that shut the door behind them? My poor Wolf!”

CHAPTER XVI.

“Poor Wolf!” old Ursel had exclaimed. But whoever had met the young knight the following morning, as he went up the stairs to the Blombergs’ rooms, would have deemed him, like Baron Malfalconnet, the happiest of mortals.

He had obeyed Dr. Hiltner’s summons, and remained a long time with him. Then he went home at a rapid pace, for he longed to tell Barbara how fair a prospect for their future was opening before him.

She had showed her liking for him plainly enough yesterday when they parted. What should prevent her from becoming his now that he could promise an ample income?

There was some one stirring in the private chapel as he passed, but he paid no heed; in former days many people from the neighbourhood prayed here frequently.

He found no one in the Blombergs’ home except the father.

Barbara would certainly return immediately, the old man said. She had gone down to the chapel a short time before. She was not in the habit of doing so at this hour, but the great favour shown her by the Emperor had probably gone to her head, and who could wonder?

Wolf also thought it natural that so great a success should excite her powerfully: but he, too, had a similar one to relate, and, with joyful emotion, he now told the old gentleman what the syndic had offered.

The Council, which, by the establishment of the “Convivium,” had already provided for the fostering of the noble art of music, wished to do still more. The project had been dear to the recently deceased Martin Luther, and the Ratisbon syndic, who had enjoyed his friendship, thought he was carrying out his wishes——

Here Wolf was interrupted, for the table groaned under the blow of the old warrior’s still powerful fist, coupled with the exclamation: “So there is still to be no rest from the accursed disturber of the peace, although he is dead! No offence, my lad; but there can be nothing edifying to a good Christian where that Wittenberg fellow is concerned.”

“Only have patience,” Wolf interposed here, secure of victory, and now, slightly vexed with himself for his imprudence in mentioning Martin Luther’s name to the old hater of Turks and heretics, he explained that Dr. Hiltner, in the name of the Council, had offered him the position of Damian Feys, Barbara’s teacher. The Netherlander was going home, and the magistrate was glad to have found in him, Wolf, a native of Ratisbon who would be no less skilled in fostering music in this good city. To bind him securely, and avoid the danger of a speedy invitation elsewhere, the position offered was provided with an annual salary hitherto unprecedented in this country, and which far exceeded that of many an imperial councillor. This had been rendered possible through a bequest, whose interest was to be devoted to the development of music, and—if he should accept the place—to him and his future wife.

When he heard this, he would fain have instantly bestowed the most beautiful candles upon the Holy Virgin, but the scruple concerning religion had prevented his rejoicing fully; and when he told the syndic that under no circumstances could he abandon the old faith, it was done with the fear that the glittering bird would fly away from him. But the result had been different, for Dr. Hiltner replied that religion did not enter into the matter. He knew Wolf and his peaceful nature, and therefore hoped that he would be advised that music was a language equally intelligible to all persons of feeling, whatever tongue they spoke and whatever creed they preferred. This opinion was also that of the Catholic maestro Feys, and he had therefore escaped all difficulty. Wolf must, of course, consider the circumstances which he would find here. If he would accommodate himself to them, the Council would be willing to overlook his faith; besides, Hiltner, on his own authority, had given him the three days’ time to reflect, for which he had asked on Barbara’s account.

A long-drawn “H’m” from Blomberg followed this disclosure. Then he shook his clumsy head, and, grasping his mustache with his hand, as if he wanted in that way to stop the motion of his head, he said thoughtfully: “Not a whole thing, Wolf, rather a double one, or—if we look at it differently—it is only a half, for an honest friend of our Holy Church. The way into which they tempt you is paved with gold, but—but—I see the snares and pitfalls——”

He rose as he spoke, muttering all sorts of unintelligible things, until he finally exclaimed, “Yet perhaps one might——”

Then he looked impatiently toward the door, and asked: “Where is the girl loitering? Would Eve probably bite the apple of temptation also?”

“Shall I call her?” cried Wolf eagerly.

“No, no,” said the captain. “It is sinful to disturb even our nearest relatives at prayer. Besides, you would not believe how the maestro’s praises and the imperial gift have excited the vanity in her woman’s nature. For the first time in I know not how many years, she overslept the hour of mass. It was probably ten o’clock when I knocked at her chamber door. Toward eleven there was a movement in her room. Then I opened the door to bid her good-morning, but she neither heard nor saw anything, and knelt at the priedieu as if turned to stone. Before going to sleep and early in the morning I expect such things, but when it is almost noon! Her porridge still stood untouched on the table here, and to-day there is no occasion for fasting. But I did not like to disturb her, and perhaps she would still be kneeling before the Virgin’s image if the maid-servant hadn’t blundered in to carry a bouquet which Herr Peter Schlumperger’s servant had brought. Then Barbara started up as if a hornet had stung her. And how she looked at me! Once—I knew it instantly—I had gazed into such a marvellously beautiful face, such helpless blue eyes. Afterward I remembered who and where it had been. God guard me from sinning against my own child, but that was exactly the way the young girl looked who they—it was farther back in the past than you can remember—burned here for a witch, as the halberdiers and monks led her to the place of execution. Susanne Schindler—that was her name—was the daughter of a respectable notary’s clerk, who was obliged to wander about the world a great deal, and perished in Hungary just as she reached womanhood. Her mother had died when she was born, and an old woman had taken care of her out of friendship. People called the lass ‘beautiful Susel,’ and she was wonderfully charming. Pink and white, like the maiden in the fairy tale, and with glittering golden hair just like my Wawerl’s. The old woman with whom she lived—her aunt or some other relative—had long practised the healing of all sorts of infirmities, and when a young Spanish count, who had come here with the Emperor Charles to the Reichstag in the year ‘31, fell under his horse in leaping a ditch, his limbs were injured so that he could not use them. As he

did not recover under the care of the Knights of St. John, who first nursed him, he went to the herb doctress, and she took charge of him, and cured him, too, although the skill of the most famous doctors and surgeons had failed to help him.

"But, to make amends, Satan, who probably had the largest share in the miracle, visited him with the sorest evil, for 'beautiful Susel,' who was the old woman's assistant, had so bewitched the young count that he not only fell in love with her, but actually desired to make her his wife.

"Then all the noble relatives at home interfered. The Holy Inquisition commanded the investigation of the case, and sent a stern vicar general to direct the proceedings of the Dominicans, who had seized the temptress. Then it came to light that 'beautiful Susel' had bewitched the luckless young count and robbed him of reason by her wicked arts.

"The old woman, whom they had also examined, escaped her just punishment because she died of the plague, which was raging here at that time, but 'beautiful Susel' was burned, and I looked on while it was done.

"When the Dominicans had led her to the stake, she turned toward the people who had flocked here from all quarters. Many doubtless pitied her on account of her marvellous beauty, and because the devil had given her the mask of the most touching kindness of heart; but she gazed directly into my face with her large, blue eyes as I stood close by, and for years I saw the witch's look distinctly before me. Yet what do we not at last forget? And now it must happen that what reminded me of her again is my own innocent child! Wawerl just looked into my eyes as if 'beautiful Susel' had risen from her grave. It was not long, yet it seemed as if she shrank in terror from me, her own clear father. She gazed up at me in helpless despair, as if she feared God and the world.

"I have learned little about shivering, but a chill ran down my spine. Of course, I did not let her notice anything. Poor child! after the honour bestowed yesterday, I thought there would be nothing to-day except laughter and loud singing. But my grandmother used to say that the grief which tortures a young girl—she herself knows not why—is the hardest to bear, and then Barbara must now make up her mind about marriage, for, besides you, there are Peter Schlumperger and young Crafft to be considered.

“I remembered all this, and so, as usual, I took her face between my hands to give her her morning kiss. She always offers me her lips, but to-day she turned away so that my mouth barely brushed her cheeks. ‘Women’s whims!’ I thought, and therefore let it pass. You can imagine how glad I should have been to hear something more about yesterday evening, but I made no objection when she wished to go to the chapel at once, because she had overslept the hour of mass. She would be back again before the porridge was heated. But the little bowl has stood there probably three quarters of an hour, and we are still waiting in vain.”

Here he paused in his voluble flow of speech, and then burst forth angrily: “The devil may understand such a girl’s soul! Usually Wawerl does just the opposite of what one expects; but if she does accept you, she will—as an honest man I ought not to conceal it from you—she will give you many a riddle to guess. Whims and freaks are as plenty with her as buttercups in spring turf; but you can’t find a more pious girl in all Ratisbon. From ancient times the motto of the Blombergs has been ‘Faith, Courage, and Honour,’ and for that very reason it seems to me highly improbable that Wawerl would advise you to accept an office which, after all, will force you to yield to the will of heretical superiors. The high pay alone will hardly win her.”

“It will not?” asked Wolf in astonishment. “It is for her alone, not for myself, that I value the increased income.”

“For her?” repeated the old man, shrugging his shoulders incredulously. “Open your eyes, and you will see what she cares for gold and jewels.”

“The splendid bouquet there—do you suppose that she even looked at it? Bright pinks, red roses, and stately lilies in the centre. Where were they obtained, since April is scarcely past? And yet she threw the costly birthday gift aside as if the flowers were apple parings. It was not she, but I, who afterward put them in the pitcher, for I can’t bear to see any of God’s creatures thirst, even though it is only a flower. Besides, we both know that the fullest purse in the city, and a man worthy of all respect to boot, are attached to the bouquet. Yes, indeed! For a long time she has been unwilling to share my poverty, and if Herr Peter had remained loyal to our holy religion, I would persuade her myself.”

Here, exhausted by his eager speech, he paused with flushed cheeks—for it was a hot day—and raised his long arm to take his hat from the hook, to

refresh his dry palate at the tavern.

But, after a brief pause for reflection, he restored it to its place.

He had remembered that he had not stirred a finger that morning, and had promised to have an inscription on a jug completed early the next day. Besides, the baker had not been paid for four weeks, so, sighing heavily, he dragged himself to the workbench to move the burin with a weary hand.

Wolf had followed him with his eyes, and the sight of the chivalrous hero, the father of the girl whom he loved, undertaking such a wretched occupation, in such a mood, pierced him to the heart.

“Father Blomberg,” he said warmly, putting his hand on his shoulder, “let your graver rest. I am a suitor for your child’s hand. We are old friends, and if from my abundance I offer you——”

Here the hot-blooded old man furiously exclaimed: “Don’t forget to whom you are speaking, young fellow! How important he feels because he gets his living at court! True, there is no abundance here; but I practise this art merely because I choose, and because it cools my hot blood in this lukewarm time of peace. But if on that account,” he added threateningly, while his prominent eyes protruded even farther than usual, “you ever again venture to talk to me as though I were a day labourer or a receiver of alms ____”

Here he hesitated, for in the midst of his outbreak Barbara had noiselessly entered the room. Now she approached him, and, in a more gentle and affectionate tone than she had ever used before, entreated him to rest.

The captain, groaning, shook his head, but Barbara stepped lightly upon the low wooden bench on which he sat, drew his gray head toward her, and tenderly stroked his hair and beard, whispering: “Rise, father, and let somebody else finish the engraving, it is so cool and shady in the green woods where the birds are singing, and only yesterday you praised the refreshing drink at the Red Cock.”

Here he impatiently, yet with a pleased senile, endeavoured to release himself from her arms, but she interrupted his exclamation, “Don’t you know, Miss Thoughtless,” with the whispered entreaty: “Here me out first, father! Maestro Appenzelder asked me to add my voice to the boy choir a few times more, and yesterday evening the treasurer told me that the Queen

of Hungary had commissioned him to give me as many ducats as the boys received pennies."

She spoke the truth; but the old man laughed heartily in his deep tones, cast a quick glance at Wolf, who was looking up at his weapons, and, lowering his voice, cried gaily, "That's what I call a feminine Chrysostomus or golden mouth, and I should think——"

Here he hesitated, for a doubt arose in his chivalrous mind whether it was seemly for a young girl who belonged to a knightly race to accept payment for her singing. But the thought that it came from the hand of royalty, and that even the great Duke of Alba, the renowned Granvelles, and so many princes, counts, and barons received golden wages for their services from the Emperor's hand, put an end to these scruples.

So, in a happier frame of mind than he had experienced for a long time, he said in a low tone, that he might not be understood by their guest: "Greater people than we rejoice in the gifts which emperors and kings bestow, and—we can use them, can't we?"

Then he rubbed his hands, laughed as if he had outwitted the people of whom he was thinking, and whispered to his daughter: "The baker will wonder when he gets paid this time in glittering gold, and the butcher and Master Reinhard! My boots still creak softly when I step, and you know what that means. The soles of your little shoes probably only sing, but they, too, are not silent."

The old man, released from a heavy burden of care, laughed merrily again at this jest, and then, raising his voice, told his daughter and Wolf that he would first get a cool drink and then go outside the gate wherever his lame foot might carry him. Would not the young nobleman accompany him?

But Wolf preferred to stay with Barbara, that he might plead his cause in person. There was something so quiet and diffident in her manner. If she would not listen to him to-day, she never would. In saying farewell, the captain remarked that he would not meddle in the affair of the Council. Wawerl alone must decide that.

"When I return home," he concluded, "you will have come to an agreement, and, whatever the determination may be, I shall be satisfied. Perhaps some bright idea may come to me, too, over the wine. I'll go to the Black Bear, where I always meet fellow-soldiers."

Then he raised his hand with a gay farewell salute, and left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

As soon as the captain's limping steps died away on the stairs, Wolf summoned all his courage and moved nearer to Barbara.

His heart throbbed anxiously as he told himself that the next few minutes would decide his future destiny.

As he saw her before him, fairer than ever, with downcast eyes, silent and timid, without a trace of the triumphant self-assurance which she had gained during his absence, he firmly believed that he had made the right choice, and that her consent would render him the most enviable of happy mortals. If she refused him her hand—he felt this no less plainly—his life would be forever robbed of light and joy.

True, he was no longer as blithe and full of hope as when he entered her plain lodgings a short time before.

The doubt of the worthy man, behind whom the house door had just closed, had awakened his doubts also. Yet what he now had it in his power to offer, since his conversation with the syndic, was by no means trivial. He must hold fast to it, and as he raised his eyes more freely to her his courage increased, for she was still gazing at the floor in silent submission, as if ready to commit her fate into his hands; nay, in the brief seconds during which his eyes rested upon her, he perceived an expression which seemed wholly alien to her features, and bestowed upon this usually alert, self-assured, vivacious creature an air of weary helplessness.

While he was generally obliged to maintain an attitude of defence toward her, she now seemed to need friendly consolation. So, obeying a hasty impulse, he warmly extended both hands, and in a gentle, sympathizing tone exclaimed, "Wawerl, my dear girl, what troubles you?"

Then her glance met his, and her blue eyes flashed upon him with an expression of defiant resistance; but he could not help thinking of the young witch who was said to have resembled her, and a presentiment told him that she was lost to him.

The confirmation of this foreboding was not delayed, for in a tone whose repellent sternness startled him, she angrily burst forth: "What should

trouble me? It as ill becomes you to question me with such looks and queries as it pleases me." Wolf, in bewilderment, assured her that she had seemed to him especially charming in her gracious gentleness. If anything had happened to cloud her fearless joyousness, let her forget it, for the matter now to be considered concerned the happiness of two human lives.

That was what she was saying to herself, Barbara replied in a more friendly tone, and, with newly awakened hope, the young knight informed her that the time had now come when, without offending against modesty, he might call himself a "made man."

With increasing eagerness and confidence he then told her what the councillor had offered. Without concealing her father's scruples, he added the assurance that he felt perfectly secure against the temptations of which there would certainly be no lack while he was in the service of a Protestant magistracy.

"And when you, devout, pure, true girl, stand by my side," he concluded with an ardour which surprised Barbara in this quiet, reserved man, "when you are once mine, my one love, then I shall conquer the hardest obstacle as if it were mere pastime, then I would not change places with the Emperor, for then my happiness would be——"

Hitherto she had silently permitted him to speak, but now her cheeks suddenly flamed with a deep flush, and she warmly interrupted: "You deserve to be happy, Wolf, and I could desire nothing more ardently than to see you glad and content; but you would never become so through me. How pale you grow! For my sake, do not take it so much to heart; it grieves me to see you suffer. Only believe that. It cuts me to the heart to inflict such great sorrow upon one so loyal, good, and dear, who values me so much more than I deserve."

Here Wolf, deeply agitated, wildly called her name, and besought her not to cast aside so harshly the wealth of love and fidelity which he offered.

His own anguish of soul, and the pain inflicted by the cruel blow which crushed his dearest hopes, robbed him of fortitude and calmness. With tears in his eyes, he threw himself on his knees before her and gazed into her face with anxious entreaty, exclaiming brokenly: "Do not—do not inflict this suffering upon me, Wawerl! Rob me of everything except hope. Defer your acceptance until I can offer you a still fairer future, only be merciful and leave me hope!"

Tears now began to glitter in Barbara's eyes also, and Wolf, noticing it, hastened with reviving courage to assure her how little it would cost him to reject, once for all, to please her, the tempting position offered to him here. He could soon obtain a good office elsewhere, since their Majesties were not only favourably disposed toward him, but now toward her also. True, to him even the most brilliant external gifts of life would be valueless and charmless without her love.

But here Barbara imperatively commanded him to rise, and not make his own heart and hers still heavier without avail.

Wolf pressed his hands upon his temples as violently as if he feared losing his senses; but the young girl voluntarily put her arm around his shoulders, and said with sincere emotion: "Poor Wolf! I know how thoroughly in earnest you are, but I dare not even leave you hope—I neither can nor ought. Yet you may hear this: From my childhood you have been dearer to me than any one else, and never shall I forget how firmly you cling to me, how hard it is for you to give me up."

Then Sir Wolf vehemently asked to know what stood between them; and Barbara, after a brief pause for reflection, answered, "Love for another."

The confession pierced him like a dagger thrust, and he passionately entreated her to tell him the name of the man who had defrauded him of the happiness to which he possessed an older and better right than any one else.

He paced the room with long strides as he spoke, gazing around him as if he imagined that she had his rival concealed somewhere.

In doing so his glance fell upon Herr Schlumperger's bouquet, and he wildly cried: "He? So, after all, wealth——"

But this was too much for Barbara, and she stopped him with the exclamation: "Fool that you are! As if You did not know that I am not to be bought for the paltry florins of a Ratisbon moneybag!"

But the next instant she had repented her outbreak, and in words so loving and gentle, so tender and considerate that his heart melted and he would fain have flung himself again at her feet, she explained to him more particularly why she was obliged to inflict this suffering upon him.

Her heart was no longer free, and precisely because he was worthy of the whole affection of a loyal heart she would not repay him in worthless metal for the pure gold of his love. She was no prophetess, yet she knew full well

that some day he would bless this hour. What she concealed from every one, even her father, as an inviolable secret, she had confessed to him because he deserved her confidence.

Then she began to speak of Dr. Hiltner's offer, and discussed its pros and cons with interest as warm as if her own fate was to be associated with his.

The result was that she dissuaded him from settling in Ratisbon. She expected higher achievements from him than he could attain here among the Protestants, who, on account of his faith, would place many a stumbling-block in his way.

Then, changing her businesslike tone, she went on with greater warmth to urge him, for her sake, and that he might be the same to her as ever, to remain loyal to the religion they both professed. She could not fulfil his hopes, it is true, but her thoughts would often dwell with him and her wishes would follow him everywhere. His place was at court, where some day he would win a distinguished position, and nothing could render her happier than the news that he had attained the highest honour, esteem, and fame.

How gentle and kind all this sounded! Wolf had not imagined that she could be so thoughtful, so forgetful of self, and so affectionate in her sympathy. He hung upon her lips in silent admiration, yet it was impossible for him to determine whether this sisterly affection from Barbara was pouring balm or acrid lye upon his wounds.

Positively as she had refused to answer his question concerning the happy mortal whom she preferred to him, Wolf could not help secretly searching for him.

Agitated and tortured to the verge of despair, even the friendliness with which she was trying to sweeten his cruel fate became unbearable, and while she was entreating him to continue to care for her and to remain on the same terms of intimacy with her father and herself, he suddenly seized her hand, covered it with ardent kisses, and then, without a farewell word, hastily left the room.

When Barbara was alone she retired into the bow-window and fell into a silent reverie, during which she often shook her head, as if amazed at herself, and often curled her full lips in a haughty smile.

The maid-servant brought in the modest meal.

Her father had forgotten it, but he would undoubtedly find more substantial viands at the Black Bear. Barbara was speedily satisfied. How poorly the food was cooked, how unappetizing was the serving! When the maid had removed the dishes, Barbara continued her reverie, and even her father had never gazed into vacancy with such gloomy earnestness.

What would she now have given for a mother, a reliable, faithful confidante! But she had none; and Wolf, on whose unselfish love she could depend, was the last person whom she could initiate into her secret.

Her father!

If she had confided to him the matter which so deeply troubled her and yet filled her with the greatest pride, the poor old warrior, who valued honour far more than life, would have turned her out of the house.

Early that morning she had averted her lips from his because she felt as if the Emperor's kiss had consecrated them. She was still under the mastery of the feeling that some disagreeable dream had borne her back to these miserable rooms, while her true place was in the magnificent apartments of royalty.

She had slept too late to attend mass, and therefore went to the private chapel, the abode of the only confidante to whom she could open her whole heart without reserve or timidity—the Mother of God.

She had done this with entire devotion, and endeavoured to reflect upon what had happened and what obligations she must meet. But she had had little success, for as soon as she began to think, her august lover rose before her eyes, she imagined that she heard his tender words, and her mind wandered to the future.

Only she had clearly perceived that she had lost something infinitely great, and obtained in its place something that was far more exquisite, that she had been deemed worthy of a loftier honour, a richer happiness than any one else.

Ah, yes, she was happy, more than happy, and yet not entirely so, for happiness must be bright, and a dark, harassing shadow fell again and again over the sunny enthusiasm which irradiated her nature and lent her a haughtier bearing.

She ascribed it to the novelty of her elevation to a height of which she had never dreamed. Eyes accustomed to twilight must also endure pain, she

told herself, ere they became used to the brilliance of the sun.

Perhaps Heaven, in return for such superabundant gifts, demanded a sacrifice, and denied complete enjoyment. She would gladly do all in her power to satisfy the claim, and so she formed the resolve—which seemed to her to possess an atoning power—no longer to deceive the worthy man who loved her so loyally, and for whom she felt an affection. At the very next opportunity Wolf should learn that she could never become his, and when she had just confessed it so gently and lovingly, she had only fulfilled the vow made in the chapel before the Virgin's image. There, too, she had determined, if the Emperor ever gave her any power over his decisions, to reward Wolf's loyal love by interceding for him wherever it could be done.

Now he had left her; but she could wait for her father no longer. She must go to Fran Lerch.

The idea of confiding to her the secret which filled her with happy dread was far from her thoughts; but love had both increased her vanity tenfold, and confined it within narrower limits. She could not be beautiful enough for the lover who awaited her, yet she wished to be beautiful for him alone. But her stock of gowns and finery was so very scanty, and no one understood how to set off her charms so well as the obliging, experienced old woman, who had an expedient for every emergency.

Retiring to her little bow-windowed room, she examined her store of clothes.

There, too, lay her royal lover's gift, the glittering star.

She involuntarily seized it to take the jewel to the Grieb and show it to the old woman; but the next instant, with a strange feeling of dissatisfaction, she flung it back again among the other contents of the chest.

Thus, in her impetuous fashion, she thrust it out of her sight. Maestro Gombert had pronounced the star extremely valuable, and she desired nothing from the Emperor Charles, nothing from her beloved lord save his love.

She had already reached the outer door, when her two Woller cousins from the Ark greeted her. They were merry girls, by no means plain, and very fond of her. The younger, Anne Mirl, was even considered pretty, and had many suitors. They had learned from their house steward, who had been

told by a fellow-countryman in the royal service, that his Majesty had rewarded Barbara for her exquisite singing with a magnificent ornament, and they wanted to see it.

So Barbara was obliged to open the chest again, and when the star flashed upon them the rich girls clapped their hands in admiration, and Anne Mirl did not understand how any one could toss such an exquisite memento into a chest as if it were a worn-out glove. If the Emperor Charles had honoured her with such a gift, she would never remove it from her neck, but even wear it to bed.

"Everybody to her taste," replied Barbara curtly, shrugging her shoulders.

Never had her cousins seemed to her so insignificant and commonplace; and, besides, their visit was extremely inopportune.

But the Woller sisters were accustomed to see her in all sorts of moods, and Nandl, the elder, a quiet, thoughtful girl, asked her how she felt. To possess such heavenly gifts as her voice and her beauty must be the most glorious of all glorious things.

"And the honour, the honour!" cried Anne Mirl. "Do you know, Wawerl, one might almost want to poison you from sheer envy and jealousy. Holy Virgin! To be in your place when you sing to the Emperor Charles again! And to talk with him as you would to anybody else!"

Barbara assured them that she would tell the whole story at their next meeting, but she had no time to spare now, for she was expected at the rehearsal.

The sisters then bade her good-bye, but asked to see the star again, and Anne Mirl counted the jewels, to be able to describe it to her mother exactly.

At last Barbara was free, but before, still vexed by the detention, she could set out for Fran Lerch's, she heard loud voices upon the stairs. It startled her, for if the Emperor sent Don Luis Quijada, or even Baron Malfalconnet, to her wretched lodgings, it would now be even more unpleasant than before.

Barbara was obliged to wait some time in vain. Her cousins had been stopped below, and were talking there with her father and another man. At last the captain came stumping up the stairs with his limping steps. Barbara

noticed that he was hurrying, and he reached the top more quickly than usual and opened the door.

He looked merry, and his massive but well-formed and manly features were flushed. He came from Erbach in the Black Bear, it is true, but in so short a time—his daughter knew that—the spirits of the wine could have done him no harm. Besides, his voice sounded as deep and firm as usual as he called to her from the threshold: "A guest, Wawerl, a distinguished guest! A splendid fellow! You've already spoken of him, and I made his acquaintance in the Bear. I learned many and many a piece of news from him about how things are going in the world-news, I tell you, girl! My heart is fairly dancing in my body. And, besides, a little puss like you is always glad to hear of an admirer, and only a short time ago you praised him loudly enough as a splendid dancer. A downright good fellow, child, just as I was myself at his age. An uncle of his, a captain of arquebusiers, Pyramus Kogel."

Hitherto Barbara, with increasing displeasure, had only suspected whom her father meant; but when he now mentioned his new friend's name, the indignant blood crimsoned her cheeks.

She had liked the handsome officer, for it was true that few men so well understood the art of guiding a partner through the dance; she, fool that she was, had made eyes at him in order not to let pretty Elspet Zohrer have the precedence. But he had himself confessed how much farther he had entered the snare than she intended when, on her way home from Fran Lerch's after her meeting with Wolf, the young officer had met her outside of the Grieb and sued for her hand.

Now the amorous swain had probably tried his luck with her father, and how the latter, in spite of poor Wolf and Herr Schlumperger, had treated him was evident from the fact that he, who usually closed his home against old friends, opened it wide to this stranger.

This was not only unpleasant to Barbara, but anger crimsoned her cheeks.

How dared the man whom she had so positively and sternly refused venture to continue his suit? Since the Emperor had loved her, she felt raised infinitely above the poor nobleman. Nay, she considered it a reprehensible impropriety that he still sought her. And, besides what consequences the visit of so stately a ladykiller, whose unusual height rendered him easily recognised, might now entail upon her! Suppose that he

should meet a messenger from the Emperor on the stairs, or it should be rumoured at court that she received such visitors. How quickly whatever happened in Ratisbon was noised abroad among the people she had just learned through the Woller girls.

The happiness which filled her was so great that everything which threatened to affect it, even remotely, alarmed her, and thus anxiety blended with indignation as, deeply agitated, she interrupted her father, and in the most unfilial manner reproached him for allowing the flattery of a boastful coxcomb to make him forget what he owned to her and her good name.

The brave champion of the faith dejectedly, almost humbly, strove to soothe her, and at least induce her not to offend his guest by unfriendly words; but she ignored his warnings with defiant passion, and when the recruiting officer, who had been detained some time on the staircase by the Wollers, knocked at the door, she shot the bolt noisily, calling to her father in a tone so loud that it could not fail to be heard outside: “I repeat it, I will neither see nor speak to this importunate gentleman. When he attacked me in the street at night, I thought I showed him plainly enough how I felt. If he forces his way into our house now, receive him, for aught I care; you have a right to command here. But if he undertakes to speak to me, he can wait for an answer till the day of judgment!”

Then she hastily slipped the bolt back again, darted past Pyramus Kogel, who did not know what had befallen him, without vouchsafing him a single glance, and then, with haughty composure, descended the stairs.

The officer, incapable of uttering a word, gazed after her.

The feeling that attracted him to Barbara was something entirely new, which since the last dance at the New Scales had robbed him of sleep by night and rest by day. He had fallen under her spell, body and soul, and he, whose business took him from city to city, from country to country, had resolved, ere he accosted Barbara in the street, to give up the free, gay life which he enjoyed with the eager zest of youth, and seek her hand in marriage.

Her first rebuff had by no means discouraged him; nay, the handsome, spoiled soldier was firmly convinced that her ungracious treatment was not due to his proposal, but to its certainly ill-chosen place. A wife of such rigid austerity would suit him, for he would often be compelled to leave her a long time alone.

When he heard the day before that he would find her among Peter Schlumperger's guests in Prufening, he had joined them, as if by accident, toward evening, and Barbara had danced with him twice.

In the schwabeln she had trusted herself to his guidance even longer than usual, and with what perfect time, with what passionate enjoyment she had whirled around with him under the sway of the intense excitement which had mastered her! He imagined that he felt her heart throb against his own breast, and had surrendered himself to the hope that it was newly awakened love for him which had deprived her of her calm bearing.

True, she had refused his company on the way home, but this was probably because she was afraid of being gossipped about in connection with him.

Well satisfied with his success, he had gone to Red Cock Street the next morning to renew his suit. On the way he met her father, and in the Black Bear had tried on the old warrior, with excellent success, the art of winning other men, in which, as a recruiting officer, he had become an adept.

Joyously confident of victory, he had accepted Blomberg's invitation, and now had experienced an unprecedentedly mortifying rebuff.

With a face blanched to the pallor of death, he stood before the old man. The wound which he had received burned so fiercely, and paralyzed his will so completely, that the clumsy graybeard found fitting words sooner than the ready, voluble trapper of men.

"You see," the captain began, "what is to be expected from one's own child in these days of insubordination and rebellion, though my Wawerl is as firm in her faith as the tower at Tunis of which I was telling you. But trust experience, Sir Pyramus! It is easier, far easier for you to exact obedience from a refractory squad of recruits than for a father to guide his little daughter according to his own will. For look! If it gets beyond endurance, you can seize the lash, or, if that won't do, a weapon; but where a fragile girl like that is concerned, we can't give vent to our rage, and, though she spoils the flavour of our food and drink by her pouting and fretting, we must say kind words to her into the bargain. Mine at least spares me the weeping and wailing in which many indulge, but it is easier to break iron than her obstinacy when her will differs from that of the person whom, on account of the fourth commandment, she——"

Pyramus Kogel, with both hands resting on the large basket handle of his long rapier, had listened to him in silence; now he interrupted the captain with the exclamation: “Iron against iron, comrade! Throw it into the fire, and swing the hammer. It will bend then. All that is needed is the right man, and I know him. If I did not feel very sorry for such a charming creature, I would laugh at the insult and go my way. But, as it is, I have a good memory, and it will be a pleasure, methinks, to keep so unruly a beauty and artistic nightingale in mind. It shall be done until my turn comes. In my pursuit I do not always succeed at the first attempt, but whoever I once fix my eyes upon comes on the roll at last, and I will keep the foremost place open for your lovely, refractory daughter. We shall meet again, Captain, and I haven’t said my last word to your ungracious daughter either.”

He held out his hand to Blomberg as he spoke, and after a brief delay the latter clasped it.

The fearless foe of the Turks was troubled by the recruiting officer’s mysterious menaces, but his kind heart forbade him to add a new offence to the bitter mortification inflicted upon this man by his daughter. Besides, he had taken a special fancy to the stately, vigorous soldier, whose height and breadth of shoulder were little inferior to his own, and while descending the stairs he thought, “It would serve Wawerl right if yonder fellow put a stop to her obstinacy, pranks, and caprices.”

But he quickly silenced the wish, for Barbara did not often give the rein to her self-will so freely, and her objectionable traits of character had been inherited from her mother. She was a good girl at heart, and how much pleasure and favour her beautiful gift brought, how much honour came to him and his ancient name through this rare child! Yet at that time he was not aware of the new benefit he was to owe to her within the next hour.

Before Barbara had returned home the treasurer of the imperial and royal musicians came to his house and, in the regent’s name, handed him the gold of which Barbara had spoken for services rendered in the boy choir of her Majesty Queen Mary. He was obliged to sign the receipt in his daughter’s name, and when the portly Netherlander, who could also make himself understood in German, asked where a sup of good wine or beer could be had in Ratisbon, he was ready to act as his guide.

Thanks to his daughter’s rich gifts, he need not wield the graver any longer that day, and for the second time could grant himself a special treat.

When he returned home he learned from the one-eyed maid that Barbara had been summoned by the Queen of Hungary to sing for her.

Weary as he was, he went to rest, and soon after the young girl entered his room to bid him “good night.”

The Queen had been very gracious, and after the singing was over had inquired about hundreds of things—who had been her singing master, what her religion was, whether her mother was still living, what calling her father followed, whether he, too, had drawn the sword against the Turks, her husband’s murderers, whether she was accustomed to riding, and, lastly, whether she was obliged to endure the narrow city streets in the summer.

Barbara had then been able to answer that the Wollers sometimes invited her to their country seat at Abbach, and intentionally added that they were her nearest relatives, and owned the Ark, the large, handsome family mansion which stood exactly opposite to the Golden Cross and her Majesty’s windows. She had also often been the guest of her uncle Wolfgang Lorberer, who stood at the head of the community at Landshut.

It had gratified her to boast of these distinguished blood relations.

She had then been asked whether she could consent to leave her father for a time to go into the country with the old Marquise de Leria, whom she knew, and who was charmed with the beauty of her singing.

The leech desired to remove the invalid lady in waiting from the city air, and she had chosen Barbara for a companion.

Here the young girl hesitated, and then carelessly asked her father what he thought of the plan.

As Blomberg knew the name of Leria to be one of the most aristocratic in the empire, and many things were beckoning to him in the future in which Barbara’s presence would only have been a hindrance, he left the decision to her.

He had made the acquaintance at the Black Bear, through Pyramus Kogel, of various soldiers who had fought in the same ranks—good Catholics, eager for a fray, who were waiting here for the outbreak of the war against the Smalkalds. What delightful hours their companionship would bestow if Barbara was provided for at present, now that he himself was no longer obliged to save every shilling so carefully!

But he had also thought of something else which was far more important, for the warlike conversation had affected him as the blast of a trumpet stirs the battle charger drawing a plough.

He had found complete enjoyment of life only in war, in the presence of death, in cutting and slashing, and he felt by no means too old to keep his seat in the saddle and lead his company of horsemen to the assault. He was not mistaken there, and, besides not only the recruiting officer, but also the scarred old captain whom they called little Gorgl, asserted that the Emperor would welcome every brave, tried soldier, even though older than he, as soon as war was declared.

Meanwhile Pyramus Kogel was constantly in his mind, and at last he thought it his duty to speak to Barbara about her unseemly treatment of this estimable man.

He had intended ever since she entered to call her to account for it, but, though he did not admit it even to himself, the old soldier dreaded his daughter's firm power of resistance.

Yet he could not keep silence this time; her behaviour had transgressed the bounds of propriety too far.

So he summoned up his courage, and, with a "What I was going to say," began to speak of the admirable officer whom he had brought into his house.

Then, clearing his throat, he drew himself up, and, raising his voice, asked how she dared to assail this gallant nobleman with such abominable, arrogant, and insulting words.

But he was to wait an answer in vain, for, with the brief declaration that she had not come to be lectured like a schoolgirl, Barbara banged the door behind her. Directly after, however, she opened it again, and with a pleasant, "No offence, father," wished the old gentleman a no less pleasant goodnight.

Then she went to her room, but in old Ursel's chamber, at the same hour as on the preceding night, a similar conversation took place.

The one-eyed maid spoke of the rats which had forced their way into the house, and the sick woman repeated impatiently, "The rats!" and, with prudent reserve, silently kept her thoughts to herself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Queen of Hungary had returned home the evening before, and on the following morning summoned Barbara to the Golden Cross to sing with the boy choir.

When the major-domo, Quijada, obedient to her command, entered the room at eleven o'clock, she called to him: "Miracles, Luis, mighty miracles in these godless times! I have just come from his Majesty, and in what did I find him occupied? Turning over music with Maestro Gombert—of course, for a female voice. Besides, he looked as if he had just defeated the Turks and Frenchmen at once. As for the gout, he'll be dancing the 'hoppedei' with the peasants presently."

"Day before yesterday he surprised us by wearing satin shoes," remarked Quijada. "May I congratulate you on the really magical effect of your Majesty's prescription?"

"Continue to think so, if it suits you," cried the Queen gaily. "Only a few powerful drops from elsewhere have probably fallen into the potion. But how stupidly artless you can look when you feign ignorance, Luis! In this case, however, you need not let your breathing be oppressed by the mask. I bow to your masculine secrecy—but why did my worldly-wise brother mingle a petticoat in this delicate business if he wishes to keep it hidden?"

"The Marquise Leria!" cried the major-domo, shrugging his shoulders angrily, as if against an inevitable misfortune.

"My senior lady in waiting," said the regent in assent to this conjecture. "Make haste to bestow a stately candle, because it is she, and no one else. You might spare yourself that smile; I know her better than you do. If she had as many teeth as she possesses vices, she might be happy; yet one admirable quality mingles with the evil traits in her character."

"And that?" asked Quijada, as if he deemed a satisfactory answer impossible.

"Secrecy," replied the Queen firmly. "She keeps what she has overheard to herself as closely as a miser guards his gold."

“In order to turn it to account when the favourable moment comes,” remarked the major-domo. “Your Majesty will also permit me to observe that if the marquise has already betrayed what was intended to remain secret——”

“Her boasted reticence can not be very great, you think,” interrupted the Queen. “But justice for all, my handsome lord. At present she is in any service, and no other. Whose bread I eat, his song I sing—which in this case means: His secret I keep, and to him I carry whatever I discover. Besides, this time even the person betrayed owes her a debt of gratitude, for you know how difficult it is for him to use his limbs, and she is most obligingly smoothing the path for him. I tell you, Luis, with all due respect for his Majesty as a general and a statesman, in a skirmish of intrigue this woman will outwit you all. The schemes her aged brain invents have neither fault nor flaw. The wheels work upon one another as they do in the Emperor’s best Nuremberg clock. I want to watch their turning before I go, for, be it known to you, early tomorrow morning—the saints be praised!—I start for Brussels.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Quijada with an expression of sincere regret; but the Queen gravely said: “There can be no further delay, Luis. It may sound improbable that there is something which draws me back to the Netherlands more strongly than the desire for freedom of movement, a pleasant ride through the forest, and the excitement of the chase, which lends spice to the insipidity of my life, yet you may believe it.”

“Business matters?” asked the nobleman anxiously.

The Queen nodded assent, and then eagerly continued: “And important ones which his Majesty himself solemnly enjoined upon me to hasten my departure. His zeal resembled a rude gesture toward the door, as much as one rotten egg looks like another, for, under certain circumstances, the affectionate brother prefers to have his beloved sister as far away as possible. Had I been of a more obstinate nature, I would stay; but there really are matters to be settled in the Netherlands which can not be deferred, and the manner of his farewell showed plainly enough that he no longer needed me. Merciful Heaven! When we parted yesterday, I dreaded his Majesty’s anger. I had left him in the lurch to gratify my own love for copse and forest. I had remained beyond the allotted time, and had resolved, bend or break, to return to my post in Brussels. When I rode in here I really felt

as though I was entering the lion's den. But then came miracle after miracle. Do you know something, Luis? The best results have often followed my most reckless acts."

"Probably because even your Majesty's least prudent deeds merit a modest reward," replied Quijada, "and because, besides the heavenly powers, there are also less estimable ones that meddle with the affairs of this world."

"Perhaps so!" exclaimed the Queen, astonished at this idea. "Perhaps the Prince of Darkness finds pleasure in this affair, and, as a fair-minded devil, is grateful to me. One thing is certain: What a woman of my age could not tell her daughter or—if she has none—her young niece, she should not meddle with. All this is by no means pleasing to me, and yet, Luis, yet We ought to rejoice in this love affair, not only for ourselves, but for his Majesty. De Soto, too, I know, is satisfied; nay, it seems as if he saw a special act of divine favour in this late blazing of the flames of love in a heart whose fires had apparently burned out."

"Wherever this passion originates," observed Quijada, "it seems to have had a good influence upon his Majesty's mood. It is said that Satan often designs evil and yet works good, and if this late and very tender emotion is a gift of hell, it nevertheless affords our sovereign lord unexpected and therefore all the more exquisite joys."

"In whose behalf it may also be said that they are numbered among those which can hardly be approved, or even forbidden ones," the regent eagerly interrupted. "But no matter! Happy is he whose pathway at the beginning of life's evening is once more so brilliantly illumined by the sun of love. In my devotion to the duties of government and the chase, I have not yet wholly forgotten enthusiasm. Whoever has once been really young retains this advantage, and I have, Luis. Therefore I could envy my beloved brother to-day no less sincerely than I pitied him yesterday. Joy is the best thing in life, and who bestows it more certainly and lavishly than the little winged god? It is fortunate for my Charles that he is again permitted to quaff the beaker of happiness! Only too soon—I know it—he will again withdraw it from his lips with his own hand, if it were only because the inclination to self-torture which he inherits, the ascetic instinct, that constantly increases in strength, destroys and stamps as sinful forgetfulness of duty every pleasure which he enjoys for any length of time. We will hope that he will not retain this new

happiness too briefly. It would be of service to us all. What he might possibly have granted me after long hesitation and consideration, and with many a delay, he yielded after mass this morning with smiling lips. Love expands the heart, and at the same time enlarges the views, especially if it is not an unfortunate one; but this Barbara Blomberg is a genuine daughter of Eve, over whom the mother of nations, if she met her by chance, would rejoice. A German Venus, whom I would gladly send to Titian for a model. And her voice and the unexpected good fortune of finding such a teacher here! Appenzelder and Gombert are full of her praises. Good heavens! How she sang yesterday evening! It was enough to stir the dead. Afterward I drew her aside for a short time."

"And your Majesty did her the honour to feel her teeth?"—[A German phrase meaning to sound a person's intentions.—TR.]—queried Quijada.

"Feel her teeth?" replied the Queen. "It might have been worth while, for those that glitter between her rosy lips are white and beautifully formed. But I did even more—I tested the girl's heart and mind."

"And the result?"

"H'm!" said the Queen. "Very favourable. Yet no. If I must be honest, that is saying too little. She stood it very, surprisingly well. Her intellect is anything but limited; nay, her comprehension is so swift that she can be sure of not trying his Majesty's patience unduly. Her manners, too, are not amiss for a German; but what is the main point—she is pious, firm in the faith, and ardent in her hatred of the foes of the Holy Church. My life upon it! all this is as genuine as the diamond in my ring, and so the white raven is complete. That she has returned the Emperor Charles love for love by no means sullies her plumage. In my eyes, it only shines the more brightly, since one so great as he permits her, though only for a short distance, to share his glorious flight. This Barbara is certainly a rare bird. But in the chase, and as regent of a restless nation, one's sight becomes keen—"

"And now," cried Quijada, "comes the 'but.'"

"It does come," replied the regent firmly, "and I will point it out to you. I only found the trail; but you, Luis, as a good sportsman and a loyal friend of his Majesty, will keep a sharp watch upon it. This girl is obstinate to the verge of defiance, vain, and unusually ambitious."

"She has already shown us the obstinacy," observed the Castilian.

“When she wheeled her horse to escape you?” asked the Queen.

“But there she was perfectly right. What a heedless, inconsiderate masculine idea, to usher a woman directly from a horseback ride into a company of gentlemen to sing before the Emperor! As to the vanity, I do not find much fault with that. It would be far worse if she lacked it. One can not imagine a genuine woman without it. It has been called pride in charms which we do not possess, but it also serves to place actual charms in a brighter light, and that I expect from this fair one. If she knows how to avoid extravagance, it will willingly be indulged. But her ambition, Luis; perils may arise from that. If it begins to stir too covetously, remember your duty as watcher—sound the horn and set the packs upon her.”

“For the sake of our sovereign lord, I will not fail,” replied Quijada. “So far as she herself is concerned, she is one of those women whose beauty I acknowledge, but to whom I am indifferent. More modest manners please me better.”

“You are thinking of Dona Magdalena de Ulloa,” observed the Queen, “you poor loyal widower, while the loveliest of wives still lives. Certainly this German bears so little resemblance to her——”

“That I most humbly entreat your Majesty,” interposed Quijada with haughty decision, “not to compare these two women, even by way of contrast.”

“B-r-r!” said the regent, extending her hands toward him as if to repel an assault. “Yet I like you in this mood, Luis. You are a true Castilian! So we will leave Dona Magdalena in her Villagarcia, and only permit myself to admire the self-sacrifice of a woman who grants a husband like you so long a leave of absence. As to the Ratisbon maiden——”

“I should be very glad to know,” Quijada began, this time in a submissive tone, “by what sign your Majesty’s penetration discovered this young creature’s ambition.”

“That is soon told,” replied the regent kindly. “She specially mentioned her distinguished relatives in the city and in Landshut, and when I advised her to show due respect to the marquise, who, in spite of everything, is a woman of high rank and certainly an old lady, before whose gray hairs Scripture commands us to rise, something hovered around her lips—they are ripe for kisses—something which it is not easy to find exactly the right words to describe: a blending of repugnance, self-assertion, and resistance.

She suffered it to remain on her beautiful face only a few minutes, but it gave me reason enough to urge you to sound a warning if his Majesty's late love should render him more yielding than is desirable."

"The warned man will heed what prescient wisdom enjoins upon him," the major-domo protested, with his hand upon his heart. "But if I know his Majesty, his strong and well-warranted sense of imperial dignity will render my attentive solicitude needless. The moment that the singer assails it will put a speedy end to my royal master's love."

The Queen shook her head, and answered doubtfully: "If only you do not undervalue the blind boy-god's power! Yet it must be owned that your theory has a certain degree of justification." She went to the window as she spoke, and added: "Karlowitz, the minister of Duke Maurice of Saxony, is leaving the house. He looks pleased, and if he has come to an agreement with the Bishop of Arras, that will also help to put the Emperor in a pleasant mood—"

"And all of us!" exclaimed Quijada, grasping his sword hilt. "If this energetic young prince, with his military ability and his army, joins us, why, then——"

"Then there will be war," interrupted the Queen, completing the sentence; "then there will be great joy among you younger, belligerent Castilians! What do you care for the tears of mothers and the blood of husbands and sons? Both will flow in streams, and, even if we were certain of victory—which we are not—what will the gain be?"

"Triumph, the restored unity of Holy Church!" cried Quijada enthusiastically.

"For which I daily pray," said the regent. "But even if you succeeded in gaining a complete victory, if every church in city and country again belonged to the only faith by which we can obtain salvation, I shall still see them deprived of their holy vocation, for they will stand empty, because then the men who would rather die than abjure their delusion will be lying silent upon battlefields."

"May they rot there!" cried the Spaniard. "But we are not fighting only for to-day and tomorrow. New generations will again fill churches and chapels. We will shed the last drops of our blood to accomplish it, and every true Castilian thinks as I do."

“I know it,” sighed the regent, “and it is not my business to preach to deaf ears. But one thing more: Do you know that his Majesty has just accepted the Marquise de Leria’s offer?”

“No; but I should be greatly indebted to your royal——”

“Then listen,” the Queen hastily interrupted. “In the suburb of Prebrunn, in a large garden, stands the pretty little castle of the Prince Prior of Berchtesgaden—I don’t mean the one belonging to the worthy Trainer, on whose preserves we hunted once in April, and which is erroneously called here the ‘cassl.’ The reverend owner offered it to his Majesty to shelter a guest of high rank. Now the marquise is to occupy it, because country air would benefit her. The singer will establish herself under the noblewoman’s maternal care. You know the Marquise de Leria’s huge litter, which was borne here by two strong mules that Ruy Gomez—what will not people do to find out something?—gave her. The black ark, with the coats-of-arms of the De Lerias and the Duke of Rency on the back, the front, and both sides, is probably well known here. At first the boys ran after the monster; now they are used to the thing, and no longer notice it. But it is comfortable, and it can be opened. When the old woman uses the litter the cover will be removed and people will see her; when it is closed, the most sharp-sighted can not discover who is within. If his Majesty desires to go out to Prebrunn and return here, he will take it, and, even if his foot pains him, will reach his fair goal unseen. The young girl consented yesterday to move there with the marquise, and directly after it will be your duty, aided by Master Adrian, to attend to the furnishing of the little castle. I will aid you. You will hear the particulars from his Majesty. The marquise will take Barbara directly to the chapel, where the choir is to sing. People must become accustomed to see and speak of the two together. What would you think of an alliance between Leria and Blomberg? If I see correctly, the old woman will train the girl to be a useful tool.”

“And if the tool cuts her fingers in the process,” said Quijada, “I shall be glad.”

“So shall I!” assented the Queen, laughing. Then she dismissed the major-domo, and a short time later singing was heard in the chapel.

The Emperor, after he had finished his meal, heard it also, and listened to Barbara as if enraptured when, in Hobrecht’s motet for five voices, Salve crux arbor vitae, in the sublime O crux lignum triumphale, she raised her

voice with a power, a wealth of pious devotion which he had never before heard in the execution of this forceful composition.

The little Maltese Hannibal again acquitted himself admirably, and in one of the duets in the second part Johannes of Cologne could prove that he had recovered.

His young companion in illness had also escaped lasting injury.

Appenzelder, too, showed himself fully satisfied with Barbara's execution. Something new and powerful, rising from the inmost depth of the soul, a passion of devout exaltation, rang in her voice which he had not perceived during the first rehearsals. Her art seemed to him to grow under his eyes like a wonderful plant, and the quiet, reserved man expressed his delight so unequivocally that the Emperor beckoned to him and asked his opinion of the singer's performance.

The musician expressed with unreserved warmth the emotions that filled his honest heart; but the monarch listened approvingly, and drew from his finger a costly ring to bestow it upon the discoverer of this glorious jewel.

The leader of the choir, it is true, declined this title of honour to award it to Sir Wolf Hartschwert; but the Emperor asserted that he was grateful to him also for many a service, and then ordered the gold chain, which had long been intended for him, to be brought for Maestro Gombert.

After these tokens of favour, which awakened the utmost surprise in those who were present, as the Emperor very rarely yielded to such impulses of generosity, the monarch's eyes sought Barbara's, and his glance seemed to say: "For your sake, love. Thus shall those who have deserved it from you be rewarded."

Finally he accosted her, intentionally raising his voice as he did so.

Word for word was intended to be heard by every one, even the remark that he wished to make the acquaintance of her father, whom he remembered as a brave comrade. Barbara would oblige him if she would request him to call upon him that afternoon. It was his duty to thank the man through whose daughter he enjoyed such lofty pleasure.

CHAPTER XIX.

A short time after, the Emperor Charles, accompanied by the Queen of Hungary and several lords and ladies, took a ride in the open air for the first time after long seclusion.

According to his custom, he had spent Passion week in the monastery. Easter had come on the latest day possible—the twenty-fifth of April—and when he bade farewell to the monks the gout had already attacked him again.

Now he rode forth into the open country and the green woods like a rescued man; the younger Granvelle, long as he had been in his service, had never seen him so gay and unconstrained. He could now understand his father's tales of his Majesty's better days, his vigorous manly strength and eager delight in existence.

True, the period of anxiety concerning the tidings of political affairs which had arrived the day before and that morning appeared to be over, for Herr von Parlowitz, the minister of Duke Maurice of Saxony, had expressed his conviction that this active young monarch might be induced to separate from the other Protestant princes and form an alliance with the Emperor, especially as his Majesty had not the most distant intention of mingling; religious matters in the war that was impending.

Despatches had also been sent from Valladolid by Don Philip, the Emperor's oldest son, which afforded the greatest satisfaction to the sovereign. If war was waged against the Smalkalds, the allied Protestants of Germany, Spain, which had been taught to regard the campaign as a religious war, was ready to aid Charles with large subsidies of money and men.

Lastly, it seemed as if two betrothals were to be made which promised to sustain the Emperor's statesmanship. Two of his nieces, the daughters of his brother Ferdinand, expected to marry—one the heir to the Bavarian throne, the other the Duke of Cleves.

Thus many pleasant things came to him simultaneously with his recovery, and his mind, inclined to mysticism, received them as a sign that

Heaven was favourable to his late happiness in love.

Granvelle attributed the Emperor's unexpectedly rapid convalescence and the fortunate change which had taken place in his gloomy mood to the favourable political news, and perhaps also to the music which, as a zealous patron of art, he himself loved. He, who usually did not fail to note even the veriest trifle when he desired to trace the motives of events which were difficult to explain, now thought he need seek no further for causes.

During the ride Barbara was not thought of, but in the Golden Cross it was to become evident to the keen intelligence of the young master of statecraft that something extremely important might escape even his penetration.

While waiting with Malfalconnet in the reception room of the monarch, who had gone into his chamber, for Charles's return, and summing up to the baron in a most charming way the causes which had effected the wonderful rejuvenation of his Majesty, the other showed him that he, Granvelle, had been short-sighted enough to overlook the most powerful influence.

This would have been vexatious to the statesman had not his mind been wholly occupied in considering how this unexpected event could be made most profitable to himself, and also to his master, whom he served with loyal devotion.

Malfalconnet had received no confidence either from the Emperor or any male member of the court, yet he knew all, for, though the Marquise de Leria well deserved the reputation of secrecy, she did not keep her tongue sufficiently in check while talking with her gay countryman. What she overheard, he succeeded by his amiable wiles in learning, and this time also he had not failed.

Soon after the Emperor had appeared again audience was given to several ambassadors. Then Chamberlain de Praet announced Captain Blomberg.

The latter, clad in full armour, entered the apartment. Over the shining coat of mail, which he himself had cleaned with the utmost care, he wore a somewhat faded scarf, and his long battle sword hung at his left side.

He looked stately enough, and his grave, oldfashioned, but thoroughly soldierly manners admirably suited the elderly warrior.

The Emperor Charles accosted the father of the woman he loved with the same blunt friendliness that so easily won the hearts of the companions in

arms to whom he condescended.

Blomberg must tell him this thing and that, and the old man gazed into his face with honest amazement and sincere delight when the monarch supplied the names of places and persons which had escaped his own feeble memory.

He accepted the praise of his daughter with a smile and the modest remark: “She is certainly a dear, kind-hearted child; and as for her voice, there were probably some to which people found less pleasure in listening. But, your Majesty, that of the nightingale battering down solid walls sounds still more beautiful to me.”

The Emperor knew that the German cannoneers gave their guns the name of nightingale, and was pleased with the comparison.

But while he was still talking gaily with the old warrior, who had really displayed truly leonine courage on many an occasion, Count Buren brought in a new despatch, remarking, as he did so, that unfortunately the bearer, a young Spanish noble, had been thrown from his horse just outside the city, and was lying helpless with a broken leg.

Sincere compassion was expressed, in which the Bishop of Arras joined, meanwhile glancing through the somewhat lengthy document.

It came from the heir and regent, Don Philip, in Valladolid. The prince desired to know the state of the negotiations with Rome and with Duke Maurice of Saxony.

After Granvelle had read the despatch he handed it to the monarch, and the latter, in a low tone, charged him not yet to inform his son of the fair prospects for an alliance with Maurice, but to send an answer at once.

While the minister withdrew to the writing table, the Emperor asked whether a trustworthy horseman could be had, since the Spaniard was disabled; and Reitzenstein, Beust, and Van der Kapellen, in whom implicit confidence could be placed, had been sent off that morning.

Then the Bishop of Arras again turned to the monarch, cast a significant glance at Malfalconnet, and, pointing to Blomberg, eagerly exclaimed: “If this valiant and faithful soldier still has a firm seat in the saddle, this highly important message might be intrusted to him.”

The proposal affected the adventure-loving old man like music. With youthful fire he protested that he could ride a horse as fast and endure

fatigue as long as the youngest man, even though the goal were the end of the world.

Such an exertion, however, was by no means expected of him, for he was to set sail at Flushing and land at Loredo in Spain. There Postmaster-General de Tassis would furnish him with horses.

The Emperor had listened to this proposal from his counsellor with a smile of satisfaction. His purpose was sufficiently obvious.

How thoroughly this young diplomat understood men! With how delicate a scent he had again discovered a secret and removed a stone of offence from his master's path! He was competent to fill his clever father's place in every respect. It was evident that neither promises nor gifts would have induced the old warrior to favour the tender wishes of his imperial master. Now he himself hastened to leave the field clear, and Granvelle had foreseen how he would receive the proposal. Charles intentionally refrained from taking any personal share in the arrangements with the old man which now followed. A communication from Malfalconnet appeared to claim his whole attention, until the Bishop of Arras announced that the captain had received his instructions and was ready to set out for Flushing and Valladolid.

The monarch listened with a slight shake of the head, and expressed his hesitation about intrusting so important a message to a man of such advanced age; but Malfalconnet, in a tone of good-natured anxiety, called to the captain, "One may be the father of a nightingale, my brave hero, and yet miss the way to the south without a guide."

"True, true," the Emperor assented. "So we will give our gallant friend a travelling companion who understands Castilian, and on whom we can also rely. Besides, affairs of so much moment are better cared for by two messengers than by one. What is the name of the cavalier, Malfalconnet, who spoke to you of the friendship which unites him to this brave old champion of the faith?"

"Wolf Hartschwert, your Majesty," was the reply.

"The musician," said the monarch, as if some memory was awakened in his mind. "A modest fellow, whose reliability my sister praised.—And now, my vigorous friend, a prosperous journey! Your daughter, whom the favour of Heaven has so richly endowed with beautiful gifts, has found, I have

heard, a maternal guardian in the Marquise de Leria. We, too, will gladly interest ourselves in the charming singer who affords us such rare pleasure."

As he spoke he showed his old companion in arms the unusual honour of extending his hand to him, and when the latter, deeply moved by such graciousness, ardently kissed it, he hurriedly withdrew it, saying, as he kindly patted his arm, "You are doing us a greater service than you imagine, Captain Blomberg."

Then, wishing him a successful journey, he went to the writing table, on which the secretary Gastelu had laid the newly received despatches.

Radiant with joy, the captain, making many profound bows, left the apartment of the gracious monarch, for whom now he would really have ridden to the world's end.

On the stairs he was detained. Malfalconnet handed him two heavy rolls of gold for the expenses of the journey, and enjoined it upon him to be ready to set out early the following morning. He might make his own arrangements with Sir Wolf Hartschwert, and assure him of his Majesty's gratitude in advance.

A short time after, Barbara was packing the gray-haired courier's knapsack.

She had never yet worked for her father with so much filial solicitude. Everything that might be of use to him on the way was carefully considered.

Though she had not been taken into his confidence, she knew the reason that he had been selected to undertake this toilsome journey.

The Emperor Charles was sending the old man far away that the happiness of her love might be undisturbed and unclouded, and the consciousness weighed heavily upon her by no means unduly sensitive conscience.

Wolf, who was already unhappy on her account, had fared the same. When her father told her that the knight was to accompany him, she had felt as if an incident of her childhood, which had often disturbed her dreams, was repeated.

She had been swinging with boyish recklessness in the Woller garden. Suddenly one of the ropes broke, and the board which supported her feet turned over out of her reach. For a time, clinging with her hands to the

uninjured rope, she swayed between heaven and earth. No one was near, and, though she soon stood once more on the firm ground unhurt, the moment when her feet, during the ascent, lost their support, was associated with feelings of so much terror that she—who at that time was considered the bravest of her playfellows—had never forgotten it.

Now she felt as though something similar had befallen her.

She had seen the props on which she might depend removed from under her feet. If her father and Wolf left her, she would look in vain for counsel and support.

That her lover was the most powerful sovereign on earth, and she could appeal to him if she needed help, did not enter her mind. Nay, a vague foreboding told her that he and what was associated with him formed the power against which she must struggle.

The sham affection of the aristocratic lady who was to be her chaperon; the Queen, who last evening had catechised her as if she were a child, and whom she distrusted; the servile flatterer, Malfalconnet, in whose mirthful manner that day for the first time she thought she had detected dislike and slight sarcasm; the imperial love messenger, Don Luis Quijada, who with icy, dutiful coldness scarcely vouchsafed a word to her; and, lastly, the confessor Pedro de Soto, who treated her like a person who needed pity, and probably only awaited a fitting time to hurl an anathema into her face—passed before her memory, and in all these persons, so far above her in birth and rank, she believed that she saw foes.

But how was it with the man who could trample them all in the dust like worms—with her imperial lover?

Until now he had been observant of her every sign, but yesterday night the lion had raised his paw against her.

A slight pain had again made itself felt in his foot. She had eagerly lamented it, and in doing so deplored the fact that she would never be permitted to share the pleasure of dancing with the man she loved and who had first taught her how beautiful life was. This perhaps incautious remark had roused the ire of the suffering monarch.

How sensitive was this man’s consciousness of sovereignty, how much suspicion and bitterness must have gathered in his heart, if he could see in

the girl's innocent compassion an offence to his dignity, a humiliating reproach!

The rebuking sharpness with which he expressed his displeasure had pierced her very soul. She felt as if she were shivering with a sudden chill, and for a long time she could not recover the loving warmth with which she had previously treated him. True, he had soon done everything in his power to atone for the pain which his irritability had inflicted, but the incident had given her the perception that the poets whose songs she sung were right when they made sorrow go hand in hand with the joys of love.

But as yet these joys of love far, far outweighed the suffering which it caused.

Even while, before the full knapsack which only needed locking, she was trying to discover what fault was to be found with the man whom she loved, while saying to herself that Charles's inconsiderate, selfish treatment of her father was unworthy of a generous man, and while also thinking of the separation from the faithful Wolf, her heart still longed for her lover.

Was she not, after all, under obligation to be grateful to him for everything for which she reproached him?

How dear she must be to this great sovereign, since, in order to possess her freely and completely, he allowed himself to be urged to an act which was unworthy of him!

If he had wounded her deeply, he had a right to expect her to excuse many things in him.

How he loved her, and how delicately he could woo and flatter, and mingle with his tender speeches the costly gifts of his rich and mobile intellect! How beautifully and aptly he could speak of her own art, and induce her to oppose to his clever remarks her own modest opinion! He had cheerfully endured contradiction the night before during the conversation concerning music.

But what had followed her luckless regret about his lame foot?

The words had pierced her heart like knives; even now she did not understand where she obtained the strength to withhold the sharp answer for which her lips had already parted; but she knew her hasty spirit, which only too easily led her to outbreaks of anger. Had the power of love, or the magic spell which emanates from genuine royalty, forced her to silence?

No matter.

A good angel had aided her to control herself, and in a rapid prayer she besought the Holy Virgin to assist her in future if her august lover again roused her to rebellion.

Now that she was losing her most sincere friends, the only ones who might have ventured a kindly warning, she must learn to guard herself.

Perhaps it was fortunate that she had already discovered how necessary it was not only to show the mighty sovereign to whom her heart belonged that he was dear to her, but also to display the timid reverence with which millions bowed before him. But if she imposed this constraint upon herself, would her love still remain the same?

“No, no, and again no!” cried the refractory spirit within.

Was he not a weak, fallible mortal, subject, like every one else, to suffering and disease, overcome by his passion, who had even been guilty of an act which, had it been committed by the son of a Ratisbon family, would have seemed to her reprehensible?

Again and again this question forced itself upon her, and with it another —whether she, the woman who had never tolerated such a thing from any one, ought not to undertake to defend herself against unjust assaults, which humiliated her in her own eyes, no matter whence they might come?

Would she not hold a higher position in his sight if she showed him, whom no one ventured to contradict, that the woman he deemed worthy of his love dared to defend her dignity, although he had deprived her of her natural protectors?

Precisely because she was conscious of loving him with her whole soul, because for his sake she had given the world the right to deny her honour and dignity, she was eager to show him that she prized both, and was not inclined to let them be assailed.

Hitherto she had not regarded it as a disgrace, but as the highest distinction, to be deemed worthy of the love of the greatest monarch on earth, and, with a sense of pride, had sacrificed her most sacred possession to his wishes. But how could she retain this feeling if he no longer showed her that he, too, regarded her worthy of him?

She had defied custom, law, the voice of her own conscience, and she did not regret that she had done so. On no account would she have changed

what had occurred if only she succeeded in guarding herself from being humiliated by her lover. To accomplish this, it was worth while to confront a great danger boldly. It was the greatest of all, the peril of losing him, for what would she be if he deserted her?

At the bare thought a torturing dread overwhelmed her.

Never had she felt so irresolute, so deeply agitated, and she uttered a sigh of relief when her father returned from his visit to old Ursel, and praised the care with which she had selected the articles that filled his knapsack.

The flushed cheeks which he noticed could scarcely be the result of the light labour which she had performed for him. With the instinct of paternal love, he probably perceived that she was agitated, but he had so little idea of the mental conflict which had taken possession of her soul that her anxiety pleased him. The separation must be hard for the poor child, and how could the honour bestowed upon the father fail to affect the daughter's mind also.

He had hoped to find Wolf in Ursel's room, but he had already been away some time, and had told the old woman that he was going to the Hiltners, and should probably remain there a long while, as his schoolmate, Erasmus Eckhart, the nephew and adopted son of the syndic and his wife, had returned home from Wittenberg.

To find Wolf and deliver the important message Blomberg would have been obliged to enter the accursed heretic's house, and, rather than do it, he protested he would inflict this and that upon himself.

But whom should he trust to represent him? The best plan would be for Barbara to write to the young knight, informing him of the honour in store for him.

He himself wielded the sword so much better than the pen.

The obliging daughter put a speedy end to her father's embarrassment by offering to go in search of Wolf in person; she by no means shunned the Hiltners. In fact, the doctor's wife had always been especially kind to her at the Convivium musicum, and her young daughter Martina, during the months in which she, too, was permitted to sing in the chorus, had displayed, whenever opportunity offered, an admiration for Barbara which bordered on enthusiasm. Besides, there was no obligation to keep Barbara

from this errand; the removal to Prebrunn to join the marquise was not to take place until noon of the following day.

The pious captain, it is true, was as reluctant to let his daughter go to the heretic's as to a pesthouse, but Wolf's notification permitted no delay, so he consented, and expressed his willingness to accompany her.

CHAPTER XX.

Barbara had scarcely entered the street with her father when they were stopped by Master Adrian, the Emperor's valet. He came from his Majesty to inform Blomberg that the regent could not spare Sir Wolf Hartschwert, and the captain might choose another companion for his ride. The Emperor expected him to select only a loyal, trustworthy, and vigorous nobleman who had taken the oath of fealty to his Majesty. If he should be in the military service, the necessary leave of absence was granted in advance; only he must present himself to the Lord Bishop of Arras that very day. Sir Wolf Hartschwert must depart for Brussels in the regent's train early the next morning.

This news by no means pleased the old soldier, yet, before the valet had finished the message, his features smoothed—he thought he had already found the right man.

After assuring himself that the imperial messenger had fulfilled his commission, he took a hasty leave of him and his daughter.

His kind heart impelled him to show his chosen companion his friendly remembrance of him, and thereby atone for the offence which had been inflicted upon him in his house. To Barbara's inquiry whom he would take with him, he hurriedly replied that he should not decide until he joined his military comrades in the Black Bear. As soon as this important matter was settled he would return home, for it had now become unnecessary to inform Wolf. The maid-servant could be sent to summon him to the Golden Cross. Barbara might go herself at once to Ursel and soothe her—anxiety about her beloved young knight weighed heavily upon her soul.

During this conversation? Master Adrian had gone to her side; but as soon as Blomberg had retired, he informed Barbara, in his master's name, that he should expect her after vespers in the apartments of the Queen of Hungary. He longed to hear her voice. The regent desired to know whether she had any special wishes concerning the Prebrunn house. She need not restrict herself on the score of expense; the Prebrunn steward would be authorized to pay everything. True, most of the furniture was supplied and

the necessary servants had been obtained, but her Majesty the Queen advised her to take with her a maid or companion whom she personally liked.

Barbara's face crimsoned as she listened, and then asked anxiously whether the Emperor Charles knew of these arrangements.

He had no doubt of it, the man replied, for he had heard his Majesty remark that, if the marquise's companion was not to become the toy of her caprices, she must be enabled to obtain what she desired independently of the old lady. He was anxious to make Barbara's life in Prebrunn a pleasant one.

The latter, with downcast eyes, thanked Master Adrian and turned away; but he detained her with the inquiry whether he should probably find Sir Wolf Hartschwert at home, and received the answer that he had gone to Syndic Hiltner's.

The valet then hastily took his leave, because just at that time his royal master needed him. Any one else could summon the knight to the regent in his place.

In the corridor of the Golden Cross he met Brother Cassian, the body servant of the Confessor de Soto, a middle-aged Swabian, who had formerly as a lay brother worked as a bookbinder in the Dominican monastery at Cologne. He was clad in a half-secular, half-priestly garb, and was an humble, extremely devout man, whose yielding nature had rendered him popular among the servants at the court. His bullet-shaped head was unusually large, and his face, with its narrow brow and small, lustreless eyes, showed that he was not prone to thinking. Yet he fulfilled every order precisely according to directions, and possessed his full share of the cunning which is often a characteristic of narrow minds.

He willingly undertook to summon Sir Wolf Hartschwert, whom he knew, to the presence of the Queen of Hungary. No special haste was needful, and, as he loved good wine and did not lack gifts from those who desired an audience with his master, he went first to the English Greeting, where the travelling clergy lodged and often deigned to accost him.

Barbara had returned home with bowed head, and threw herself into her father's arm-chair in his workshop. She gazed into vacancy with a sore and anxious heart, and, as an insane violinist lures the same tone from the

instrument again and again, she constantly returned to the same thought, “Lost! lost!—too late! too late!”

Barbara gave herself up to this mood for several minutes, but at last she remembered her lover’s summons for that evening.

He longed to hear her voice, Master Adrian had said.

Surely, surely he himself had clothed the expression in a totally different, a hundred times warmer form. How bewitchingly he, the great Emperor, understood how to flatter, and, with the memory of the charm of his manner, the thought of the blissful hours which she had enjoyed through his love returned to her mind. It was in his power to bestow the highest happiness which earth can give; after all, his love outweighed everything that she must sacrifice for it. To enjoy it, though but for a brief season, she ought not to refuse to bear the hardest, most terrible things, and, if what was now her secret became rumoured among the people, to accept humiliation, shame, and scorn. Let the respectable women of Ratisbon, in their pride of virtue, maliciously cast stones at her; they could not look down upon her, for, as the object of the most illustrious sovereign’s love, she was raised far above them.

Meanwhile, with a feeling of defiant self-confidence, she was again braiding her hair. But the mental firmness which she had regained did not last; more than once her hand faltered while the comb was dividing the wealth of her golden tresses. How ardently Charles had praised their luxuriant beauty!-and to-day he was to rejoice in it again. But why had not even one poor word from his own hand accompanied the summons?

Why had his messenger been only a valet? Why had he wounded her so deeply the night before?

Why did leaden weights seem to hang upon her soul when she attempted to soar upward?

Oh, what a state of things!

Who had given the regent, to whom nothing attracted her, the right to dispose of her as though she were a chattel or her captive?

Had she, with her heart and her honour, also resigned her freedom to her lover?

If she had only possessed one, one single person to whom she could utter her thoughts!

Then her glance fell upon the knapsack, and she remembered Wolf. He was to set out on his journey early the next morning; her lover expected her after vespers; so perhaps she would not be permitted to see him again, for she scarcely dared to hope that, after the rebuff which he had experienced, he would seek her again. Yet she longed once more to clasp the hand of the man for whom she felt a sister's affection and yet had so deeply wounded.

Without one kind farewell word from him, the bitterest drop of all would fall into the wormwood which already mingled in her happiness. It seemed incomprehensible that he who from childhood had given her his whole heart would henceforth deny her every friendly feeling. For her own sake, and also for his, this should not be.

How many had sought her love! But perhaps the time would soon come when, on account of the one who must supply the place of all others, no one would care for her. Then she wished at least to be sure of the sympathy, the friendship of this good loyal man.

There were still many things for her to do, but to seek Wolf she left them all, even the visit to Frau Lerch, whom she wished to ask to devote herself exclusively to her service in Prebrunn.

Full of anxious cares, lofty anticipations, and the ardent desire to conciliate Wolf, she took the by no means lengthy walk to the Hiltners. Not until she reached the doctor's house did it occur to her that she had forgotten to execute her father's commission and relieve Ursel's anxiety about her darling.

How did it happen that, if any affair of her own interested her, she always forgot what she owed to others?

Barbara was obliged to wait in the broad, lofty hall of the syndic's house for the maid-servant, who announced her; and the stout man with the big head, who had seized the knocker just before she entered, shared her fate.

He was now leaning with bowed head against the wall, both hands clasped under his beardless chin, and might have been taken for a monk repeating his prayers. The long, brown doublet fastened around his hips by a Hemp rope, instead of a girdle, made him resemble a Franciscan. But his thick, flaxen hair lacked the tonsure, the rope the rosary, and he wore coarse leather shoes on his large feet.

Barbara fancied that she had seen this strange figure somewhere, and he, too, must have recognised her, for he bowed when she looked at him. There was not the slightest movement of the body except the small eyes, which wandered restlessly around the spacious room as if they missed something.

The inquiry what he found lacking here was already rising to Barbara's lips when the syndic's wife came toward her, preceded by her daughter Martina, who, radiant with joy at seeing the ardently admired singer in her own house, kissed her with fervent affection.

The mother merely extended her hand to Barbara, yet the whole manner of the gentle, reserved woman showed that she was a welcome guest.

Frau Sabina loved and understood music, still enjoyed singing hymns with the members of her household, and had done everything in her power to aid the establishment of the Convivium musicum and foster its progress.

Interest in music had also united her to Dr. Martin Luther, her husband's friend, and mane a composition of the Wittenberg ecclesiastic had first been performed at the Hiltners.

The old faith offered so much more to charm the senses than the new one! Therefore it seemed a special cause for thanksgiving that singing and playing upon the organ occupied a prominent place in the Protestant religious service, and that Luther most warmly commended the fostering of music to those who professed the evangelical belief. Besides, her adopted son Erasmus, the new Wittenberg master of arts, had devoted himself eagerly to music, and composed several hymns which, if Damian Feys permitted it, would be sung in the Convivium musicum.

Frau Sabina Hiltner had often met Barbara there, and had noticed with admiration and pleasure the great progress which this richly gifted young creature had made under the direction of the Netherland master.

Other members of the Convivium, on the contrary, bore Barbara a grudge because she remained a Catholic, and many a mother of a daughter whom Barbara, as a singer, had cast too far into the shade, would gladly have thrust her out of the circle of music-loving citizens.

Frau Sabina and Master Feys, who, like the much-envied girl, was a professor of the old faith, interceded for her all the more warmly.

Besides, it afforded Frau Hiltner scarcely less pleasure to hear Barbara than it did Martina, and she could also fix her eyes with genuine devotion

upon the girl's wonderfully beautiful and nobly formed features. The mother and daughter owed to this peerless singer the best enjoyment which the Collegium afforded them, and, when envy and just displeasure approached Frau Sabina to accuse Barbara of insubordination, obstinacy, pride, and forwardness, which were unseemly for one so young, as well as exchanging coquettish glances with the masculine members of the choir, the profoundly respected wife of the syndic and her young daughter warmly defended the persecuted girl.

In this her husband strongly supported her, for, when necessary, he dealt weighty blows and upheld what he deemed just without fear of man and with the powerful aids of his strong intellect and the weight of the esteem he had won by a stainless, industrious life.

Doubtless Frau Sabina also perceived something unusual in Barbara's nature and conduct, traits of defiance, almost rebellion, which would have troubled her in her Martina, who, though no beauty, was a pretty girl, with the most winning, childlike charm; but she secretly asked herself whether she would not accept it gratefully if, in exchange, her girl could possess such a wonderful gift of God; for, sharply as the eye of envy followed Barbara's every act, she had never given cause to doubt her chastity, and this Frau Hiltner considered greatly in her favour; for what tremendous temptations must have assailed this marvellously beautiful creature, this genuine artist, who had grown to womanhood without a mother, and whose only counsellor and protector was a crippled, eccentric old soldier.

As Martina opened the door of the sitting room a loud conversation in men's voices became audible, and with the deep, resonant tones of the syndic Barbara recognised the higher, less powerful ones of the man whom she was seeking.

The kiss of the scarcely unfolded bud of girlhood, the child of a mother whose presence in the Convivium had often helped her to curb an impetuous impulse, pleased Barbara, and yet awakened the painful feeling that in accepting it without resistance she was guilty of a deception. Besides, she had not confessed, and it seemed as if, in feeling the young heretic's kiss an honour, she were adding to the burden which had not yet been removed from her conscience.

Yet she could not overcome an emotion of rare pleasure when Frau Sabina, after beckoning to her husband, took her hand and led her into the

reception room. Erasmus Eckhart, the adopted son of the house, hastened toward Barbara to greet her as an acquaintance of his school days, flushing deeply in his surprise at her great beauty as he did so.

But the mistress of the house gave him no time to renew the relations of childhood, and led her away from him to her husband and her mother-in-law, a woman of ninety, to whom she presented her with kind, nay, with extremely flattering, words. Barbara lowered her eyes in confusion, and did not see how, at her entrance, Wolf's face had blanched and old Frau Hiltner had sat up in her cushioned arm-chair at the window to look her sharply and fixedly in the eyes with the freedom of age.

Meanwhile the man from the hall had stationed himself beside the door in the same attitude, with his hands clasped under his chin and his cap between his breast and arm, and stood motionless. He did not appear to be at ease, and gnawed his thick lower lip with a troubled look as he occasionally cast a glance at the strong countenance of Martin Luther, whose portrait, the size of life, gazed at him from its gilt frame on the opposite wall.

Barbara did not regain complete self-control until the syndic asked his errand.

The man in the brown doublet was Brother Cassian, the body servant of the Emperor's confessor. He now unclasped his hands to grasp the cap under his arm, which he twirled awkwardly in his fingers while saying, in a rapid, expressionless tone, as though he were repeating a lesson, that he had come to summon Wolf Hartschwert to the Queen of Hungary, with whom he must set out for Brussels early the next morning.

Barbara then remarked in a subdued tone that she had come here for the same purpose, and also for another-to shake hands with the playmate of her childhood, because she probably would not see him again before his departure.

Wolf listened to this statement in surprise, and then told the messenger that he would obey her Majesty's command.

"Obey the command," Cassian repeated, according to his servant custom. Then he was about to retire, but Frau Sabina had filled a goblet with wine for him, and Martina, according too an old custom of the family, offered it to the messenger.

But, much as Cassian liked the juice of the grape, he waved back the kindly meant gift of the mistress of the house with a hoarse “No, no!” and shaking his head, turned on his heel, and without a word of thanks or farewell left the room.

“The heretic’s wine,” observed Dr. Hiltner, shrugging his shoulders regretfully, and then asked Wolf, “Do you know the queer fellow?”

“The body servant of the almoner, Pedro de Soto,” was the reply. The bang of the closed outer door was heard at the same moment, for Cassian had rushed into the open air as fast as his feet would carry him. After leaving part of the street behind him, he stopped, and with a loud “B-r-r-r!” shook himself like a poodle that has just come out of the water.

Into what an abominable heretic house Master Adrian had sent him!

To despatch a good Christian to such an unclean hole!

No images of the Virgin and the saints, no crucifix nor anything else that elevates a human soul in the whole dwelling, but the portrait of the anti-Christ, the arch-heretic Luther, in the best place in the room! However he turned his eyes away, the fat heretic face had forced him to look at it. Meanwhile he had felt as if the devil himself was already stretching out his arm from the ample sleeve to seize him by the collar.

“B-r-r-r!” he repeated, and hurried off to Saint Leonhard’s chapel in the Golden Cross, where he sprinkled himself eagerly with holy water, and then sought Master Adrian. But the valet was with the Emperor, and so he went to his master and told him where he had unexpectedly wandered.

The latter lent a willing ear and shook his sagacious head indignantly when he learned that, besides Sir Wolf Hartschwert, Cassian had also met “the singer” at the house of the syndic, the soul of the evangelical movement in Ratisbon.

Meanwhile Barbara was taking leave of the friend of her youth at the Hiltner house.

The others, with the exception of the deaf old dame, had considerately left the room.

Wolf felt it gratefully, for a dark suspicion, which Barbara’s information of her father’s long ride as a messenger only confirmed, weighed heavily upon his heart.

The man for whose sake the woman he loved had given him up must be Baron Malfalconnet.

It was well known how recklessly this gay, gallant noble trifled with women's hearts, and he had mentioned Barbara in his presence in a way that justified the conjecture.

Therefore, ere Wolf clasped her hand, he told her the suspicions which filled him with anxiety about her.

But he was soon to discover the baselessness of this fear.

Whatever the truthful girl so positively and solemnly denied must be far from her thoughts, and he now clasped her right hand in both his.

The heavy anxiety that his "queen" had fallen into the baron's hands as a toy had been removed. The thought of the Emperor Charles was as far removed from his mind as heaven from earth, though Barbara emphasized the fact that the man whom she loved would be sure of his respect. She also, with deep emotion, assured him that she wished him the best and most beautiful life, and would always retain her friendship for him whatever Fate might have in store for both.

The words sounded so truthful and loyal that Wolf's heart was moved to its inmost depths, and he now, in his turn, assured her that he would never forget her, and would treasure her image in his heart's core to the end. True, he must endure the keenest suffering for her sake, but he also owed her the greatest happiness life had granted him.

The eyes of both were dim, but when he began to talk in the old pathetic way of the magic of love, which would at last bring together those whom Heaven destined for one another, she tore herself away, hastily begged him to say farewell to Fran Hiltner for her, and then went into the hall; but here Martina overtook the departing guest, threw herself impetuously into her arms, and whispered the question whether she would permit her to pay her a visit at Prebrunn when she was with her old marquise, she had so much, so very much, to tell her.

But the wish, of which her mother was ignorant, remained unfulfilled, for Barbara, scarcely able to control her voice in her embarrassment, hurriedly replied that while with the lady in waiting she would no longer be her own mistress, pressed a hasty kiss upon the innocent child's brow, released

herself from her embrace, and rushed through the door, which Wolf was holding open for her, into the street.

The former gazed after her with a troubled heart, and, after she was out of sight, returned to the others. He conscientiously delivered Barbara's farewell, and the praise which Frau Sabina lavished upon her pleased him as much as if nothing had come between them. Finally he made an engagement to see Erasmus Eckhart that evening in his lodgings, and then went to the Queen of Hungary.

After he had left the Hiltners Frau Sabina bent down to her mother-in-law's ear—though she had lost her quickness of hearing, she had retained her sight perfectly—and, raising her voice, told her the name of the young lady who had just left them. Then she asked if she, too, did not admire Barbara's beauty, and what she thought of her.

The grandmother nodded, exclaiming in a low tone, "Beautiful, beautiful—a wonderfully beautiful creature!" Then she gazed thoughtfully into vacancy, and at last asked whether she had heard correctly that Jungfrau Blomberg was also a remarkable singer.

Her daughter-in-law eagerly nodded assent to this question.

The aged woman silently bowed her head, but quickly raised it again, and there was a faint tinge of regret in her voice as she began: "Too much, certainly too much. Such marvels are rare. But one thing or the other. For women of her stamp there are only two conditions, and no other—rapturous happiness and utter misery. She will be content with no average. It does not suit such natures."

Here she paused abruptly, for Martina entered the room, and with affectionate solicitude said to her granddaughter: "Young Trainer was here just now. Has anything happened between you? I see by your eyes that you have been weeping."

CHAPTER XXI.

The Emperor Charles loved his sister Mary, and he now desired to show her how dear she was to his heart. She had been obliging to him, and he had in mind the execution of a great enterprise which she had hitherto zealously opposed, yet for which he needed her co-operation.

It satisfied him to know that the father of his love would be absent from Ratisbon for the present. He did not care who accompanied him.

When the regent reproached him for having taken Sir Wolf Hartschwert from her without a word of consultation, although she was unwilling to spare him, he had instantly placed Wolf at her disposal again.

The simplest and cheapest plan would have been to let Blomberg pursue his journey alone; but the monarch feared that the despatch might not be quickly delivered if anything happened to the old man on the way, and he had said before witnesses that he would not allow him to go without companionship.

He scarcely thought of Barbara's filial feeling. She loved him, and the place which she gave to any one else in her heart could and must therefore be extremely small.

How powerfully the passionate love for this girl had seized him he dared not confess to himself. But he rejoiced in the late love which rejuvenated him and filled him with a joy in existence whose fresh blossoming would have seemed impossible a few days before.

How superb a creature he had found in this German city, from which, since its change of religion, he had withdrawn his former favour! In his youth his heart had throbbed ardently for many a fair woman, but she surpassed in beauty, in swift intelligence, in fervour, in artistic ability, and, above all, in sincere, unfeigned devotion every one whom his faithful memory recalled.

He would hold fast to the loved one who bestowed this happiness and fresh vigour of youth. To make warm the nest which was to receive his dear nightingale he had conquered the economy which was beginning to

degenerate into avarice, and also intended to accomplish other sacrifices in order to procure her the position which she deserved.

He no longer knew that he had wounded her deeply the night before. He was in the habit of casting aside whatever displeased him unless it appeared advantageous to impose restraint upon himself; and who would ever have dared to resist the expression of his indignation? Had Barbara obeyed her hasty temper and returned him a sharp answer, he certainly would not have forgotten it. The bare thought of her dispelled melancholy thoughts from his mind; the hope of soon seeing and hearing her again rendered him friendly and yielding to those about him. The trivial sin which this sweet love secret contained had been pardoned in the case of the man bound by no older obligation, after a slight penance, and now for the first time he fully enjoyed the wealth of the unexpected new happiness. It must also be acceptable to Heaven, for this was distinctly shown by the more and more favourable turn of politics, and he held the return gift.

That it was the right one was proved by the nature of the gratifying news brought by the very last despatches. They urged him directly toward the war which hitherto, from the most serious motives, he had avoided, and, as his royal sister correctly saw, would destroy a slowly matured, earnest purpose; for it forced him to renounce the hope of effecting at Trent a reformation of the Church according to his own ideas, and a restoration of the unity of religion in a peaceful manner by yielding on one side and reasonable concessions on the other. He had long since perceived that many things in the old form of religion needed reformation. If war was declared, he would be compelled to resign the hope that these would be undertaken by Rome, and the opposition, the defiance, the bold rebellion of the Protestant princes destroyed every hope of propitiation on their part. They were forcing him to draw the sword, and he might venture to do so at this time, for he need now feel no fear of serious opposition from any of the great powers around him. Maurice of Saxony, too, was on the point of withdrawing from the Smalkalds and becoming his ally; so, with the assistance of Heaven, he might hope to win the victory for the cause of the Church, and with it also that of the crown.

With regard to the probability of this war, he had much to expect from the activity of his sister in the Netherlands, and though she now advocated peace, in the twelfth hour, which must soon strike, he could rely upon her.

Yet she was a woman, and it was necessary to bind her to him by every tie of the heart and intellect.

He loved Barbara as warmly as he was capable of loving; but had Mary that evening required his separation from the singer as the price of her assistance in promoting his plans, the desire of the heart would perhaps have yielded to the wishes of the statesman.

But the regent did not impose this choice; she did not grudge him his late happiness, and gratefully appreciated the transformation which Barbara's rare gifts had wrought.

The affectionate sister's heart wished that the bond which produced so favourable a result might be of the longest possible duration, and she had therefore personally attended to the furnishing of the Prebrunn house, and made all sorts of arrangements to render Barbara's life with the marquise, not only endurable, but pleasant.

The Emperor had allowed a considerable sum for this purpose, but she did not trouble herself about the amount allotted. If she exceeded it, Charles must undertake the payment, whether he desired it or not.

Her vivid imagination had showed her how she, in the Emperor's place, would treat the object of his love, and she acted accordingly, without questioning him or the girl for whom her arrangements were made.

Nothing was too expensive for the favoured being who dispelled the Emperor's melancholy, and she had proved how much can be accomplished in a brief space where there is good will on all sides.

By her orders entirely separate suites of apartments had been prepared for Barbara and the marquise. Quijada had selected four of her own saddle horses for the stable of the little castle, and supplied it with the necessary servants. Her steward had been commissioned to provide the servants wanted in the kitchen, and one of her Netherland officials had received orders to manage the household of the marquise and her companion, and in doing so to anticipate Barbara's wishes in the most attentive manner. One of her best maids, the worthy and skilful Frau Lamperi, though she was reluctant to part with her, had been sent to Prebrunn to serve Barbara as garde-robiere. The advice that the Emperor's love should take her own waiting maid also came from her. She knew the value, amid new circumstances, of a person long known and trusted. The idea that Barbara would take her own maid with her rested, it is true, on the supposition that

so well-dressed a young lady, who belonged to an ancient family, must as surely possess such a person as eyes and hands.

Barbara had just induced Frau Lerch to accompany her to Prebrunn. The old woman's opposition had only been intended to extort more favourable terms. She knew nothing of the regent's arrangements.

Queen Mary was grateful to Charles for so readily restoring the useful Sir Wolf Hartschwert, and when the latter presented himself he was received even more graciously than usual.

She had some work ready for him. A letter in relation to the betrothal of her nieces, the daughters of King Ferdinand, was to be sent to the Imperial Councillor Schonberg at Vienna. It must be written in German, because the receiver understood no other language.

After she had told the knight the purpose of the letter, she left him; the vesper service summoned her, and afterward Barbara detained her as she sang to the Emperor, alone and accompanied by Appenzelder's boy choir, several songs, and in a manner so thoroughly artistic that the Queen lingered not only in obedience to her brother's wish, but from pleasure in the magnificent music, until the end of the concert.

Just as Wolf, seated in the writing room, which was always at his disposal, finished the letter, the major-domo, Don Luis Quijada, sought him.

He had already intimated several times that he had something in view for him which promised to give Wolf's life, in his opinion, a new and favourable turn. Now he made his proposal.

The duties imposed upon him by the service compelled him to live apart from his beloved, young, and beautiful wife, Dona Magdalena de Ulloa, who had remained at his castle Villagarcia in Spain. She possessed but one true comforter in her solitude—music. But the person who had hitherto instructed her—the family chaplain—was dead. So far as his ability and his taste were concerned, it would have been easy to replace him, but Quijada sought in his successor qualities which rarely adorned a single individual, but which he expected to find united in the knight.

In the first place, the person he desired must be, like the chaplain, of noble birth; for to see his wife closely associated with a man of inferior station was objectionable to the Spanish grandee, who was perhaps the most popular of all the officers in the army, not only on account of his valour in

the field, but also for the kindly good will and absolute justice which he bestowed upon even the humblest soldier.

That the chaplain's successor must be a good artist, thoroughly familiar with Netherland and Italian music, was a matter of course. But Don Luis also demanded from Dona Magdalena's new teacher and household companion graceful manners, a modest disposition, and, above all things, a character on which he could absolutely rely. Not that he would have cherished any fears of the fidelity of the wife whom he honoured as the purest and noblest of her sex, and of whom he spoke to the knight with reverence and love; he desired only to guard her from any occurrence that might offend her.

Wolf listened in surprise. He had firmly resolved that on no account would he stay in Ratisbon. What could he find save fresh anxiety and never-ending anguish of the heart if he remained near Barbara, who disdained his love?

He possessed little ambition. It was only for the sake of the woman he loved that he had recently made more active exertions, but with his excellent acquirements and the fair prospects which were open to him at the court, it seemed, even to his modest mind, too humble a fate to bury himself in a Spanish castle in order to while away with music the lonely hours of a noblewoman, no matter how high her rank, how beautiful and estimable she might be, or how gladly he would render her admirable husband a favour.

Quijada had said this to himself, and perceived plainly enough what was passing in the young knight's thoughts.

So he frankly confessed that he was well aware how few temptations his invitation offered a man endowed with Wolf's rare advantages, but he came by no means with empty hands—and he now informed the listening musician what he could offer him.

This certainly gave his proposal a different aspect.

The aristocratic Quijada family—and as its head he himself—had in its gift a rich living, which annually yielded thousands of ducats, in the great capital of Valladolid. Many a son of a distinguished race sought it, but he wished to bestow it upon Wolf. It would insure him more than a comfortable support, permit him to marry the woman of his choice, and, if he remained several years in Villagarcia, afford him the possibility of accumulating a neat little property, as he would live in Quijada's castle as a

welcome guest and scarcely ever be obliged to open his purse strings. Besides, music was cultivated in Valladolid, and if Don Luis introduced him to the clergy there, it might easily happen that they would avail themselves of his great knowledge and fine ability and intrust to him the amendment and perhaps, finally, the direction of the church music.

As Dona Magdalena often spent several months with her brother, the Marquis Rodrigo de la Mota, Wolf could from time to time be permitted to visit the Netherlands or Italy to participate in the more active musical life of these countries.

Wolf listened to this explanation with increasing attention.

The narrow path which buried itself in the sand was becoming a thoroughfare leading upward. He was glad that he had withheld his refusal; but this matter was so important that the prudent young man, after warmly thanking Don Luis for his good opinion, requested some time for consideration.

True, Quijada could assure him that, for the sake of his wife, Dona Magdalena de Ulloa, whom from childhood she had honoured with her special favour, the regent would place no obstacle in the way of his retirement from her service. But Wolf begged him to have patience with him. He was not a man to make swift decisions, and nowhere could he reflect better than in the saddle during a long ride. He would inform him of his determination by the first messenger despatched from Brussels to the Emperor. Even now he could assure him that this generous offer seemed very tempting, since solitude always had far more charm for him than the noisy bustle of the court.

Quijada willingly granted the requested delay, and, before bidding him farewell, Wolf availed himself of the opportunity to deliver into his hands the papers collected by his adopted father, which he had on his person. They contained the proof that he was descended from the legal marriage of a knight and a baroness; and Don Luis willingly undertook to have them confirmed by the Emperor, and his patent renewed in a way which, if he accepted his proposal, might also be useful to him in Spain.

So Wolf took leave of the major-domo with the conviction that he possessed a true friend in this distinguished man. If the regent did not arbitrarily detain him, he would show himself in Villagarcia to be worthy of his confidence.

On the stairs he met the Emperor's confessor, Don Pedro de Soto. Wolf bowed reverently before the dignified figure of the distinguished Dominican, and the latter, as he recognised him, paused to request curtly that he would give him a few minutes the following day.

"If I can be of any service to your Reverence," replied Wolf, taking the prelate's delicate hand to kiss it; but the almoner, with visible coldness, withdrew it, repellently interrupting him: "First, Sir Knight, I must ask you for an explanation. Where the plague is raging in every street, we ought to guard our own houses carefully against it."

"Undoubtedly," replied Wolf, unsuspiciously. "But I shall set out early to-morrow morning with her Majesty."

"Then," replied the Dominican after a brief hesitation, "then a word with you now."

He continued his way to the second story, and Wolf, with an anxious mind, followed him into a waiting room, now empty, near the staircase.

The deep seriousness in the keen eyes of the learned confessor, which could look gentle, indulgent, and sometimes even merry, revealed that he desired to discuss some matter of importance; but the very first question which the priest addressed to him restored the young man's composure.

The confessor merely desired to know what took him to the house of the man who must be known to him as the soul of the evangelical innovations in his native city, and the friend of Martin Luther.

Wolf now quietly informed him what offer Dr. Hiltner, as syndic of Ratisbon, had made him in the name of the Council.

"And you?" asked the confessor anxiously.

"I declined it most positively," replied Wolf, "although it would have suited my taste to stand at the head of the musical life in my native city."

"Because you prefer to remain in the service of her Majesty Queen Mary?" asked De Soto.

"No, your Eminence. Probably I shall soon leave the position near her person. I rather feared that, as a good Catholic, I would find it difficult to do my duty in the service of an evangelical employer."

"There is something in that. But what led the singer—you know whom I mean—to the same house?"

Wolf could not restrain a slight smile, and he answered eagerly: “The young lady and I grew up together under the same roof, your Eminence, and she came for no other purpose than to bid me farewell. A lamb that clings more firmly to the shepherd, and more strongly abhors heresy, could scarcely be found in our Redeemer’s flock.”

“A lamb!” exclaimed the almoner with a slight touch of scorn. “What are we to think of the foe of heresy who exchanges tender kisses with the wife of the most energetic leader of Protestantism?”

“By your permission, your Eminence,” Wolf asserted, “only the daughter offered her her lips. She and her mother made the singer’s acquaintance at the musical exercises established here by the Council. Music is the only bond between them.”—“Yet there is a bond,” cried De Soto suspiciously. “If you see her again before your departure, advise her, in my name, to sever it. She found a friendly welcome and much kindness in that house, and here at least—tell her so—only one faith exists. A prosperous journey, Sir Knight.”

The delay caused by this conversation induced Wolf to quicken his pace. It had grown late, and Erasmus Eckhart had surely been waiting some time for his school friend in the old precentor’s house.

This was really the case, but the Wittenberg theologian, whose course of study had ended only a fortnight before, and who, with his long, brown locks and bright blue eyes, still looked like a gay young student, had had no reason to lament the delay.

He was first received by Ursel, who had left her bed and was moving slowly about the room, and how much the old woman had had to tell her young fellow-believer from Wittenberg about Martin Luther, who was now no longer living, and Professor Melanchthon; but Erasmus Eckhart liked to talk with her, for as a schoolmate and intimate friend of Wolf he had paid innumerable visits to the house, and received in winter an apple, in summer a handful of cherries, from her.

The young man was still less disposed to be vexed with Wolf for his delay when Barbara appeared in Ursel’s room. Erasmus had played with her, too, when he was a boy, and they shared a treasure of memories of the fairest portion of life.

When Wolf at last returned and Barbara gave him her hand, Erasmus envied him the affectionate confidence with which it was done. She was

charged with the warmest messages from her father to the knight, and conscientiously delivered them. The old gentleman's companion had advised starting that evening, because experience taught that, on a long ride, it was better for man and beast to spend the night outside the city.

They were to put up at the excellent tavern in Winzer, an hour's journey from Ratisbon, and continue the ride from that point.

Wolf knew that many couriers did the same thing, in order to avoid delay at the gate, and only asked whom her father had chosen for a companion.

"A young nobleman who was here as a recruiting officer," replied Barbara curtly.

She had not heard until the last moment whom her father had selected, and had only seen Pyramus Kogel again while the captain's groom was buckling his knapsack upon the saddle. He had ridden to the house, and while she gazed past him, as though an invisible cap concealed him from her eyes, he asked whether she had no wish concerning her father at heart.

"That some one else was to accompany him," came her sharp reply.

Then, before the captain put his foot into the stirrup, she threw her arms around the old man's neck, kissed him tenderly, and uttered loving wishes for him to take with him on his way.

Her father, deeply moved, at last swung himself into the saddle, commending her to the protection of the gracious Virgin. It was not wholly easy for him to part with her, but the prospect of riding out into the world with a full purse, highly honoured by his imperial master, gratified the old adventure-loving heart so much that he could feel no genuine sympathy. Too honest to feign an emotion which he did not experience, he behaved accordingly; and, besides, he was sure of leaving his child in the best care as in her earlier years, when, glad to leave the dull city, business, and his arrogant, never-satisfied wife behind, he had gone with a light heart to war.

While pressing the horse's flanks between his legs and forcing the spirited animal, which went round and round with him in a circle, to obedience, he waved his new travelling hat; but Barbara, meanwhile, was thinking that he could only leave her with his mind thus free from care because she was deceiving him, and, as her eyes rested on her father's wounded limb projecting stiffly into the air, bitter grief overwhelmed her.

How often the old wounds caused him pain! Other little infirmities, too, tortured him. Who would bind them up on the journey? who would give him the medicine which afforded relief?

Then pity affected her more deeply than ever before, and it was with difficulty that she forced back the rising tears. Her father might perhaps have noticed them, for one groom carried a torch, and the one-eyed maid's lantern was shining directly into her face.

But while she was struggling not to weep aloud, emotion and anxiety for the old man who, through her fault, would be exposed to so much danger, extorted the cry: "Take care of him, Herr Pyramus! I will be grateful to you."

"That shall be a promise, lovely, ungracious maiden," the recruiting officer quickly answered. But the old man was already waving his hat again, his horse dashed upon the Haidplatz at a gallop, and his companion, with gallant bearing, followed.

Barbara had then gone back into the house, and the maid-servant lighted her upstairs.

It had become perfectly dark in her rooms, and the solitude and silence there oppressed her like a hundredweight burden. Besides, terrible thoughts had assailed her, showing her herself in want and shame, despised, disdained, begging for a morsel of bread, and her father under his fallen horse, on his lonely, couch of pain, in his coffin.

Then her stay in her lonely rooms seemed unendurable. She would have lost her reason ere Quijada came at midnight to conduct her for a short time to the Golden Cross. She could not remain long with her lover, because the servants were obliged to be up early in the morning on account of the regent's departure.

With Ursel she would be protected from the terrors of solitude, for, besides the old woman's voice, a man's tones also reached her through the open window. It was probably the companion of her childhood. In his society she would most speedily regain her lost peace of mind.

In his place she had at first found only Erasmus Eckhart.

The strong, bold boy had become a fine-looking man.

A certain gravity of demeanour had early taken possession of him, and while his close-shut lips showed his ability to cling tenaciously to a

resolution, his bright eyes sparkled with the glow of enthusiasm.

Barbara could believe in this young man's capacity for earnest, lofty aspiration, and for that very reason it had aroused special displeasure in her mind when he gaily recalled the foolish pranks, far better suited to a boy, into which as a child she had often allowed herself to be hurried.

She felt as if, in doing so, he was showing her a lack of respect which he would scarcely have ventured toward a young lady whom he esteemed, and the petted singer, whom no less a personage than the Emperor Charles deemed worthy of his love, was unwilling to tolerate such levity from so young a man.

She made no claim to reverence, but she expected admiration and the recognition of being an unusual person, who was great in her own way.

For the sake of the monarch who raised her to his side, she owed it to herself to show, even in her outward bearing, that she did not stand too far below him in aristocratic dignity.

She succeeded in this admirably during the conversation on music and singing which she carried on with Erasmus.

When she at last desired to return home, Wolf accompanied her up the stairs, informed her of his conversation with the confessor, and at the same time warned her against incautious visits to the Hiltners so long as the Emperor held his court in Ratisbon.

To have fallen under suspicion of heresy would have been the last thing Barbara expected, and she called it foolish, nay, ridiculous. But, ere she clasped Wolf's hand in farewell, she promised to show the almoner at the first opportunity upon how false a trail he had come.

CHAPTER XXII.

When Wolf went back to Erasmus the latter assured his friend that he had met no maiden in Ratisbon who, to rare gifts, united the dignity which he had hitherto admired only in the ladies whom he had met at the court of the Elector of Saxony. His sparkling eyes flashed more brightly as he spoke, and, like a blushing girl, he confessed to his friend that Jungfrau Blomberg's promise to sing one of his own compositions to him made him a happy man.

Barbara's conduct had made the repressed fire of love blaze up anew in Wolf.

Now, for the first time, the woman he loved fully and entirely fulfilled the ideal which he had formed of the "queen" of his heart.

Was it the sad separation from him, the taking leave of her father, or her new love, which was bestowed on a man whom he also esteemed, that impressed upon her nature the stamp of a nobility which beseemed her as well as it suited her aristocratic beauty?

Never had it appeared to him so utterly impossible that he could yield her to another without resistance. Perhaps the man chosen by such a jewel was more worthy than he, but no one's love could surpass his in strength and fervour. She had tested it, and he need no longer call himself an insignificant suitor; for, if he gained possession of the living which Don Luis had ready for him, if he obtained a high position in Valladolid—But his friend gave him no time to pursue such thoughts further, for, while Barbara shortly after midnight stole down the stairs like a criminal, and Quijada conducted her to her imperial lover, Erasmus began to press him with demands which he was obliged to reject.

The Wittenberg master of arts, ever since his first meeting with his friend, had been on the point of asking the question how he, who had obtained in the school of poets an insight into the pure word of God, could prevail upon himself to continue to wear the chains of Rome and remain a Catholic.

Wolf had expected this query, and, while he filled his companion's goblet with the good Wurzburg wine which Ursula provided, he begged him not to

bring religion into their conversation.

The young Wittenberg theologian, however, had come for the express purpose of discussing it with his friend.

Religion, he asserted in the fervid manner characteristic of him, was in these times the axis around which turned the inner life of the world and every individual. He himself had resolved to live for the object for whose sake it was worth while to die. He knew the great perils which would be associated with it for one of his warlike temperament, but he had become, by the divine summons, an evangelical theologian, a combatant for the liberation of the slaves sighing under the tyranny of Rome. A serious conversation with a friend who was a German and resisted yielding to a movement of the spirit which was kindling the inmost depths of the German nature, thoughts, and feelings, and was destined to heal the woes of the German nation and preserve it from the basest abuse, would be to him inconceivable.

Wolf interrupted this avowal with the assurance that he must nevertheless decline a religious discussion with him, for the weapons they would use were too different. Erasmus, as a theologian, was deeply versed in the Protestant faith, while he professed Catholicism merely as a consequence of his birth and with a layman's understanding and knowledge. Yet he would not shun the conflict if his hands were not bound by the most sacred of oaths. Then he turned to the past, and while he himself, as it were, lived through for the second time the most affecting moment in his existence, he transported his friend to his dead mother's sick-bed.

In vivid language he described how the devout widow and nun implored her son to resist like a rock in the sea the assault of the new heretical ideas, that the thousands of prayers which she had uttered for him, for his soul, and his father's, might not be vain.

Then Wolf confessed that just at that time, as a pupil in the school of poets, he had come under the influence of the scholar Naevius, whose evangelical views Erasmus knew, and related how difficult it had been for him to take the oath which, nevertheless, now that he had once sworn it, he would keep, even though life and his own intelligence would not have taught him to prefer the old faith to every new doctrine, whether it emanated from Luther, from Calvin, or from Zwingli.

For a short time Erasmus found no answer to this statement, and Wolf's old nurse, who herself clung to the Protestants from complete conviction, and had listened attentively to his words, urged her young co-religionist, by all sorts of signs, to respect his friend's decision.

The confession of his schoolmate had not been entirely without effect upon the young theologian. The name of "mother" also filled him with reverence.

True, his birth had cost his own mother her life, but he had long possessed a distinct idea of her nature and being, and had given her precisely the same position which, in the early days of his school life, the Virgin Mary had occupied.

To induce another to break a vow made to his mother would have been sinful. But a brief reflection changed his mind.

Were there not circumstances in which the Bible itself commanded a man to leave father and mother? Had not Jesus Christ made the surrender of every old relation and the following after him the duty of those who were to become his disciples? What was the meaning of the words the Saviour had uttered to his august mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" except it was commanded to turn even from the mother when religion was at stake?

Many another passage of Scripture had strengthened the courage of the young Bible student when at last, with a look of intelligence, he pledged Wolf, and remarking, "How could I venture the attempt to lead you to break so sacred an oath?" instantly brought forward every plea that a son who, in religious matters, followed a different path from his mother could allege in his justification.

A short time before, in Brussels, Wolf had seen a superior of the new Society of Jesus, whose members were now appearing everywhere as defenders of the violently assailed papacy, seek to win back to Catholicism the son of evangelical parents with the very same arguments. He told his friend this, and also expressed the belief that the Jesuit, too, had spoken in good faith.

Erasmus shrugged his shoulders, saying "Doubtless there are many mansions in our Father's house, but who will blame us if we left the dilapidated old one, where our liberty was restricted and our consciences were burdened, and preferred the new one, in which man is subject to no

other mortal, but only to the plain words of the Bible and to the judge in his own breast? If we prefer this mansion, which stands open to every one whose heart the old one oppresses, to the ruinous one of former days——"

"Yet," interrupted Wolf, "you must say to yourselves that you leave behind in the old one much which the new one lacks, no matter with how many good things you may equip it. The history of our religion and its development does not belong to your new home—only to the old one."

"We stand upon it as every newer thing rests on the older," replied Erasmus eagerly. "What we cast aside and refuse to take into the new home with us is not the holy faith, but merely its deformity, abasement, and falsification."

"Call it so," replied Wolf calmly. "I have heard others name and interpret differently what you probably have in mind while using these harsh epithets. But is it not the old house, and that alone, in which the martyrs shed their blood for Christianity? Where did it fulfil its lofty task of saturating the heart of mankind with love, softening the customs of rude pagans, clearing away forests, transforming barren wastes into cultivated fields, planting the cross on chapels and churches, summoning men with the consecrated voice of the bell to the sermon which proclaims love and peace? Where did it open the doors of the school which prepares the intellect to satisfy its true destiny, and first qualifies man to become the image of God? By the old mansion this country, covered with marshes, moors; and impenetrable forests, was rendered what it now is; from it proceeded that fostering of science and the arts of which as yet I have seen little in your circles."

"Give us time," cried the theologian, "and perhaps in our home their flowering will attain an unsurpassed richness of development. With what loose bonds the humanists are still united to you!"

"And the finest intellect of all, the great scholar whose name you bear, though he deemed many things in our old home deserving of improvement, remained with us until his death. Jesus Christ is one, and so his Church must also remain. The only question is, What the Saviour still is to you Protestants, what he is to you, my friend?"

"Before how many saints, and many another whom your Church desires to honour, do you bow the knee?" Erasmus fervidly answered; "but we do so only to the august Trinity. And do you wish to know what Jesus Christ,

the Son, is to me? All, and more than all, is the answer; I live and breathe in my Saviour Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and throughout eternity."

The young theologian raised his sparkling eyes heavenward as he spoke, and continued: "Our doctrine is founded on him, his word, his love alone; and who among the enthusiastic heralds of Christianity in ancient times grasped faith in him with warmer sincerity than the very Martin Luther whom you would have led to the stake had not the Emperor Charles's plighted word been dearer to him than the approval of Rome? Oh, my friend, our young faith can also show its martyrs. Think of the Bohemian John Huss and the true Christians who, in the Netherlands and Spain, were burned at the stake and bled upon the scaffold because they read the Bible, the Word of God and their Saviour, and would rather die than deny it. If it should come to the worst, thousands here would also be ready to ascend the funeral pyre, and I at their head. If war is declared now, the Emperor Charles will gain the victory; and if he does not wish to withdraw in earnest from Romish influences, who can tell what will then await us Protestants? But I am not anxious about what may come. We German citizens, who are accustomed to guide our own destinies and maintain the system of government we arranged for ourselves, who built by our own strength our solid, comfortable, gable-roofed houses and noble, towering cathedrals, will also independently maintain the life of our minds and our souls. Rome, with her legions of priests, claimed the right not only to interfere in our civil life, but also to intrude into our houses, our married lives, and our nurseries. What could she not decide for the individual by virtue of the power she arrogates to bind and to loose, to forgive sins, and to open or to close the door of heaven for the dying? What she has done with the Church's gifts of grace we know.

"There is a deep, beautiful meaning underlying this idea. But it has degenerated into a base traffic in indulgences. We have sincere natures. For a long time we believed that salvation is gained by works—gifts to the Church, fasts, scourgings, seclusion from the world, self-confinement in a cell—and our wealth went to Rome. Rarely do we look vainly in the most beautiful sites on mountain or by river for a monastery! But at last the sound sense of Germany rebelled, and when Luther saw in Rome poor sufferers from gout and cripples ascending the stairs of the Lateran on their knees, a voice within cried out to him the great 'sola fide' on which our

faith is founded. On it alone, on devotion to Jesus Christ, depends our salvation."

"Then," asked Wolf, "you boldly deny any saving power to good works?"

"Yes," was the firm reply, "so far as they do not proceed from faith."

"As if the Church did not impose the same demand!" replied Wolf in a more animated tone. "True, base wrong has been done in regard to the sale of indulgences, but at the Council of Trent opposition will be made to it. No estimable priest holds the belief that money can atone for a sin or win the mercy of Heaven. With us also sincere repentance or devout faith must accompany the gift, the fasting, and whatever else the believer imposes upon himself here below. Man is so constituted that the only things which make a deep impression are those that the body also feels. The teacher's blow has a greater effect than his words, a gift produces more willingness than an entreaty, and the tendency toward asceticism and penance is genuinely Christian, and belongs to many a people of a different faith. Your Erasmus said that his heart was Catholic, but his stomach desired to be Protestant. You have an easier task than we."

"On the contrary," the young theologian burst forth. "It is mere child's play for you to obtain forgiveness by acts which really do not cut deeply into the flesh; but if one of us errs, how hard must be the conflict in his own breast ere he attains the conviction that his guilt is expiated by deep repentance and better deeds!"

"I can answer for that," here interposed old Ursel, who from her arm-chair had listened to the conversation between the two with intense interest.

"Good heavens! One went forth from the confessional as pure as a white dove after absolution had been received and the penance performed; but now that I belong to the Protestants, it is hard to reach a perfect understanding with the dear Saviour and one's self."

"And ought that to redound to the discredit of my faith?" asked Wolf. "So far as I have learned to know men, the majority, at least, will not hasten to attain our Ursel's complete understanding with one's self. I should even fear that there are many among you who no longer feel a desire to heed little sins and their forgiveness——"

Here Ursel again interrupted him with an exclamation of dissent, accompanied by a gesture of denial from her thin old hand; but Wolf

glanced at the clock which the precentor had received as a testimonial of affection from the members of the cathedral choir, which he had led for years.

It was already half past one, and for the sake of Ursel, who was still obliged to take care of herself, he urged departure, adding gaily that he had not the ability to “defend himself against two.” Erasmus, too, was surprised to find it so late, and, after shaking hands with the old woman and promising to visit her soon again, seized his cap. Wolf accompanied him.

The May night was sultry, and the air in the low room had been hot and oppressive.

He would gladly have dropped the useless discussion, but Erasmus’s heart was set upon winning his schoolmate to the doctrine which he believed with his whole soul. He toiled with the utmost zeal, but during their nocturnal walk also he failed to convince his opponent. Both were true to their religion. Erasmus saw in his faith the return to the pure teachings of Christ and the liberation of the human soul from ancient fetters; Wolf, who had had them pointed out to him at school by a Protestant teacher, by no means denied the abuses that had crept into his, but he clung with warm love to Holy Church, which offered his soul an abundance of what it needed.

His art certainly also owed to her its best development—from the inexhaustible spring of faith which is formed from thousands of rivulets and tributaries in the holy domain of the Catholic Church, and in it alone, the most sublime of all material flowed to the musician, and not to him only, but to the artist, the architect, and the sculptor. The fullest stream—he was well aware of it—came from ancient pagan times, but from whatever sources the spring was fed, the Church had understood how to assimilate, preserve, and sanctify it.

Erasmus listened silently while Wolf eagerly made these statements; but when the latter closed with the declaration that the evangelical faith would never attain the same power of elevating hearts, he interrupted the knight with the exclamation, “We shall have to wait for that!”

Luther, he went on, had given the most powerful encouragement to music, and the German Protestant composers even now were not so very far behind the Netherland ones. The Catholic Church could no longer claim the great Albrecht Durer, and, if art ceased to create images of the saints, with

which the childish minds of the common people practised idolatry, so much the better. The Infinite and Eternal was no subject for the artist. The humanization of God only belittled his infinite and illimitable nature. Earthly life offered art material enough. Man himself would be the worthiest model for imitation, and perhaps no earlier epoch had created handsomer likenesses of men and women than would now be produced by evangelical artists.

To their own surprise, during this conversation they had reached the Hiltner house, and Erasmus invited his friend to come to his room and over a glass of wine answer him, as he had had the last word. But Wolf had already drunk at his own home more of the fiery Wurzburg from the precentor's cellar than usual. Besides, much as he still had to say in reply to Erasmus, the sensible young man deemed it advisable to avoid the syndic's house for the present. The confessor's suspicion had been aroused, and De Soto was a Dominican, who certainly did not stand far from the Holy Inquisition.

Therefore while Erasmus, with burning head and great excitement, was still urging his friend to come in, Wolf unexpectedly bade him a hasty and resolute farewell.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Wolf left the Hiltner house behind him with the feeling that he had upheld the cause of his Church against the learned opponent to the best of his ability, and had not been defeated. Yet he was not entirely satisfied. In former years he had read the Hutten dialogues, and, though he disapproved of their assaults upon the Holy Father in Rome, he had warmly sympathized with the fiery knight's love for his native land.

Far as, at the court of Charles, the German ranked below the Netherlander, the Spaniard, and the Italian, Wolf was proud of being a German, and it vexed him that he had not at least made the attempt to repel the theologian's charge that the Catholic, to whom the authority of Rome was the highest, would be inferior to the Protestant in patriotism.

But he would have succeeded no better in convincing Erasmus than the learned theologians who, at the Emperor's instance, had held an earnest religious discussion in Ratisbon a short time before, had succeeded in arriving at even a remote understanding.

As he reached the Haidplatz new questions of closer interest were casting these of supreme importance into the shade.

He was to enter his home directly, and then the woman whom he loved would rest above him, and alone, unwatched, and unguarded, perhaps dream of another.

Who was the man for whose sake she withdrew from him the heart to whose possession he had the best and at any rate the oldest right?

Certainly not Baron Malfalconnet.

Neither could he believe it to be Peter Schlumperger or young Crafft.

Yet perhaps the fortunate man belonged to the court. If that was the case, how easy would the game now be made for him with the girl, who was guarded by no faithful eye!

His heart throbbed faster as he entered Red Cock Street.

The moon was still in the cloudless, starry sky, shining with her calm, silver radiance upon one side of the street. Barbara's bow-window was

touched by it, and—what did it mean?—a small lamp must still be burning in her room, for the window was illuminated, though but dimly. Perhaps she had kept the light because she felt timid in her lonely chamber. Now Wolf crossed obliquely toward his house.

Just at that moment he saw the tall figure of a man.

What was he doing there at this hour? Was it a thief or a burglar? There was no lack of evil-disposed folk in this time of want.

Wolf still wore his court costume, and the short dress sword which belonged to it hung in its sheath.

His heart beat quicker as he loosed the blade and advanced toward the suspicious night-bird.

Just then he saw the other calmly turn the big key and take it out of the door.

That could be no thief! No, certainly not!

It was a gentleman of tall stature, whose aristocratic figure and Spanish court costume were partially covered by a long cloak.

There was no doubt! Wolf could not be mistaken, for, while the former was putting the key in his pocket, the mantle had slipped from one shoulder.

“Malfalconnet,” muttered Wolf, grasping the hilt of his short sword more firmly.

But at the same moment the moonlight showed him the Spaniard’s face. A chill ran through his frame, followed by a feverish heat, for the nocturnal intruder into his house was not the baron, but Quijada, the noble Don Luis, his patron, who had just been lauding to the skies the virtues, the beauty, the goodness of the peerless Dona Magdalena de Ulloa, his glorious wife. He had intended to send Wolf, the friend and housemate of his victim, to Spain to become the instructor of his deceived wife.

He saw through the game, and it seemed as if he could not help laughing aloud in delight at his own penetration, in rage and despair.

How clearly, and yet how coarsely and brutally, it had all been planned!

The infamous scoundrel, who possessed so much influence over the Emperor, had first sent old Blomberg away; now he, Wolf, was to follow, that no one might stand between the game and the pursuer.

Barbara's lover must be Quijada. For the Spaniard's sake she had given him up, and perhaps even played the part of adviser in this abominable business. It must be so, for who else could know what she was to him?

Yet no! He himself had aided the guilty passion of this couple, for how warmly he had sung Barbara's praises to Don Luis! And then in how many a conversation with Barbara had Quijada's name been mentioned, and he had always spoken of this man with warm regard. Hence her remark that he himself deemed her lover worthy of esteem.

In a few seconds these thoughts darted through his heated brain with the speed of lightning.

The street began to whirl around him, and a deep loathing of the base traitor, a boundless hatred of the destroyer of his happiness, of the betrayed girl, and the life which led through such abysses overpowered the deluded man.

The infamous girl had just left her lover's arms, her kiss was doubtless still glowing on his faithless lips!

Wolf groaned aloud like a sorely stricken deer, and for a moment it seemed to him that the best course would be to put an end to his own ruined life. But rage and hate urged him upon another victim, and, unable to control himself, he rushed with uplifted blade upon the hypocritical seducer.

This utterly unexpected attack did not give Don Luis time to draw his sword, but, with ready presence of mind, he forced the hand wielding the weapon aside, and, while he felt a sharp pain in his left arm, seized the assassin with his right hand, swung his light figure upward, and with the strength and skill peculiar to him hurled it with all his might upon the stone steps of the dwelling.

Not a single word, only a savage cry of fury, followed by a piteous moan, had escaped Wolf's lips during this swift deed of violence.

The Spaniard scornfully thrust aside with his foot the inert body lying on the ground. His arrogance did not deem it worth while to ascertain what had befallen the murderer who had been punished. He had more important things to do, for his own blood was flowing in a hot, full stream over his hand.

Accustomed in bull fighting and in battle to maintain his calmness and caution even in the most difficult situation, he said to himself that, if his

wound should be connected with the murder before this house it would betray his master's secret to the Ratisbon courts of justice, and thereby to the public.

He had heard the skull of the lurking thief strike against the granite steps of the house. So the dark, motionless mass before him was probably a corpse. There was no hurry about that, but his own condition compelled him to take care of himself. Entering the shadow of a tall building opposite the dwelling, he assured himself that the street was entirely empty, and then, drawing the aching arm from the doublet, he examined the wound as well as the dim light would permit. It was deep, it is true, but the robber's weapon appeared merely to have cut the flesh.

A jerk, and Quijada had stripped the ruff from his neck, and, as this did not suffice, he cut with his sword blade and his teeth a piece of fine linen from his shirt.

This would do for the first bandage. The skilful hand which, in battle, had aided many a bleeding comrade soon completed the task.

Then he flung his uninjured cloak around him again, and turned toward the lifeless body at the foot of the steps.

There lay the murderer's weapon—a delicately fashioned short dress sword, with an ivory hilt, not the knife of a common highwayman.

That was the reason the wound was so narrow.

But who had sought his life with this dainty steel blade?

There were few at court who envied him the Emperor's favour—his office often compelled him to deny even persons of higher rank access to his Majesty; but he had never—this he could assure himself—treated even men of humble station harshly or unjustly. If he had offended any one by haughty self-confidence, it had been unintentional. He was not to blame for the manner natural to the Castilian.

Besides, he had little time for reflection; scarcely had he hastily wiped off with the little cloak that lay beside him the blood which covered the face of the prostrate man than he started back in horror, for the person who had sought his life was the very one whom he had honoured with his highest confidence, and had chosen as the teacher and companion of the wife who was dearer than his own existence.

Some cruel misunderstanding, some pitiable mistake must have been at work here, and he came upon the right trail speedily enough.

The hapless knight loved Barbara, and had taken him, Luis, for her betrayer and nocturnal visitor.

Fatal error of the Emperor, whose lamentable consequences were already beginning!

With sincere repentance for his needlessly violent act of defence, he bent over the severely injured man. His heart was still beating, but doubtless on account of the great loss of blood—it throbbed with alarming weakness. Don Luis also soon found a wound in the skull, which appeared to be fractured.

If speedy aid was not rendered, the unfortunate man was lost.

Quijada laid Wolf's head quickly and carefully on his cloak, which he placed in a roll beneath it, and then hurried to the Red Cock, where one servant was just opening the door and another was leading out two horses. The latter was Jan, Wolf's Netherland servant, who wanted to water the animals before starting on the journey.

He instantly recognised the nobleman; but the latter had resolved to keep the poor musician's attack a secret.

As Jan bowed respectfully to him, he ordered him and the servant of the Red Cock to leave everything and follow him. He had found a dead man in the street.

A few minutes after the three were standing at the steps of the house, before the object of their solicitude.

The groom of the Red Cock, who still held a lantern in his hand, though dawn was already beginning to glimmer faintly in the east, threw the light upon the face of the bleeding form, and Jan exclaimed in grief and terror that the injured man was his master.

The Brabant lad wailed, and the German, who had known the "precentor cavalier" all his life, joined in the lamentation; but Quijada induced them both to think only of saving the wounded nobleman.

The old groom, with savage imprecations upon the scoundrels who now infested their quiet streets, raised the wounded man's head and told Jan to lift his feet. Both were familiar with the house, and, while the servants bore Wolf up the narrow stairs, the proud Spanish grandee lighted their way with

the lantern, supporting the wounded man's injured head, with his free hand. At the door of the young knight's rooms he told the servants to attend to his needs, and then hurried back to the Golden Cross.

He found a great bustle prevailing there. Tilted wagons were being loaded with the regent's luggage, couriers and servants were rushing to and fro, and in the courtyard men were currying the horses which were to be ridden on the journey.

Don Luis paid no heed to all this, hastening first to the chapel to ask a young German chaplain to administer the sacrament to Sir Wolf Hartschwert, to whose house he hurriedly directed him. Then going swiftly to the third story, he waked Dr. Mathys, the Emperor's leech.

The portly physician rubbed his eyes angrily; but as soon as he learned for whom he was wanted and how serious was the injury, he showed the most praiseworthy haste and, with the attendant who carried his surgical instruments and medicines, was standing beside the sufferer's couch almost as soon as the wounded man.

The result of his examination was anything but gratifying.

He would gladly do all that his skill would permit for the knight, but in so serious a fracture of the skull only the special mercy of Heaven could preserve life.

Dr. Doll, the best physician in Ratisbon, assisted him with the bandaging, and old Ursel had suddenly recovered her lost strength.

When the maid-servant asked timidly if she should not call Wawerl down from upstairs, she shrugged her shoulders with a movement which the one-eyed girl understood, and which signified anything but acceptance of the proposal.

Yet Barbara would perhaps have rendered most efficacious assistance.

True, she was still sleeping the sound slumber of wearied youth. Directly after her return from her imperial lover, she had gone to rest in the little chamber behind the bow-windowed room. It looked out upon the courtyard, and was protected from the noise of the street. When she heard sounds in the house, she thought that old Ursel was ill and they were summoning the doctor. For a moment she felt an impulse to rise and go downstairs, but she did not like to leave her warm bed, and Wolf would manage without her. She had always lacked patience to wait upon the sick, and Ursel had grown

so harsh and disagreeable since she joined the Protestants. Finally, Barbara had brought home exquisite recollections of her illustrious lover, which must not be clouded by the suffering of the old woman, whom, besides, she could rarely please.

She did not learn what had happened until she went to mass, and then it weighed heavily upon her heart that she had not given Wolf her assistance, especially as she suspected, with strange certainty, that she herself was connected with this terrible misfortune.

Now—ah, how gladly!—she would have helped Ursel with the nursing, but she forbade her to enter the sick-room. The most absolute quiet must reign there. No one was permitted to cross the threshold except herself and an elderly nun, whom the Clares had sent for the sake of the wounded man's dead mother. A Dominican also soon came, whom the old woman could not shut out because he was despatched by the Queen of Hungary, and the violinist Massi, whom she gladly welcomed as a good friend of her Wolf. He proved himself loyal, and devoted every leisure hour of the night to the sufferer. Barbara knocked at the door very often, but Ursel persisted in refusing admittance. She knew that the girl had rejected her darling's proposal, and it was a satisfaction to her when, toward noon, the former told her that she was about to leave the house to go to Prebrunn.

A cart would convey her luggage, but it would be only lightly laden. Fran Lerch went with the baggage.

An hour later Barbara herself moved into the little castle, which had been refurnished for her. Mounted upon a spirited bay horse from her Prebrunn stables, she rode beside the Marquise de Leria's huge litter to her new home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The very harsh execrations which the regent bestowed upon pleasant Ratisbon when she learned what had befallen Sir Wolf Hartschwert were better suited to the huntress than to the queen and sister of a mighty emperor.

Murderous knaves who, in the heart of the city, close to the imperial precincts, endangered the lives of peaceful people at night! It was unprecedented, and yet evidently only a result of the heretical abuses.

She had sprung into the saddle—she always travelled on horseback—in the worst possible mood, but had urged all who were near the Emperor Charles's person, and also the almoner Pedro de Soto, to remember the wounded man and do everything possible to aid his recovery.

She did not mention Barbara, even by a single word, in her farewell to her royal brother.

The latter had intended to accompany her a portion of the way, but a great quantity of work—not least in consequence of the loss of time occasioned by the new love life—had accumulated, and he therefore preferred to take leave of his sister in the courtyard of the Golden Cross.

There, with his assistance, she mounted her horse.

Quijada, who usually rendered her this service, stood aloof, silent and pale. The regent had noticed it, and attributed his appearance to grief for her departure. No one at court held a higher place in her regard, and it pleased her that he, too, found it so hard to do without her.

As her horse started, her last salute was to the monarch and to him.

Malfalconnet, whose eyes were everywhere, noticed it, and whispered to the Marquise de Leria, who was standing beside him: "Either Don Luis would do well to intrust himself to our Mathys's treatment, or this gentleman is an accomplished actor, or our most gracious lady has tampered with the fidelity of this most loyal husband, and the paternosters and pilgrimages of Dona Magdalena de Ulloa have been vain."

A few minutes after, the Emperor Charles was sitting at the writing table examining, with the Bishop of Arras, a mountain of reports and documents. Two or three hours elapsed ere he received ambassadors and gave audiences, and during that time Quijada was not needed by his royal master.

He had previously had leisure only to provide for the wounded man, cleanse himself from blood, change his dress, bid Queen Mary farewell, and bandage the hurt afresh. He had done this with his own hands because he distrusted the reticence of his extremely skilful but heedless French valet.

When he returned to his lodgings, Master Adrian followed him, and modestly, yet with all the warmth of affection which he felt for this true friend of his master, entreated him to permit him to speak freely. He had perceived, not only by the pallor of Don Luis's cheeks, but other signs, that he was suffering, and in the name of his wife, who, when her husband was summoned from her side, had urged him with the earnestness of anxious love to watch over him, begged him not to force himself beyond his strength to perform his service, if his sufferings corresponded with his appearance.

Don Luis looked sharply into the faithful face, and what he found there induced him to admit that he was concealing a wound. Adrian silently beckoned to him, and led the way into his own room, where he entreated Don Luis to show him the injury. When he saw it, his by no means mobile features blanched.

He knew that Quijada had accompanied Barbara home that night. On this errand, he was sure of it, Don Luis must have received this serious wound at the same time as Wolf, or even obtained it from the young knight himself. Besides, he felt certain that the object of the Emperor's love was connected with both disasters. Yet not a word which could have resembled a question escaped his beardless lips while he examined, sewed, and bandaged the deep sword thrust with the skill and care of a surgeon.

When he had finished his task, he thanked Don Luis for the confidence reposed in him.

Quijada pressed his hand gratefully, and begged him to do his best that no one, not even the Emperor, should learn anything about this vexatious mischance. Then, not from curiosity, for grave motives, he desired to know what relations existed between Sir Wolf Hartschwert and Barbara.

The answer was somewhat delayed, for Wolf had won the affection of the influential valet, and what Master Adrian had learned concerning the young knight's personal affairs from himself, his own wife in Brussels, and the violinist Massi, he would have confided to no one on earth except Quijada, and perhaps not even to him had he not accompanied his inquiry with the assurance that what he intrusted to him would remain buried in his soul, and be used only for Wolf's advantage.

This promise loosed the cautious valet's tongue. He knew his man, and, when Don Luis also desired to learn whether the knight had already discovered that Barbara was now the Emperor's love, he thought he could answer in the negative.

What he had heard of Wolf's relation to Barbara was only that the two had spent their early youth in the same house, that the knight loved the singer, but that she had rejected his suit.

This avowal appeared to satisfy Quijada, and it really did calm him. He now believed that Wolf had misjudged him, and, supposing that he was coming from a meeting with the girl he loved, had drawn his sword against him. The manner in which he had attempted to rid himself of the rival seemed criminal enough, yet the nocturnal attack had scarcely concerned him personally, and he would not condemn the man who was usually so calm and sensible without having heard him.

If Wolf lived—and he desired it from his heart—this act, which he appeared to have committed in a fit of blind jealousy, should do him no injury.

With a warm clasp of the hand, which united these two men more firmly than a long period of mutual intercourse, each went his way in quiet content.

In the afternoon Master Adrian was sent out to Prebrunn to announce to Barbara a visit from the Emperor after vespers.

Wolf, it is true, had told her many things about Adrian Dubois, and informed her how much pleasure he had had at Brussels in visiting him and his sensible, cheerful wife, how implicitly the Emperor trusted him, how faithfully he served him, how highly the ambassadors and the most aristocratic gentlemen esteemed him, and how great an advantage it had been to him, Wolf, to possess his friendship; yet she thought proper to treat the valet with the haughty reserve which beseemed her as the Emperor's

favourite, and which yesterday evening had won the approval of the Wittenberg theologian and of Wolf.

But Master Adrian appeared to take no notice of her manner, and performed his errand with businesslike composure.

The Emperor Charles wished to know how she liked her new home.

In reality she had found its beauty and comfort far beyond her expectations, had clapped her hands in surprise when she was conducted by the marquise through the new abode, and, under the guidance of the house steward Steen, had been shown the kitchen, the stable, the four horses, and the garden. In her reception-room she found a lute and a harp of exquisitely beautiful workmanship, and a small Milan cabinet made of ebony inlaid with ivory, in which was a heavy casket bound with silver. The key had been given to her the evening before by the regent herself, and when Barbara opened it she discovered so many shining zecchins and ducats that a long time was occupied when she obeyed Fran Lerch's request to count them.

The dressmaker from the Grieb was already in her service, and had been a witness of her sincere delight and grateful pleasure. The second hour after their arrival she had helped her to employ Frau Lamperi, the maid whom the steward called the 'garde-robiere', and had already been to the city herself to buy, for her fortunate "darling" costly but, on account of the approach of summer, light materials. But she had seen Master Adrian corning, and, while he was passing through the garden, gave her the advice by no means to praise what she found here, but to appear as though she had been accustomed to such surroundings, and found this and that not quite worthy of her, but needing addition and improvement.

At first Barbara had succeeded in assuming the airs of the spoiled lady, but when Adrian, with prosaic definiteness, asked for details, and she saw herself compelled to begin the game of dissimulation anew, it grew repugnant to her.

To her artist nature every restraint soon became irksome, especially so unpleasant a one, which was opposed to her character, and ere she was her self aware of it she was again the vivacious Wawerl, and frankly and freely expressed her pleasure in the beautiful new things she owed to her lover's kindness.

A smile, so faint and brief that Barbara did not perceive it, was hovering meanwhile around the valet's thin lips. The causes of this strange change of opinion and mood would have been sufficiently intelligible to him, even had he not perceived one of the reproving glances which Frau Lerch cast at Barbara.

She, too, had met one; but since she had once obeyed the impulse of her own nature, and felt content in doing so, she troubled herself no further about the monitor, and there was nothing in her new home which was not far more beautiful than what she had had in the precentor's modest house.

The marquise displeased her most deeply, and this also she plainly told Master Adrian, and begged him to inform his Majesty, with her dutiful greeting. His best gift was the precaution which he had taken that she should live apart from the old monkey.

The valet received this commission, like all the former ones, with a slight, grave bow.

On the whole, the experienced man was not ill-pleased with her, only it seemed to him strange that Barbara did not mention the serious misfortune which had befallen Wolf; yet she knew from his own lips that he loved the knight, and had learned that the latter's life was in serious danger.

So he turned the conversation to his young friend, and in an instant a remarkable change took place in Barbara. Wolf's sorrowful fate and severe wound had weighed heavily upon her heart, but what the present brought was so novel and varied that it had crowded the painful event, near as was the past to which it belonged, into the shadow.

She now desired to know who the murderer was who had attacked him, and cursed him with impetuous wrath. She thought it base and shameful that she had been denied access to his couch.

Poor, poor Wolf!

Of all the men on earth, he was the best! Meanwhile tears of genuine compassion flowed from her eyes and, with passionate vehemence, she declared that no power in the world should keep her from him. The mere sound of her voice, she knew, would be a cordial to him.

So Master Adrian had not been mistaken.

It was not only in song that she was capable of deep feeling, and the love which had seized the Emperor Charles so late, and yet so powerfully, had

not gone far astray.

He could scarcely have bestowed it upon a more beautiful woman. While pleasure in her new surroundings held sway over her, it was a real pleasure to see her face. But this creature, so richly gifted by the grace of God, was not suited for his modest young friend; this had become especially evident to him when an almost evil expression escaped her lips while she emptied the vial of her wrath upon Wolf's murderer.

If she deemed herself worthy of his master's love, she would not lack Adrian's protection, which was the more effective the more persistently he refrained from asking of the Emperor's favour even the slightest thing for himself, his wife, or others; that the time would come when she would need it, he was certain.

No one knew the Emperor so well as he, and he saw before him the cliffs which threatened to shatter the little ship of this love bond. Already an imprudent violation of his extreme sense of the dignity of majesty, or of the confidence which he bestowed upon her, might become fatal to it.

But, ardently as she might return his love, loyal and discreet as her conduct might be, there were other grave perils menacing the tie which united the Emperor to Barbara.

Charles was a man of action, of work, of fulfilment of duty. The moment that he perceived this love bond would impede his progress toward the lofty goals to which he aspired might easily mark the beginning of its end.

Now, in the midst of peace, such a result was scarcely to be feared; but if it came to fighting—and many a sign showed Adrian that war was not far distant—a great change would take place in his master's character; the general would assert his rights. Every other consideration would then be pitilessly thrust aside and, if Charles still remained loyal to his affection, he would have fallen under the spell of one of those great passions which defy every assault of time and circumstance and find an end only in death. But the sharp-sighted man could not believe in such love on his master's part; in his nature the claims of reason threw those of the heart too far into the shade. If Barbara was wise, her daily prayer should be for the maintenance of peace.

To speak of these fears to the care-free girl would have been cruel, but he could probably give her a useful hint as opportunity offered.

Accustomed to perform his duty silently and, where speech was necessary, to study the utmost brevity, he had not learned the art of clothing his thoughts in pleasing forms. So, without circumlocution, he whispered to Barbara the advice to send away Frau Lerch, who was not fit for her service, and as soon as possible to dismiss her entirely.

The girl flew into a rage, and no whisper or urgency from another, but her own unbridled, independent nature, which during continual struggle had been steeled to assert herself, in spite of her poverty, among the rich companions of her own rank, as well as the newly awakened haughty consciousness that now, as the object of the mightiest monarch's love, she was exalted far above the companions of her own rank—led her to rebuff the warning of the well-meaning man with a sharpness that it ill beseemed one so much younger to use toward the Emperor's gray-haired messenger.

The valet shrugged his shoulders compassionately, and his regular features, whose expression varied only under the influence of strong, deep feelings, distinctly betrayed how sincerely he lamented her conduct.

Barbara noticed it, and instantly remembered what Wolf had told her about him and his wife. She did not think of the influence which he exercised upon the Emperor and the service which he might render her, but all the more vividly of his steadfast, devoted loyalty, and what he was and had accomplished for the man whom she loved, and, seized with sincere repentance, obeying a powerful impulse, she held out her hand with frank cordiality just as he was already bowing in farewell. Adrian hesitated a moment.

What did this mean?

What accident was causing this new change of feeling in this April day of a girl?

But when her sparkling blue eyes gazed at him so brightly and at the same time so plainly showed that she knew she had wronged him, he clasped the hand, and his face again wore a friendly expression.

Then Barbara laughed in her bewitching, bell-like tones and, like a naughty child begging forgiveness for a trivial fault, asked him gaily not to take offence at her foolish arrogance. All the new things here had somewhat turned her silly brain. She knew how faithfully he served her Charles, and for that reason she could not help liking him already.

“If you have any cause to find fault with me,” she concluded merrily, “out with it honestly.” Then addressing Frau Lerch, not as though she were speaking to a servant, but to an older friend, she asked her to leave her alone with Herr Adrian a short time; but she insisted positively on having her own way when the dressmaker remarked that she did not know why, after the greatest secret of all had been forced upon her, her discretion should be distrusted.

As soon as she had retired the valet entreated Barbara to beware of the advice of this woman, whose designs he saw perfectly. He, Adrian, would wish her to have a companion of nobler nature and more delicate perceptions.

But this warning seemed scarcely endurable to Barbara. Although she did not fly into a passion again, she asked in an irritated tone whether Adrian had been granted the power of looking into another’s soul. What she perceived with absolute certainty in Frau Lerch, who, as her dead mother’s maid, had tended her as a child, was great faithfulness and secrecy and the most skilful hands. Still, she promised to remember his well-meant counsel.

Adrian’s warning always to consider what a position her lord occupied in the world, and to beware of crossing the border line which separated the monarch from his subjects, and even from those who were of the highest rank and dearest to him, was gratefully received, for she remembered the sharp rebuff which she had already experienced from her lover. It proved this excellent man’s good will toward her, and her eyes fairly hung upon his lips as he informed her of some of his master’s habits and peculiarities which she must regard. He warned her, with special earnestness, not to allow herself to be used by others to win favour or pardon for themselves or their kindred. She might perhaps find means for it later; now she would at once awaken in the extremely suspicious monarch doubt of her unselfishness.

This was certainly good advice, and Barbara confessed to the valet that the marquise had requested her at dinner that day to intercede for her unfortunate son, who, unluckily, had the misfortune to be misunderstood by the Emperor Charles. Master Adrian had expected something of the kind, for the lady in waiting had more than once urged him also to obtain his Majesty’s pardon for this ruined profligate, the shame of his noble race. He had persistently refused this request, and now enjoined it upon Barbara to

follow his example. Before leaving her, he undertook to send her tidings of Wolf's health now and then by the violinist Massi, as he had not leisure to do it himself. At the same time he earnestly entreated her to repress her wish to see the sufferer again, and to bear in mind that she could receive no visitor, take no step in this house or in the city, which would not be known in the Golden Cross.

Barbara passionately demanded to know the spy who was watching her, and whether she must beware specially of the marquise, her French maid, the Spanish priest who accompanied the old woman as her confessor, the garde-robiere Lamperi, who nevertheless had a good face, or who else among the servants.

On this point, however, the valet would or could give no information. He knew only his master's nature. Just as he was better acquainted with every province than the most experienced governor, with every band of soldiers than the sergeant, so nothing escaped him which concerned the private lives of those whom he valued. It need not grieve her that he watched her so carefully. Her acts and conduct would not become a matter of indifference to him until he withdrew his confidence from her or his love grew cold.

The deep impression which this information made upon the girl surprised Adrian. While he was speaking her large eyes dilated more and more, and with hurried breathing she listened until he had finished. Then pressing both hands upon her temples, she frantically exclaimed: "But that is horrible! it is base and unworthy! I will not be a prisoner—! will not, can not bear it! My whole heart is his, and never belonged to any other; but, rather than be unable to take a step that is not watched, like the Sultan's female slaves, I will return to my father."

Here she hesitated; for the first time since she had entered Prebrunn she remembered the old man who for her sake had been sent out into the world. But she soon went on more calmly: "I even permitted my father to be taken from me and sent away, perhaps to death. I gave everything to my sovereign, and if he wants my life also," she continued with fresh emotion, "he may have it; but the existence of a caged bird!—that will destroy me."

Here the sensible man interrupted her with the assurance that no one, last of all his Majesty, thought of restricting her liberty more than was reasonable. She would be permitted to walk and to use her horses exactly as

she pleased, only the object of her walks and rides must be one which she could mention to her royal lover without timidity.

Barbara, still with quickened breathing, then put the question how she could know this; and Adrian, with a significant smile, replied that her heart would tell her, and if it should ever err—of this he was certain—the Emperor Charles.

With these words he took leave of her to go, on behalf of his master, to the marquise, and Barbara stood motionless for some time, gazing after him.

In the Golden Cross Quijada asked Adrian what he thought of the singer, and it was some time ere he answered deliberately: “If only I knew exactly myself, your lordship—I am only a plain man, who wishes every one the best future. Here I do so out of regard for his Majesty, Sir Wolf Hartschwert, and the inexperienced youth of this marvellously beautiful creature. But if you were to force me by the rack to form a definite opinion of her, I could not do it. The most favourable would not be too good, the reverse scarcely too severe. To reconcile such contrasts is beyond my power. She is certainly something unusual, that will fit no mould with which I am familiar.”

“If you had a son,” asked Don Luis, “would you receive her gladly as a daughter-in-law?”

A gesture of denial from the valet gave eloquent expression of his opinion; but Quijada went on in a tone of anxious inquiry: “Then what will she whom he loves be to the master whose happiness and peace are as dear to you as to me?”

Adrian started, and answered firmly: “For him, it seems to me, she will perhaps be the right one, for what power could she assert against his? And, besides, there is something in his Majesty, as well as in this girl, which distinguishes them from other mortals. What do I mean by that? I see and hear it, but I can neither exactly understand nor name it.”

“That might be difficult even for a more adroit speaker,” replied Quijada; “but I think I know to what you allude. You and I, Master Adrian, have hearts in our breasts, like thousands of other people, and in our heads what is termed common sense. In his Majesty something else is added. It seems as though he has at command a messenger from heaven who brings him thought and decisions.”

“That’s it!” exclaimed Adrian eagerly; “and whenever she raises her voice to sing, a second one stands by the side of this Barbara Blomberg.”

“Only we do not yet know,” observed Quijada anxiously, “whether this second one with the singer is a messenger from heaven, like his Majesty’s, or an emissary of hell.”

The valet shrugged his shoulders irresolutely, and said quietly: “How could I venture to express an opinion about so noble an art? But when I was listening to the hymn to the Virgin yesterday, it seemed as if an angel from heaven was singing from her lips.”

“Let us hope that you may be right,” replied the other. “But no matter! I think I know whence comes the invisible ally his Majesty has at his disposal. It is the Holy Ghost that sends him—there is no doubt of it! His control is visible everywhere. With miraculous power he urges him on in advance of all others, and even of himself. This becomes most distinctly perceptible in war.”

“That is true,” declared the valet, “and your lordship has surely hit the right clew. For”—he glanced cautiously around him and lowered his voice —“whenever I put on my master’s armour I always feel how he is trembling—yes, trembling, your lordship. His face is livid, and the drops of perspiration on his brow are not due solely to the heat.”

“And then,” cried Quijada, his black eyes sparkling with a fiery light —“then in his agitation he scarcely knows what he is doing as I hold the stirrup for him. But when, once in his saddle, his divine companion descends to him, he dashes upon the foe like a whirlwind and, wherever he strikes, how the chips fly! The strongest succumb to his blows. ‘Victory! victory!’ men shout exultingly wherever he goes. Even in the last accursed Algerian defeat his helper was at his side; for, Adrian”—here he, too, lowered his voice—“without him and his wonderful power every living soul of us, down to the last boat and camp follower, would have been destroyed.”

CHAPTER XXV.

After this conversation the two men who, in different positions, stood nearest to the Emperor Charles, placed no obstacle in Barbara's way.

The third—the Bishop of Arras—also showed a friendly spirit toward the Emperor's love affair. True, he had not been taken into his confidence, but he rarely failed to be present when Barbara sang with the boy choir, or alone, in the Golden Cross, before the monarch or distinguished guests.

Charles summoned her there almost daily, and always at different hours.

This was done to strengthen the courtiers and the citizens of Ratisbon in the belief that Barbara owed his favour solely to her singing.

Granvelle, who appreciated and was interested in music as well as in painting and sculpture, found real pleasure in listening to Barbara, yet while doing so he did not forget that she might be of service to him. If she only remained on good terms with him she would, he was sure of that, whether willing or not, be used as his tool.

Spite of his nine-and-twenty years, he forbade himself to cherish any other wishes, because he would have regarded it treachery to the royal master whom he served with faithful devotion. But, as he accepted great gifts without ever allowing himself to be tempted to treason or forgetfulness of duty, so he did not reject little tokens of friendliness from Barbara, and of these she showed no lack. The young Bishop of Arras was also an extremely fine-looking man, whose clever brain and bright, penetrating glance harmonized with his great intellect and his position. Wolf had already told her how much the monarch regarded the opinion of this counsellor.

The fourth person whose good will had been represented to her as valuable was the almoner, Pedro de Soto; but he, who usually understood how to pay homage to beautiful women in the most delicate manner, kept rigidly aloof.

True, he had placed no obstacle in the way of the late kindling of the heart of his imperial master, but since his servant's report, from which it appeared that Barbara was on friendly terms with heretics, and therefore

cherished but a lukewarm devotion to her own faith, she was no longer the same to him. In Spain this would have been enough to deliver her to the Holy Inquisition. Here, however, matters were different. Everywhere he saw the lambs associating with the wolves, and the larger number of the relatives of the Emperor's love had become converts to heresy. Therefore indulgence was demanded, and De Soto would have gladly been convinced of Barbara's orthodoxy under such difficult circumstances. But if it proved that the girl not only associated with heretics, but inclined to their error, then gentle inaction must be transformed into inexorable sternness, even though the rejuvenating power which she exerted upon the monarch were tenfold stronger than it doubtless was; for what danger might threaten the Emperor and Christianity from the bewitching woman who seemed to love Charles, if she undertook to influence him in favour of the new doctrines, which, in the eyes of every earnest Dominican, the Emperor treated far too leniently!

He, the confessor, even knew that Charles considered several demands of the Protestants to which the Church could never consent, entirely justifiable —nay, that he deemed a reformation of the Church by the council now in session at Trent extremely desirable.

Therefore it was a duty to withhold from him every influence which could favour these pernicious views and wishes, and Pedro de Soto had also been young and knew only too well what power so beautiful a woman, with such bewitching gifts, could exert upon the man whose heart cherishes her.

So, immediately after Barbara's entrance into Prebrunn, the confessor adopted his measures. Although the conversation to which he subjected her had resulted in her favour, he had deemed it beneficial to place a priest who was devoted to him among the ecclesiastics in the little castle.

To surround her with spies chosen from the lay class was repugnant to his lofty nature. Besides, they would have been superfluous; for a short time before his servant Cassian had asked permission to marry the marquise's French maid, and Alphonsine, who was neither young nor pretty, was inclined to all sorts of intrigues. She supplied slow, pious Cassian's deficiencies in the best possible manner. A chance word from the distinguished prelate had sufficed to make it their duty to watch Barbara and her visitors.

In Alphonsine's mistress, the Marquise de Leria, the almoner also possessed a willing tale-bearer. She had avoided him since his refusal to commend her ruined son to the favour of his imperial penitent. Now, unasked, she had again approached him, and her explanation first gave many an apparently unimportant communication from the servants its real value.

The atmosphere of the court was her vital air. Even when she had voluntarily offered to take Barbara under her charge, in a secluded house in the suburb, she had been aware how greatly she would miss the presence of royalty. Yet she would have endured far more difficult things, for a thousand signs betrayed that this time his Majesty's heart had not been merely superficially touched, and Barbara's traits of character made it appear probable that, like many a beauty at the court of Francis I of France, she might obtain an influence over the Emperor. If this occurred, the marquise had found the most powerful tool for the deliverance of her son.

This hope filled the old noblewoman's heart and brain. It was her last, for the Emperor was the only person who could save the worthless idol of her soul from ruin, and yet, when she had grovelled at his knees in her despair, she received an angry repulse and the threat of being instantly deprived of her position if she ever again attempted to speak to him about this vexatious matter. She knew only too well that Charles would keep his word, and therefore had already induced every person whom she believed possessed even a small share of influence over the monarch to intercede for her, but they had been no less sharply rebuffed than herself; for the sovereign, usually so indulgent to the reckless pranks of the young nobles, would not even hear the name of the aristocratic sharper, who was said to have sold the plans of the fortifications to France.

Charles now loved a woman whom, with swift presence of mind, she had bound to herself, and what no one else had succeeded in doing Barbara might accomplish.

Therefore the marquise had retired to the solitude which she hated, and hourly humbled herself to cringing flattery of a creature whom, on account of her birth, she scorned.

But Barbara was warned and, difficult as it often was for her to withstand the humble entreaties to which the old lady in waiting frequently condescended, persisted in her refusal.

Yet the unhappy mother did not give up hope, for as soon as the singer committed any act which she was obliged to conceal she could obtain power over her. So she kept her eyes open and, whenever the Emperor sought the young girl and was alone with her, she stole into the garden and peered through the badly fitting window shutters into the lighted room which was the scene of the happiness of the ill-matched lovers.

What she overheard, however, only increased the feeling of powerlessness against the hated creature whom she so urgently needed; for the tenderness which Charles showed Barbara was so great that it not only filled the marquise with surprise and bitter envy, but also awakened the conviction that it must be a small matter for the singer to obtain from so ardent a lover far greater things than she had asked.

So she continued to watch and listen unweariedly, day after day and evening after evening, but always in vain. She had not the most trivial thing for which Barbara could be seriously reproached to report to the confessor; yet De Soto desired nothing better, for Barbara still exerted an extremely favourable influence upon the Emperor's mood. Therefore it vexed him that Cassian informed him of many things which prevented his relying firmly upon her orthodoxy.

At any rate, there were Protestants among her visitors and, unfortunately, they included Herr Peter Schlumperger, whom De Soto knew as an active promoter of the apostasy of the Ratisbon burghers. He had called upon her the second day after her arrival and remained a long time but, it is true, had not appeared again. With the others also she held no regular intercourse—nay, she scarcely seemed to enjoy their visits. Thus the daughters of the Woller family from the Ark, who had appeared one afternoon, had been detained only a little longer by her than other Protestant matrons and maidens.

All this was scarcely sufficient to foster his anxiety; but Cassian reported one visit with which the case was different. Barbara had not only received this guest alone, but she had kept him more than an hour, and the servant could swear that the young man to whom she sang long songs—which, it is true, sounded like church music—to the lute and also to the harp, was Erasmus Eckhart, the adopted son of the archtraitor, Dr. Hiltner, who had just obtained the degree of Master of Arts in Wittenberg. This seemed suspicious, and induced De Soto to investigate the matter thoroughly.

Erasmus had come in the morning, at a time when the Emperor never visited Barbara. Nothing remarkable had taken place during their interview, but Cassian had heard her dismiss him with a warning which, even to a less distrustful person, would have seemed suspicious. Why had she assured the Wittenberg theologian, as she extended her hand to him in farewell, that what he offered her had given her great pleasure, and she would gladly invite him to bring her similar things often, but must deny herself this gratification from motives which he could imagine? His urgent entreaty at least to be permitted to call on her sometimes she had curtly and positively refused, but the Wittenberg heretic did not allow himself to be rebuffed, for Cassian had seen him several times in the neighbourhood of the castle.

There was as little cause to object to the visits paid to her by Gombert, Appenzelder, Damian Feys, occasionally some noblemen or guests of the court, and once even by no less a personage than the Bishop of Arras, as to the rides she took every afternoon; for the latter were always under the charge of Herr de Fours, an old equerry of the Emperor, and in the company of several courtiers, among whom Baron Malfalconnet was often included. A number of gay young pages always belonged to this brilliant cavalcade, whose number never lacked the handsome sixteen-year-old Count Tassis, who spent his whole large stock of pocket money in flowers which he sent every morning to Barbara.

The confessor was glad to hear that the estimable violinist Massi frequently visited the girl, for he was firm in the faith, and that he brought her tidings of the sorely wounded Sir Wolf Hartschwert could only be beneficial, for perhaps he warned her of the seriousness of life and that there were other things here below than the joy of love, jest, and laughter. The almoner’s doubt of Wolf’s orthodoxy had been entirely dispelled by his confession. Men do not deceive in the presence of death.

It would have been a genuine boon had Barbara selected him to open her heart to him in the confessional, for her relation to the wounded man rendered it difficult for him to trust her entirely.

Wolf’s thoughts in his fever constantly dwelt upon her, and he sometimes accused her of the basest treachery, sometimes coupled her name with Malfalconnet’s, sometimes with Luis Quijada’s. The Emperor’s, on the contrary, he had not mentioned.

He must love Barbara with ardent passion, and she, too, still seemed warmly attached to him, for to see him again she had bravely exposed herself to serious danger.

Eye and ear witnesses had reported that, notwithstanding his Majesty's positive orders to avoid her old home, she had entered the house and the knight's apartments, knelt beside his couch, and even kissed his weak, burning hand with tender devotion.

But though she still retained a portion of her former affection for Wolf Hartschwert, she loved the Emperor Charles with passionate fervour. Even the marquise did not venture to doubt this. Often as she had watched the meetings of the lovers, she had marvelled at the youthful ardour of the monarch, the joyous excitement with which Barbara awaited him, and her sorrowful depression when he left her. During the first week the old noblewoman thought that she had never met a happier pair. The almoner deemed it unworthy of him to listen to a report of the caresses which she scornfully mentioned.

The time even came when he no longer needed confirmation from others, and forbade himself to doubt Barbara's fidelity to her religion; for at the end of the first week in Prebrunn she had desired to ask a servant of the Church what she must do to make herself worthy of such abundance of the highest happiness, and to atone for the sin she was committing through her love.

In doing so she had opened her heart to the confessor with childlike frankness, and what De Soto heard on this occasion sincerely delighted him and endeared to him this thoroughly sound, beautiful creature overmastered by a first great passion. He believed her, and indignantly rejected what the spies afterward brought to him.

Yet he did not close his ears to the marquise when, in her clever, entertaining way, she told him what, against her will, she had overheard in consequence of the careless construction of the little castle, built only for a summer residence, or had seen during a walk in the garden when the shutters, through forgetfulness, had not been closed.

How should he not have heard gladly that the monarch, at every interview with Barbara, listened to her singing with special pleasure?

At first she chose grave, usually even religious songs, and among them Charles's favourite was the "Quia amore langueo."

To listen to these deeply felt tones of yearning always seemed to possess a fresh charm for him.

No wonder!

The singer understood how to produce a new effect each time by means of wonderful gradations of expression in the comprehension and execution.

Once she had also succeeded in cheering her lover with Perissone Cambio's merry singing lesson on the 'ut re mi fa sol', and again with Willaert's laughing song, "Sempre mi ridesta."

Two days later there had again been a great deal of laughing because Barbara undertook to sing to his Majesty another almost recklessly merry song by the same composer. The marquise knew it, and declared that Barbara's style and voice did not suit such things. She admitted that her execution of serious, especially religious and solemn compositions, was not amiss—nay, often it was wonderfully fine—but in such secular tunes her real nature appeared too plainly, and the skilful singer became a Bacchante.

It had been a sorry pleasure to her to watch the boisterous manner and singing of this creature, who had been far too highly favoured by the caprice of Fortune.

These reckless songs, unless she was mistaken, had also been by no means pleasing to his Majesty. The light had fallen directly upon his face just as she happened to glance up at the house from under the group of lindens, and she had distinctly seen him angrily thrust out his lower lip, which every one near his person knew was a sign of extreme displeasure.

But the girl had gone beyond all bounds. Old as she was, she could not help blushing at the mere thought of it. In her reckless mood she had probably forgotten that she had drawn her imperial lover into her net by arts of an entirely different nature. The almoner listened incredulously, for in his youth the Emperor Charles had joined in the wildest songs of the soldiery, and had well understood, on certain occasions, how to be merry with the merry, laugh and carouse in a Flemish tavern. After the confession the almoner heard things to which he would gladly have shut his ears, though they proved that the time which the marquise had spent at the French court had benefited her powers of observation.

Three days before the Emperor, for the first time, had seriously found fault with Barbara.

It had been impossible for the lady in waiting to discover the cause; but what she knew certainly was that her lover's censure had roused the girl to vehement contradiction, and that his Majesty, after a sharp reply, had been on the point of leaving her. True, the reckless beauty had repented her imprudent outburst of wrath speedily enough, and had understood how to conciliate the far too indulgent sovereign by such humility and such sweet tenderness that he probably must have forgiven her—at least the farewell had been as affectionate as ever.

Nevertheless, on the following evening, for the first time, he did not come to the castle, and the marquise had feared that the Emperor might now withdraw his favour from Barbara, which would have been too soon for her own wishes.

But yesterday evening, after sunset, the dark litter, to the old noblewoman's relief, had again stopped behind the garden gate, and the pleasure of having her lover again had so deeply overjoyed Barbara that he, too, was infected by her radiant delight.

Then, in the midst of the most tender caresses, he had been summoned out of the room, and when he returned, with frowning brow, the marquise had witnessed at least the commencement of a scene which seemed to justify her opinion that his Majesty: would have no taste for Barbara's utter freedom from restraint and gay secular songs.

Unfortunately, she had been prematurely driven from her post of observation; but she had seen the Emperor come in, and Barbara, without noticing his altered expression, or rather, probably, to cheer him by something especially merry, gaily began Baldassare Donati's superb dancing-master's song, "Qui la gagliarda vuol imparare," at the same time in the merriest, most graceful manner imitating the movements of the gagliarda dancer.

But Charles soon interrupted her, sharply requesting her to sing something else or cease entirely for that day.

Startled, she again asked forgiveness, and then pleaded in justification the universally acknowledged beauty of this charming song, which Maestro Gombert also admired; but the Emperor flew into a passion, and cut her short with the loud remark that he was not in the habit of having his own judgment corrected by the opinion of others. The jest did all honour to the skill and merry mood of the composer, but the contrary might be said of the

singer who ventured to sing it to a person in whom it could awaken only bitter feelings.

But when, so painfully surprised that her eyes filled with tears, she confessed that her selection perhaps had not been very appropriate, and sadly added the inquiry why her beloved sovereign condemned a trivial offence so harshly, he wrathfully exclaimed, “For more than one reason.”

Then, rising, he paced the room several times with a somewhat limping gait, saying, in so loud a tone that it could be distinctly heard in the dark, sultry garden: “Because it shows little delicacy of feeling when the man who is satiated tells the starving one of the dainty meal which he has just eaten; because—because I call it shameful for a person who can see to tell one who is blind of the pleasure he derives from the splendid colours of gay flowers; because I expect from the woman whom I honour with my love more consideration for me and what shadows my life. Because”—and here he raised his voice still more angrily—“I demand from any one united to me, the Emperor, by whatever bond——”

The marquise had been unable to hear more of the monarch’s violent attack, for the messenger who had just brought the unwelcome news—it was Adrian Dubois—had not only passed her, but ventured to call to her and remark that she would be wise to go into the house—a thunderstorm was rising. He was not afraid of the rain, and would wait there for his Majesty.

So the listener did not hear how the incensed monarch continued with the demand that the woman he loved should neither tell him falsehoods nor deceive him.

Until then Barbara had listened, silent and pale, biting her trembling lips in order to adhere to her resolve to submit without reply to whatever Charles’s terrible irritability inflicted upon her. But he must have noticed what was passing in her mind, for he suddenly paused in his walk, and, abruptly standing before her, gazed full into her face, exclaiming: “It is not you who are offended, but I, the sovereign whom you say you love. Day before yesterday I forbade you to go to the musician in Red Cock Street, yet you were with him to-day. I asked you just now whether you had obeyed me and, with smiling lips, you assented.”

Barbara was already prepared with an answer in harmony with the sharpness of the attack, yet her lover’s reproof was well founded.

When he had left the room shortly before he must have been informed that, in defiance of his explicit command, she had gone to the knight's house that morning.

But no one had ever charged her with lack of courage. Why had she not dared to confess the fault which, from a good and certainly pardonable impulse, she had committed?

Was she not free, or when had she placed herself under obligation to render blind obedience to her lover?

But the falsehood!

How severely she must perhaps atone for it this time!

Yet the esteem, the love of the man to whom her heart clung, whom she worshipped with all the fervour of her passionate soul, might be at stake, and when he now seized his hat to withdraw she barred his way.

Sobbing aloud, she threw herself at his feet, confessed that she was guilty, and remorsefully admitted that fear of his resentment, which seemed to her more terrible than death, had induced her to deny what she had done. She could hate herself for it. Nothing could palliate the departure from the path of truth, but her disobedience might perhaps appear to him in a milder light if he learned what had induced her to commit it.

Charles, still in an angry, imperious tone, ordered her to rise. She silently obeyed, and when he threw himself on the divan she timidly sat down by his side, turning toward him her troubled face, which for the first time he saw wet with tears.

Yet a hopeful smile brightened her moist eyes, for she felt that, since he permitted her to remain at his side, all might yet be well.

Then she timidly took his hand and, as he permitted it, she held it firmly while she explained what ties had bound her to Wolf from childhood.

She represented herself as the sisterly counsellor of the friend who had grown up in the same house with her. Music and the Catholic religion, in the midst of a city which had fallen into the Protestant heresy, had been the bond between them. After his return home he had probably been unable to help falling in love with her, but, so truly as she hoped for Heaven's mercy, she had kept her heart closed against Cupid until he, the Emperor, had approached in order, like that other Caesar, to come, to see, and to conquer. But she was only a woman, and pity in a woman's soft heart was as hard to

silence as the murmur of a swift mountain stream or the rushing of the wind.

Yesterday she had learned from the violinist Massi that the knight's condition was much more critical, and he desired before his death to clasp her hand again. So, believing that disobedience committed to lighten the last hours of a dying man would be pardonable before God and human beings, she had visited the unfortunate Wolf.

The helpful and joy-bestowing power of good works, which the Protestants denied, had thus become very evident to her; for since she had clasped the sufferer's hand an indescribable sense of happiness had taken possession of her, while the knight began to improve. The news had reached her just before this, the Emperor's, arrival, had made her happy, and, in spite of her evil conscience, had put her in a very cheerful mood. But now this beautiful evening had become the saddest one of her whole life.

Fresh tears, and the other means of conciliation inspired by her loving heart, then induced the angry lover to forgive her.

Barbara felt this as a great piece of good fortune, and made every effort to curb the refractory temper which, hitherto, had found nothing less welcome than humble submission.

Day after day since that evening the confessor had been informed that nothing interrupted the concord of the lovers, and that Barbara often prayed very fervently in the private chapel. This pleased the almoner, and when Cassian told him that, on the evening after the quarrel, the Emperor had again come to the castle to remain a long time, he rejoiced.

To Barbara this visit had been a true heavenly blessing, but though Charles showed himself sufficiently loving, she felt, even during the succeeding visits, that since that fateful episode something difficult to describe or explain had rested like a gloomy shadow on the Emperor's joyous confidence.

This change in her lover could scarcely be due to her, for she had honestly endeavoured to avoid everything which could anger him.

How should she have suspected that the great student of human nature to whom she had given her heart perceived the restraint which she imposed upon herself in every interview with him, and that the moderation to which she submitted from love robbed her of a portion of the charm her gay

unconcern had exerted upon him? Charles suspiciously attributed this change in the disposition of the woman he loved sometimes to one cause, sometimes to another; and when he showed her that he missed something in her which had been dear to him, she thought it a new token of his dissatisfaction, and increased the restraint which she placed upon herself.

If the gout again attacked him or the pressure of business, which at that time constantly made more and more imperious demands upon the Emperor Charles, detained him from her on one or another evening, torturing anxiety assailed her, and she had no sleep all night.

Besides, the marquise did not cease to press her with entreaties and expostulations, and Frau Lerch constantly urged Barbara to profit by the favour of such a lover. She ought to think of the future, and indemnify herself with estates and titles for the sad fate awaiting her if his Majesty wearied of her love.

The ex-maid knew how to describe, in vivid hues, how all would turn from her if that should happen, and how little the jewels with which he sometimes delighted her would avail.

But Barbara had cared only for her lord's love, and it was not even difficult for her to resist the urgency. Yet whenever she was alone with Charles, and he showed plainly how dear she was to him, the question forced itself upon her whether this would not be the right time to speak of her future, and to follow the counsel of the experienced woman who certainly meant kindly toward her.

This made her silent and constrained for a time, and when she saw that her manner annoyed her lover she thrust aside the selfish impulse which was rendering her unlovable, and sometimes showed her delight in the victory of love over every other feeling so impetuously, that her nature seemed to have lost the unvarying cheerfulness which had formerly delighted him, and he left her in a less satisfied mood.

Besides, the marquise had received a letter from Paris, in which her son declared that if his gambling debts were not paid by the first of August he would be completely disgraced, and nothing would remain for him except to end an existence which had lost all charm. The wretched mother again opened her heart to Barbara and, when she still resisted her lamentations and entreaties, threw herself on her knees and sobbing besought her to let her heart be softened.

The sight of the aged noblewoman writhing like a maniac in the dust was so pitiful and touching that it melted Barbara's heart, and induced her to promise to use the first favourable opportunity to intercede with the Emperor in behalf of her son and his child, a little girl of six. From that time she awaited at every new interview the opportune moment; but when Charles was less gracious, the right time certainly had not come, and when he was especially loving the happiness of possessing his heart seemed to her so great that it appeared sinful to risk it for the sake of a stranger.

This waiting and conflict with herself also did not remain unnoticed, and it was characteristic of Charles to reflect upon and seek reasons for it. Only the spell of her voice and her beauty had remained unchanged, and when she sang in the Golden Cross in the presence of the guests, who became more numerous the nearer drew the time of the opening of the Reichstag, fixed for the fifth of June, and he perceived their delight, vanity fanned the dying fire again, for he still loved her, and therefore felt associated with her and her successes.

So the days became weeks, and though they brought Barbara a wealth of happiness, they were not free from gloomy and bitter hours.

The marquise, who saw her son's doom drawing nearer and nearer, made the mealtimes and every moment which she spent with her a perfect hell. Frau Lerch continued to urge her, and now advised her to persuade the Emperor to rid her of the old tormentor.

In another matter also she was at a loss what to do. The Wittenberg theologian, Erasmus Eckhart, found that his own songs, when she sang them to him, seemed entirely new, and the gratitude he felt merged into ardent love, the first which had taken possession of his young soul. But Barbara resolutely refused to receive his visits, and thereby deprived him of the possibility of opening his heart to her. So, in despair, he wandered about her house more and more frequently, and sent her one fiery love letter after another.

To betray his unseemly conduct to the Emperor or to the confessor would have brought upon him too severe a punishment for an offence which, after all, was the most profound homage. She dared not go to the Hiltners, from fear of a fresh misunderstanding, and it would be a long time ere Wolf's health would permit him to be excited by such matters.

So she was forced to content herself with censuring Erasmus's conduct, through Frau Lerch, in the harshest manner, and threatening to appeal to his foster-parents and, in the worst extremity, to the magistrate, to rid herself of his importunities. Nearly two thirds of May had passed when the Emperor found himself prevented by a second attack of gout from visiting her. But Barbara's heart drew her toward him so strongly that during the usual noon ride she hit upon an idea, for whose execution she immediately made preparations by secretly entreating young Count Tassis to lend her one of his suits of clothes.

The merry page, a handsome boy of sixteen, who had already crossed rapiers with one of his companions for her sake, was about her height, and delighted to share a secret with her. His most expensive costume, with everything belonging to it, was placed in her room at twilight, and when night closed in, disguised as a page, she entered the litter and was carried to the Golden Cross, where Adrian received her and conducted her to his royal master.

The elderly man thought he had never seen her look so charming as in the yellow velvet doublet with ash-gray facings, the gray silk hose, and the yellow and gray cap resting on her glittering golden hair.

And the Emperor Charles was of the same opinion.

Besides, her lively prank transported him back to his own youth, when he himself had glided more than once in page's attire to some beautiful young lady of the court, and gaily as in better days, tenderly as an ardent youth, he thanked her for her charming enterprise.

After a few blissful hours, which crowded all that she had lately suffered into oblivion, she left him.

When she again entered the little Prebrunn castle she would gladly have embraced the whole world.

From the litter she had noticed a light in the windows of the marquise's sitting-room, but she could now look the poor old noblewoman freely in the face, for this time, sure of experiencing no sharp rebuff, she had found courage to speak of the son to her royal lover.

True, as soon as Charles heard what she desired, he kindly requested her not to sully her beautiful lips with the name of a scoundrel who had long

since forfeited every claim to his favour, and her mission was thereby frustrated; but she had now kept her promise.

With the entreaty to spare him in future the pain of refusing any wish of the woman he loved, the disagreeable affair had been dismissed.

When Barbara took the lute, he had begged the fairest of all troubadours to sing once more, before any other song, his beloved “Quia amore langueo,” and the most vigorous applause was bestowed on every one which she afterward executed.

Now she had done all that was possible for the marquise, but no power on earth should induce her to undertake anything of the sort a second time; She was saying this to herself as she entered the little castle.

Let the old noblewoman come now!

She was not long in doing so. But how she looked!

The little gray curls done up in papers stood out queerly from her narrow head. Her haggard cheeks were destitute of rouge and lividly pale.

Her black eyes glittered strangely from their deep sockets as if she were insane, and ragged pieces of her morning dress, which she had torn in a fit of helpless fury, hung down upon her breast.

The sight made Barbara shudder. She suspected the truth.

During her absence a new message of evil had reached the marquise.

Unless ten thousand lire could be sent to her son at once, he would be condemned to the galleys, and his child would be abandoned to misery and disgrace.

While speaking, the wretched mother, with trembling hands, tore out a locket which she wore on a little chain around her neck. It contained the angelic face, painted on ivory by an artist’s hand, of a fair-haired little girl. The child bore her name, Barbara. The singer knew this. How often the affectionate grandmother had told her with sparkling eyes of her little “Babette”!

The father chained to the rowers’ bench among the most abominable ruffians, this loveliest of children perishing in hunger, misery, and shame—what a terrible picture! Barbara beheld it with tangible distinctness, and while the undignified old aristocrat, deprived of all self-control, sobbed and besought her to have compassion, the girl who had grown up amid poverty

and care went back in memory to the days when, to earn money for a thin soup, a bit of dry bread, a small piece of cheap cow beef, or to protect herself from the importunity of an unpaid tradesman, she had washed laces with her own delicate hands and seen her nobly born, heroic father scratch crooked letters and scrawling ornaments upon common gray tin.

The same fate, nay, one a thousand times worse, awaited this wonderfully lovely patrician child, whose father was to wield the oars in the galleys if no one interceded for the unfortunate man.

What was life!

From the height of happiness it led her directly to such an abyss of the deepest woe.

What contrasts!

A day, an hour had transported her from bitter poverty and torturing yearning to the side of the highest and greatest of monarchs, but who could tell for how long—how soon the fall into the gulf awaited her?

A shudder ran through her frame, and a deep pity for the sweet creature whose coloured likeness she held in her hand seized upon her.

She probably remembered her lover's refusal, and that she only needed to allude to it to release herself from the wailing old woman, but an invisible power sealed her lips. She was filled with an ardent desire to help, to avert this unutterable misery, to bring aid to this child, devoted to destruction.

To rise above everything petty, and with the imperial motto "More, farther," before her eyes, to attain a lofty height from which to look down upon others and show her own generosity to them, had been the longing of her life. She was still permitted to feel herself the object of the love of the mightiest sovereign on earth, and should she be denied performing, by her own power, an act of deliverance to which heart and mind urged her?

No, and again no!

She was no longer poor Wawerl!

She could and would show this, for, like an illumination, words which she had heard the day before in the Golden Cross had flashed into her memory.

Master Wenzel Jamnitzer, the famous Nuremberg goldsmith, had addressed them to her in the imperial apartments, where he had listened to

her singing the day before.

He had come to consult with the Emperor Charles about the diadems which he wished to give his two nieces, the daughters of Ferdinand, King of the Romans, who were to be married in July in Ratisbon. Their manufacture had been intrusted to Master Jamnitzer, and after the concert the Nuremberg artist had thanked Barbara for the pleasure which he owed her. In doing so, he had noticed the Emperor's first gift, the magnificent star which she wore on her breast at the side of her squarenecked dress. Examining it with the eye of an expert, he had remarked that the central stone alone was worth an estate.

If she deprived herself of this superb ornament, the despairing old mother would be consoled, and the lovely child saved from hunger and disgrace.

With Barbara, thought, resolve, and action followed one another in rapid succession.

"You shall have what you need to-morrow," she called to the marquise, kissed—obeying a hasty impulse—her little namesake's picture, rejected any expression of thanks from the astonished old dame, and went to rest.

Frau Lerch had never seen her so radiant with happiness, yet she was irritated by the reserve of the girl for whom she thought she had sacrificed so much, yet whose new garments had already brought her more profit than the earnings of the three previous years.

The next morning Master Jamnitzer called the valuable star his own, and pledged himself to keep the matter secret, and to obtain from the Fuggers a bill of exchange upon Paris for ten thousand lire.

The honest man sent her through the Haller banking house a thousand ducats, that he might not be open to the reproach of having defrauded her.

Yet the gold which she did not need for the marquise seemed to Barbara like money unjustly obtained. While she was riding out at noon, Frau Lerch found it in her chest, and thought that she now knew what had made the girl so happy the day before. She was all the more indignant when, soon after, Barbara gave half the new wealth to the Prebrunn town clerk to distribute among the poor journeymen potters whose huts had been burned down the previous night. The rest she kept to give to the relatives of her one-eyed maid-servant at home, who were in the direst poverty.

For the first time she had felt the pleasure of interposing, like a higher power, in the destiny of others. What she had hoped from the greatness to which she had risen now appeared on the eve of being actually and wholly fulfilled.

Even the strange manner in which the marquise thanked her for her generosity could but partially impair the exquisite sense of happiness which filled her heart.

As soon as the old noblewoman heard that the bill of exchange for her son was on the way to Paris, she expressed her intention of thanking his Majesty for this noble donation.

Startled and anxious, Barbara was obliged to forbid this, and to confess that, on the contrary, the Emperor had refused to do anything whatever for her son, and that morning, for little Babette's sake, she had used her own property.

The marquise then angrily declared that a Marquise de Leria could accept such a favour without a blush solely from his Majesty. Even from an equal in station she must refuse gifts of such value. If Barbara was honest, she would admit that she had never, even by a syllable, asked for a donation, but always only for her intercession with his Majesty. Her hasty action made withdrawal impossible, but the humiliation which she had experienced through her was so hard to conquer that she could scarcely bring herself to feel grateful for a gift which, in itself, was certainly worthy of appreciation.

In fact, from that time the marquise entirely changed her manner, and instead of flattering her ward as before, she treated her with haughty coldness, and sometimes remarked that poverty and hostility were often easier to bear than intrusive kindness and humiliating gifts.

Hitherto Barbara had placed no one under obligation to be grateful, and therefore the ugliness of ingratitude was unknown to her.

Now she was to become acquainted with it.

At first this disappointment wounded her, but soon the marquise's intention of ridding herself, by this conduct, of a heavy debt became apparent, and she opposed to the base cunning a gay defence, but was then forced to encounter the marquise's condemnation of it as the outgrowth of an ungenerous soul.

How unpleasant this was! Yet she kept what she had done for the old aristocrat and the way in which she had requited it a secret, even from Frau Lerch, especially as the Emperor soon alluded to his denial of her entreaty, and gave a description of young Leria which filled her with horror, and led to the conviction that the sacrifice which she had made for him and his little daughter had been utterly futile.

Little Babette, she also heard, was cared for in the best possible manner, having been withdrawn front her father's influence long before and placed in charge of an estimable, wealthy, and aristocratic aunt, her mother's sister, who filled the latter's place.

This act of charity had been utterly spoiled for the overhasty giver, and, while the glad remembrance of the pure delight which she had felt after her generous resolve faded more and more, she began to be uneasy about her reckless transaction with the Nuremberg goldsmith, for the Emperor during his very next visit had asked about the star, and in her confusion she had again been forced into a falsehood, and tried to excuse herself for so rarely wearing his beautiful present by the pretext that the gold pin which fastened it was bent.

She could have inflicted various punishments upon herself for her precipitate yielding to a hastily awakened sympathy, for it would surely anger the Emperor if he learned how carelessly she had treated his first costly gift.

Perhaps some hint of its sale had already reached his ears, for, although he had made no opposition to her apology, he afterward remained taciturn and irritable.

Every subsequent interview with her lover was terribly shadowed by the dread that he might think of the unlucky ornament again.

Yet, on this occasion also, fear prevented the brave girl from confessing the whole truth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On St. Desiderius's Day—[May 23rd]—the Emperor again missed the star, and, as it was in the Golden Cross and the heat was great, Barbara replied that her dress was too thin for the heavy ornament. But the inquiry had made her fear of additional questions so great that she rejoiced over the news that her lover would not visit her the next day.

On the day before yesterday Christoph Madrucci, the Cardinal of Trent, his warlike brother Hildebrand, and the Count of Arco had arrived, bringing news from the Council; but on the morrow Duke Maurice of Saxony was expected, and the most important negotiations were to be carried on not only with him, but also with the former, each individual being dealt with singly and at different hours.

In the evening the welcome guest was to be entertained by music and, if agreeable to Barbara, by singing also. On the twenty-fifth the city had decided to give a May festival under the lindens in honour of the duke. The Emperor and the whole court were of course invited.

Barbara then acknowledged that she was fond of such magnificent exhibitions, and begged Charles to allow her to attend the festival with the marquise.

The answer was an assent, but the Emperor gave it after some delay, and with the remark that he could devote little time to her, and expected that she would subject herself to some restraint.

True, the painful surprise which her features expressed vividly enough led him to add the apology that, on account of the presence of the two cardinals—for one had come from Augsburg—he would be compelled to deny himself the pleasure of showing her anything more than courteous consideration in public; but she could not succeed in conquering the mortification which, besides the grief of disappointment, had taken possession of her sensitive soul.

Charles probably perceived, by the alternate flushing and paling of her cheeks, what was passing in her thoughts, and would gladly have soothed

her; but he refrained, and forced himself to be content with the few conciliatory words which he had already addressed to her.

Great events were impending. If he decided upon war, nothing, not even love, could be permitted to encroach too heavily upon his time and strength; but Barbara and the demands which her love made upon him would surely do this if he did not early impose moderation upon her and himself.

He had heard nothing about the sale of the star, and whatever had displeased him in Barbara's conduct during the last few weeks she had succeeded in effacing. Yet he had often been on the point of breaking off his relations with her, for just at this time it was of infinite importance that he should keep himself free and strong in mind and body.

Moreover, in a few days he expected his brother Ferdinand with his grown children. Two of his nieces were to be married here in his presence, and he felt that he ought not to let either them or the Cardinal of Trent—who was coming from the Council and would return there—see how strong were the fetters with which, at his age and just at this time, he allowed himself to be bound by love for a beautiful singer.

The wisdom which had long been characteristic of him commanded him to sever abruptly the connection with the woman he loved and remove her from his path. But the demands of the heart and the senses were too powerful for the man who indulged to excess in fiery wine and spiced foods, though he knew that greater abstinence would have spared him torturing pangs.

He had succeeded hundreds of times in obtaining the victory over other urgent wishes, and conquering strong affections. But this was different, for separation from Barbara must, at any rate, destroy the exquisite late happiness of the newly unfolded enjoyment of life, and for this heavy loss he saw no compensation. To part from her entirely, therefore, seemed to him impossible—at any rate, for the present. On the other hand, the duty of the sovereign and consideration for his relatives both commanded him to restrict the demands of her passionate young heart and his own, which had so recently awaked from slumber.

He had recognised this necessity, and considered the pros and cons precisely as if the matter were a political question. He who, without the quiver of an eyelash, had sent many a band of soldiers to certain death in order to execute a well-conceived plan of battle, was compelled to inflict

keen suffering upon the woman he loved and himself, that greater interests might not be injured.

He had commenced the retreat that day.

The constraint which it was necessary to impose upon themselves must be equally painful to them both, yet this could not be altered.

Had it affected him alone, in defiance of his sense of rank and the tyranny of court etiquette, he would have led Barbara, attired like a true queen, with his own hand to the festival under the lindens, but the gratification of this heartfelt wish would have entailed too many evil consequences.

Toying with her, who so quickly understood and so gratefully accepted the gifts of the intellect which he offered, was so sweet, but in these days it must not be permitted to impair mental repose, keen thought. What he had to discuss and settle with Maurice of Saxony and Cardinal Madrucci was of too momentous importance to the destiny of the world, to the Church, to his fame as a sovereign, to his own greatness and that of his race.

He would have liked best to send Barbara away from Ratisbon, as he had despatched her father three weeks before, and not recall her until these decisive days were over; but this was prohibited by his ardent desire for her presence, her clever questions and appreciative listening, and, above all, her singing, which he valued perhaps even more than her beauty.

Had he confided to Barbara the important reasons which compelled him to impose restrictions for a short time upon the demands of his heart, she, who esteemed his grandeur little less than his love, would have cheerfully submitted to what was necessary and right; but truthfulness and frankness were far more characteristic of her nature than of that of the politician who was accustomed to the tricks and evasions of the time of Machiavelli. He never lacked credible reasons when he desired to place an intention in a favourable light, and where he wished to keep Barbara away from him, during the next few days, such were certainly to be found in each individual instance. Suppose the woman he loved did not accept them? So much the worse for her; he was the Emperor.

As for Barbara, with the subtle power of presentiment of a loving heart she felt that his passion was waning, and tortured her mobile intellect to discover the right cause.

If the luckless star was connected with it, why had he not blamed her openly?

No, no!

Adrian had already predicted it; his constancy could not be relied upon, and if war was in prospect he forgot everything that was usually dear to his heart, and the appearance of the Duke of Saxony certainly seemed to indicate an outbreak. Many an intimation of the Emperor, Granvelle, and the almoner seemed to suggest this, and, deeply troubled, she went to rest.

During the silent night her worst fears became certainty.

She recalled to mind every hour which they had spent alone together. Some change had certainly taken place in him of late.

During her visit as a page the passion of former days had once more glowed hotly, as the fire on the hearth blazes up brightly before it expires.

The alteration had begun with the reproaches for her visit to the suffering Wolf. Now he was aiming to rid himself of her, though with a considerate hand. And she, what could she do to win back the man who held every fixed resolve as firmly as the rocks of the cliff hold the pine which grows from them?

Nothing, except to bear patiently whatever he inflicted upon her.

This, however, seemed to her so impossible and painful, so humiliating and shocking, that she sprang from her bed and for a long time paced with bare feet the sleeping-room, which was but dimly lighted by the lamp. Yet all her thoughts and pondering were futile, and when she lay down again she slept until mass.

By daylight she found that she had regarded matters in far too dark a light. True, Charles probably no longer loved her as ardently as before, yet she need scarcely fear the worst at present. But the bare thought of having so soon lost the power to bind him to her aroused a storm of feeling in her passionate soul, and when it subsided bitter thoughts followed, and a series of plans which, on closer examination, proved impracticable.

The day dragged slowly along.

During the ride in the country she was so depressed and downcast that her companions asked what troubled her.

The lonely evening seemed endless. A short letter from her father, which informed her that he had not expected too much of himself, and was in good health, she cast aside after reading. During the night the feeling of unhappiness and apprehension increased. But the next morning the sun shone brightly into her windows, and after mass a messenger from the Golden Cross announced that Duke Maurice of Saxony had arrived, and in the afternoon his Majesty wished to see her and hear her sing.

This news cheered her wonderfully; but while Fran Lerch was dressing her she, too, missed the star, and it seemed to Barbara that with it she had lost a portion of her charm.

In going out, the marquise met her in the corridor, but Barbara passed without returning her greeting.

When she arrived, the company had assembled in the chapel. The Duke of Saxony sat between the Emperor and Granvelle.

What a handsome, knightly man this Maurice was! A prince from head to foot, young, and yet, while talking with the Emperor and Granvelle, grave and self-possessed as if he felt himself their peer.

And what fire glowed in his bright glance whenever it rested upon her!

In the chase and over the wine-cup this brave soldier and subtle statesman was said scarcely to have his equal. Many tales of his successes with fair women had been told her. He pleased her, too, in spite of the bold, free manner in which he gazed at her, and which she would not have tolerated in any one else.

After she had finished the last song, the duke expressed his appreciation in gay, flattering words, at the same time complimenting her beauty.

There had been something remarkably winning in his compliments; but when she pleased her imperial lover, the acknowledgment was very different. Then there was no mere praise clad in the form of enthusiastic homage, but in addition always acute remarks. With the recognition blended opinions which revealed the true connoisseur.

This Maurice was certainly wise and brave, and, moreover, far handsomer than his imperial master; but what illumined Charles’s prominent brow and brilliant eyes she had never beheld in any one else. To him, to him alone her heart belonged, worthy of esteem as the duke, who was so much his junior, appeared.

While taking leave the Saxon held her hand in his for a time and, as she permitted it, she met a glance from her lover which warned her to be ware of incautious familiarity with this breaker of hearts.

Barbara felt as if a sudden brightness had filled her soul, and on her way home the seed which that look had cast into it began to put forth vigorous shoots.

The ardent young Saxon duke would have been a dangerous rival for any one, even the handsomest and most powerful of men. Suppose that she should profit by the wish he showed so plainly, and through jealousy bind the man whom she loved anew and more firmly than ever?

She probably admitted to herself that in doing so she would incur a great risk, but it seemed easier to lose her greatest treasure entirely than only to half possess it; and when she had once looked this thought in the face it attracted her, as with the gaze of a basilisk, more and more strongly.

The afternoon of the following day, with the marquise, she entered the scene of festivity under the lindens.

To punish Barbara for not returning her greeting, the gray-haired lady in waiting had at first been inclined to excuse herself on the plea of illness; but the taste for amusement with which her nature was still pervaded, as well as curiosity to see the much-discussed Duke Maurice, and the desire to watch Barbara's conduct, drew her to the place where the festival was held.

Ratisbon had done her best to receive this guest, whom she especially desired to honour, with all possible magnificence. Flags and streamers bearing the colours of the empire, with the Burgundian red and gold of the Emperor, the silver-crossed keys on a red field of the city of Ratisbon, and with the Saxon coats of arms, rose amid the leafy tops of the lindens, and floated from tall poles in the sunny May air. The blue and yellow Saxon flag, with the black and yellow chevron in the field and a lozenged chaplet from the left corner to the top, was more frequently seen than any other banner.

Even though this festival was held for Duke Maurice, no one could fail to notice how much more space was given to his escutcheon than to the Emperor's.

The entertainment had opened at noon with a tournament and riding at the ring. The duke had participated in the sport a short time, and carried off

several rings on his sword while in full career.

The Emperor had held aloof from this game, in which he had formerly joined gladly and with much skill, but, on the other hand, he had promised to appear at the festival under the lindens, which was to last until night. The Council had had a magnificent tent erected for him, Duke Maurice, and the court, and in order to ornament the interior suitably had allowed the use of the beautiful tapestries in the town hall. These represented familiar incidents from famous love tales: Tristan and Isolde seeing the face of King Mark in the mirror of the spring, Frau Venus as, surrounded by her court, she receives Tannhauser in the Horselberg, and similar scenes. Other art textiles showed incidents in the lives of forest people—little men and women in striped linen garments, wonderful trees and birds such as no human eye ever beheld—but above the hangings a row of coats of arms again appeared, in which the imperial escutcheon alternated with the Saxon.

The front of the tent, covered with red and white material, stood open, permitting the guests who did not belong to the court to survey the interior.

Artistic platters, large dishes, in which dainty sweets and fruits were gracefully heaped and the cathedral of Ratisbon and other devices stood, the costly silverware of the city, and many beautifully formed wine flagons attracted the gaze. Beside these were dishes of roast meats, fish, and cakes for the illustrious guests.

Stewards and guards of the Council, clad in red and white, with the crossed keys in silver embroidery on the shoulder, offered refreshments. Two superb thrones stood ready for the Emperor and the duke, easy-chairs for the cardinals, princes, and counts, stools for the barons, knights, and ladies.

Opposite to the tent stands were erected for the Council, the patrician families, and the other ladies and gentlemen whom the city had invited to the festival. In their midst rose a large, richly decorated stage for the Emperor’s orchestra, which, with his Majesty’s permission, had been induced to play a few pieces, and by the side of the stands was a towerlike structure, from whose summit the city pipers of Ratisbon, joined by those of Landshut, were to be heard.

A large, round stage, encircled by a fence of young birch logs, had been built for dancing amid the leafy lindens, and stood directly opposite to the imperial tent. Near the linden-shaded square at the shooting house were

posted the cannon and howitzers, which were to receive the distinguished guests with loud volleys and lend fresh animation to the festival.

The Lindenplatz belonged to the same suburb of Prebrunn in which stood the little castle of the Prince Abbot of Berchtesgaden, which Barbara occupied. So, during the short distance which she and the marquise had to traverse in litters, uproar, music, and the thunder of artillery greeted them.

This exerted an intoxicating influence upon Barbara, who had been so long absent from such scenes. At home she had abandoned her intention of arousing the Emperor's jealousy; now her excited nerves urged her to execute it. The advantage she hoped to derive was well worth the risk. But if the bold game failed, and the proud, sensitive monarch should be seriously angry——

Just then shots crashed again, music and shouts echoed more loudly in her ears.

"A Blomberg does not fear," and with newly awakened defiance she closed her ears to the warning voice.

The festival was commencing.

She, too, would be gay for once, and if she was cautious the bold enterprise must succeed. A merry evening awaited her and, if all went well, on the morrow, after a few unpleasant hours, her lover's whole heart would once more be hers.

When she reached the scene of festivity it was already thronged with richly attired princes and counts, knights and ladies, citizens of Ratisbon, as well as nobles and distinguished townspeople from the neighbouring castles, citadels, and cities.

Music and a loud medley of shouts and conversation greeted her at her entrance. Her heart throbbed quickly, for she did not forget her daring purpose, and a throng of memories of modest but more carefree days rushed upon her.

Here, when a little girl, she had attended the May festival Virgatum—which owed its name to the green rods or twigs with which the school children adorned themselves—and played under yonder lindens with Wolf, with the wilder Erasmus, and other boys. How delightful it had been!—and when the enlarged band of city pipers struck up a gavotte her feet unconsciously kept time, and she could not help thinking of the last dance

in the New Scales, the recruiting officer who had guided her so firmly and skilfully in the Schwabeln, and through him of her father, of whom she had not thought again since the good news received two evenings before.

She still stood at the crowded entrance gazing around her.

The interior of the imperial tent could not be seen from here, but she could overlook the stand of the noble families, and there she saw her cousins Anne Mirl and Nandl Woller, with Martina Hiltner beside them.

She had refused to receive all three in her little castle at Prebrunn; the true reason she alone knew. Her excuse had perhaps appeared to the girls trivial and unkind.

Now her glance met Nandl's, and her warmhearted friend beckoned eagerly to her; but her mother drew her arm down, and it was evident that the corpulent lady said something reproving.

Barbara looked away from the stand, and the question where her place was here suddenly disturbed her.

She had received no invitation from the Council of the city, and perhaps she would have been refused admittance to the stand. She did not know whether before the Emperor's arrival she would be received in the court tent, which Cardinal Madrucci of Trent, in superb scarlet robes, was just approaching, and an oppressive anxiety again subdued the courage which had just resolved on the boldest venture.

At that moment Baron Malfalconnet saw her, and instantly approached. Gaily offering one arm to her and the other to the marquise, he escorted both to the tent, whispering meanwhile in Barbara's ear, "Glowing summer, between spring and winter," and, as soon as he had taken them to the buffet, off he hurried again to offer his arm to the Margravine of Leuchtenberg, who was followed by two charming daughters, with pretty pages bearing their trains.

How the gold, jewels, and shining armour in the tent glittered! How the crimson glowed, the plumes waved, the heavy velvet attracted the eye by rich hues, the light laces by their delicate fineness! How the silk rustled, and one superb piece of fur vied with the other in costliness, the white with the red rose in beauty!

Barbara involuntarily looked at her sea-green brocade, and felt its heavy texture and the softness of the fur trimming on the overdress, which at

home she had called a masterpiece of Frau Lerch's work. She could be satisfied with her appearance, and the string of pearls on her neck and the bracelet which her lover had sent to her, after her visit in the page's costume, were also costly ornaments. The magnificent star was missing; in its place she wore at the square-cut neck of her dress two beautiful halfblown roses, and her mirror had showed her how becoming they were.

She did not need gold or gems. What gave her power to subdue the hearts of men was of higher value.

Yet, when she mingled among the other dignitaries, she felt like an intruder in this circle.

The marquise had left her, and joined those of her own rank. Most of the ladies were strangers to Barbara, and she was avoided by those whom she knew; but, to make amends, she was soon surrounded by many aristocratic gentlemen, and her mobile nature speedily made her forget what had just depressed her joyous spirit.

Then the cannon and culverins thundered louder, the blare of trumpets rent the air with deafening shrillness, the ringing of bells in all the steeples of Ratisbon, the exulting shouts of the crowd upon the stands and in the whole Lindenplatz poured in mighty waves of sound into the tent, where the nobles and aristocratic ladies around Barbara now raised their voices also.

With a throbbing heart she mingled her cheers with those of the others and, like them, waved her handkerchief and her fan.

The man whom she loved was approaching! This crashing and echoing, this wild uproar of enthusiastic shouts and cries, this flutter of flags and waving of handkerchiefs were all in his honour and, stirred to her inmost soul by impetuous enthusiasm and ardent gratitude, her eyes grew dim with tears, and she joined far more loudly and freely in the cheers of the multitude than the aristocrats around her, to whom court etiquette dictated reserve on all occasions, even this one.

The loving woman saw nothing save the man who was advancing. How should she have noticed the scornful glances which her unrestrained vivacity elicited?

Her gaze was fixed solely upon the one sun to which the little stars around her owed their paler or brighter radiance. She scarcely noticed even the handsome young prince at Charles's side. Yet Duke Maurice would have

been well worthy of her whole attention, for with what a free, proud step he advanced, while his imperial master used his arm as a support!

Charles also looked magnificent in the Castilian court costume, with the chain of the Grand Master of the Golden Fleece about his neck; but the young Saxon duke was considerably his superior in height, and the silver-embroidered, steel-gray suit of Spanish cut and the black velvet mantle trimmed with a border of marten fur, were extremely becoming. Both saluted the crowd that welcomed them so warmly and loudly, gazing meanwhile at the festal scene, the Emperor with haughty, almost indifferent dignity, the duke with less reserve and more eager gestures.

Barbara knew the sovereign, and when she saw him thrust his lower lip slightly forward she was sure that something vexed him.

Perhaps she ought not to venture to irritate the lion that day.

Was his anger roused by the boldness of the city magistrates, who dared to favour the Saxon escutcheon and banners so openly? It seemed to her exasperating, punishable insolence. But perhaps in his greatness he did not grudge this distinction to a guest so much his inferior, and it was only the gout again inflicting its pangs upon his poor tortured foot.

The way was strewn with leaves and green branches, and the Saxon was leading her lord directly over the hard little boughs in the middle of the path. Barbara would fain have called to him to look at the ground and not up at the banners and escutcheons bearing his colours, whose number seemed to flatter him. Had Charles been leaning on her arm, she would have performed the office of guide better.

At last the distinguished pair, with the companions who followed them, reached the tent and took their seats upon the thrones. Again Maurice gazed eagerly around him, but Charles vouchsafed the Lindenplatz and stands only a few careless glances. He had no time to do more, for the young Landgravines of Leuchtenber; and several other newcomers at court were presented to him by the Count of Nassau, and, after greeting the occupants of the tent by a gracious gesture, the monarch addressed a few kind words to each.

Barbara was obliged to content herself with the others, yet her heart ached secretly that he gave her no word of welcome.

Then, when the performances began and the chamberlains and major-domo seated the aristocratic ladies and older dignitaries according to their sex and rank, and she was thus placed very far in the rear, she felt it as a grievous injustice. Was she no longer the love of the man who reigned over everything here? And since no one could deny this claim, why need she be satisfied with a place beside the insignificant ladies of honour of the princelings who were present?

How forsaken and ill-treated she seemed to herself!

But there was Don Luis Quijada already making his way to her to bring a greeting from his Majesty and escort her to a place from which she could have a better view of what the city had arranged for the entertainment of the distinguished guest.

So she was not wholly forgotten by her lover, but with what scanty alms he fed her!

What did she care for the exhibition which was about to begin?

The minutes dragged on at a snail's pace while the lanterns on the lindens and poles, the torches, and pitch pans were lighted.

Had not the gentlemen and ladies been so completely separated, it might perhaps have been a little gay. But, as it was, no one of the aristocratic women who surrounded her granted her even one poor word; but the number of glances, open and secret, cast at her became all the greater as one noble dame whispered to another that she was the singer whom his Majesty condescended to distinguish in so remarkable a manner.

To know that she was thus watched might be endured, as she was aware that she could be satisfied with her appearance, but vanity compelled her to assume an expression and bearing which would not disappoint the gazers, and after the performances began this imposed a wearisome restraint.

Once only was her solitude in the midst of this great company pleasantly interrupted, for the Bishop of Arras, without troubling himself about the separation of the sexes, had sought her out and whispered that he had something to ask of her, whose details they would discuss later. On the evening of the day after to-morrow his Majesty's most distinguished guests, with their ladies, were to assemble at his house. If she desired to place him under the deepest obligations, she would join them there and adorn the festival with her singing. Barbara asked in a low tone whether the Emperor

would also be present, and the statesman, smiling, answered that court etiquette prohibited such things. Yet it was not impossible that, as a special favour, his Majesty might listen for a short time in the festal hall, only he feared that the gout might interpose—the evil guest was already giving slight warnings of its approach.

Then, without waiting for a reply, the young minister went back to his royal master; but his invitation exerted a disturbing influence upon Barbara. She would have been more than glad to accept, for the entertainments of the Bishop of Arras were unequalled in varied attractions, magnificence, and gaiety, and what a satisfaction to her ambition it would be to sing before such an audience, dine at the same table with such ladies and gentlemen! She knew also how heavily this man's favour would weigh in the scales with the Emperor, yet to appear at the banquet without her lover's knowledge was utterly impossible, and just now she felt reluctant to ask his permission. What heavy chains loaded the favoured woman who possessed the love of this greatest of sovereigns!

However, reflections concerning Granvelle's invitation passed away the time until the lighting of the Lindenplatz was completed. Then the shrill blare of trumpets again rent the air, the city pipers in the towers struck up a gay march, and the entertainment began.

The gods of Olympus, led by Fame and Fortune, offered their homage to the Emperor. A youth from the school of poets, attired as the goddess of Fame, bewailed in well-rhymed verses that for a long time no one had given her so much to do as the Emperor Charles. His comrade, who, bearing a cornucopia in his arms, represented Fortune, assured her companion, in still more bombastic verse, that she should certainly expect far more from her, the goddess of Fame, in favour of his Majesty. This would continue until her own end and that of all the Olympians, because the Emperor Charles himself was an immortal. He had made them both subject to him. Fortune as well as Fame must obey his sign. But there was another younger friend of the gods for whom, on account of the shortness of his life, they had been able to do less, but for whom they also held in readiness their best and greatest gifts. He, too, would succeed in rendering them his subjects. While speaking, Fortune pointed with the cornucopia and Fame with the trumpet to Duke Maurice, and besought their indulgent lord and master, the Emperor Charles, to be permitted to show some of their young favourite's

possessions, by whose means he, too, would succeed in retaining them in his service.

Then Pallas Athene appeared with the university city of Leipsic, the latter laden with all sorts of symbols of knowledge. Next came Plutus, the god of Wealth, followed by Freiberg miners bearing large specimens of silver ore in buckets and baskets; and, lastly, Mars, the god of War, leading by a long chain two camels on which rode captive and fettered Turks.

During these spectacles, which were followed by other similar ones, Barbara had been thinking of her own affairs, and gazed more frequently at her lover and his distinguished guests than at the former.

But the next group interested her more because it seemed to honour the Emperor's taste for astronomy, of which he had often talked with her.

On a long cart, drawn by powerful stallions, appeared a gigantic firmament in the shape of a hemisphere, on whose upper surface the sun, moon, and stars were seen shining in radiant light. The moon passed through all her changes, the sun and planets moved, and from the dome echoed songs and lute-playing, which were intended to represent the music of the spheres. Another chorus was heard from a basket of flowers of stupendous size. Among the natural and artificial blossoms sat and lay upon leaves and in the calyxes of the flowers child genii, who flung to the Emperor beautiful bouquets, and into the laps and at the feet of the ladies in the tent smaller ones and single flowers.

Barbara, too, did not go with empty hands. The Cupid who had thrown his to her was the little Maltese Hannibal, who sang with other boys as "Voices of the Flowers," and later was to take part in the great chorus.

This friendly remembrance of her young fellow-artist cheered Barbara, and when a fight began, which was carried on by a dozen trained champions brought from Strasburg expressly for this purpose, she turned her attention to it.

At first this dealing blows at one another with blunt weapons offered her little amusement; but when shouts from the tent and the stands cheered the men from the Mark, and powerful blows incensed to fury those who were struck, the scene began to enthral her.

A handsome, agile youth, to her sincere regret, had just fallen, but swiftly recovered his elasticity, and, springing to his feet, belaboured his opponent,

a clumsy giant, so skilfully and vigorously that the bright blood streamed down his ugly face and big body. Barbara's cheeks flushed with sympathy. That was right. Skill and grace ought everywhere to conquer hideous rude force.

If she had been a man she would have found her greatest happiness, as her father did, in battle, in measuring her own strength with another's. Now she was obliged to defend herself with other weapons than blunt swords, and when she saw the champions, six against six, again rush upon one another, and one side drive the other back, her vivid imagination transported her into the midst of the victors, and it seemed as if the marquise and the whole throng of arrogant dames in the tent, as well as the Ratisbon women on the stands who had insulted her by their haughty airs of virtue, were fleeing from her presence.

How repulsive these envious, hypocritical people were! How she hated everything that threatened to estrange her lover's heart! To them also belonged the scoundrel who, she supposed, had betrayed the sale of the star to the Emperor. She resolved to confess to Charles how she had been led to commit this offence, which was indeed hard to forgive. Perhaps all would then be well again, for in this unfortunate action she could recognise the sole wrong which she had ever inflicted upon her lover. She could not help attributing his humiliating manner to it alone, for her love had always remained the same, and only yesterday, after she had sung before the Duke of Saxony, Appenzelder, who never flattered, had assured her that her voice had gained in power, her expression in depth, and she herself felt that it was so.

Music was still the firmest bond that united her to her lover. So long as her art remained faithful, he could not abandon her. This conviction was transformed into certainty when the final performance began, and the Ratisbon choir, under the direction of Damian Feys, commenced the mighty hymn with which the composer, Jean Courtois, had greeted the Emperor Charles in Cambray:

"Venite populi terrai"—"Come hither, ye nations of the earth"—this motet for four voices called imperiously to all mankind like a joyous summons.

"Ave Cesar, ave majestas sacra," sounded in solemn, religious tones the greeting to the greatest of monarchs. It seemed to transport the listener to

the summit of the cathedral, as the choir now called to the ruler that the earth was full of his renown. The Ratisbon singers and the able Feys did their best, and this mighty act of homage of all the nations of the earth by no means failed to produce its effect upon him to whom it was addressed.

While Barbara listened, deeply agitated, she did not avert her eyes from her lover's face, which was brightly illumined by a pyramid of candles on each side of the two thrones.

Every trace of weariness, indifference, and discomfort had vanished from Charles's features. His heart, like hers—she knew it—was now throbbing higher. If he had just been enduring pain, this singing must have driven it away or lessened it, and he had certainly felt gratefully what power dwells in the divine art.

This noble composition, Barbara realized it, would again draw her near her lover, and the confirmation of this hope was not delayed, for as soon as the last notes of the motet and the storm of applause that followed had died away, the Emperor, amid the renewed roar of the artillery, rose and looked around him—surely for her.

The good citizens of Ratisbon! No matter how much more bunting they had cut up in honour of the Saxon duke than of the Emperor, how bombastic were the verses composed and repeated in praise of Maurice, this paean of homage put all their efforts to shame. It suited only one, lauded a grandeur and dignity which stood firm as indestructible cliffs, and which no one here possessed save the Emperor Charles.

Who would have ventured to apply this motet to the brave and clever Saxon, high as he, too, towered above most of his peers? What did the nations of the earth know about him? How small was the world still that was full of his renown!

This singing had reminded both princes of Barbara, and they looked for her. The Emperor perceived her first, beckoned kindly to her, and, after conversing with her for a while so graciously that it aroused the envy of the other ladies in the tent, he said eagerly: "Not sung amiss for your Ratisbon, I should think. But how this superb composition was sung six years ago at Catnbray, under the direction of Courtois himself!—that, yes, that is one of the things never to be forgotten. Thirty-four singers, and what power, what precision, and, moreover, the great charm of novelty! I have certainly been permitted to hear many things——"

Here he paused; the Cardinal of Trent was approaching with the Bishop of Arras.

The younger Granvelle, with his father, had also been present at the performance of this motet of homage at Cambray, and respectfully confirmed his Majesty's remark, speaking with special warmth of the fervour and delicacy with which Jean Courtois had conducted the choir.

The cardinal had no wish to detract from the merits of the Netherland maestro, but he called the Emperor's attention to young Orlando di Lasso, the leader of the orchestra in the Lateran at Rome, who, in his opinion, was destined as a composer and conductor to cast into the shade all the musicians of his time. He was born in Hennegau. The goddess of Music continued to honour the Netherlands with her special favour.

During this conversation Barbara had stepped modestly aside. Charles glanced toward her several times to address her again, but when the Bishop of Arras whispered that, before the commencement of the festival, the cardinal had received despatches from the Council and from Rome, he motioned to both prelates to follow him, and, paying no further heed to Barbara—nay, without even vouchsafing her a farewell wave of the hand—conducted them to the rear of the tent.

Again the girl's heart ached in her abandonment. Duke Maurice, too, had vanished. When he saw the Emperor address her he had left the tent.

Dancing had begun, and he was now accepting the invitation of the magistrate Ambrosius Ammann to inaugurate the young people's pleasure as leader of the Polish dance.

For a time Barbara stood as if spellbound to the spot where her lover had so suddenly turned away from her.

She was again experiencing what Adrian had predicted—politics made Charles forget everything else, even love. How would it be when war actually came?

Now, after the Emperor had showed her that he still deemed her worthy of regard, she felt for the first time thoroughly neglected, and with difficulty restrained her tears. She would have liked to follow Charles, and at every peril whisper softly, so that he alone could hear, yet with all the sharpness of her resentment, that it was unchivalrous to leave her standing here like an outcast, and that she demanded to learn why she had forfeited his love.

The wild throbbing of her heart impeded her breathing, and, in the indignation of her soul, she longed to escape fresh humiliation and to leave the festival.

But again Baron Malfalconnet appeared as a preserver in the hour of need, and, with the profound submissiveness bordering upon mockery which he always showed her, asked why she had so speedily deprived his Majesty of the pleasure of her society. Barbara gave way to her wrath and, while vehemently forbidding the unseemly jibe, glanced with a bitter smile toward the Emperor, who, in conversation with the two dignitaries, seemed to have forgotten everything around him.

"The destiny of the world," observed the baron, "can not be set to dance music. The domain of your obedient admirer, Malfalconnet, on the contrary, obeys solely the heart throbs in this loyal breast; and if you, fairest of women, will allow yourself to be satisfied with so small a realm of sovereignty, it is at your disposal, together with these tolerably agile feet, which still wait in vain for the well-merited imperial gout."

The sharp refusal which this proposition received amused the baron instead of offending him, and passing into a more conversational tone, he proposed to her to leave this abode of ennui, where even the poor satyrs on the hangings were holding their big hands over their mouths to hide their yawns, and go with him to the dancing floor.

Barbara laid her hand on his arm and followed him to the pleasure ground under the lindens, where the pretty daughters of the Ratisbon noble families had just commenced a dance with the gentlemen belonging to their circle.

Barbara had gone to school, exchanged kisses, and was a relative or friend of most of these young girls in light gala dresses, adorned with coloured flowers, whose names Malfalconnet asked, yet, after an interval of these few weeks, she met them like a stranger.

The love which united her to the Emperor had raised her far above them.

Accustomed to give herself up entirely to the gifts which the present offered, she had turned her back on Ratisbon and its inhabitants, with whom, during this period of happiness she could easily dispense, as if they were a forgotten world. There was no one in her native city whom she seriously missed or to whom she was strongly drawn. That she, too, offered these people little, and was of small importance, self-love had never

permitted her to realize, and therefore she felt an emotion of painful surprise when she perceived the deep gulf which separated her from her fellow-citizens of both sexes.

Now her old friends and acquaintances showed her plainly enough how little they cared for her withdrawal.

Pretty Elspet Zohrer, with whom she had contended for the recruiting officer, Pyramus Kogel, was standing opposite to her, by her partner's side, in the same row with charming little Mietz Schiltl, Anne Mirl Woller, her cousin, Marg Thun, and the others.

The Zauner, which they were dancing with a solemn dignity that aroused the baron's mirth, afforded them an opportunity to look around them, and they eagerly availed themselves of it; nay, they almost all glanced at Barbara, and then, with evident intention, away from her, after Elspet Zohrer, with a contemptuous elevation of her dainty little snub nose, had ignored her schoolmate's greeting.

Barbara drew herself up, and the air of unapproachable dignity which she assumed well suited the aristocratic gentleman at her side, whom every one knew as the most brilliant, witty, and extravagant noble at the Emperor's court. At the same time she addressed the baron, whom she had hitherto kept at a distance, with unconstrained familiarity, and as the eyes of the mothers also rested upon her, remarks which might have driven the blood to her cheeks were made upon the intimate terms existing between the "Emperor's sweetheart" and the profligate and spendthrift Malfalconnet.

True, Barbara could not understand what they were saying, but it was easy enough to perceive in what way they were talking about her.

Yet what gave these women the right to condemn her?

They bore her a grudge because she had distinguished herself by her art, while their little geese were idle at home or, at most, busied themselves in the kitchen, at the spinning wheel, in dancing, and whatever was connected with it while waiting for their future husbands. The favour which the most illustrious of mortals showed her they imputed to her as a crime.

How could they know that she was more to the Emperor than the artist whose singing enraptured him?

The girls yonder—her Woller cousins certainly—merely held aloof because their mothers commanded them to do it. Only in the case of a few

need she fear that jealousy and envy had taken possession of them. Yet what did she care for them and their behaviour? She looked over their heads with the air of a queen.

But what was the meaning of this?

As soon as the dance was over, a pretty young girl, scarcely seventeen years old, with blue forget-me-nots in her fair hair and on her breast, left her partner and came directly toward Barbara.

Her head drooped and she hesitated shyly as she did so, but her modest timidity was so charming that the dissolute courtier at Barbara's side felt a throb of sympathy, and gazed down at her like a benevolent fatherly friend as she held out her hand to his companion.

He did not think Martina Hiltner actually beautiful as she stood close before him, but, on the other hand, inexpressibly charming in her modest grace.

That it was she who came to Barbara so confidingly increased his good opinion of the self-reliant, hot-blooded girl who had won the Emperor's love, and therefore he was deeply angered when the latter answered Martina's greeting curtly and coldly, and, without vouchsafing her any further words, requested him to summon one of the attendants who were serving refreshments.

Malfalconnet glanced significantly toward Martina, and, while offering Barbara a goblet of lemonade, said, "There is candied lemon and other seasoning in it, so it will probably suit your taste, exacting beauty, since you appear to dislike what is pure."

"Only when poison is mixed with it," she answered quickly, tossing her head arrogantly. Then, controlling herself, she added in an explanatory tone: "In this case, Baron, your far-famed penetration deceived you. It gave me more pain than you will believe to reject the friendly advances of this lovely child, but her father is the head of the Lutheran heresy here, and the almoner——"

"Then that certainly alters the case," the other interrupted. "Where the Holy Inquisition threatens, I should be capable of denying a friend thrice ere the cock crew. But what a number of charming young faces there are on this Lindenplatz! Here one can understand why Ratisbon, like the French Arles, is famed for the beauty of her daughters. It was not easy for you to

earn the reputation of the greatest beauty here. You have also gained that of the most cruel one. You make me feel it. But if you wish to cast into oblivion the poisoned cup proffered just now, do me the favour to trust yourself to my guidance in the next dance."

"Impossible," answered Barbara firmly. "If I were really cruel, I would yield to your skill in tempting, and render you the base betrayer of the greatest and noblest of masters."

"Does not every one who gazes at your beauty or listens to your song become such a monster, at least in thought?" asked the baron gaily. "Are you really so inexorable about the dance?"

"As this statue," Barbara answered with mirthful resolution, pointing to a plaster figure which was intended to represent the goddess Flora or the month of May. "But let us stay here a few minutes longer, though only as spectators."

Barbara expressed this wish because a group of young gentlemen, who had always been among those who sought her most eagerly for a partner at the dances in the New Scales, had attracted her attention. They were engaged in an animated discussion, which from their glances and gestures evidently concerned Barbara.

Bernhard Trainer, the tall son of an old and wealthy family, who loved Martina Hiltner, and had been incensed by Barbara's treatment of her, seemed to gain his point, and when the city pipers began to play again, all of them—probably a dozen in number—passed by her arm-in-arm in couples, with their eyes studiously fixed upon the opposite side of the dancing floor.

Barbara could entertain no doubt that this insulting act was intended to wound her. The "little castle," as it was called in Prebrunn, owned by Bernhard Trainer's family, was near the bishop's house which she occupied. Therefore the Trainers had probably heard more than others about the visits she received. Or did the gentlemen consider that she deserved punishment for not treating Martina more kindly?

Whatever might have caused the unseemly act, in Barbara's eyes it was a base trick, which filled her with furious rage against the instigators. Had she shared the Emperor's power, it would have been a delight to her in this hour to repay the malignant insult in the same or far heavier coin. But, on

Malfalconnet's account, she must submit in silence to what had been inflicted upon her.

So, in a muffled tone, she requested the baron to take her back to the tent, but while fulfilling her wish he wondered at the long strides of the capricious young lady at his side, and the mortifying inattention with which she received his questions.

Meanwhile the Emperor had returned to the throne, and Maurice of Saxony was again standing beside him, while the chamberlain Andreas Wolff was humbly, inviting the monarch to make the Ratisbon young people happy by visiting the scene of the dancing.

After a dance of inquiry at the duke, Charles assented to this request. But they must pardon him if he remained a shorter time than he himself would desire, as the physician was urging his return home.

While the chamberlain was retiring, Charles saw Barbara leaning on Malfalconnet's arm, beckoned to them, and asked her whether she had yielded to her love for dancing.

A brief "No, your Majesty," assured him of the contrary, and led him to make the remark that whoever exercised a noble art so admirably as she would be wise to refrain from one which could afford nobody any higher pleasure than the peasant and his sweetheart, if they only had sound feet.

The counsel sounded harsh, almost warning, and the already irritated girl with difficulty restrained a sharp reply; but the Emperor was already rising, that, leaning on Quijada's arm, he might seek the dancing ground.

Meantime the young Saxon duke had approached Barbara, and expressed his admiration of the successful festival, but she scarcely heard what he said. Yet when she turned her face toward him, and his ardent gaze rested yearningly upon her, she felt that the opportunity had now come to carry out her half-forgotten intention of arousing the jealousy of her royal lover.

Whatever it might cost, she must undertake the risk.

Summoning all her strength of will, she silenced the bitter resentment which filled her heart, and a sunny glance told Duke Maurice how much his escort pleased her. Malfalconnet had watched every look of the lady on his arm, as well as the duke's, and as they approached the scene of the dance he asked the latter if his Highness would condescend to relieve him for a short

time of a delightful duty. An important one in the service of his imperial Majesty——

Here the duke's eager assent interrupted him, and the next moment Barbara was leaning on the arm of the handsome young prince.

She had found in him the tool which she needed, and Maurice entered into her design only too readily, for the baron had scarcely retired ere he changed his tone of voice and began an attack upon her heart.

He had no need to respect the older rights of his imperial host, for Charles had distrustfully concealed from him the bond which united him to the beautiful singer. So, with glowing eloquence, he described to Barbara how quickly and powerfully the spell of her beauty and her wonderful art had fired his brain, and besought her to aid him not to commence one of the most important periods of his life with a sore heart and sick with longing; but she allowed him to speak, without interrupting him by a single word.

She could not misunderstand what he desired, and many a glance permitted him to interpret it in his favour; but resentment still continued to stir in her soul, growing and deepening as the Emperor, seated on the throne erected for him, without noticing her appearance, sometimes listened to the chamberlain, who mentioned the names of the handsomest dancers, sometimes addressed a question to the Bishop of Arras and the other gentlemen who had followed him.

Her royal lover deprived her of even the possibility of rousing him by jealousy from the consciousness of the secure possession of her person. Besides, the flushed faces of the young men who had so shamelessly insulted her were beaming before her with the joy of the festival.

But the expression of their features was already changing. Duke Maurice had been recognised, and now all who felt entitled to do so approached him, among them her foes, at their head Bernhard Trainer, who were obliged to bend low before him, and therefore before her also.

Just then the city pipers struck up a gagliarde, and the music was the air of the dancing-master's song by Baldassaro Donati, which had roused the Emperor's indignation a few days ago. In imagination she again heard his outburst of anger, again saw him rise from his seat in wrath at the innocent "Chi la gagliarda vuol imparare."

The time of reckoning had come, and he should pay her for the bitterness of that hour! Yonder malevolent fellows, who now looked bewildered and uneasy, should be forced to retreat before her and perceive what power she had obtained by her beauty and her art.

With fevered blood and panting breath she listened to the gay music of the enlarged band of city pipers, and watched the movements of the couples who had already commenced the gagliarde, and—how was it possible in such a mood?—a passionate desire to dance took possession of her.

Without heeding the many persons who stood around them, she whispered softly to the duke, “It would be a pleasure to keep time to the music of the gagliarde with you, your Highness.”

An ardent love glance accompanied this invitation, and the bold Saxon duke was a man to avail himself of every advantage.

He instantly expressed to the Ratisbon gentlemen his desire to try the gagliarde himself to such excellent music, and at a sign from the master of ceremonies the dance stopped.

Several members of the Council requested the couples to make way, and Maurice took his partner’s hand and led her on the stage.

The sudden cessation of the music attracted the Emperor’s attention also. In an instant he perceived what was about to take place, and looked at Barbara. Her eyes met his, and such a glow of indignation, nay, wrath, so imperious a prohibition flashed from his glance that her flushed cheeks paled, and she strove to withdraw her hand from the duke’s.

But Maurice held it firmly, and at the same moment the city pipers began to play again, and the music streamed forth in full, joyous tones.

The wooing notes fell into her defiant soul like sparks on dry brushwood. She could not help dancing, though it should be her death. Already she had begun, and with mischievous joy the thought darted through her mind that now Charles, too, would perceive what anguish lay in the fear of losing those whom we love.

If this grief brought him back to her, she thought, while eagerly following the figures of the dance, she would tend him all her life like a maidservant; if his pride severed the bond between them—that could not be done, because he loved her—she must bear it. Doubtless the conviction forced itself upon her superstitious mind that Fate would be ready to ruin her by

the dance, yet she executed what must bring misfortune upon her; to retreat was no longer possible.

These thoughts darted in wild confusion in a few moments through her burning brain, and while Maurice swung her around it seemed as if the music reached her through the roar and thunder of breakers. The words “Chi la gagliarda vuol imparare” constantly echoed in her ears, mocking, reckless, urging her to retaliation.

The dancing-master, Bernandelli, whom the Council had summoned from Milan to the Danube, had taught her and the other young people of Ratisbon the gagliarde. The sensible teacher, to suit the taste of the German burghers, had divested the gay dance of its recklessness. But he had showed his best pupils with how much more freedom the Italians performed the gagliarde, and Barbara had not forgotten the lesson. Duke Maurice moved and guided her with the same unfettered ease that the little maestro had displayed in former days. Willing or not, she was obliged to follow his lead, and she did so, carried away by the demands of her excited blood and the pleasure of dancing, so long denied, yet with the grace and perfect ear for time which were her special characteristics.

Neither the Ratisbon citizens nor Charles, who had been a good dancer himself, had ever seen the gagliarde danced in this way by either the gentleman or the lady. A better-matched couple could scarcely be imagined than the tall, powerful, chivalrous young prince and the beautiful, superbly formed, golden-haired girl who seemed, as it were, carried away by the music.

But Charles did not appear to share the pleasure which the sight of this rare couple and their dancing awakened even in the most envious and austere of the Ratisbon spectators, for when, in a pause, Barbara, with sparkling eyes, glanced first into the duke’s face and then, with a merry look of inquiry, at her lover, she found his features no longer distorted by anger, but disgusted, as though he were witnessing an unpleasant spectacle.

Nevertheless she danced a short time longer without looking at him, until suddenly the remembrance of his reproving glance spoiled her pleasure in this rare enjoyment.

She whispered to the duke that she was satisfied.

A wave of his hand stopped the music but, ere returning the bow of her distinguished partner, Barbara looked for the Emperor.

Her eyes sought him in vain-he had left the turf under the lindens before the close of the dance. The Bishop of Arras, Malfalconnet, and several of the ladies and gentlemen who had left the tent in no small number and gone to the scene of the dancing after learning what was taking place there, had remained after the monarch's departure. Most of them joined in the applause which the younger Granvelle eagerly commenced when the city pipers lowered their instruments.

Barbara heard it, and saw that Bernhard Trainer and other young citizens of Ratisbon were following the courtiers' example, but she seemed scarcely to notice the demonstration.

The doubt whether Charles had merely not waited till the end of the dance, or had already left the festival, made her forget everything else. Through the Bishop of Arras she learned that his Majesty had gone home.

No one, not even the baron and Quijada, had received a message for her.

This fresh humiliation pierced her heart like a knife.

On every similar occasion hitherto he had sent her a few kind words, or, if Don Luis was the messenger, tender ones.

Yet she was obliged to force herself to smile, in order not to betray what was passing in her mind. Besides, she could not shake off the Duke of Saxony like the poor, handsome recruiting officer, Pyramus Kogel.

Fortunately, some of the most prominent Ratisbon citizens now crowded around Maurice to thank him for the honour which he had done the city.

She availed herself of the favourable opportunity to beg Granvelle, in a low tone, to keep the duke away from her the next morning until his departure at noon, and, if possible, now.

"One service for another," replied the statesman. "I will rid you of the most desirable admirer in Germany. But, on the day after to-morrow, you will adorn my modest banquet with the singing of the most gifted artist in the world."

"Gladly, unless his Majesty forbids me to do so," replied Barbara.

A few minutes later she informed her passionate young ducal lover, who wished to call upon her in her own home that very evening, that it would be utterly impossible. With an air of the greatest regret, she said that her little castle was guarded like an endangered citadel; and when the duke proposed

a meeting, he was interrupted by the Bishop of Arras, who desired to speak to him about “important business.”

In spite of the late hour, the minister, even without the girl’s request, would have sought an audience with the duke, and to the ambitious Maurice politics and the important plans being prepared for immediate execution were of infinitely greater value than a love adventure, no matter what hours of pleasure it promised to afford.

So Barbara succeeded in taking leave of the duke without giving him offence.

The marquise was waiting for her with ill-repressed indignation. The weary old woman had wanted to return home long before, but the command of the grand chamberlain compelled her to wait for Barbara and accompany her the short distance to the house.

With an angry glance and a few bitter-sweet words of greeting, the old dame entered the litter. Barbara preferred to walk beside hers, for clouds had darkened the sky; it had become oppressively sultry, and she felt as if she would stifle in the close, swaying box.

Four torch-bearers accompanied the litters. She ordered the knight and the two lackeys whom Quijada had commissioned to attend her to remain behind, and also refused the service of the little Maltese, who—oh, how gladly!—would have acted as a page and carried her train.

As the shipwrecked man on a plank amid the endless surges longs for land, Barbara longed to get away, far away from the noise of the festival. Yet she dreaded the solitude which she was approaching, for she now perceived how foolishly she had acted, and with what sinful recklessness she had perhaps forfeited the happiness of her life on this luckless evening.

But need she idly wait for the doom to which she was condemned? He whose bright eyes could beam on her so radiantly had just wounded her with angry glances, like a foe or a stern judge, and his indignation had not been groundless.

What had life to offer her without his love? The wantonly bold venture had been baffled. Yet no! All was not yet lost!

Suppose she should summon courage to steal back to him and on her knees repentantly beseech him to forgive her?

But she cherished this desire only a few moments. Then the angry, wronged heart rebelled against such humiliation. She had not so shame fully offended the Emperor, but the lover, and it was his place to entreat her not to withdraw the love which made him happy.

The young girl raised her head with fresh courage. What had happened more than she had expected?

Because he loved her, he had become jealous, and made her feel his anger. But if she should now persistently withdraw from him, and let him realize how deeply he had offended her, she could not fail to win the game. In spite of all his crowns and kingdoms, he was only a man, and must not she, who in a few brief hours had forced a Maurice of Saxony to sue yearningly for her love, succeed by the might of her art and her beauty in transforming the wrath of the far older man, Charles, into his former passion?

If the Italian novels with which she was familiar did not lie, not only jealousy, but apparent indifference on the part of the beloved object, fanned the heart of man to burst into fresh flames.

It was only necessary to hold her impetuous temper in check, and profit by the jealousy which had now been aroused in Charles's mind. Hitherto she had always obeyed hasty impulses. Why should not she, too, succeed in accomplishing a well-considered plan? With the torturing emotions of failure, mortification, desertion, remorse, and yearning for forgiveness, now blended the hope of yet bringing to a successful conclusion the hazardous enterprise which she had already given up as hopeless, and, while walking on, her brain toiled diligently over plans for the campaign which would compel the great general to return with twofold devotion the love of which he had deprived her.

So, in the intense darkness, she followed the light which the torches cast upon the uneven path. At first she had taken up the train of her dress; now it was sweeping the dusty road.

What did she care for the magnificent robe if she regained Charles's love? Of what use would it be if she had lost it, lost it forever?

Before the litters reached the little castle a gust of wind rose, driving large drops of rain, straw, and withered leaves-Barbara could not imagine whence they came in the month of May—into her face. She was obliged to

struggle against these harbingers of the coming tempest, and her heart grew lighter during the conflict. She was not born to endure, but to contend.

The scene of the festivities emptied rapidly. The duke and Granvelle drove back to the city in the minister's carriage. Malfalconnet and Quijada, in spite of the gathering storm, went home on foot.

"What a festival!" said Don Luis scornfully.

"In former days such things presented a more superb spectacle even here. But now! No procession, no scarlet save on the cardinals, no golden cross, no venerable priest's head on the whole pleasure ground, and, moreover, neither consecration nor the pious exhortation to remember Heaven, whence comes the joy in which the crowd is rejoicing."

"I, too, missed something here," cried the baron eagerly, "and now I learn through you what it is."

"Will not the heretics themselves gradually feel that they are robbing the pasty of faith of its truffles—what am I saying?—of its salt? May their dry black bread choke them! The only thing that gave the unseasoned meal a certain charm was the capitally performed gagliarde.

"Which angered his Majesty more deeply than you imagine," replied Don Luis. "The singer's days are probably numbered. It is a pity! She was wonderfully successful in subduing the spirits of melancholy."

"The war, on which we can now depend, will do that equally well, if not better," interrupted the baron. "Within a short time I, too, have lost all admiration for this fair one. Cold-hearted and arrogant. Capable of the utmost extremes when her hot blood urges her on. Unpopular with the people to whom she belongs, and, in spite of her bold courage, surprisingly afraid of the Holy Inquisition. Here, among the heretics, that gives cause for thought."

"Enough!" replied Don Luis. "We will let matters take their course. If the worst comes, I, at least, will not move a finger in her behalf."

"Nor will I," said Malfalconnet, and both walked quietly on.

BOOK 2.

CHAPTER I.

Through the storm, which lashed her face with whirling clouds of dust and drops of rain, Barbara reached the little Prebrunn castle.

The marquise had not yet left her litter. The wind had extinguished two of the torches. One bearer walked in front of Barbara with his, and the gale blew the smoking flame aside. But, ere she had reached the gate, a man who had been concealed behind the old elm by the path stepped forward to meet her. She started back and, as he called her by name, she recognised the young Wittenberg theologian, Erasmus Eckhart. Sincerely indignant, she ordered him to go away at once, but her first words were interrupted by the shrill voice of the marquise, who had now left her litter, and with loud shrieks ordered the steward to seize the burglar.

Erasmus, however, trusted to his strength and nimbleness and, instead of promptly taking flight, entreated Barbara to listen to him a moment. Not until, far from allowing herself to be softened, she, too, threatened him, did he attempt to escape, but both litters were in his way, and when he had successfully passed around them the gardener, suddenly emerging from the darkness, seized him. But the sturdy young fellow knew how to defend his liberty, and had already released himself from his assailant when other servants grasped him.

Above the roar of the storm now rose the shrieks of the marquise, the shouts of “Stop thief!” from the men, and Erasmus’s protestations that he was no robber, coupled with an appeal to Jungfrau Blomberg, who knew him.

Barbara now stated that he was the son of a respectable family, and had by no means come here to steal the property of others; but the marquise, though she probably correctly interpreted the handsome young fellow’s late visit, vehemently insisted upon his arrest. She treated Barbara’s remonstrance with bitter contempt; and when Cassian, the almoner’s servant, appeared and declared that he had already caught this rascal more than once strolling in a suspicious manner near the castle, and that he himself was here so late only because his beloved bride, in her mistress’s

absence, was afraid of the robber and his companions, Barbara's entreaties and commands were disregarded, and Erasmus's hands were bound.

By degrees the noise drew most of the inmates of the castle out of doors, and among them Frau Lerch. Lastly, several halberdiers, who were coming from the Lindenplatz and had heard the screams in the garden, appeared, chained the prisoner, and took him to the Prebrunn jail.

But scarcely had Erasmus been led away when the priests of the household also came out and asked what had happened. In doing this Barbara's caution in not calling Erasmus by name proved to have been futile, for Cassian had recognised him, and told the ecclesiastics what he knew. The chaplain then asserted that, as the property of the Prince Abbot of Berchtesgaden, the house and garden were under ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and committed the further disposal of the burglar's fate to the Dominican whom the almoner had placed there. For the present he might remain in secular custody. Early the following morning he must be brought before the Spanish Dominicans who had come with the Emperor, and from whom greater severity might be expected than from the Ratisbon brotherhood, by whom monastic discipline had been greatly relaxed.

Meanwhile the wind had subsided, and the storm had burst with thunder, lightning, and torrents of rain. Priests and laymen retreated into the house, and so did Barbara and the marquise. The latter had exposed herself to the tempest only long enough to emphasize the necessity of delivering the heretical night-bird to the Spanish Dominicans very early the next morning, and to show Barbara that she did not overlook the significance of the incidents under the lindens. With a disagreeable blending of tenderness and malice, she congratulated the young girl on the applause she had received as a dancer, the special favour which she had enjoyed from the Duke of Saxony, and the arrest of the dangerous burglar, which would also be a gratification to his Majesty.

With these words the old aristocrat, coughing slightly, tripped up the stairs; but Barbara, without vouchsafing an answer to this speech, whose purpose she clearly understood, turned her back upon her and went to her own room.

She had desired no gift in return when, to save this contemptible woman's son and his child, she sacrificed her lover's precious memento; but the base reward for the kind deed added a burning sense of pain to the other

sorrows which the day had brought. What a shameful crime was ingratitude! None could be equally hateful to eternal justice, for—she now learned it by her own experience—ingratitude repaid kindness with evil instead of with good, and paralyzed the disappointed benefactor's will to perform another generous deed.

When she entered her sleeping-room the courage which she had summoned during the walk, and the hope to which she had yielded, appeared to be scattered and blown away as if by a gust of wind. Besides, she could not conceal from herself that she had drawn the nails from the planks of her wrecked ship of life with her own hand.

Did it not seem as if she had intentionally done precisely what she ought most studiously to have left undone? Her sale of the star had been only an unfortunate act of weakness, but the dance, the luckless dance! Not once only, several times Charles had stated plainly enough how unpleasant it was to him even to hear the amusement mentioned. She had behaved as if she desired to forfeit his favour.

And why, in Heaven's name, why? To arouse his jealousy?

Fool that she was! This plant took root only in a heart filled with love

And his?

Because she perceived that his love was dying, she had awakened this fatal passion. Was it not as if she had expected to make a water-lily blossom in the sands of the desert?

True, still another motive had urged her to this mad act. She knew not what name to give it, yet it was only too possible that, in spite of her recent experiences, it might overpower her again on the morrow.

Surprised at herself, she struck her brow with her hand, and when Frau Lerch, who was just combing her wet hair, perceived it, she sobbed aloud, exclaiming: "Poor, poor young gentleman, and the Hiltners, who love him as if he were their own son! Such a terrible misfortune! Old fool that I am! The first time he asked admittance to show you the tablature, and you did not want to receive him, I persuaded you to do so. Then he fared like all the others whose heads you have turned with your singing. Holy Virgin! If the Hiltners learn that you and I let him be bound without making any real protest. It will fall heaviest upon me; you can believe that, for Fran Hiltner and Jungfrau Martina, since the young girl has gone to dances, have been

among my best customers. Now they will say: Frau Lerch, who used to be a good little woman, left the young fellow in the lurch when his life was at stake, for they will take him to the Spanish Dominicans. They belong, to the Holy Inquisition, and think no more of burning people at the stake than we do of a few days in prison."

Here Barbara interrupted her with the remark that Erasmus could be convicted of no crime, and the Holy Inquisition had no authority in Ratisbon.

But Frau Lerch knew better. That was all very well during the Emperor's absence, but now that his Majesty resided in the city the case was different. Erasmus had been arrested on ecclesiastical ground, the chaplain had ordered him to be delivered to the Spaniards early the next morning and, ere the syndic could interpose, the rope would already be twisted for him, for with these gentlemen the executioner stood close beside the judge. Besides, she had heard of a pamphlet against the Pope, which the young theologian had had published, that had aroused great indignation among the priesthood. If he fell into the hands of the Dominicans, he would be lost, as surely as she hoped to be saved. If he were only in the custody of the city, of course a better result might be hoped.

Here she stopped with a shriek, dropping the comb, for the thundercloud was now directly over the city, and a loud peal, following close upon the flash of lightning, shook the house; but Barbara scarcely heeded the dazzling glare and the rattling panes.

She had risen with a face as white as death. She knew what severe sentences could be pronounced by the Council of the Inquisition, and the thought that the keenest suffering should be inflicted upon the Hiltners through her, to whom they had showed so much kindness, seemed unendurable. Besides, what she had just said to herself concerning ingratitude returned to her mind.

And then, Inquisition and the rack were two ideas which could scarcely be separated from one another. What might not be extorted from the accused by the torture! In any case, the almoner's suspicion would obtain fresh nourishment, and her lover had told her more than once—what a special dislike he felt for women who, with their slender intelligence, undertook to set themselves above the eternal truths of the Holy Church. And the jealousy which, fool that she was, she had desired to arouse in her

lover, what abundant nourishment it would derive from the events which had occurred on her return from the festival!

But even these grave fears were overshadowed by the thought of Dr. Hiltner's wife and daughter. With what fair-mindedness the former in the Convivium had made her cause her own, how touching had been Martina's effort to approach her, and how ill that very day she had requited their loyal affection! Erasmus was as dear as a beloved son to these good women, and Frau Lerch's reproach that her intercession for him was but lukewarm had not been wholly groundless. The next day these friends who, notwithstanding the difference in their religious belief, had treated her more kindly than any one in Ratisbon, would hear this and condemn her. That should not be! She would not suffer them to think of her as she did of the shameless old woman whose footsteps she still heard over her head.

She must not remain idly here, and what her impetuous nature so passionately demanded must be carried into execution, though reason and the loud uproar of the raging storm opposed it.

Fran Lerch had just finished arranging her hair and handed her her night-coif, when she started up and, with the obstinate positiveness characteristic of her, declared that she was going at once to the Hiltners to inform the syndic of what had happened here. Erasmus was still in the hands of the town guards, and perhaps it would be possible for the former to withdraw the prisoner from ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Frau Lerch clasped her hands in horror, exclaiming: "Holy Virgin, child! Have you gone crazy? Go out in this weather? Whoever is not killed by lightning will drown in the puddles."

But with that violent peal of thunder the storm had reached its height, and when the next flash of lightning came the thunder did not follow until some time after, though the rain continued to beat as heavily against the panes. Yet even had the tempest continued to rage with full fury, Barbara would not have been dissuaded from the resolution which she had once formed.

True, her attempt to persuade Frau Lerch to accompany her remained futile. Her frail body, the dressmaker protested, was not able to undertake such a walk through the storm. If she yielded, it would be her death. It would kill Barbara, also, and this crazy venture would be too dearly paid for at the cost of two human lives.

Barbara's angry remark that if she would not run the risk of getting wet for the sake of compassion, she might on account of the Hiltners' good custom, finally made the excited woman burst into piteous crying; yet in the midst of it she brought Barbara's dress and old thick cloak and, as she put them on the girl, exclaimed, "But I tell you, child, you'll turn back again when you get halfway there, and all you bring home will be a bad illness."

"Whoever can execute the gagliarde to dance herself into misery," replied Barbara impatiently, "will not find it difficult to take a walk through the rain to save some one else from misfortune. The cloak!"

"She will go," sobbed Frau Lerch. "The servants must still obey you. At least order the litter. This crazy night pilgrimage can not remain concealed."

"Then let people talk about it," replied Barbara firmly and, after having the cloak clasped and the hood drawn over her head, she went out. Frau Lerch, who had the key, opened the door for her amid loud lamentations and muttered curses; but when the girl had vanished in the darkness, she turned back, saying fiercely through her set teeth: "Rush on to ruin, you headstrong creature! If I see aright, the magnificence here is already tottering. Go and get wet! I've made my profit, and the two unfinished gowns can be added to the account. The Lord is my witness that I meant well. But will she ever do what sensible people advise? Always running her head against the wall. Whoever will not hear, must feel."

She hastened back into the house as she spoke to escape the pouring rain, but Barbara paid little heed to the wet, and waded on through the mire of the road.

The force of the storm was broken, the wind had subsided, distant flashes of lightning still illumined the northern horizon, and the night air was stiflingly sultry. No one appeared in the road, and yet some belated pedestrian might run against her at any moment, for the dense darkness shrouded even the nearest objects. But she knew the way, and had determined to follow the Danube and go along the woodlands to the tanner's pit, whence the Hiltner house was easily reached. In this way she could pass around the gate, which otherwise she would have been obliged to have opened.

But ere gaining the river she was to learn that she had undertaken a more difficult task than she expected. Her father had never allowed her to go out after dark, unaccompanied, even in the neighbourhood, and the terrors of

night show their most hideous faces to those who are burdened by anxious cares. Several times she sank so deep into the mud that her shoe stuck fast in it, and she was obliged to force it on again with much difficulty. As she walked on and a strange, noise reached her from the woodyard on her left, when she constantly imagined that she heard another step following hers like an audible shadow, when drunken raftsmen came toward her, hoarsely singing an obscene song, she pressed against a fence in order not to be seen by the dissolute fellows. But now a light came wavering toward her, looking like a shining bird flying slowly, or a hell-hound, with glowing eyes, and at the sight it seemed to her impossible to wander on all alone. But the mysterious light proved to be only a lantern in the hand of an old woman who had been to fetch a doctor, so she summoned up fresh courage, though she told herself that here near the lumber yards she might easily encounter raftsmen and guards watching the logs and planks piled on the banks of the river, fishermen, and sailors. Already she heard the rushing of the swollen Danube, and horrible tales returned to her memory of hapless girls who had flung themselves into the waves here to put an end to lives clouded by disgrace and fear.

Then a shiver ran through her, and she asked herself what her father would say if he could see her wading alone through the water. Perhaps the fatigues of the long journey had thrown him upon a sick-bed; perhaps he had even—at the fear she felt as though her heart would stop beating—succumbed to them. Then he knew how matters stood with her, the sin she had committed, and the shame she had brought upon him that she might enjoy undisturbed a happiness which was already changing into bitter sorrow. Meanwhile it seemed as if she was gazing into his rugged, soldierly face, reddish-brown, with rolling eyes, as it looked when disfigured by anger, and she raised her hands as if to hold him back; but only for a few minutes, for she perceived that her excited imagination was terrifying her with a delusion.

Drawing a long breath, she pushed her dank hair back into her hood and pressed her hand upon her heart. Then she was calm a while, but a new terror set it throbbing again. Close beside her—this time at her right—the loud laughter of men’s harsh voices echoed through the darkness.

Barbara involuntarily stopped, and when she collected her thoughts and looked around her, her features, distorted by anxiety and terror, smoothed

again, and she instantly knocked with her little clinched hand upon the door of the hut from whose open windows the laughter had issued.

It stood close to the river bank, and the tiny dwelling belonged to the Prior of Berchtesgaden's fisherman and boatman, who kept the distinguished prelate's gondolas and boats in order, and acted as rower to the occupants of the little Prebrunn castle. She had often met this man when he brought fish for the kitchen, and he had gone with the boats in the water excursions which she had sometimes taken with Gombert and Appenzelder or with Malfalconnet and several pages. She had treated him kindly, and made him generous gifts.

All was still in the house after her knock, but almost instantly the deep voice of the fisherman Valentin, who had thrust his bearded face and red head out of the window, asked who was there.

The answer received an astonished "Can it be!" But as soon as she informed him that she needed a companion, he shouted something to the others, put on his fisherman's cap, stepped to Barbara's side, and led the way with a lantern which stood lighted on the table.

The road was so softened that, in spite of the light which fell on the ground, it was impossible to avoid the pools and muddy places. But the girl had become accustomed to the wet and the wading. Besides, the presence of her companion relieved her from the terrors with which the darkness and the solitude had tortured her. Instead of watching for new dangers, she listened while Valentin explained how it happened that she found him still awake. He had helped hang the banners and lamps tinder the lindens, and when the storm arose he assisted in removing the best pieces. In return a jug of wine, with some bread and sausages, had been given to him, and he had just begun to enjoy them with two comrades.

The Hiltner house was soon reached. Nothing had troubled Barbara during the nocturnal walk since the fisherman had accompanied her.

Her heart was lighter as she rapped with the knocker on the syndic's door; but, although she repeated the summons several times, not a sound was heard in the silent house.

Valentin had seen the Hiltners' two men-servants with the litters under the lindens, and Barbara thought that perhaps the maids might have gone to the scene of the festival to carry headkerchiefs and cloaks to the ladies

before the outbreak of the storm. That the deaf old grandmother did not hear her was easily understood.

The Hiltners could not have returned, so she must wait.

First she paced impatiently to and fro in the rain, then sat upon a curbstone which seemed to be protected from the shower by the roof. But ever and anon a larger stream of water poured down upon her from the jaws of a hideous monster in which the gutter ended than from the black clouds, and, dripping wet, she at last leaned against the door, which was better shielded by the projecting lintel, while the fisherman inquired about the absent occupants of the house.

Thus minute after minute passed until the first and then the second quarter of an hour ended. When the third commenced, Barbara thought she had waited there half the night. The rain began to lessen, it is true, but the sultry night grew cooler, and a slight chill increased her discomfort.

Yet she did not move from the spot. Here, in front of the house in which estimable women had taken her to their hearts with such maternal and sisterly affection, Barbara had plainly perceived that she, who had never ceased to respect herself, would forever rob herself of this right if she did not make every effort in her power to save Erasmus from the grave peril in which he had become involved on her account. During this self-inspection she did not conceal from herself that, while singing his own compositions to him, she had yielded to the unfortunate habit of promising more with her eyes than she intended to perform. How could this vain, foolish sport have pleased her after she had yielded herself, soul and body, to the highest and greatest of men!

Anne Mirl Woller had often been reproved by her mother, in her presence, for her freedom of manner. But who had ever addressed such a warning to her? Now she must atone for her heedlessness, like many other things which her impetuous will demanded and proved stronger than the reason which forbade it. It was a wonder that Baron Malfalconnet and Maestro Gombert had not sued more urgently for her favour. If she was honest, she could not help admitting that her lover—and such a lover!—was justified in wishing many things in her totally different. But she was warned now, and henceforth these follies should be over—wholly and entirely over!

If only he would refrain from wounding her with that irritating sharpness, which made her rebellious blood boil and clouded her clear brain! He was

indeed the Emperor, to whom reverence was due; but during the happy hours which tenderly united them he himself desired to be nothing but the man to whom the heart of the woman he loved belonged. She must keep herself worthy of him, nothing more, and this toilsome errand would prevent her from sullying herself with an ugly sin.

During these reflections the chill had become more and more unendurable, yet she thought far less of the discomfort which it caused her than of increased danger to Erasmus from the Hiltners' long absence.

The third quarter of an hour was already drawing to an end when Valentin came hurrying up and told Barbara that they were on the way. He had managed to speak to the syndic, and told him who was waiting for him.

A young maid-servant, running rapidly, came first to open the house and light the lamps. She was followed, quite a distance in advance of the others, by Dr. Hiltner.

The fisherman's communication had made him anxious. He, too, had heard that Barbara was the Emperor's favourite. Besides, more than one complaint of her offensive arrogance had reached him. But, for that very reason, the wise man said to himself, it must be something of importance that led her to him at this hour and in such weather.

At first he answered her greeting with cool reserve, but when she explained that she had come, in spite of the storm, because the matter concerned the weal or woe of a person dear to him, and he saw that she was dripping wet, he honestly regretted his long delay, and in his manly, resolute manner requested her to follow him into the house; but Barbara could not be persuaded to do so.

To give the thunderstorm time to pass and take his wife and daughter home dry, he had entered a tavern near the lindens and there engaged in conversation with several friends over some wine. Whenever he urged returning, the young people—she knew why—objected. But at last they had started, and Bernhard Trainer had accompanied the Hiltners, in order to woo Martina on the way. Her parents had seen this coming, and willingly confided their child's happiness to him.

The betrothed couple now came up also, and saw with surprise the earnest zeal with which Martina's father was discussing something, they knew not what, with the singer on whose account they had had their first quarrel. The lover had condemned Barbara's unprecedented arrogance

during the dance so severely that Martina found it unendurable to listen longer.

Frau Sabina, too, did not know how to interpret Barbara's presence; but one thing was certain in her kindly heart—this was no place for such conversation. How wet the poor girl must be! The wrong which Barbara had done her child was not taken into consideration under these circumstances and, with maternal solicitude, she followed her husband's example, and earnestly entreated Barbara to change her clothes in her house and warm herself with a glass of hot black currant wine. But Barbara could not be induced to do so, and hurriedly explained to the syndic what he lacked the clew to understand.

In a few minutes she had made him acquainted with everything that it was necessary for him to know. Dr. Hiltner, turning to his wife, and mean while looking his future son-in-law steadily in the eye, exclaimed, "We are all, let me tell you, greatly indebted to this brave girl."

Frau Sabina's heart swelled with joy, and to Martina, too, the praise which her father bestowed on Barbara was a precious gift. The mother and daughter had always espoused her cause, and now it again proved that they had done well.

"So I was right, after all," whispered the young girl to her lover.

"And will prove so often," he answered gaily. But when, a short time after, he proposed to Barbara's warm advocate to accompany the singer home, Martina preferred to detain him, and invited him to stay in the house with her a little while longer.

These incidents had occupied only a brief period, and Dr. Hiltner undertook to escort the young girl himself. To save time, he questioned her about everything which he still desired to know, but left her before she turned into the lane leading to the little castle, because he was aware that she, who belonged to the Emperor's household, might he misjudged if she were seen in his company.

Shortly after, he had freed Erasmus from imprisonment and sent him, in charge of one of the Council's halberdiers, beyond the gate. He was to remain concealed outside the city until the syndic recalled him.

The young theologian willingly submitted, after confessing to his foster-father how strongly love for Barbara had taken possession of him.

This act might arouse strong hostility to the syndic, but he did not fear it. Moreover, the Emperor had showed at the festival plainly enough his withdrawal of the good opinion which he had formerly testified upon many an occasion. This was on account of his religion, and where that was concerned there was no yielding or dissimulation on either side.

Barbara returned home soothed.

Frau Lerch was waiting for her, and with many tokens of disapproval undressed her. Yet she carefully dried her feet and rubbed them with her hands, that she might escape the fever which she saw approaching.

Barbara accepted with quiet gratitude the attention bestowed upon her, but, though she closed her eyes, the night brought no sleep, for sometimes she shivered in a chill, sometimes a violent headache tortured her.

CHAPTER II.

Sleep also deserted the Emperor's couch. After his return from the festival he tried to examine several documents which the secretary Gastelii had laid ready for him on the writing-table, but he could not succeed. His thoughts constantly reverted to Barbara and her defiant rebellion against the distinct announcement of his will. Had the Duke of Saxony, so much his junior and, moreover, a far handsomer and perhaps more generous prince, won her favour, and therefore did she perhaps desire to break the bond with him?

Why not?

She was a woman, and a capricious one, too, and of what would not such a nature be capable? Besides, there was something else. Jamnitzer, the Nuremberg goldsmith, had intrusted a casket of jewels to Adrian to keep during his absence. They were intended for the diadems which the Emperor was to give his two nieces for bridal presents. The principal gems among them were two rubies and a diamond. On the gold of the old-fashioned setting were a P and an l, the initial letters of his motto "Plus ultra." He had once had it engraved upon the back of the star which he bestowed upon Barbara. His keen eye and faithful memory could not be deceived—Jamnitzer's jewels had been broken from that costly ornament.

From time immemorial it had belonged to the treasures of his family, and he had already doubted whether it was justifiable to give it away.

Was it conceivable that Barbara had parted with this, his first memento, sold it, "turned it into money"?—the base words wounded his chivalrous soul like the blow of a scourge.

She was a passionate, defiant, changeful creature, it is true, yet her nature was noble, hostile to baseness, and what a wealth of the purest and deepest feeling echoed in her execution of solemn songs! This induced him to reject as impossible the suspicion that she could have stooped to anything so unworthy.

Still, it was not easily banished. A long series of the sorest disappointments had rendered him distrustful, and he remembered having

asked her several times for the star in vain.

Perhaps it had been stolen from her, and Jamnitzer had obtained it from the thief himself or from the receiver. This thought partially soothed him, especially as, if correct, it would be possible for him to recover the ornament. But he was an economical manager, and to expend thousands of ducats for such a thing just at this time, when immense sums were needed for the approaching war, seemed to him more than vexatious.

Besides, the high price which he had paid for the Saxon's aid rendered him uneasy. He had ceded two large bishoprics to his Protestant ally, and this act of liberality, which, it is true, had been approved and supported by Granvelle, could no longer be undone. Moreover, if he drew the sword, he must maintain the pretence that it was not done for the sake of religion, but solely to chastise the insubordinate Protestant princes, headed by the Elector John Frederick of Saxony and Philip of Hesse, who had seriously angered him.

In ten days the Reichstag would be opened in Ratisbon and, in spite of his special invitation, these princes, who had refused to recognise the Council of Trent, had excused their absence upon trivial pretexts—the Hessian, who on other occasions, attended by his numberless servants in green livery, had made three times as great a display as he, the Emperor, on the pretext that the journey to Ratisbon would be too expensive.

Maurice now had his imperial word and he the duke's; but since that evening Charles thought he had noticed something which lessened his confidence in the Saxon. It was not only jealousy which showed him this young, clever, brave, and extremely ambitious prince in a more unfavourable light than before. He knew men, and thought that he had perceived in him signs of the most utter selfishness. As Maurice, to gain two bishoprics, and perhaps later the Elector's hat, abandoned his coreligionists, his cousin and his father-in-law, he would also desert him if his own advantage prompted him to do so. True, such an ally was useful for many things, but he could not be trusted implicitly a single hour.

Maurice certainly had not remained ignorant of Barbara's relation to him, the Emperor, and yet, in the sovereign's very presence, he had courted her favour with such defiant boldness that Charles struck the writing-table with his fist as he thought of his manner to the singer. Would Maurice impose greater moderation upon himself in political affairs?

Yet perhaps he judged the Saxon too severely, and made him suffer for another's sin. The man's conduct is governed by the woman's, and he had seen how Barbara, as it were, gave Maurice the right to sue thus boldly for her favour.

Was it conceivable that she loved him, after having wounded him, as if intentionally, by acts which she knew were detestable to him? If her heart was still his, how could she have so inconsiderately favoured in his presence another, younger man?

Angrily excited by the question, he rose from the writing-table. But ere he went to rest he thought of his hapless mother, whose birthday at this hour, beyond midnight, was now over, and, kneeling before the priedieu in his bedroom, he fervently commended her to the mercy of Heaven. This woman had loved her husband so fondly that it was long ere she could resolve to part from his corpse, yet she was the heiress of the mightiest sovereigns; and what was this Ratisbon girl whom he honoured with his affection?

And yet!

While her lips were still glowing from his kisses, she had carried on a reckless game with another, and was now robbing him of the repose of mind which he so urgently, needed.

And the mother of the woman whose birthday had just passed, the proud Queen Isabella, the conqueror of the Moors—what would she have said had she been condemned to see her grandson, the heir of so great an empire, ensnared by such bonds?

He had proved, since he wielded the sceptre, that he did not lack strength of will, and he must show it again.

He reminded himself indignantly that he was not only the ruler of many nations, but the head of perhaps the most illustrious family on earth.

He thought of his royal brothers and sisters, his haughty son Philip, his daughters, nephews, and nieces; and while pouring forth his soul in fervent prayer for his unfortunate mother, with her disordered intellect, he also besought the Redeemer to free him from the evil of this love. Three words from his lips would have sufficed to rid him of Barbara forever, but—he felt it—that would not end the matter. He must also learn to forget her, and for that he needed the aid of the higher powers. He had once more yielded to

worldly pleasure. The kiss of her beautiful soft lips had been sweet, the melody of her voice still more blissful. It had given him hours of rapture; but were these joys worth the long repentance which was already beginning? It was wise to sacrifice the transitory pleasures of earth to loftier purposes. One thing alone promised permanent duration even here—what he was achieving for the future greatness of his own name and that of his race. For them he was now going to war, and, by fighting against the heretics, the foes of God, he entered the strife, in a sense, as the instrument of Heaven. Thus, not only his duty as a sovereign, but care for his eternal salvation, compelled him to cast aside everything which might jeopardize the triumph of his good, nay, sacred cause; and what could imperil it more seriously than this late passion, which to-day had rendered it impossible to do his duty?

Firmly resolved to resign Barbara before his brother Ferdinand reached Ratisbon with his family, he rose from the priedieu and sought his couch. But sleep fled from the anxious ruler; besides, the pain of the gout became more severe.

After rising early, he went limping to mass, breakfasted, and began his work.

Many charts and plans had been placed on the writing-table for him, and beside them he found a letter from Granvelle, in which he stated his views concerning the alliance with Duke Maurice, and what advantage might be derived from it. Both as a whole and in detail Charles approved them, and gladly left to the minister the final negotiations with the duke, who intended to leave Ratisbon at noon. If he briefly ratified the terms which had been arranged with Granvelle, and gave Maurice his hand in farewell, he thought he would have satisfied amply the claims of the covetous man, of whose aid, however, he stood in need.

After the thunderstorm the weather had grown cloudy and cool. Perhaps the change had caused his increased suffering and unhappy mood. But the true reason was doubtless the resolution formed the night before, and which now by day seemed more difficult to execute than he had thought at the priedieu. He was still resolved to keep it, but earthly life appeared less short, and he could not conceal from himself that, without Barbara’s sunny cheerfulness, bewitching tenderness, and, alas! without her singing, his future existence would lack its greatest charm. His life would be like this

gloomy day. Put he would not relinquish what he had once firmly determined and proved to himself by reasoning to be the correct course.

He could not succeed in burying himself in charts and plans as usual and, while imagining how life could be endured without the woman he loved, he pushed the papers aside.

In days like these, when the old ache again attacked him, Barbara and her singing had brightened the dreary gloom and lessened the pain, or she had caressed and sung it entirely away. He seemed to himself like a surly patient who throws aside the helpful medicine because it once tasted badly to him and was an annoyance to others. Yet no. It contained poison also, so it was wise to put it away. But had not Dr. Mathys told him yesterday that the strongest remedial power was concealed in poisons, and that they were the most effective medicines? Ought he not to examine once more the reasons which had led him to this last resolution? He bowed his head with an irresolution foreign to his nature, and when his greyhound touched his aching foot he pushed the animal angrily away.

The confessor De Soto found him in this mood at his first visit.

Ere he crossed the threshold he saw that Charles was suffering and felt troubled by some important matter, and soon learned what he desired to know. But if Charles expected the Dominican to greet his decision with grateful joy, he was mistaken, for De Soto had long since relinquished the suspicion which had prejudiced him against Barbara and, on the contrary, with the Bishop of Arras, had reached the certainty that the love which united the monarch to the singer would benefit him.

Both knew the danger which threatened the sovereign from his tendency to melancholy, and now that he saw his efforts to urge the Emperor to a war with the Smalcalds crowned with success, he wished to keep alive in him the joyousness which Barbara, and she alone, had aroused and maintained.

So he used the convincing eloquence characteristic of him to shake the monarch’s resolve, and lead him back to the woman he loved.

The Church made no objection to this bond of free love formed by a sovereign whom grave political considerations withheld from a second marriage. If his Majesty’s affection diminished the success of his work, the separation from so dear a being, who afforded him so much pleasure, would do this to a far greater degree. That Barbara had allowed the bold Saxon too much liberty on the dancing ground he did not deny, but took advantage of

the opportunity to point out the unscrupulousness which characterized Maurice, like all heretics. As for Barbara, the warm blood and fresh love of pleasure of youth, qualities which to many were her special charm, had led her into the error of the luckless dance. But the Emperor, who until then had listened to De Soto' here interrupted him to confide the unfortunate suspicion which had been aroused in him the day before.

The mention of this matter, however, was very opportune to the almoner, for he could easily turn it to the advantage of the suspected girl. The day before yesterday she had confessed to him the fate of the valuable star, and begged him, if her imprudent deed of charity should be discovered, to relieve her of the painful task of explaining to Charles how she had been induced to sell a memento so dear to her. Thereupon the confessor himself had ascertained from the marquise and the goldsmith Jamnitzer that Barbara had told him the whole truth.

So in his eyes, and probably in those of a higher power, this apparently ignoble act would redound no little to the credit of the girl's heart.

Charles listened to this explanation with a silent shrug of the shoulders. Such a deed could scarcely be otherwise regarded by the priest, but Barbara's disregard of his first gift offended him far more than the excellent disposition evinced by the hasty act pleased him. She had flung the first tangible token of his love into the insatiable jaws of a worthless profligate, like a copper coin thrown as alms to a beggar. It grieved the soul of the economical manager and lover of rare works of art to have this ancient and also very valuable family heirloom broken to pieces. Malfalconnet would not fail to utter some biting jest when he heard that Charles must now, as it were, purchase this costly ornament of himself. He would have forgiven Barbara everything else more easily than this mad casting away of a really royal gift.

Expressing his indignation to the almoner without reserve, he closed the interview with him. When Charles was again alone he tried to rise, in order, while pacing up and down the room, to examine his resolution once more. But his aching foot prevented this plan and, groaning aloud, he sank back into his arm-chair.

His heart had not been so sore for a long time, and it was Barbara's fault. Yet he longed for her. If she had laid her delicate white hand upon his brow, he said to himself, or had he been permitted to listen to even one of her

deeply felt religious songs, it would have cheered his soul and even alleviated his physical suffering. Several times he stretched his hand toward the bell to send for her; but she had offended him so deeply that he must at least let her feel how gravely she had erred, and that the lion could not be irritated unpunished, so he conquered himself and remained alone. The sense of offended majesty strengthened his power of resisting the longing for her.

Indignant with himself, he again drew the maps toward him. But like a cloth fluttering up and down between a picture and the beholder, memories of Barbara forced themselves between him and the plans over which he was bending.

This could not continue!

Perhaps, after all, her singing was the only thing which could restore his lost composure. He longed for it even more ardently than for her face. If he sent for her, he could show her by his manner what fruit her transgressions had borne. The rest would follow as a matter of course. Now every fibre of his being yearned for the melody of her voice.

Obeying a hasty resolution, he rang the bell and ordered Adrian to call Quijada and command Barbara to sing in the Golden Cross that afternoon.

After the valet had replaced his aching foot in the right position, Don Luis appeared. Without any further comment the Emperor informed him that he had determined to sever the bond of love which united him to the singer.

While speaking, he looked his friend sharply in the face, and when he saw, by his silent bow, that his decision called forth no deeper emotion in him, he carelessly added that, nevertheless, he intended to hear her sing that day, and perhaps many times more.

Perceiving a significant smile upon the lips of the faithful follower, and recognising the peril contained in the last resolve, he shook his finger at Quijada, saying: “As if even the inmost recesses of your soul were concealed from me! You are asking yourself, Why does Charles deny me leave to visit Villagarcia, and thereby cruelly prevent my being happy with my dear, beautiful young wife, after so long a separation, if he considers himself strong enough to turn his back, without further ceremony, upon the woman he loves, after seeing and hearing her again?”

“Your Majesty has read correctly,” replied Don Luis, “yet my wish for a brief stay with Doha Magdalena de Ulloa is very different from your Majesty’s desire.”

“How?” demanded Charles in a sharp tone of inquiry. “Is my strength of will, in your opinion, so far inferior to yours?”

“Your Majesty can scarcely deem me capable of so presumptuous an error,” replied Quijada. “But your Majesty is Charles V, who has no superior save our Lord in heaven. I, on the contrary, am only a Castilian nobleman, and as such prize my honour as my highest treasure; but, above all other things, even above the lady of my heart, stands the King.”

“I might know that,” cried the Emperor, holding out his hand to his friend. “Yet I refused you the leave of absence, you faithful fellow. The world calls this selfishness. But since it still needs me, it ought in justice to excuse me, for never have I needed you so much as during these decisive weeks, whether war is declared—and it will come to that—or not. Think how many other things are also impending! Besides, my foot aches, and my heart, this poor heart, bears a wound which a friend’s careful hand will soothe. So you understand, Luis, that the much-tormented Charles can not do without you just now.”

Quijada, with sincere emotion, bent over the monarch’s hand and kissed it tenderly, but the Emperor, for the first time, hastily stroked his bearded cheek, and said in an agitated tone, “We know each other.”

“Yes, your Majesty,” cried the Spaniard. “In the first place, I will not again annoy my master with the request for a leave of absence. Dona Magdalena must try how she can accommodate herself to widowhood while she has a living husband, if the Holy Virgin will only permit me to offer your Majesty what you expect from me.”

“I will answer for that,” the Emperor was saying, when Adrian interrupted him.

The messenger had returned from Prebrunn with the news that the singer had taken cold the day before, and could not leave the house.

Charles angrily exclaimed that he knew what such illness meant, and his under lip protruded so far that it was easy to perceive how deeply this fresh proof of Barbara’s defiance and vanity incensed him.

But when the chamberlain said that the singer had been attacked by a violent fever, Charles changed colour, and asked quickly in a tone of sincere anxiety: “And Dr. Mathys? Has he seen her? No? Then he must go to her at once, and I shall expect tidings as soon as he returns. Perhaps the fever was seething in her blood yesterday.”

He had no time to make any further remarks about the sufferer, for one visitor followed another.

Shortly before noon the Bishop of Arras ushered in Duke Maurice, who wished to take leave of him.

Granvelle, in a businesslike manner, summed up the result of the negotiations, and Charles made no objection; but after he had said farewell to the Saxon prince, he remarked, with a smile which was difficult to interpret: “One thing more, my dear Prince. The beautiful singer has suffered from the gagliarde, which she had the honour of dancing with you; she is lying ill of a fever. We will, however, scarcely regard it as an evil omen for the agreements which we concluded on the same day. With our custom of keeping our hands away from everything which our friendly ally claims as his right, our alliance, please God, will not fail to have good success.”

A faint flush crimsoned the intelligent face of the Saxon duke, and an answer as full of innuendo as the Emperor’s address was already hovering on his lips, when the chief equerry’s entrance gave him power to restrain it.

Count Lanoi announced that his Highness’s travelling escort was ready, and the Emperor, with an air of paternal affection, bade the younger sovereign farewell.

As soon as the door had closed behind Maurice, Charles, turning to Granvelle, remarked, “The Saxon cousin returned our clasp of the hand some what coldly, but the means of rendering it warmer are ready.”

“The Elector’s hat,” replied the Bishop of Arras. “I hope it will prevent him from making our heads hot, as the Germans say, instead of his own.”

“If only our brains keep cool,” replied the Emperor. “It is needful in dealing with this young man.”

“He knows his Machiavelli,” added the statesman, “but I think the Florentine did not write wholly in vain for us also.”

“Scarcely,” observed the Emperor, smiling, and then rang the little bell to have his valet summon Dr. Mathys.

The leech had returned from his visit to Barbara, and feared that the burning fever from which she was suffering might indicate the commencement of inflammation of the lungs.

Charles started up and expressed the desire to be conveyed at once in the litter to Prebrunn; but the physician declared that his Majesty’s visit would as certainly harm the feverish girl as going out in such weather would increase the gout in his royal master’s foot.

The monarch shrugged his shoulders, and seized the despatches and letters which had arrived. The persons about him suffered severely from his detestable mood, but the dull weather of this gloomy day appeared also to have a bad effect upon the confessor De Soto, for his lofty brow was scarcely less clouded than the sky. He did not allude to Barbara by a single word, yet she was the cause of his depression.

After his conversation with the sovereign he had retired to his private room, to devote himself to the philological studies which he pursued during the greater portion of the day with equal zeal and success. But he had scarcely begun to be absorbed in the new copy of the best manuscript of Apuleius, which had readied him from Florence, and make notes in the first Roman printed work of this author, when Cassian interrupted him.

He had missed the servant in the morning. Now the fellow, always so punctual when he had not gazed too deeply into the wine-cup, stood before him in a singular plight, for he was completely drenched, and a disagreeable odour of liquor exhaled from him. The flaxen hair, which bristled around his head and hung over his broad, ugly face, gave him so unkempt and imbecile an appearance that it was repulsive to the almoner, and he harshly asked where he had been loitering.

But Cassian, confident that his master’s indignation would soon change to approval and praise, rapidly began to relate what had occurred outside the little castle at Prebrunn when the festival under the lindens was over.

After helping to place the Wittenberg theologian in custody, he had followed Barbara at some distance during her nocturnal walk. While she waited in front of Dr. Hiltner’s house and talked with the members of the syndic’s family after their return, he had remained concealed in the shadow of a neighbouring dwelling, and did not move until the doctor had gone

away with the singer. He cautiously glided behind them as far as the garden, witnessed the syndic's cordial farewell to his companion, and dogged the former to the Prebrunn jail. Here he had again been obliged to wait patiently a long while before the doctor came out into the open air with the prisoner. The rope had been removed from Erasmus's hands, and Cassian had remained at his heels until he stopped in the village of Kager, on the Nuremberg road. The young man had taken a lunch in the tavern there; the money for it was given him by the syndic. Cassian had seen the gold pieces which had been placed in Erasmus's hand, to pay his travelling expenses, glitter in the rosy light of dawn.

In reply to the almoner's question whether he remembered any portion of the conversation between the syndic and the singer, Cassian admitted that he had been obliged to keep too far away from them to hear it, but Dr. Hiltner's manner to the girl had been very friendly, especially when he took leave of her.

The anything but grateful manner with which the almoner received this story was a great disappointment to the overzealous servant; nay, he secretly permitted himself to doubt his master's wisdom and energy when the latter remarked that the arrest of a man who had merely entered a stranger's garden was entirely unjustifiable, and that he was aware of the singer's acquaintanceship with the Hiltners.

With these words he motioned Cassian to the door.

When the prelate was again alone he gazed thoughtfully into vacancy. He understood human beings sufficiently well to know that Barbara had not deceived him in her confession. In spite of the nocturnal walk with the head of the Ratisbon heretics, she was faithful to the Catholic Church.

Erasmus's visit at night alone gave him cause for reflection, and suggested the doubt whether he might not have interceded too warmly for this peculiar creature and her excitable artist nature.

CHAPTER III.

Silence pervaded the little castle in Prebrunn; nay, there were days when a thick layer of straw in the road showed that within the house lay some one seriously ill, who must be guarded from every sound.

In Ratisbon and the Golden Cross, on the contrary, the noise and bustle constantly increased. On the twenty-eighth of May, King Ferdinand arrived with his family to visit his brother Charles. The Reichstag would be opened on the fifth of June, and attracted to the Danube many princes and nobles, but neither the Elector John of Saxony nor the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, the heads of the Smalcald league. King Ferdinand's two daughters were to be married the first of July, and many a distinguished guest came to Ratisbon in June. Besides, several soldiers began to appear.

The Emperor Charles's hours were filled to the brim with work and social obligations. The twinges of the gout had not wholly disappeared, but remained bearable.

The quiet good-breeding of the two young archduchesses pleased the Emperor, and their young brother Maximilian's active mind and gay, chivalrous nature delighted him, though many a trait made him, as well as the confessor, doubt whether he did not incline more toward the evangelical doctrine than beseemed a son of his illustrious race. But Charles himself, in his youth, had not been a stranger to such leanings. If Maximilian was intrusted with the reins of government, he would perceive in what close and effective union stood the Church and the state. Far from rousing his opposition by reproaches, the shrewd uncle won his affection and merely sowed in his mind, by apt remarks, the seeds which in due time would grow and bear their fruit.

The Austrians watched with sincere admiration the actually exhausting industry of the illustrious head of their house, for he allowed himself only a few hours' sleep, and when Granvelle had worked with him until he was wearied, he buried himself, either alone or with some officers of high rank, in charts of the seat of war, in making calculations, arranging the levying of

recruits and military movements, and yet did not withdraw from the society of his Viennese relatives and other distinguished guests.

Still, he did not forget Barbara. The leech was daily expected to give a report of her health, and when, during the middle of June, Dr. Mathys expressed doubts of her recovery, it rendered him so anxious that his relatives noticed it, and attributed it to the momentous declaration of war which was on the eve of being made.

When the sufferer at last began to recover, his selfishness was satisfied with the course of events. True, he thought of the late springtime of love which he had enjoyed as an exquisite gift of Fortune, and when he remembered many a tender interview with Barbara a bright smile flitted over his grave countenance. But, on the whole, he was glad that this love affair had come to so honourable an end. The last few weeks had claimed his entire time and strength so rigidly and urgently that he would have been compelled to refuse Barbara's demands upon his love or neglect serious duties.

Besides, a meeting between Barbara and his nephew and young nieces could scarcely have been avoided, and this would have cast a shadow upon the unbounded reverence and admiration paid him by the wholly inexperienced, childlike young archduchesses, which afforded him sincere pleasure. The confessor had taken care to bring this vividly before his mind. While speaking of Barbara with sympathizing compassion, he represented her illness as a fresh token of the divine favour which Heaven so often showed to the Emperor Charles, and laid special stress upon the disadvantages which the longer duration of this love affair—though in itself, pardonable, nay, even beneficial—would have entailed.

Queen Mary's boy choir was to remain in Ratisbon some time longer, and whenever the monarch attended their performances—which was almost daily-the longing for Barbara awoke with fresh strength. Even in the midst of the most arduous labour he considered the question how it might be possible to keep her near him—not, it is true, as his favourite, but as a singer, and his inventive brain hit upon a successful expedient.

By raising her father to a higher rank, he might probably have had her received by his sister Mary among her ladies in waiting, but then there would always have been an unwelcome temptation existing. If, on the other hand, Barbara would decide to take the veil, an arrangement could easily be

made for him to hear her often, and her singing might then marvellously beautify the old age, so full of suffering and destitute of pleasure, that awaited him. He realized more and more distinctly that it was less her rare beauty than the spell of her voice and of her art which had constrained him to this late passion.

The idea that she would refuse to accept the fate to which he had condemned her was incomprehensible to his sense of power, and therefore did not occur to his mind.

Yet, especially when he was bearing pain, he did not find it difficult to silence even this wish for the future, for then memories of the last deeply clouded hours of their love bond forced themselves upon him.

He saw her swinging like a Bacchante in the dance with the young Saxon duke; the star which had been thrown away appeared before his eyes, and his irritated soul commanded him never to see her again.

But the suffering of a person whom we have once loved possesses a reconciling power, and he who usually forgot no insult, even after the lapse of years, was again disposed to forgive her, and reverted to the wish to continue to enjoy her singing.

When, before their wedding day, he gave his nieces the diadems which Jammtzer had made for them, his resentment concerning the ornament sold by Barbara again awoke. He could no longer punish her for this “loveless” deed, as he called it, but he made the marquise feel severely enough his indignation for her abuse of the young girl’s inexperience, for, without granting her a farewell audience, he sent her back to Brussels, with letters to Queen Mary expressing his displeasure. Instead of her skilful maid Alphonsine, a clumsy Swabian girl accompanied her—the former had married Cassian.

Barbara heard nothing of all these things; her recovery was slow, and every source of anxiety was kept from her.

She had never been ill before, and to be still at a time when every instinct urged her to battle for her life happiness and her love, to prove the power of her beauty and her art, put her slender stock of patience to the severest test.

During the first few days she was perfectly conscious, and watched with keen suspense what was passing around her. It made her happy to find that Charles sent his own physician to her but, on the other hand, she was deeply

and painfully agitated by his failure to grant the entreaty which she sent by Dr. Mathys to let her see his face, even if only for a moment.

Gombert and Appenzelder, Massi, the Wollers from the Ark, Dr. Hiltner's wife and daughter, the boy singer Hannibal, and many gentlemen of the court-nay, even the Bishop of Arras—came to inquire for her, and Barbara had strictly enjoined Frau Lerch to tell her everything that concerned her; for every token of sympathy filled the place, as it were, of the applause to which she was accustomed.

When, on the second day, she heard that old Ursula had been there to ask about her for Wolf, who was now convalescing, she passionately insisted upon seeing her, but, obedient to the physician's orders, Frau Lerch would not admit her. Then Barbara flew into such a rage that the foolish woman forgot to take the fever into account, and determined to return home. Many motives drew her there, but especially her business; day and night her mind was haunted by the garments which, just at this time, before the commencement of the Reichstag, other dressmakers were fashioning for her aristocratic customers.

A certain feeling of shame had restrained her from leaving Barbara directly after the beginning of her illness. Besides, delay had been advisable, because the appearance of the Emperor's physician proved that the monarch's love was not wholly dead. But Barbara's outbreak now came at an opportune time, for yesterday, by the leech's suggestion, and with the express approval of the Emperor, one of the Dominican nuns, Sister Hyacinthe, had come from the Convent of the Holy Cross and, with quiet dignity, assumed her office of nurse beside her charge's sick-bed. This forced Fran Lerch into a position which did not suit her, and as, soon after Barbara's outbreak, Dr. Mathys sternly ordered her to adopt a more quiet and modest bearing, she declared that she would not bear such insult and abuse, hastily packed her property, and returned to the Grieb with a much larger amount of luggage than she had brought with her.

Sister Hyacinthe now ruled alone in the sickroom, and the calm face of the nun, whose cap concealed hair already turning gray, exerted as soothing an influence upon the patient as her low, pleasant voice. She was the daughter of a knightly race, and had taken the veil from a deep inward vocation, as one of the elect who, in following Christ, forget themselves, in order to dedicate to her suffering neighbours all her strength and the great

love which filled her heart. They were her world, and her sole pleasure was to satisfy the compassionate impulse in her own breast by severe toil, by tender solicitude, by night watching, and by exertions often continued to actual suffering. Death, into whose face she had looked beside so many sickbeds, was to her a kind friend who held the key of the eternal home where the Divine Bridegroom awaited her.

The events occurring in the world, whether peace reigned or the nations were at war with one another, affected her only so far as they were connected with her patient. Her thoughts and acts, all her love and solicitude, referred solely to the invalid in her care.

The departure of Frau Lerch was a relief to her mind, and it seemed an enigma that Barbara, whose beauty increased her interest, and whom the physician had extolled as a famous singer, could have given her confidence, in her days of health, to this woman.

Sister Hyacinthe's appearance beside her couch had at first perplexed Barbara, because she had not asked for her; but the mere circumstance that her lover had sent her rendered it easy to treat the nun kindly, and the tireless, experienced, and invariably cheerful nurse soon became indispensable.

On the whole, both the leech and Sister Hyacinthe could call Barbara a docile patient, and she often subjected herself to a restraint irksome to her vivacious temperament, because she felt how much gratitude she owed to both.

Not until the fever reached its height did her turbulent nature assert its full power, and the experienced disciple of the art of healing had seen few invalids rave more wildly.

The delusions that tortured her were by no means varied, for all revolved about the person of her imperial lover and her art. But under the most careful nursing her strong constitution resisted even the most violent attacks of the fever, and when June was drawing toward an end all danger seemed over.

Dr. Mathys had already permitted her to sit out of doors, and informed the Emperor that there was no further occasion for fear.

The monarch expressed his gratification but, instead of asking more particularly about the progress of her convalescence, he hastily turned the

conversation to his own health.

Dr. Mathys regretted this for the sake of the beautiful neglected creature, who had won his sympathy, but it did not surprise him, for duty after duty now filled every hour of Charles's day. Besides, on the day after to-morrow, the fourth of July, the marriages of his two nieces were to take place, and he himself was to accompany the bridal procession and attend the wedding. On the fifth the Reichstag would be opened, and the Duke of Alba, with several experienced colonels, had arrived as harbingers of the approaching war. Where this stern and tried general appeared, thoughts of war began to stir, and already men equipped with helmets and armour began to be seen in unusual numbers in all the streets and squares of Ratisbon.

The Emperor's room, too, had an altered aspect, for, instead of a few letters and despatches, his writing-table was now covered not only with maps and plans, but lists and tables referring to the condition of his army.

What could the health of a half-convalescent girl now be to the man to whom even his most trusted friend would no longer have dared to mention her as his favourite?

Of course, Dr. Mathys told Barbara nothing about the Emperor's lack of interest, for any strong mental excitement might still be injurious to her. Besides, he was a reserved man, who said little more to Barbara than was necessary. Toward the Emperor Charles he imposed a certain restraint upon himself; but the royal adept in reading human nature knew that in him he possessed one of the most loyal servants, and gave him his entire confidence. For his sake alone this wealthy scholar devoted himself to the laborious profession which so often kept him from library and laboratory. Although his smooth, brown hair had turned gray long ago, he had never married, for he had decided in the Emperor's favour—this Charles knew also—whenever the choice presented itself to follow his royal patient during his journeys and expeditions or to find rest and comfort in a home of his own.

The calm, kindly manner of this far-famed physician very soon gained a great influence over the vivacious Barbara. Since she had felt sure of his good will, she had willingly obeyed him. Though he was often obliged to shake his finger at her and tell her how much she herself could contribute toward regaining freedom of motion and the use of her voice, she really did

nothing which he could seriously censure, and thus her recovery progressed in the most favourable manner until the wedding day was close at hand.

She had already been permitted to receive visits from old acquaintances and, without saying much herself, listen to the news they brought. The little Maltese, Hannibal, had also appeared again, and the lively boy told her many things which Gombert and Appenzelder had not mentioned.

The morning of the day before the princesses' marriage he informed her, among other things, that the bridal procession would march the following morning. It was to start from the cathedral square and go to Prebrunn, where it would turn back and disband in front of the Town Hall. All the distinguished noblemen and ladies who had come to Ratisbon to attend the wedding and the Reichstag would show themselves to the populace on this occasion, and it was even said that the Emperor intended to lead the train with his royal brother. It must pass by the garden; but the road could scarcely be seen from the little castle—the lindens, beeches, and elms were too tall and their foliage was too thick to permit it.

This news destroyed Barbara's composure. Though she had slept well during the past few nights, on this one slumber deserted her. She could not help thinking constantly of the possibility that the Emperor might be present in the procession, and to see her lover again was the goal of her longing.

Even in the morning, while the physician permitted her to remain in the open air because the clay was hot and still, the bridal procession was continually in her thoughts. Yet she did not utter a word in allusion to it.

At the noon meal she ate so little that Sister Hyacinthe noticed it, and anxiously asked if she felt worse; but Barbara reassured her and, after a short rest in the house, she asked to be taken out again under the lindens where she had reclined in an armchair that morning.

Scarcely had she seated herself when all the bells in the city began to ring, and the heavy ordnance and howitzers shook the air with their thunder.

What a festal alarum!

How vividly it reminded her of the brilliant exhibitions and festivities which she had formerly attended!

She listened breathlessly to the sounds from the city, and now a distant blare of trumpets drowned the dull roar of the ordnance and the sharp rattle of the culverins.

The confused blending of many human voices reached her from beyond the garden wall.

The road must be full of people. Now single shrill trumpet notes echoed from afar amid the trombones and the dull roll of the drums, the noise increasing every moment. From a large, old beech tree close to the wall, into which a dozen lads had climbed, she already saw handkerchiefs waving and heard the shouts of clear, boyish voices.

Sister Hyacinthe had just gone into the house, and like an illumination the thought darted through Barbara's mind that the road could be seen from the little summer house which the reverend owner of the castle called his "frigidarium," because it was cool even during the warmest summer day.

It was a small, towerlike building close to the garden wall, whose single inner room was designed to imitate a rock cave. The walls were covered with tufa and stalagmites, shells, mountain crystals, and corals, and from the lofty ceiling hung large stalactites. From one of the walls a fountain plashed into a large shell garlanded with green aquatic plants and tenanted by several goldfish and frogs.

The single open window resembled a cleft in the rocks, and looked out upon the road. Blocks of stone, flung one upon another without regard to order, formed steps from which to look out of doors.

These stairs afforded a view of the road to the city. Barbara had often used them when watching in the dusk of evening for her lover's litter or, at a still later hour, for the torch-bearers who preceded it.

She could already walk firmly enough to mount the few rough steps which led to the opening in the rocks and, obeying the tameless yearning of her heart, she rose from the arm-chair and walked as rapidly as her feeble strength permitted toward the frigidarium.

It was more difficult to traverse the path, illumined by the hot July sun, than she had expected; but the pealing of the bells and the roar of the cannon continued, and now it was drowned by the fanfare of the trumpets and the shouts of the people.

All this thundering, ringing, clashing, chiming, and cheering was a greeting to him for the sight of whom her whole being so ardently longed; and when, halfway down the path, she felt the need of resting on a bench under a weeping ash, she did not obey it, but forced herself to totter on.

Drops of perspiration covered her forehead when she entered the frigidarium, but there the most delicious coolness greeted her. Here, too, however, she could allow herself no rest, for the boys in the top of the beech, and some neighbouring trees, were already shouting their clear voices hoarse and waving caps and branches.

With trembling knees she forced herself to climb one after another of the blocks that formed the staircase. When a slight faintness attacked her, a stalactite afforded her support, and it passed as quickly as it came. Now she had reached her goal. The rock on which she stood gave her feet sufficient support, as it had done many times before.

Barbara needed a few minutes in this wonderfully cool atmosphere to recover complete self-control. Only the wild pulsation of her heart still caused a painful feeling; but if she was permitted to see the object of her love once more, the world might go to ruin and she with it.

Now she gazed from the lofty window over the open country.

She had come just at the right time. Imperial halberdiers and horse guards, galloping up and down, kept the centre of the road free. On the opposite side of the highway which she overlooked was a dense, countless multitude of citizens, peasants, soldiers, monks, women, and children, who with difficulty resisted the pressure of those who stood behind them, shoulder to shoulder, head to head. Barbara from her lofty station saw hats, barets, caps, helmets, women's caps and coifs, fair and red hair on uncovered heads and, in the centre of many, the priestly tonsure.

Then a column of dust advanced along the road from which the fanfare resounded like the scream of the hawk from the gray fog. A few minutes later, the cloud vanished; but the shouts of the multitude increased to loud cheers when the heralds who rode at the head of the procession appeared and raised their long, glittering trumpets to their lips. Behind them, on spirited stallions, rode the wedding marshals, members of royal families, in superb costumes with bouquets of flowers on their shoulders.

Now the tumult died away for a few minutes, and Barbara felt as though her heart stood still, for the two stately men on splendid chargers who now, after a considerable interval, followed them, were the royal brothers, the Emperor Charles and King Ferdinand.

The man for whom Barbara's soul longed, as well as her eyes, rode on the side toward her.

He was still half concealed by dust, but it could be no one else, for now the outburst of enthusiasm, joy, and reverence from the populace reached its climax. It seemed as though the very trees by the wayside joined in the limitless jubilation. The greatness of the sovereign, the general, and the happy head of the family, made the Protestants around him forget with what perils this monarch threatened their faith and thereby themselves; and he, too, the defender and loyal son of the Church, appeared to thrust aside the thought that the people who greeted him with such impetuous delight, and shared the two-fold festival of his family with such warm devotion, were heretics who deserved punishment. At least he saluted with gracious friendliness the throng that lined both sides of the road, and as he passed by the garden of the little castle he even smiled, and glanced toward the building as though a pleasant memory had been awakened in his mind. At this moment Barbara gazed into the Emperor's face.

Those were the features which had worn so tender an expression when, for the first time, he had uttered the never-to-be-forgotten "Because I long for love," and her yearning heart throbbed no less quickly now than on that night. The wrong and suffering which he had inflicted upon her were forgotten. She remembered nothing save that she loved him, that he was the greatest and, to her, the dearest of all men.

It was perfectly impossible for him to see her, but she did not think of that; and when he looked toward her with such joyous emotion, and the cheers of the populace, like a blazing fire which a gust of wind fans still higher, outstripped, as it were, themselves, she could not have helped joining in the huzzas and shouts and acclamations around her though she had been punished with imprisonment and death.

And clinging more firmly to the stalactite, Barbara rose on tiptoe and mingled her voice with the joyous cheers of the multitude.

In the act her breath failed, and she felt a sharp pain in her chest, but she heeded the suffering as little as she did the weakness of her limbs. The physical part of her being seemed asleep or dead. Nothing was awake or living except her soul. Nothing stirred within her breast save the rapture of seeing him again, the indescribable pleasure of showing that she loved him.

Already she could no longer see his face, already the dust had concealed him and his charger from her eyes, yet still, filled with peerless happiness, she shouted "Charles!" and again and again "Charles!" It seemed to her as

though the air or some good spirit insist bear the cry to him and assure him of her ardent, inextinguishable love.

The charming royal brides, radiant in their jewels, their betrothed husbands, and the lords and ladies of their magnificent train passed Barbara like shadows. The procession of German, Spanish, Hungarian, Bohemian, and Italian dignitaries swam in a confused medley before her eyes. The glittering armour of the princes, counts, and barons, the gems on the heads, the robes, and the horses' trappings of the ladies and the Magyar magnates flashed brightly before her, the red hats and robes of the cardinals gleamed out, but usually everything that her eyes beheld mingled in a single motley, shining, moving, many-limbed body.

The end of the procession was now approaching, and physical weakness suddenly asserted itself most painfully.

Barbara felt only too plainly that it was time to leave her post of observation; her feet would scarcely carry her and, besides, she was freezing.

She had entered the damp cave chamber in a thin summer gown, and it now seemed to be continually growing colder and colder.

Climbing down the high steps taxed her like a difficult, almost impossible task, and perhaps she might not have succeeded in accomplishing it unaided; but she had scarcely commenced the descent when she heard her name called, and soon after Sister Hyacinthe entered the frigidarium and, amid no lack of kindly reproaches, helped her to reach the open air.

When even in the warm sunshine the chill did not pass away, Barbara saw that the sister was right, yet she was far from feeling repentant.

During the night a violent attack of fever seized her, and her inflamed throat was extremely painful.

When Dr. Mathys came to her bedside he already knew from the nun the cause of this unfortunate relapse, and he understood only too well what had induced Barbara to commit the grave imprudence. Reproof and warnings were useless here; the only thing he could do was to act, and renew the conflict with the scarcely subdued illness. Thanks to his indefatigable zeal, to the girl's strong constitution, and to the watchful care of the nurse, he won the victory a second time. Yet he could not rejoice in a complete

triumph, for the severe inflammation of the bronchial tubes had caused a hoarseness which would yield to none of his remedies. It might last a long time, and the thought that the purity of his patient's voice was perhaps forever destroyed occasioned sincere regret.

True, he opposed the girl when she expressed this fear; but as July drew to its close, and her voice still remained husky, he scarcely hoped to be able to restore the old melody. In other respects he might consider Barbara cured, and intrust her entire convalescence to her own patience and caution.

Perhaps the ardent desire to regain the divine gift of song would protect her from perilous ventures like this last one, and even more certainly the hope which she had confided to the nun and then to him also. The physician noticed, with warm sympathy, how deeply this mysterious expectation had influenced her excitable nature, ever torn by varying emotions, and the excellent man was ready to aid her as a friend and intercessor.

Unfortunately, just at this time the pressure of business allowed the Emperor little leisure to listen to the voice of the heart.

The day before yesterday the Elector John Frederick of Saxony and the Landgrave Philip of Hesse had been banned, and with this the war began.

Already twelve troops of Spaniards who had served in Hungary, and other bands of soldiers had entered Ratisbon; cannon came up the Danube from Austria, and the city, had gained a warlike aspect. To disturb the Emperor in his work as a general at such a time, with a matter which must agitate him so deeply, was hazardous, and few would have been bold enough to bring it before the overburdened monarch; but the leech's interest in Barbara was so warm and sincere that he allowed himself to be persuaded to act the mediator between her and the man who had interfered so deeply in the destiny of her life. For the first time he saw her weep, and her winning manner seemed to him equally touching, whether she yielded to anxious distress of mind or to joyous hopes.

His intercession in her behalf would permit no delay, for the Emperor's departure to join the troops was close at hand.

Firmly resolved to plead the cause of the unfortunate girl, whose preservation, he might say, was his work, yet with slight hope of success, he crossed the threshold of the imperial apartments.

When the physician informed the sovereign that Barbara might be considered saved for the second time, the latter expressed his pleasure by a warm “We are indebted to you for it again “; but when Mathys asked if he did not intend to hasten Barbara’s recovery by paying her a visit, though only for a few moments, the Emperor looked into the grave countenance of the physician, in whom he noticed an embarrassment usually foreign to him, and said firmly, “Unfortunately, my dear Mathys, I must deny myself this pleasure.”

The other bowed with a sorrowful face, for Barbara’s dearest wish had been refused. But the Emperor saw what was passing in the mind of the man whom he esteemed, and in a lighter tone added: “So even your invulnerable dragon hide was not proof against the shafts—you know! If I see aright, something else lies near your heart. My refusal—that is easily seen—annoys you; but, much as I value your good opinion, Mathys, it is firm. The more difficult I found it to regain my peace of mind, the more foolish it would be to expose it to fresh peril. Now, if ever, I must shun every source of agitation. Think! With the banning, the general’s work begins. How you look at me! Well, yes! You, too, know how easy it is for the man who has most to do to spare a leisure hour which the person without occupation does not find, and neither of us is accustomed to deceive the other. Besides, it would be of little avail. So, to cut the matter short, I am unwilling to see Barbara again and awaken false hopes in her mind! But even these plain words do not seem to satisfy you.”

“By your Majesty’s permission,” replied the leech, “deeply as I regret it for the invalid’s sake, I believe, on the contrary, that you are choosing the right course. But I have only discharged the first part of my patient’s commission. Though I have no pleasant tidings to take back to her, I am still permitted to tell her the truth. But your Majesty, by avoiding an interview with the poor girl, will spare yourself a sad, nay, perhaps a painful hour.”

“Did the disease so cruelly mar this masterpiece of the Creator?” asked the Emperor. “With so violent a fever it was only too natural,” replied the physician. “Time and what our feeble skill can do will improve her condition, I hope, but—and this causes the poor girl the keenest suffering—the unfortunate inflammation of the bronchial tubes most seriously injures the tone of her clear voice.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the startled Emperor with sincere compassion. “Do everything in your power, Mathys, to purify this troubled spring of melody. I will repay you with my warmest gratitude, for, though the Romans said that Cupid conquered through the eyes, yet Barbara’s singing exerted a far more powerful influence over my heart than even her wonderful golden hair. Restore the melting tones of her voice and, though the bond of love which rendered this month of May so exquisitely beautiful to us must remain severed, I will not fail to remember it with all graciousness.”

“That, your Majesty, can scarcely be avoided,” the physician here remarked with an embarrassment which was new in him to Charles, “for the continuance of the memory of the spring days which your Majesty recalls with such vivid pleasure seems to be assured. Yet, if it pleases Heaven, as I have learned to-day for the first time, to call a living being into existence for this purpose——”

“If I understand you correctly,” cried the Emperor, starting up, “I am to believe in hopes——”

“In hopes,” interrupted the physician with complete firmness, “which must not alarm your Majesty, but render you happy. This new branch of the illustrious trunk of your royal race I, who am only 30 a plain man, hail with proud joy, and half the world, I know, will do so with me.”

Charles, with brows contracted in a gloomy frown, gazed for a long time into vacancy.

The leech perceived how mighty a conflict between contradictory emotions would be waged in his breast, and silently gave him time to collect his thoughts.

At last, rising from his arm-chair, the Emperor struck the table with his open hand, and said: “Whether the Lord our God awoke this new life for our punishment or our pleasure the future will teach. What more must be done in this matter? You know my custom in regard to such important affairs. They are slept upon and maturely considered. Only there is one point,” and as he uttered the words his voice assumed an imperious tone, “which is already irrevocably decided. The world must not suspect what hope offers itself to me and another. Tell her, Mathys, we wish her happiness; but if her maternal heart expects that I will do her child the honour of calling it mine, I must require her to keep silence, and intrust the newborn infant’s destiny, from the first hour of its birth, to my charge.”

Here he hesitated, and, after looking the physician in the face, went on: "You again think that harsh, Mathys—I see it in your expression—but, as my friend, you yourself can scarcely desire the world to see the Emperor Charles performing the same task with a Barbara Blomberg. She is free to choose. Either I will rear the child, whether it is a boy or a girl, as my own, as I did my daughter, Duchess Margaret of Parma, or she will refuse to give me the child from its birth and I must deny it recognition. I have already shared far too much with that tempting creature; I can not permit even this new dispensation to restore my severed relationship with the singer. If Barbara's maternal love is unselfish, the choice can not be difficult for her. That the charge of providing for this new life will fall upon me is a matter of course. Tell her this, Mathys, and if in future—But no. We will confide this matter to Quijada."

As the door closed behind the physician, Charles stood motionless. Deep earnestness furrowed his brow, but suddenly an expression of triumphant joy flashed over his face, and then yielded to a look of grateful satisfaction. Soon, however, his lofty brow clouded again, and his lower lip protruded. Some idea which excited his indignation must have entered his mind. He had just been thinking with the warmest joy of the gift of Fate of which the physician had told him, but now the reasons which forbade his offering it a sincere welcome crowded upon the thinker.

If Heaven bestowed a son upon him, would not only the Church, but also the law, which he knew so well, refuse to recognise his rights? A child whose mother had offended him, whose grandfather was a ridiculous, impoverished old soldier, whose cousins——

Yet for what did he possess the highest power on earth if he would not use it to place his own child, in spite of every obstacle, at the height of earthly grandeur?

What need he care for the opinion of the world? And yet, yet——

Then there was a great bustle below. The loud tramping of horses' hoofs was heard. A troop of Lombardy cavalry in full armour appeared on the Haidplatz—fresh re-enforcements for the war just commencing. The erect figure of the Duke of Alba, a man of middle height, followed by several colonels, trotted toward it. The standard-bearer of the Lombards lowered the banner with the picture of the Madonna before the duke, and the Emperor involuntarily glanced back into the room at the lovely Madonna

and Child by the master hand of Giovanni Bellini which his royal sister had hung above his writing table.

How grave and lovely, yet how full of majesty, the Christ-child looked, how touching a grace surrounded the band of angels playing on violins above the purest of mothers!

Then the necessity of appealing to her in prayer seized upon him, and with fervent warmth he besought her to surround with her gracious protection the young life which owed its existence to him.

He did not think of the child's mother. Was he still angry with her?

Did she seem to him unworthy of being commended to the protection of the Queen of Heaven? Barbara was now no more to him than a cracked bell, and the child which she expected to give him, no matter to what high' honours he raised it, would bear a stain that nothing could efface, and this stain would be called "his mother."

No deviation from the resolve which he had expressed to the physician was possible. The child could not be permitted to grow up amid Barbara's surroundings. To prevent this she must submit to part from her son or her daughter, and to take the veil. In the convent she could remember the happiness which had once raised her to its loftiest height. She could and must atone for her sin and his by prayers and pious exercises. To return to the low estate whence he had raised her must appear disgraceful to herself. How could one who had once dined at the table of the gods still relish the fare of mortals? Even now it seemed inconceivable to him that she could oppose his will. Yet if she did, he would withdraw his aid. He no longer loved her. In this hour she was little more to him than the modest casket to which was confided a jewel of inestimable value, an object of anxiety and care. The determination which he had confided to his physician was as immovable as everything which he had maturely considered. Don Luis Quijada should provide for its execution.

CHAPTER IV.

Dr. Mathys had himself carried in the litter from the Golden Cross to Barbara.

This errand was a disagreeable one, for, though the Emperor's remark that he had yielded to the rare charm of this woman was not true, his kindly heart had become warmly attached to Barbara. For the first time he saw in her the suffering which often causes a metamorphosis in certain traits in a sick person's character extend their transforming power to the entire nature. Passionate love for her art gave her the ability to maintain with punctilious exactness the silence which he had been compelled to impose upon her, and the once impetuous, obstinate creature obeyed his directions and wishes with the patience of a docile child.

The manner in which, after he permitted her to speak, she had disclosed in a low whisper her happy yet disquieting secret, hovered before him now as one of the most pathetic incidents in a life full of varied experiences.

How touchingly deep misery and the greatest rapture, gloomy anxiety and radiant joy, bitter dread and sweet anticipation, despairing helplessness and firm confidence had looked forth at him from the beautiful face whose noble outlines were made still more delicate by the illness through which she had passed! He could not have refused even a more difficult task to this petitioner.

Now he was returning from the Emperor, and he felt like a vanquished general.

In what form was he to clothe the bad news which he was bringing to the convalescent girl? Poor child! How heavily she had to atone for her sin, and how slight was his own and every other influence upon the man, great even in his selfishness, who had had the power to render him a messenger of joy!

While the physician was approaching the little castle, she of whom he was so eagerly thinking awaited his return with feverish suspense. Yet she was obliged at this very time to devote herself to a visitor. True, he was the only person whom she would not have refused to see at this hour.

Wolf Hartschwert was with her.

His first errand after the period of severe suffering through which he had passed was to Barbara, earnestly as old Ursel had endeavoured to prevent him.

He had found her under a linden tree in the garden.

How they had met again!

Wolf, pale and emaciated, advanced toward her, leaning on a cane, while Barbara, with slightly flushed cheeks, reclined upon the pillows which Sister Hyacinthe had just arranged for her.

Her head seemed smaller, her features had become more delicate and, in spite of the straw hat which protected her from the dazzling sunshine, he perceived that her severe illness had cost her her magnificent golden hair. Still wavy, it now fell only to her neck, and gave her the appearance of a wonderfully handsome boy.

The hand she extended to him was transparently thin, and when he clasped it in his, which was only a little larger, and did not seem much stronger, and she had hoarsely whispered a friendly greeting, his eyes filled with tears. For a time both were silent. Barbara was the first to find words and, raising her large eyes beseechingly to his, said: “If you come to reproach me—But no! You look pale, as though you had only partially recovered yourself, yet kind and friendly. Perhaps you do not know that it was through my fault that all these terrible things have befallen you.”

Here a significant smile told her that he was much better informed than she supposed, and, lowering her eyes in timid embarrassment, she asked,

“Then you know who it was for whom this foolish heart——”

Here her breath failed, and while she pressed her hand upon her bosom, Wolf said softly: “If you had only trusted me before! Many things would not have happened, and much suffering might have been spared. You did wrong, Wawerl, certainly, but my guilt is the greater, and we were both punished—oh, how sorely!”

Barbara, amid low sobbing, nodded assent, but he eagerly continued: “Quijada confided everything to me, and if he—you know—now forgets all other matters in the war and the anxieties of the general, and, you need my counsel and aid, we will let what came between us he buried, and think that we are brother and sister.”

The girl held out her hand to him, saying: “How long you have been a brother to me! But, as for your advice—Holy Virgin!—I know now less than ever how I am to fare; but I shall soon learn. I can say no more. It must be a severe trial to listen to me. Such a raven’s croak from the throat which usually gave you pleasure, and to which you gladly listened! Shall I myself ever grow accustomed to this discord? And you? Answer honestly—I should like to know whether it is very, very terrible to hear.”

“You are still hoarse,” was the reply. “Such things pass away in a few weeks, and it will again be a pleasure to hear you sing.”

“Do you really think so?” she cried with sparkling, eyes.

“Firmly and positively,” answered the young knight in a tone of most honest conviction; but she repeated in joyous excitement, “Firmly and positively,” and then eagerly continued: “Oh, if you should be right, Wolf, how happy and grateful I would be, in spite of everything! But I can talk no longer now. Come again to-morrow, and then the oftener the better.”

“Unfortunately, that can not be, gladly as I would do so,” he answered sadly, extending his hand in farewell. “In a few days I shall return to Brussels.”

“To remain with the regent?” asked Barbara eagerly.

“No,” he answered firmly. “After a short stay with her Majesty, I shall enter the service of Don Luis Quijada, or rather of his wife.”

“O-o-oh!” she murmured slowly. “The world seems wholly strange to me after my long illness. I must first collect my thoughts, and that is now utterly impossible. To-morrow, Wolf! Won’t you come to-morrow? Then I shall know better what is before me. Thanks, cordial thanks, and if tomorrow I deny myself to every one else, I will admit you.”

After Wolf had gone, Barbara gazed fixedly into vacancy. What did the aspiring young musician seek with a nobleman’s wife in a lonely Spanish castle? Were his wings broken, too, and did he desire only seclusion and quiet?

But the anxiety which dominated her mind prevented her pursuing the same thought longer. Dr. Mathys had promised to tell her the result of his conversation with the Emperor as soon as possible, and yet he had not returned.

Fool that she was!

Even on a swift steed he could not have traversed the road back to the castle if he had been detained only half an hour in the Golden Cross. It was impatience which made the minutes become quarters of an hour. She would have liked to go to the cool frigidarium again to watch for the physician's litter; but she was warned, and had accustomed herself to follow the doctor's directions as obediently as a dutiful child. Besides, Sister Hyacinthe no longer left her alone out of doors, and possessed a reliable representative, who had won Barbara's confidence and affection, in Frau Lamperi, the garde-robiere, whom the Queen of Hungary had not yet summoned.

So she remained under the linden, and Dr. Mathys did not put her newly won virtue of patience, which he prized so highly, to too severe a trial.

Fran Lamperi had watched for him, and hastily announced that his litter had already passed the Reichart pottery.

Now Barbara did not turn her eyes from the garden door through which the man she ardently longed to see usually came, and when it opened and the stout, broad-shouldered leech, with his peaked doctor's hat, long staff, and fine linen kerchief in his right hand advanced toward her, she motioned to the nun and the maid to leave them, and pressed her left hand upon her heart, for her emotion at the sight of him resembled the feeling of the prisoner who expects the paper with which the judge enters his cell to contain his death-warrant.

She thought she perceived her own in the physician's slow, almost lagging step. His gait was always measured; but if he had had good news to bring, he would have approached more rapidly. A sign, a gesture, a shout would have informed her that he was bearing something cheering.

But there was nothing of this kind.

He did not raise his hat until he stood directly in front of her, and while mopping his broad, clamp brow and plump cheeks with his handkerchief, she read in his features the confirmation of her worst fears.

Now in his grave voice, which sounded still deeper than usual, he uttered a curt "Well, it can't be helped," and shrugged his shoulders sorrowfully.

This gesture destroyed her last hope. Unable to control herself longer, she cried out in the husky voice whose hoarse tone was increased by her intense agitation: "I see it in your face, Doctor; I must be prepared for the worst."

“Would to Heaven I could deny it!” he answered in a hollow tone; but Barbara urged him to speak and conceal nothing from her, not even the harshest news.

The leech obeyed.

With sincere compassion he saw how her face blanched at his information that, owing to the pressure of duties which the commencement of the war imposed upon him, his Majesty would be unable to visit her here. But when, to sweeten the bitter potion, he had added that when her throat was well again, and her voice had regained its former melody, the monarch would once more gladly listen to her, he was startled; for, instead of answering, she merely shrugged her shoulders contemptuously, while her face grew corpselike in its pallor. He would have been best pleased to end his report here, but she could not be spared the suffering to which she was doomed, and pity demanded that the torture should be ended as quickly as possible. So, to raise her courage, he began with the Emperor’s congratulations, and while her eyes were sparkling brightly and her pale cheeks were crimsoned by a fleeting flush, he went on, as considerately as he could, to inform her of the Emperor’s resolution, not neglecting while he did so to place it in a milder light by many a palliating remark.

Barbara, panting for breath, listened to his report without interrupting him; but as the physician thought he perceived in the varying expression of her features and the wandering glance with which she listened tokens that she did not fully understand what the Emperor required of her, he summed up his communications once more.

“His Majesty,” he concluded, “was ready to recognise as his own the young life to be expected, if she would keep the secret, and decide to commit it to his sole charge from its arrival in the world; but, on the other hand, he would refuse this to her and to the child if she did not agree to impose upon herself sacrifice and silence.”

At this brief, plain statement Barbara had pressed her hands upon her temples and stretched her head far forward toward the physician. Now she lowered her right hand, and with the question, “So this is what I must understand?” impetuously struck herself a blow on the forehead.

The patient man again raised his voice to make the expression of the monarch’s will still plainer, but she interrupted him after the first few words with the exclamation: “You can spare yourself this trouble, for the meaning

of the man whose message you bear is certainly evident enough. What my poor intellect fails to comprehend is only—do you hear?—is only where the faithless traitor gains the courage to make me so unprecedented a demand. Hitherto I was only not wicked enough to know that there—there was such an abyss of abominable hard-heartedness, such fiendish baseness, such ____"

Here an uncontrollable fit of coughing interrupted her, but Dr. Mathys would have stopped her in any case; it was unendurable to him to listen longer while the great man who was the Emperor, and whom he also honoured as a man, was reviled with such savage recklessness.

As in so many instances, Charles's penetration had been superior to his; for he had not failed to notice to what tremendous extremes this girl's hasty temper could carry her. What burning, almost evil passion had flamed in her eyes while uttering these insults! How perfectly right his Majesty was to withdraw from all association with a woman of so irresponsible a nature!

He repressed with difficulty the indignation which had overpowered him until her coughing ceased, then, in a tone of stern reproof, he declared that he could not and ought not to listen to such words. She whom the Emperor Charles had honoured with his love would perhaps in the future learn to recognise his decision as wise, though it might offend her now. When she had conquered the boundless impetuosity which so ill beseemed her, she herself would probably perceive how immeasurably deep and wide was the gulf which separated her from the sacred person of the man who, next to God, was the highest power on earth. Not only justice but duty would command the head of the most illustrious family in the world to claim the sole charge of his child, that it might be possible to train it unimpeded to the lofty position of the father, instead of the humble one of the mother.

Hitherto Barbara had remained silent, but her breath had come more and more quickly, the tremor of the nostrils had increased; but at the physician's last remark she could control herself no longer, and burst forth like a madwoman: "And you pretend to be my friend, pretend to be a fairminded man? You are the tool, the obedient echo of the infamous wretch who now stretches his robber hand toward my most precious possession! Ay, look at me as though my frank speech was rousing the greatest wrath in your cowardly soul! Where was the ocean-deep gulf when the perjured betrayer clasped me in his arms, uttered vows of love, and called himself happy

because his possession of me would beautify the evening of his life? Now my voice has lost its melting music, and he sends his accomplice to leave the mute ‘nightingale’—how often he has called me so!—to her fate.”

Here she faltered, and her cheeks glowed with excitement as, with her clinched hand on her brow, she continued: “Must everything be changed and overturned because this traitor is the Emperor, and the betrayed only the child of a man who, though plain, is worthy of all honour, and who, besides, was not found on the highway, but belongs to the class of knights, from whom even the proudest races of sovereigns descend? You trample my father and me underfoot, to exalt the grandeur of your master. You make him the idol, to humble me to a worm; and what you grant the she-wolf—the right of defence when men undertake to rob her of her young—you deny me, and, because I insist upon it, I must be a deluded, unbridled creature.”

Here she sobbed aloud and covered her face with her hands; but Dr. Mathys had been obliged to do violence to his feelings in order not to put a speedy end to the fierce attack. Her glance had been like that of an infuriated wild beast as the rage in her soul burst forth with elementary power, and the sharpness of her hoarse voice still pierced him to the heart.

Probably the man of honour whom she had so deeply-insulted felt justified in paying her in the same coin, but the mature and experienced physician knew how much he must place to the account of the physical condition of this unfortunate girl, and did not conceal from himself that her charges were not wholly unjustifiable. So he restrained himself, and when she had gained control over the convulsive sobbing which shook her bosom, he told her his intention of leaving her and not returning until he could expect a less hostile reception. Meanwhile she might consider whether the Emperor’s decision was not worthy of different treatment. He would show his good will to her anew by concealing from his Majesty what he had just heard, and what she, at no distant day, would repent as unjust and unworthy of her.

Then Barbara angrily burst forth afresh: “Never, never, never will that happen! Neither years nor decades would efface the wrong inflicted upon me to-day. But oh, how I hate him who makes this shameful demand—yes, though you devour me with your eyes—hate him, hate him! I do so even more ardently than I loved him! And you? Why should you conceal it?

From kindness to me? Perhaps so! Yet no, no, no! Speak freely! Yes, you must, must tell him so to his face! Do it in my name, abused, ill-treated as I am, and tell him——”

Here the friendly man’s patience gave out, and, drawing his little broad figure stiffly up, he said repellently: “You are mistaken in me, my dear. If you need a messenger, you must seek some one else. You have taken care to make me sincerely regret having discharged this office for your sake. Besides, your recovery will progress without my professional aid; and, moreover, I shall leave Ratisbon with my illustrious master in a few days.”

He turned his back upon her as he spoke. When toward evening the Emperor asked him how Barbara had received his decision, he shrugged his shoulders and answered: “As was to be expected. She thinks herself ill-used, and will not give up the child.”

“She will have a different view in the convent,” replied the Emperor. “Quijada shall talk with her to-morrow, and De Soto and the pious nuns here will show her where she belongs. The child—that matter is settled—will be taken from her.”

The execution of the imperial will began on the very next morning. First the confessor De Soto appeared, and with convincing eloquence showed Barbara how happily she could shape her shadowed life within the sacred quiet of the convent. Besides, the helpless creature whose coming she was expecting with maternal love could rely upon the father’s recognition and aid only on condition that she yielded to his Majesty’s expressed will.

Barbara, though with no little difficulty, succeeded in maintaining her composure during these counsels and the declaration of the servant of the Holy Church. Faithful to the determination formed during the night, she imposed silence upon herself, and when De Soto asked for a positive answer, she begged him to grant her time for consideration.

Soon after Don Luis Quijada was announced. This time he did not appear in the dark Spanish court costume, but in the brilliant armour of the Lombard regiment whose command had been entrusted to him.

When he saw Barbara, for the first time after many weeks, he was startled.

Only yesterday she had seemed to Wolf Hartschwert peerlessly beautiful, but the few hours which had elapsed between the visit of the physician and

the major-domo had sadly changed her. Her large, bright eyes were reddened by weeping, and the slight lines about the corners of the mouth had deepened and lent her a severe expression.

A hundred considerations had doubtless crowded upon her during the night, yet she by no means repented having showed the leech what she thought of the betrayer in purple and the demand which he made upon her. De Soto's attempt at persuasion had only increased her defiance. Instead of reflecting and thinking of her own welfare and of the future of the beloved being whose coming she dreaded, yet who seemed to her the most precious gift of Heaven, she strengthened herself more and more in the belief that it was due to her own dignity to resist the Emperor's cruel encroachments upon her liberty. She knew that she owed Dr. Mathys a debt of gratitude, but she thought herself freed from that duty since he had made himself the blind tool of his master.

Now the Spaniard, who had never been her friend, also came to urge the Emperor's will upon her. Toward him she need not force herself to maintain the reserve which she had exercised in her conversation with the confessor.

On the contrary!

He should hear, with the utmost plainness, what she thought of the Emperor's instructions. If he, his confidant, then showed him that there was one person at least who did not bow before his pitiless power, and that hatred steeled her courage to defy him, one of the most ardent wishes of her indignant, deeply wounded heart would be fulfilled. The only thing which she still feared was that her aching throat might prevent her from freely pouring forth what so passionately agitated her soul.

She now confronted the inflexible nobleman, not a feature in whose clear-cut, nobly moulded, soldierly face revealed what moved him.

When, in a businesslike tone, he announced his sovereign's will, she interrupted him with the remark that she knew all this, and had determined to oppose her own resolve to his Majesty's wishes.

Don Luis calmly allowed her to finish, and then asked: "So you refuse to take the veil? Yet I think, under existing circumstances, nothing could become you better."

"Life in a convent," she answered firmly, "is distasteful to me, and I will never submit to it. Besides, you were hardly commissioned to discuss what

does or does not become me."

"By no means," replied the Spaniard calmly; "yet you can attribute the remark to my wish to serve you. During the remainder of our conference I will silence it, and can therefore be brief."

"So much the better," was the curt response. "Well, then, so you insist that you will neither keep the secret which you have the honour of sharing with his Majesty, nor——"

"Stay!" she eagerly interrupted. "The Emperor Charles took care to make the bond which united me to him cruelly hateful, and therefore I am not at all anxious to inform the world how close it once was."

Here Don Luis bit his lips, and a frown contracted his brow. Yet he controlled himself, and asked with barely perceptible excitement, "Then I may inform his Majesty that you would be disposed to keep this secret?"

"Yes," she answered curtly.

"But, so far as the convent is concerned, you persist in your refusal?"

"Even a noble and kind man would never induce me to take the veil."

Now Quijada lost his composure, and with increasing indignation exclaimed: "Of all the men on earth there is probably not one who cares as little for the opinion of an arrogant woman wounded in her vanity. He stands so far above your judgment that it is insulting him to undertake his defence. In short, you will not go to the convent?"

"No, and again no!" she protested bitterly. "Besides, your promise ought to bind you to still greater brevity. But it seems to please your noble nature to insult a defenceless, ill-treated woman. True, perhaps it is done on behalf of the mighty man who stands so far above me."

"How far, you will yet learn to your harm," replied Don Luis, once more master of himself. "As for the child, you still seem determined to withhold it from the man who will recognise it as his solely on this condition?"

Barbara thought it time to drop the restraint maintained with so much difficulty, and half with the intention of letting Charles's favourite hear the anguish that oppressed her heart, half carried away by the resentment which filled her soul, she permitted it to overflow and, in spite of the pain which it caused her to raise her voice, she ceased whispering, and cried: "You ask to hear what I intend to do? Nothing, save to keep what is mine! Though I know how much you dislike me, Don Luis Quijada, I call upon you to

witness whether I have a right to this child and to consideration from its father; for when you, his messenger of love, led me for the first time to the man who now tramples me so cruelly under his feet, you yourself heard him greet me as the sun which was again rising for him. But that is forgotten! If his will is not executed, mother and child may perish in darkness and misery. Well, then, will against will! He has the right to cease to love me and to thrust me from him, but it is mine to hate him from my inmost soul, and to make my child what I please. Let him grow up as Heaven wills, and if he perishes in want and shame, if he is put in the pillory or dies on the scaffold, one mission at least will be left for me. I will shriek out to the world how the royal betrayer provided for the welfare of his own blood!"

"Enough!" interrupted Don Luis in mingled wrath and horror. "I will not and can not listen longer while gall and venom are poured upon the sacred head of the greatest of men."

"Then leave me!" cried Barbara, scarcely able to use her voice. "This room, at least, will be mine until I can no longer accept even shelter from the traitor who—you used the words yourself—instilled venom and bitter gall into my soul."

Quijada, with a slight bend of the head, turned and left the room.

When the door closed behind him, Barbara, with panting breath and flashing eyes, threw herself into an arm-chair, content as if she had been relieved of a heavy burden, but the Emperor's envoy mounted the horse on which he had come, and rode away.

He fared as the leech had done the day before. Barbara's infamous abuse still fired his blood, but he could not conceal from himself that this unfortunate woman had been wronged by his beloved and honoured master. In truth, he had more than once heard the ardent professions of love with which Charles had greeted and dismissed her, and his chivalrous nature rebelled against the severity with which he made her suffer for the cruelty of Fate that had prematurely robbed her of what had been to him her dearest charm.

Before he went to Prebrunn, Dr. Mathys had counselled him not to forget during the disagreeable reception awaiting him that he was dealing with an irritable invalid, and the thoroughly noble man resolved to remember it as an excuse. The Emperor Charles should learn only that Barbara refused to submit to his arrangements, that his harshness deeply wounded her and

excited her quick temper. He was unwilling to expose himself again to an outburst of her rage, and he would therefore intrust to another the task of rendering her more docile, and this other was Wolf Hartschwert.

A few days before he had visited the recovering knight, and obtained from him a decision whose favourable nature filled him with secret joy whenever he thought of it.

Wolf had already learned from the valet Adrian the identity of the person to whom he had been obliged to yield precedence in Barbara's heart, and how generously Quijada had kept silence concerning the wound which he had dealt him. When Don Luis freely forgave him for the unfortunate misunderstanding for which he, too, was not wholly free from blame, Wolf had thrown himself on his knees and warmly entreated him to dispose of him, who owed him more than life, as he would of himself. Then, opening his whole heart, he revealed what Barbara had been to him, and how, unable to control his rage, he had rushed upon him when he thought he had discovered, in the man who had just asked him to go far away from the woman he loved, her betrayer.

After this explanation, Quijada had acquiesced in the knight's wish that he should give him the office offered on that luckless evening, and he now felt disposed also to intrust to him further negotiations with the singer.

In the report made to the Emperor, Don Luis suppressed everything which could offend him; but Charles remained immovable in his determination to withdraw the expected gift of Fate, from its first entrance into the world, from every influence except his own. Moreover, he threatened that if the blinded girl continued to refuse to enter the convent and yield up the child, he would withdraw his aid from both. After a sleepless night, however, he remarked, on the following morning, that he perceived it to be his duty, whatever might happen, to assume the care of the child who was entitled to call him its father. What he would do for the mother must depend upon her future conduct. This was another instance how every trespass of the bounds of the moral order which the Church ordains and hallows entails the most sorrowful consequences even here below. Precisely because he was so strongly attached to this unfortunate woman, once so richly gifted, he desired to offer her the opportunity to obtain pardon from Heaven, and therefore insisted upon her retiring to the convent. His own guilt was causing him great mental trouble and, in fact,

notwithstanding the arduous labour imposed upon him by the war, the most melancholy mood again took possession of him.

The day before his departure to join the army which was gathered near by at Landshut, he withdrew once more into the apartment draped with sable hangings.

When he was informed that Barbara wished to leave the Prebrunn castle, he burst into a furious passion, and commanded that she should be kept there, even if it was necessary to use force.

CHAPTER V.

Everything in Barbara's residence had remained as it was when she arrived, only the second story, since the departure of the marquise, had stood empty. Two horses had been left in the stable, the steward performed his duties as before, the cook presided in the kitchen, and Frau Lamperi attended to Barbara's rooms.

Nevertheless, at Wolf's first visit he was obliged to exert all his powers of persuasion to induce his miserable friend to give up her resolution of moving into her former home. Besides, after the conversation with Charles's messenger, she had felt so ill that no visitor except himself had been received.

When, a few days later, she learned that the Emperor had set out for Landshut, she entreated Wolf to seek out Pyramus Kogel, for she had just learned that during her illness her father's travelling companion had asked to see her, but, like every one else, had been refused. She grieved because they had forgotten to tell her this; but when she discovered that the same stately officer had called again soon after the relapse, she angrily upbraided, for the first time, Frau Lamperi, who was to blame for the neglect, and her grief increased when, on the same day, a messenger brought from the man who had twice been denied admittance a letter which inclosed one from her father, and briefly informed her that he should set out at once for Landshut. As she would not receive him, he must send her the captain's messages in this way.

It appeared from the old man's letter that, while leaving the ship at Antwerp, he had met with an accident, and perhaps might long be prevented from undertaking the toilsome journey home. But he was well cared for, and if she was still his clear daughter, she must treat Herr Pyramus Kogel kindly this time, for he had proved a faithful son and good Samaritan to him.

A stranger's hand had written this letter, which contained nothing more about the old soldier's health, but reminded her of a tin tankard which he had forgotten to deliver, and urged her to care for the ever-burning lamp in

the chapel. It closed with the request to offer his profound reverence at the feet of his Majesty, the most gracious, most glorious, and most powerful Emperor, and the remark that there was much to say about the country of Spain, but the best was certainly when one thought of it after turning the back upon it.

As a postscript, he had written with his own hand, as the crooked letters showed: “Mind what I told you about Sir Pyramus, without whom you would now be a deserted orphan. Can you believe that in all Spain there is no fresh butter to be had, either for bread or in the kitchen for roast meat, but instead rancid oil, which we should think just fit for burning?”

With deep shame Barbara realized through this letter how rarely she remembered her father. Only since she knew positively what joy and what anxiety awaited her had she again thought frequently of him, but always with great fear of the old man whose head had grown gray in an honourable life. Now the hour was approaching when she would be obliged to confess to him what she still strove to deem a peerless favour of Fate, for which future generations would envy her. Perhaps he who looked up to the Emperor Charles with such enthusiastic devotion would agree with her; perhaps what she must disclose to him would spoil the remainder of his life. The image of the aged sufferer, lying in pain and sorrow far from her old his home, in a stranger’s house, constantly forced itself upon her, and she often dwelt upon it, imagining it with ingenious self-torture.

Love for another had estranged her from him who possessed the first claim to every feeling of tenderness and gratitude in her heart. The thought that she could do nothing for him and give him no token of her love pierced deep into her soul. Every impulse of her being urged her to learn further details of him and his condition. As Pyramus Kogel was staying in Landshut, she wrote a note entreating him, if possible, to come to Ratisbon to tell her about her father, or, if this could not be, to inform her by letter how he fared.

There was no lack of messengers going to Landshut, and the answer was not delayed. During these war times, Pyramus answered, he was not his own master even for a moment; therefore he must deny himself a visit to her, and he also lacked time for a detailed account by letter. If, however, she could resolve to do him the honour of a visit, he would promise her a more

cordial reception than he had experienced on her side. For the rest, her father was being carefully nursed, and his life was no longer in danger.

At first Barbara took this letter for an ungenerous attempt of the insulted man to repay the humiliation which he had received from her; but the news from the throngs of troops pouring into the city made the officer's request appear in a milder light, and the longing to ascertain her father's condition daily increased.

At the end of the first week in August her strength would have sufficed for the short drive to Landshut. True, she was as hoarse as when she gave the physician a disinclination to return, but she had regained her physical vigour, and had taken walks, without special fatigue, sometimes with Wolf, sometimes with Gombert. The latter, as well as Appenzelder, still frequently called upon her, and tried to diminish her grief over the injury to her voice by telling her of hundreds of similar cases which had resulted favourably.

The musicians were to return to Brussels the next day. Appenzelder would not leave his boy choir, but Gombert had accepted an invitation from the Duke of Bavaria, at whose court in Munich the best music was eagerly fostered. His road would lead him through Landshut, and how more than gladly Barbara would have accompanied him there!

She must now bid farewell to Appenzelder and Massi, and it was evident that the parting was hard for them also. The eyes of the former even grew dim with tears as he pressed a farewell kiss upon Barbara's brow. The little Maltese, Hannibal Melas, would have preferred to stay with her—nay, he did not cease entreating her to keep him, though only as a page; but how could he have been useful to her?

Finally, she was obliged to bid Wolf, too, farewell, perhaps for many years.

During the last few days he had again proved his old friendship in the most loyal manner. Through Quijada he had learned everything which concerned her and the Emperor Charles, and this had transformed his former love for Barbara, which was by no means dead, into tender compassion.

Not to serve the monarch or the husband of his new mistress in Villagarcia, but merely to lighten her own hard fate, he had not ceased to represent what consequences it might entail upon her if she should continue to defy the Emperor's command so obstinately.

He, too, saw in the convent the fitting place for her future life, now bereft of its best possessions; but although she succeeded in retaining her composure during his entreaties and warnings, she still most positively refused to obey the Emperor's order.

Her strong desire to visit Landshut was by no means solely from the necessity of hearing the particulars about her father, and the wish to see so brilliant an assemblage of troops from all countries, but especially the consuming longing to gaze once more into the face of the lover who was now making her so miserable, yet to whom she owed the greatest joy of her life.

And more!

She thought it would restore her peace of mind forever if she could succeed in speaking to him for even one brief moment and telling him what a transformation his guilt had wrought in her ardent love and her whole nature.

Wolf's representations and imploring entreaties remained as futile as those of Sister Hyacinthe and the abbesses of the Clare Sisters and the Convent of the Holy Cross, who had sought her by the confessor's wish. None of these pious women, except her nurse, knew the hope she cherished. They saw in her only the Emperor's discarded love; yet as such it seemed to them that Barbara was bidden to turn her back upon the world, which had nothing similar to offer her, in order, as the Saviour's bride, to seek a new and loftier happiness.

But Barbara's vivacious temperament shrank from their summons as from the tomb or the dungeon and, with all due reverence, she said so to the kindly nuns.

She desired no new happiness, nay, she could not imagine that she would ever again find joy in anything save the heavenly gift which she expected with increasing fear, and yet glad hope. Yet they wished to deprive her of this exquisite treasure, this peerless comfort for the soul! But she had learned how to defend herself, and they should never succeed in accomplishing this shameful purpose. She would keep her child, though it increased the Emperor's resentment to the highest pitch, and deprived her of every expectation of his care.

Eagerly as Wolf praised Quijada's noble nature, she commanded him to assure the Castilian, whose messenger he honestly confessed himself to be,

that she would die rather than yield to the Emperor's demands.

When the time at last came to part from Wolf also, and he pressed his lips to her hand, she felt that she could rely upon him, no matter how sad her future life might be. He added many another kind and friendly word; then, in an outburst of painful emotion, cried: "If only you had been contented with my faithful love, Wawerl, how very different, how much better everything would have been, how happy I might be! and, if loyal love possesses the power of bestowing happiness, you, too——"

Here Barbara pointed mournfully to her poor aching throat and, while he earnestly protested that, deeply as he lamented the injury to her voice, this cruel misfortune would by no means have lessened his love, her eyes suddenly flashed, and there was a strange quiver around the corners of her mouth as she thought: "Keep that opinion. But I would not exchange for a long life, overflowing with the happiness which you, dear, good fellow, could offer me, the brief May weeks that placed me among the few who are permitted to taste the highest measure of happiness."

Yet she listened with sincere sympathy to what he had heard of Villagarcia and Magdalena de Ulloa, Quijada's wife, and what he expected to find there and in Valladolid.

It pleased her most to know that he would be permitted to return sometimes to the Netherlands. When once there, he must seek her out wherever her uncertain destiny had cast her.

When, in saying this, her hoarse voice failed and tears of pain and sorrow filled her eyes, emotion overpowered him also and, after he had again urged her to submit to the will of their imperial master, he tore himself away with a last farewell.

The ardent, long-cherished passion which had brought the young knight full of hope to Ratisbon had changed to compassion. With drooping head, disappointed, and heavily burdened with anxiety for the future of the woman who had exerted so powerful an influence upon his fate, he left the home of his childhood; but Barbara saw him go with the sorrowful fear that, in the rural solitude which awaited him in Spain, her talented friend would lose his art and every loftier aspiration; yet both felt sure that, whatever might be the course of their lives, each would hold a firm place in the other's memory.

A few hours after this farewell Barbara received a letter from the Council, in which Wolf Hartschwert secured to her and her father during their lives the free use of the house which he had inherited in Red Cock Street, with the sole condition of allowing his faithful Ursula to occupy the second story until her death.

The astonished girl at once went to express her thanks for so much kindness; but Wolf had left Ratisbon a short time before, and when Barbara entered the house she found old Ursula at the window with her tear-stained face resting on her clasped hands. When she heard her name called, she raised her little head framed in the big cap, and as soon as she recognised the unexpected visitor she cast so malevolent a glance at her that a shiver ran through the girl's frame.

After a few brief words of greeting, Barbara left the old woman, resolving not to enter the house soon again.

In passing the chapel she could and would not resist its strong power of attraction. With bowed head she entered the quiet little sanctuary, repeated a paternoster, and prayed fervently to the Mother of God to restore the clearness of her voice once more. While doing so, she imagined that the gracious intercessor gazed down upon her sometimes compassionately, sometimes reproachfully, and, in the consciousness of her guilt, she raised her hands, imploring forgiveness, to the friendly, familiar figure.

How tenderly the Christ-child nestled to the pure, exalted mother! Heaven intended to bestow a similar exquisite gift upon her also, and already insolent hands were outstretched to tear it from her. True, she was determined to defend herself bravely, yet her best friend advised her to yield without resistance to this unprecedented demand.

What should she do?

With her brow pressed against the priedieu, she strove to attain calm reflection in the presence of the powerful and gracious Queen of Heaven. If she yielded the child to its cruel father, she would thereby surrender to him the only happiness to which she still possessed a claim; if she succeeded in keeping it for herself, she would deprive it of the favour of the mighty sovereign, who possessed the power to bestow upon it everything which the human heart craves. Should she persist in resistance or yield to the person to whom she had already sacrificed so much the great blessing which had the ability to console her for every other loss, even the most cruel?

Then her refractory heart again rebelled. This was too much; Heaven itself could not require it of her, the divine Mother who, before her eyes, was pressing her child so tenderly to her bosom, least of all. Hers, too, would be a gift of God, and, while repeating this to herself, it seemed as though a voice cried out: “It is the Lord himself who intends to confide this child to you, and if you give it up you deprive it of its mother and rob it—you have learned that yourself—of its best possession. What was given to you to cherish tenderly, you can not confide to another without angering him who bestowed the guerdon upon you.”

Just at that moment she thought of the star, her lover’s first memento, with which she had parted from weakness, though with a good intention.

The misfortune which she was now enduring had grown out of this lamentable yielding. No! She would not, ought not to allow herself to be robbed of her precious hope. One glance at the Mother and Child put an end to any further consideration.

Comforted and strengthened, she went her way homeward, scarcely noticing that Peter Schlumperger and his sister, whom she met, looked away from her with evident purpose.

CHAPTER VI.

That night Barbara dreamed of her father. Birds of prey were attacking his body as it lay upon the ground, and she could not drive them off. The terror with which this spectacle had disturbed her sleep could not be banished during the morning. Now, whatever it cost, she must go to Landshut and hear some tidings of him.

Maestro Gombert would set out for Munich the next day, and in doing so must pass the neighbouring city. If he would carry her with him, she would be safe. He came at twilight to take leave of her, and with genuine pleasure gave her the second seat in his travelling carriage.

Early the following morning the vehicle, drawn by post horses, stopped before the little Prebrunn castle, and Barbara was soon driving with the musician through the pleasant country in the warm August day.

Sister Hyacinthe and Fran Lamperi had tried to prevent her departure by entreaties and remonstrances, for both feared that the long ride might injure her; and, moreover, the latter had been charged by Quijada, in the Emperor's name, to keep her in the castle and, if she left it, to inform him at once by a mounted messenger.

As Barbara could not be detained, Frau Lamperi, though reluctantly, obeyed this command.

Before leaving Prebrunn Barbara had warned Gombert that he would find her a very uninteresting companion, since it was still impossible to talk much; but Gombert would not admit this. To a true friend, the mere presence of the other gives pleasure, even though he should not open his lips.

The girl had become very dear to him, and her presence made time pass swiftly, for the great musician liked to talk and conversed bewitchingly, and he had long since discovered that Barbara was a good listener.

Besides, the motley life on the road attracted his attention as well as his travelling companion's, for the war had begun, and already would have resulted in a great victory for the Smalcalds, at the foot of the Bavarian Alps, had not the Augsburg Military Council prevented the able commander

in chief Schartlin von Burtenbach and his gallant lieutenant Schenkwitz from profiting by the advantage won. The way to Italy and Trent, where the Council was in session, was already open to the allied Protestants, but they were forbidden from the green table to follow it. It would have led them through Bavarian territory, and thereby perhaps afforded Duke William, the ruler of the country, occasion to abjure his neutrality and turn openly against the Smalcalds.

The shortsightedness with which the Protestants permitted the Emperor to remain so long in Ratisbon unmolested, and gather troops and munitions of war, Gombert had heard termed actually incomprehensible.

The travellers might expect to find a large force in Landshut, among the rest ten thousand Italians and eight thousand Spaniards. This, the musician explained to his companion, was contrary to the condition of his Majesty's election, which prohibited his bringing foreign soldiers into Germany; but war was a mighty enterprise, which broke even Firmer contracts.

A bitter remark about the man who, even in peace, scorned fidelity and faith, rose to Barbara's lips; but as she knew the warm enthusiasm which Gombert cherished for his imperial master, she controlled herself, and continued to listen while he spoke of the large re-enforcements which Count Buren was leading from the Netherlands.

A long and cruel war might be expected, for, though his Majesty assumed that religion had nothing to do with it, the saying went—here Catholics, here Protestants. The Pope gave his blessing to those who joined Charles's banner, and wherever people had deserted the Church they said that they were taking the field for the pure religion against the unchristian Council and the Romish antichrist.

"But it really can not be a war in behalf of our holy faith," Barbara here eagerly interposed, "for the Duke of Saxony is our ally, and Oh, just look! we must pass there directly."

She pointed as she spoke to a peasant cart just in front of them, whose occupants had been hidden until now by the dust of the road. They were two Protestant clergymen in the easily recognised official costume of their faith—a long, black robe and a white ruff around the neck.

Gombert, too, now looked in surprise at the ecclesiastical gentlemen, and called the commander of the four members of the city guard who escorted his carriage.

The troops marching beside them were the soldiers of the Protestant Margrave Hans von Kustrin who, in spite of his faith, had joined the Emperor, his secular lord, who asserted that he was waging no religious war. The clergymen were the field chaplains of the Protestant bands.

When the travellers had passed the long baggage train, in which women and children filled peasant carts or trudged on foot, and reached the soldiers themselves, they found them well-armed men of sturdy figure.

The Neapolitan regiment, which preceded the Kustrin one, presented an entirely different appearance with its shorter, brown-skinned, light-footed soldiers. Here, too, there was no lack of soldiers' wives and children, and from two of the carts gaily bedizened soldiers' sweethearts waved their hands to the travellers. In front of the regiment were two wagons with racks, filled with priests and monks bearing crosses and church banners, and before them, to escape the dust, a priest of higher rank with his vicar rode on mules decked with gay trappings.

On the way to Eggmuhl the carriage passed other bodies of troops. Here the horses were changed, and now Gombert walked with Barbara in front of the vehicle to "stretch their legs."

A regiment from the Upper Palatinate was encamped outside of the village. The prince to whom it belonged had given it a free ration of wine at the noonday rest, and the soldiers were now lying on the grass with loosened helmets and armour, feeling very comfortable, and singing in their deep voices a song newly composed in honour of the Emperor Charles to the air, "Cheer up, ye gallant soldiers all!"

The couple so skilled in music stopped, and Barbara's heart beat quicker as she listened to the words which the fair-haired young trooper close beside her was singing in an especially clear voice:

"Cheer up, ye gallant soldiers all!
Be blithe and bold of mind
With faith on God we'll loudly call,
Then on our ruler kind.
His name is worthy of our praise,
Since to the throne God doth him raise;
So we will glorify him, too,
And render the obedience due.
Of an imperial race he came,
To this broad empire heir;
Carolus is his noble name,
God-sent its crown to wear.
Mehrer is his just title grand,

The sovereign of many a land
Which God hath given to his care
His name rings on the air!”

[Mehrer—The increaser, an ancient title of the German emperors]

How much pleasure this song afforded Barbara, although it praised the man whom she thought she hated; and when the third verse began with the words,

“So goodly is the life he leads
Within this earthly vale,”

oh, how gladly she would have joined in!

That could not be, but she sang with them in her heart, for she had long since caught the tune, and how intently the soldiers would have listened if it had been possible for her to raise her voice as usual! Amid the singing of all these men her clear, bell-like tones would have risen like the lark soaring from the grain field, and what a storm of applause would have greeted her from these rough throats!

Grief for the lost happiness of pouring forth her feelings in melody seized upon her more deeply than for a long time. She would fain have glided quietly away to escape the cause of this fresh sorrow. But Gombert was listening to the young soldier’s song with interest, so Barbara continued to hear the young warrior as, with evident enthusiasm, he sang the verse:

“Patient and tolerant is he,
Nor vengeance seeks, nor blood;
E’en though he errs, as well may be,
His heart is ever good.”

She, too, had deemed this heart so, but now she knew better. Yet it pleased her that the fair-haired soldier so readily believed the poet and, obeying a hasty impulse, she put her hand into the pouch at her belt to give him a gold piece; but Gombert nudged her, and in his broken Netherland German repeated the verse which he had just heard:

“‘Tis stern necessity that forced
The sword into his hand;
‘Tis not for questions of the faith
That he doth make his stand.”

So the soldiers believed that their commander had only grasped the sword when compelled to do so, and that religion had nothing to do with the war, but the leader of the orchestra knew better. The conversations of the Spaniards at the court, and the words which De Soto had uttered lauding the Emperor, “Since God placed my foes in my hands, I must wage war upon his enemies,” were plain enough.

Gombert repeated this remark in a low tone but, ere Barbara could answer him, the carriage, with its fresh relay of horses, stopped in the road.

It was time to get in again, but Barbara dreaded the ride over the rough, crowded highway, and begged her companion to pursue their journey a little farther on foot. He consented and, as the girl now flung a gold gulden to the blond leader of the voices, cheers from the soldiers followed them.

Leaning on Gombert’s arm, Barbara now moved on more cheerfully until they were stopped by the vivandiere’s counter.

The portly woman stood comfortably at ease behind her eatables and drinkables, rested her fists on her hips, and glanced toward her assistant, who stared boldly into the musician’s face, and asked him to take some refreshment for himself and his sweetheart.

She was a young creature, with features prematurely haggard, cheeks scarlet with rouge, and eyebrows and lashes dyed black. The infant which a pale little girl nine years old was tending belonged to her. She had had her hair cut close, and her voice was so discordantly hoarse that it hurt Barbara’s ears.

As the bold young woman tapped Gombert lightly on the arm and, with fresh words of invitation, pointed toward the counter, a shiver ran through Barbara’s limbs. Even her worst enemy would not have ventured to compare her with this outcast, but she did herself as she thought of her own cropped hair and injured voice. Perhaps the child in the arms of the pale nine-year-old nurse was disowned by its father, and did not the greatest of sovereigns intend to do the same to his, if the mother refused to obey him?

These disagreeable thoughts fell upon her soul like mildew upon growing grain, and after Gombert had helped her into the carriage again she begged him to let her rest in silence for a while. The Netherlander, it is true, had no suspicion of her condition, but he knew that she had not yet wholly recovered, and carefully pushed his own knapsack under her feet.

Barbara now closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep, yet she tortured her mind with the same question which she had vainly tried to decide in the chapel of Wolf's house. Besides, she was troubled about the information which the recruiting officer might give her concerning her father. And suppose she should meet the Emperor Charles in Landshut, and be permitted to speak to him?

The blare of trumpets and a loud shout of command roused her from this joyless reverie. The carriage was passing some squads of Hungarian cavalry moving at a walk toward Landshut.

Their gay, brilliant appearance scattered the self-torturing thoughts. Why should she spoil the delightful drive with her friend, which, besides, was nearly over? Even if the worst happened, it would come only too soon.

So drawing a long breath, she again turned to her companion, and Gombert rejoiced in the refreshing influence which, as he supposed, her sleep had exerted upon her. In an hour he must part from the artist to whom he owed so much pleasure, whose beauty warmed his aging heart, and who he frequently wished might regain the wonderful gift now so cruelly lost. Her fiery vivacity, her thoroughly natural, self-reliant unconcern, her fresh enthusiasm, the joyousness and industry with which she toiled at her own cultivation, and the gratitude with which any musical instruction had been received, had endeared her to him. It would be a pleasure to see her again, and a veritable banquet of the soul to hear her sing in the old way.

He told her this with frank affection, and represented to her how much better suited she was to Brussels than to her stately but dull and quiet Ratisbon.

With enthusiastic love for his native land, he described the bustling life in his beautiful, wealthy home. There music and every art flourished; there, besides the Emperor and his august sister, were great nobles who with cheerful lavishness patronized everything that was beautiful and worthy of esteem; thither flocked strangers from the whole world; there festivals were celebrated with a magnificence and joyousness witnessed nowhere else on earth. There was the abode of freedom, joy, and mirth.

Barbara had often wished to see the Netherlands, which the Emperor Charles also remembered with special affection, but no one had ever thus transported her to the midst of these flourishing provinces and this blithesome people.

During the maestro's description her large eyes rested upon his lips as if spellbound. She, too, must see this Brabant, and, like every newly awakened longing, this also quickly took possession of her whole nature. Only in the Netherlands, she thought, could she regain her lost happiness. But what elevated this idea to a certainty in her mind was not only the fostering of music, the spectacles and festivals, the magnificent velvet, the rustling silk, and the gay, varied life, not only the worthy Appenzelder and the friend at her side, but, far above all other things, the circumstance that Brussels was the home of the Emperor Charles, that there, there alone, she might be permitted to see again and again, at least from a distance, the man whom she hated.

Absorbed in the Netherlands, she forgot to notice the nearest things which presented themselves to her gaze.

The last hour of the drive had passed with the speed of an arrow, both to her and her travelling companion, and just as they were close to the left bank of the Isar, which was flowing toward them, Gombert's old servant turned and, pointing before him with his outstretched hand, exclaimed, "Here we are in Landshut!" she perceived that the goal of their journey was gained.

Barbara was familiar with this flourishing place, above which proudly towered the Trausnitzburg, for here lived her uncle Wolfgang Lorberer, who had married her mother's sister, and was a member of the city Council. Two years before she had spent a whole month as a guest in his wealthy household, and she intended now to seek shelter there again. Fran Martha had invited her more than once to come soon, and meanwhile her two young cousins had grown up.

Two arms of the Isar lay before her, and between them the island of Zweibrucken.

Before the coach rolled across the first, Barbara gathered her luggage together and told the postboy where he was to drive. He knew the handsome Lorberer house, and touched his cap when he heard its owner's name. Barbara was glad to be brought to her relatives by the famous musician; she did not wish to appear as though she had dropped from the clouds in the house of the aunt who was the opposite of her dead mother, a somewhat narrow-minded, prudish woman, of whom she secretly stood in awe.

CHAPTER VII.

Progress was very slow, for many peasants and hogs were coming toward them from the Schweinemarkt at their right.

The gate was on the second bridge, and here the carriage was compelled to stop on account of paying the toll. But it could not have advanced in any case; a considerable number of vehicles and human beings choked the space before and beyond the gate. Horsemen of all sorts, wagons of regiments marching in and out, freight vans and country carts, soldiers, male and female citizens, peasants and peasant women, monks, travelling journeymen, and vagrants impeded their progress, and it required a long time ere the travelling carriage could finally pass the gate and reach the end of the bridge.

There the crowd between it, the Hospital of the Holy Ghost, and the church belonging to it seemed absolutely impenetrable. The vehicle was forced to stop, and Gombert stood up and overlooked the motley throng surrounding it.

Barbara had also risen from her seat, pointed out to her companion one noteworthy object after another, and finally a handsome sedan chair which rested on the ground beside the hospital.

“His Majesty’s property,” she said eagerly; “I know it well.”

Here she hesitated and turned pale, for she had just noticed what Gombert now called to her attention.

Don Luis Quijada, with the haughty precision of the Castilian grandee, was passing through the humble folk around him and advancing directly toward her.

All who separated him from the carriage submissively made way for the commander of the Lombard regiment; but Barbara looked toward the right and the left, and longed to spring from the vehicle and hide herself amid the throng.

But it was too late for that.

She could do nothing except wait to learn what he desired, and yet she knew perfectly well that Don Luis was not coming to the musician, but to her, and that he was bringing some startling, nay, probably some terrible news.

She had not met him since she had poured forth the indignation of her heart. Now he was standing close beside the carriage, but his grave face looked less stern than it did at that time.

After he had bent his head slightly to her and held out his hand to Gombert with friendly condescension, he thanked him for the kindness with which he had made room for his travelling companion, and then, with quiet courtesy, informed Barbara that he had come on behalf of his Majesty, who feared that she might not find suitable lodgings in overcrowded Landshut. The sedan chair stood ready over there by the hospital.

The longing to escape this fresh outrage from the mighty despot seized upon Barbara more fiercely than ever, but flight in this crowd was impossible, and as she met Quijada's grave glance she forced herself to keep silence. She could not endure to make the Netherland maestro, who was kindly disposed toward her, and whom she honoured, a witness of her humiliation. So she was compelled to reserve what she wished to say to the Spaniard until later, and therefore only bade her friend farewell and, scarcely able to control her voice, expressed her regret that she could not take him to the Lorberers, since his Majesty was making other arrangements for her.

Another clasp of the Netherlander's hand, a questioning glance into the Castilian's calm face, and she was forced to consider herself the Emperor Charles's prisoner.

True, her captor studiously showed her every attention; he helped her out of the carriage with the utmost care, and then led her through the moving throng of people to the sedan chair, behind which a mounted groom was holding Quijada's noble steed by the bridle.

While Don Luis was helping Barbara into the chair, she asked in a low tone what she was to think of this act of violence, and where she was being taken.

"His Majesty's command," was the reply. "I think you will be satisfied with your lodgings here." The girl shrugged her shoulders indignantly, and asked if she might only know how it had been discovered that she was on

her way to Landshut; but Don Luis, in a gayer manner than his usual one, answered, “A little bird sang it to us, and I waited for you just here because, at the end of the bridge, we are most certain to meet whoever is obliged to cross either branch of the river.” Then, in a tone so grave as to exclude any idea of mockery, he added, “You see how kindly his Majesty has provided for your welfare.”

Closing the sedan chair as he spoke, he rode on before her.

Meanwhile contradictory emotions were seething and surging in Barbara’s breast.

Where were they taking her?

Did the Emperor intend to make her a prisoner? He certainly possessed the power. Who would dare to resist him?

She could attain no clearness of thought, for, while giving free course to the indignation of her soul, she was gazing out at the open sides of the sedan chair.

Every house, every paving stone here was familiar and awakened some memory. A crowd of people surrounded her, and among them appeared many a foreign soldier on foot and on horseback, who would have been well worthy of an attentive glance. But what did she care for the Italians in helmets and coats of mail who filled the Altstadt—the main business street of Landshut—through which she was being carried? She doubtless cast a glance toward the Town Hall, where her uncle was now devising means to provide shelter for this legion of soldiers and steeds, doubtless put her head a little out of the window as she approached the houses and arcades in the lower stories, and the Lorberer mansion, with the blunt gable, where she had spent such happy days, appeared. But she quickly drew it back again; if any of her relatives should see her, what answer could she make to questions?

But no one perceived her, and who knows whether they would not have supposed the delicate, troubled face, short locks of hair, and unnaturally large eyes to be those of another girl who only resembled the blooming, healthful Barbara of former days?

She also glanced toward the richly decorated portal of St. Martin’s Church, standing diagonally opposite to the sedan chair, and tried to look up to the steeple, which was higher than almost any other in the world.

Even in Ratisbon there was not a handsomer, wider street than this Altstadt, with its stately gable-roofed houses, and certainly not in Munich, where her uncle had once taken her, and the Bavarian dukes now resided.

But where, in Heaven's name, would she be borne?

The sedan chair was now swaying past the place where the "short cut" for pedestrians led up to the Trausnitzburg, the proud citadel of the dukes of Bavarian Landshut. She leaned forward again to look up at it as it towered far above her head on the opposite side of the way; the powerful ruler whose captive she was probably lodged there.

But now!

What did this mean?

The sedan chair was set down, and it was just at the place where the road at her left, leading to the citadel, climbed the height where rose the proud Trausnitz fortress.

Perhaps she might now find an opportunity to escape.

Barbara hastily opened the door, but one of her attendants closed it again, and in doing so pressed her gently back into the chair. At the same time he shook his head, and, while his little black eyes twinkled slyly at her, his broad, smiling mouth, over which hung a long black mustache, uttered a good-natured "No, no."

Now the ascent of the mountain began. A wall bordered the greater portion of the road, which often led through a ravine overgrown with brushwood and past bastions and other solid masonry.

The bearers had already mounted to a considerable height, yet there was no view of the city and the neighbouring country. But even the loveliest prospect would not have induced Barbara to open her eyes, for the indignation which overpowered her had increased to fierce rage, blended with a fear usually alien to her courageous soul.

In the one tower of the citadel there were prisons of tolerably pleasant aspect, but she had heard whispers of terrible subterranean dungeons connected with the secret tribunal.

Suppose the Emperor Charles intended to lock her in one of these dungeons and withdraw her from the eyes of the world? Who could guard her from this horrible fate? who could prevent him from keeping her buried alive during her life?

Shuddering, she looked out again. If she was not mistaken, they were nearing the end of the road, and she would soon learn what was before her. Perhaps the Emperor Charles himself was awaiting her up there. But if he asked her whether she intended always to defy him, she would show him that Barbara Blomberg was not to be intimidated; that she knew how to defend herself and, if necessary, to suffer; that she would be ready to risk everything to baffle his design and carry out her own resolve. Then he should see that nations and kings, nay, even the Holy Father in Rome-as Charles had once sacrilegiously done—may be vanquished and humbled; that the hard, precious stone may be crushed and solid metal melted, but the steadfast will of a woman battling for what she holds dearest can not be broken.

The sedan chair had already passed through half a dozen citadel gates and left one solid wall behind it, but now a second rose, with a lofty door set in its strong masonry.

When Barbara had formerly ascended the Trausnitz, with what pleasure she had gazed at the deep moat at her left, the pheasants, the stately peacocks, and other feathered creatures, as well as a whole troop of lively monkeys; but this time she saw nothing except that the heavy iron-bound portals of the entrance opened before her, that the drawbridge, though the sun was close to the western horizon, was still lowered, and that Quijada stood at the end, motioning to the bearers to set the sedan chair on the ground.

Now the major-domo opened the door, and this time he was not alone; Barbara saw behind him a woman whose appearance, spite of her angry excitement, inspired confidence.

The questions which, without heeding his companion, she now with crimson cheeks poured upon Don Luis as if fairly frantic, he answered in brief, businesslike words.

The Emperor Charles wished to place her in safe quarters up here, while he himself had taken lodgings in the modest house of a Schwaiger—a small farmer who tilled his own garden and land in the valley below.

For the present, some of the most distinguished officers were here in the citadel as guests of the Duke of Bavaria. Barbara was to live in the ladies' apartments of the fortress, under the care of the worthy woman at his side.

“His Majesty could not have provided for you more kindly,” he concluded.

“Then may the Virgin preserve every one from such kindness!” she impetuously exclaimed. “I am dragged to this citadel against my will—-”

“And that irritates your strong feeling of independence, which we know,” replied the Spaniard quietly. “But when you listen to reason, fairest lady, you will soon be reconciled to this wise regulation of his Majesty. If not, it will be your own loss. But,” he added in a lowered tone, “this is no fitting place for a conversation which might easily degenerate into a quarrel. It can be completed better in your own apartments.”

While speaking he led the way, and Barbara followed without another word of remonstrance, for soldiers of all ages and other gentlemen were walking in the large, beautiful courtyard which she overlooked; a group of lovers of horseflesh were examining some specially fine steeds, and from several of the broad windows which surrounded the Trausnitz courtyard on all sides men’s faces were looking down at her.

This courtyard had always seemed to her a stage specially suitable for the display of royal magnificence, and yet, in spite of its stately size, it would be difficult to imagine anything more pleasant, more thoroughly secluded.

It had formerly witnessed many brilliant knightly games and festal scenes, but even now it was the favourite gathering place for the inhabitants of the citadel and the guests of the ducal owner, though the latter, it is true, had ceased to live here since Landshut had become the heritage of the Munich branch of the Wittelsbach family, and the Bavarian dukes resided in Munich, the upper city on the Isar.

Just as Barbara entered the castle the vesper bell rang, and Quijada paused with bared head, his companions with clasped hands.

The girl prisoner felt little inclination to pray; she was probably thinking of a dance given here by torchlight, in which, as her uncle’s guest, she had taken part until morning began to dawn.

While they were walking on again, she also remembered the riding at the ring in the Trausnitz courtyard, which she had been permitted to witness.

The varied, magnificent spectacle had made her almost wild with delight. The dance in this square had been one of her fairest memories. And with what feelings she looked down into this courtyard again! What could such

an amusement be to her now? Yet it roused a bitter feeling that, in spite of her youth, such scenes should be closed to her forever.

She silently followed the others into an airy room in the third story, whose windows afforded a beautiful view extending to the Bohemian forests.

But Barbara was too weary to bestow more than a fleeting glance upon it.

Paying no heed to the others, she sank down upon the bench near one of the walls of the room, and while she was still talking with Don Luis her new companion, of whose name she was still ignorant, brought several cushions and silently placed them behind her back.

This chamber, Quijada explained, he had selected for her by his Majesty's permission. The adjoining room would be occupied by this good lady—he motioned to his companion—the wife of Herr Adrian Dubois, his Majesty's valet. Being a native of Cologne, she understood German, and had offered to bear her company. If Barbara desired, she could also summon the garde-robiere Lamperi from Ratisbon to the Trausnitz.

Here she interrupted him with the question how long the Emperor intended to detain her here.

"As long as it suits his imperial pleasure and the physician deems advisable," was the reply. Barbara merely shrugged her shoulders again; she felt utterly exhausted. But when Quijada, who perceived that she needed rest, was about to leave her, she remembered the cause of her drive to Landshut, and asked whether she might speak to her father's travelling companion, who could give her information about the health of the old man who, after the Emperor had sent him out into the world, had fallen ill in Antwerp.

This was willingly granted, and Don Luis even undertook to send Sir Pyramus Kogel, whom he knew by sight, to her. Then commending her to the care of Fran Dubois, who was directed to gratify every reasonable wish, he left the room. Meanwhile Barbara desired nothing except rest, but she studiously refrained from addressing even a word to her new companion. Besides, there was little time to do so, she was soon sound asleep.

When at the end of two hours she awoke, she found herself lying at full length upon the bench, while a careful hand had removed her shoes, and the pillows which had supported her weary back were now under her head.

During her slumber it had grown dark, and a small lamp, whose rays a handkerchief shielded from her eyes, was standing on the stove in one corner of the room.

Yet she was alone; but she had scarcely stirred when Frau Dubois appeared with a maid-servant bearing a candelabrum with lighted candles. The careful nurse asked in brief but pleasant words whether she felt stronger, if it would be agreeable to her to have supper served in fifteen minutes, and if she would allow her to help her.

“Willingly,” replied Barbara, very pleasantly surprised. Her companion, as it were, anticipated her strongest wishes—to satisfy her hunger and to change her dress.

She must be capable and, moreover, a woman of kindly, delicate feelings, and it certainly was no fault of hers that she was intrusted with her guardianship and that she belonged to no higher station in life. She was only punishing herself by persisting in her silence and, as Frau Dubois tended her like a watchful mother, though without addressing a single word to her unasked, Barbara’s grateful heart and the satisfaction which the valet’s wife inspired silenced her arrogance.

When an attendant laid the table for only one person, the girl kindly invited Frau Dubois to dine with her; the former, however, had already had her meal, but she said that she would be very glad to bear the young lady company if she desired.

The first long conversation between the two took place at the table.

The pretty face of the native of the Rhine country, with its little snub nose, which in youth must have lent a touch of gay pertness to the well-formed features, was still unwrinkled, though Frau Dubois was nearer fifty than forty. Her gray, nearly white hair, though ill-suited to her almost youthful features, lent them a peculiar charm, and how brightly her round, brown eyes still sparkled! The plain gown of fine Brabant stuff fitted as if moulded to her figure, and it was difficult to imagine anything neater than her whole appearance.

Adrian had certainly attained an exceptional position among his class, yet Barbara wondered how he had won this woman, who apparently belonged to a far higher station. And then what had brought her to this place and her companionship?

She was to learn during the meal, for Frau Dubois not only answered her questions kindly, but in a manner which showed Barbara sincere sympathy for her position.

She was the daughter of a captain who had fallen in the Emperor Charles's service before Padua. The pension granted to his widow had not been paid, and when, with her daughter, she sought an audience with the commander in chief, the influential valet had seen the blooming girl, and did not seek her hand in vain. Maternal joys had been denied her; besides, Frau Dubois thought it hard that her husband was obliged to accompany the Emperor, who could not spare him for a single day, on his long and numerous journeys. Even the very comfortable life secured to her by the distinguished valet, who was respected by men of the highest rank, by no means consoled her for it.

The Emperor Charles knew this, and had given Adrian a pretty house in the park of the Brussels palace, besides favouring him in other ways. Now he had allowed him, before setting out for the war, to send for his wife. On reaching Landshut, she had shared during a few hours the little house which the monarch and general had chosen for his lodgings. The imperial commander had not gone up to the citadel because he wished to remain among his troops.

True, the little farmhouse on the "hohen Gred" which he occupied was anything but a suitable abode for a powerful sovereign, for above the ground floor it had only a single story with five small windows and an unusually high roof. But, on the other hand, the regiments lying encamped near it could be quickly reached. Another reason for making the choice was that he could obtain rest here better than on the Trausnitz, for his health was as bad as his appearance and his mood. He intended to break up the headquarters on the day after to-morrow, so another separation awaited the valet and his wife.

When the mounted messenger sent by Frau Lamperi reached Landshut, and it was necessary to find a suitable companion for Barbara, the Emperor himself had thought of Fran Dubois.

There had been no opposition to his wish. Besides, she said, his Majesty meant kindly by Barbara and, so far as her power extended, everything should be done to soften her hard destiny.

She knew the whole history of the girl intrusted to her care, yet she would scarcely have undertaken the task committed to her had she not been aware that every determination of the Emperor was immovable. Besides, she could also strive to render the hard fate imposed upon the poor girl more endurable.

Barbara had listened eagerly to the story without interrupting her; then she desired to learn further particulars concerning the health of the man from whom even now her soul could not be sundered and, finally, she urged her to talk about herself.

So time passed with the speed of the wind. The candles in the candelabrum were already half burned down when Fran Dubois at last urged going to rest.

Barbara felt that she was fortunate to have found so kind and sensible a companion and, while the Rhinelander was helping her undress, she begged her in future to call her by her Christian name “Gertrud,” or, as people liked to address her, “Frau Traut.”

CHAPTER VIII.

When Barbara rose from her couch the next morning it was no longer early in the day. She had slept soundly and dreamlessly for several hours, then she had been kept awake by the same thoughts which had pressed upon her so constantly of late.

She would defy Charles's cruel demand. The infuriating compulsion inflicted upon her could only strengthen her resolve. If she was dragged to a convent by force, she would refuse, at the ceremony of profession, to become a nun.

She thought of a pilgrimage to induce Heaven to restore the lost melody of her voice. But meanwhile the longing to see the Emperor Charles's face once more again and again overpowered her. On the other hand, the desire to speak to him and upbraid him to his face for the wrong he had done her was soon silenced; it could only spoil his memory of her if he should hear the discordant tones which inflicted pain on her own ear.

Another train of thoughts had also kept her awake. How was her father faring? Had he learned what she feared to confess to him? What had befallen him, and what had the recruiting officer to tell of his fate?

She was to know soon enough, for she had scarcely risen from breakfast when a ducal servant announced Sir Pyramus.

Barbara with anxious heart awaited his entrance, and as she stood there, her cheeks slightly flushed and her large, questioning eyes fixed upon the door, she seemed to Frau Traut, in spite of her short hair and the loss of the rounded oval of her face, so marvellously beautiful that she perfectly understood how she had succeeded in kindling so fierce a flame in the Emperor's heart, difficult as it was to fire.

Frau Traut did not venture to determine what made the blood mount into Pyramus's cheeks when Barbara at his entrance held out her slender white hand, for she had left the room immediately after his arrival. But she did not need to remain absent long; the interview ended much sooner than she expected.

This young officer was certainly a man of splendid physique, with handsome, manly features, yet she thought she perceived in his manner an air of constraint which repelled her and, in fact, this gigantic soldier was conscious that if, for a single moment, he relinquished the control he imposed upon himself his foolish heart would play him a trick.

Barbara had seemed more beautiful than ever as she greeted him with almost humble friendliness, instead of her former defiance. The hoarse tone of her voice, once so musical, caused him so much pain that he was on the verge of losing his power to keep his resolve to conceal the feelings which, in spite of the insults she had heaped upon him, he still cherished for her. While he allowed himself to look into her face, he realized for the first time how difficult a task he had undertaken, and therefore tried to assume an expression of indifference as he began the conversation with the remark that the ride to the citadel was detaining him from his duties longer than he could answer for in such a stress of military business and, moreover, under the eyes of his Majesty. Therefore it would only be possible to talk a very short time.

He had hurled forth this statement rather than spoken it; but Barbara, smiling mournfully, replied that she could easily understand his reluctance to lose so much time merely on her account.

“For your sake, my dear lady,” he replied with an acerbity which sounded sufficiently genuine, “it might scarcely have seemed feasible to go so far from the camp; but for the brave old comrade who was intrusted to my care I would have made even more difficult things possible—and you are his daughter.”

The girl nodded silently to show that she understood the meaning of his words, and then asked how the journey had passed and what was the cause of her father’s illness.

Everything had gone as well as possible, he replied, until they reached Spain; but there the captain was tortured by homesickness. Nothing had pleased him except the piety of the people. The fiery wine did not suit him, the fare seemed unbearable, and the inability to talk with any one except himself had irritated him to actual outbursts of rage. On the neat Netherland ship which bore him homeward matters were better; nay, while running into the harbour of Antwerp he had jested almost in his old reckless manner. But when trying to descend the rope-ladder from the high ship into the skiff in

which sailors had rowed from the land, he made a misstep with his stiff leg and fell into the boat.

A low cry of terror here escaped the lips of the deeply agitated daughter, and Pyramus joined in her expressions of grief, declaring that a chill still ran down his back whenever he thought of that fall. The captain had been saved as if by a miracle. Yet the consequences were by no means light, for when he, Pyramus, left him, he was barely able to totter from one chair to another. A journey on horseback, the physician said, would kill him, and a ride in a carriage over the rough roads would also endanger his life. Several months must pass ere he could think of returning home.

In reply to Barbara's anxious question how the impatient man bore the inactivity imposed upon him, her visitor answered, "Rebelliously enough, but he has already grown quieter, and my sister is fond of him and takes the best care of him."

"Your sister?" asked Barbara abashed, holding out her hand again; but he pretended not to notice it, and merely explained curtly that she had come to the Netherlands with her husband. This enterprising man, like himself, was a native of the principality of Grubenhagen in the Hartz Mountains. At sixteen the wild fellow went out into the world to seek his fortune, and had found it as a daring sailor. He returned a rich man to seek a wife in his old home. Now he had gone on a voyage to the Indies, and while his wife awaited his return she had gladly received her brother's old comrade. Nursing him would afford her a welcome occupation during her loneliness. Her house lacked nothing, and Barbara might comfort herself with the knowledge that the captain would have the best possible care.

With these words he seemed about to leave her; but she stopped him with the question, "And when the service summoned you away from him, had he heard what his daughter——"

Here, flushing deeply, she paused with downcast eyes. Pyramus feasted a short time on the spectacle of her humbled pride, but soon he could no longer bear to see her endure such bitter suffering, and therefore answered hastily, "If you mean what is said about you and his Majesty the Emperor, he was told of it by an old comrade from this neighbourhood."

"And he?" she asked anxiously.

"He wrathfully ordered him out of the door," replied the officer, and he saw how her eyes filled with tears.

Then feeling how soft his own heart was also growing, he hurriedly said farewell. Again she gratefully extended her hand, and he clasped it and allowed himself the pleasure of holding it in his a short time. Then bowing hastily, he left her.

She had been the Emperor's toy, her voice had lost its melting melody, and yet he thought there was no woman more to be desired, far as his profession of recruiting had led him through all lands. This iron no longer needed bending; but how fiercely the flames of suffering which melted her obstinate nature must have burned! Surely he had not seen her for the last time, and perhaps Fate would now help him to perform the vow that he had made before her door in the dark entry of the house in Ratisbon.

While Sir Pyramus was leaving her Barbara had heard a man's voice in Frau Traut's room, but she scarcely noticed it. What she had learned weighed heavily upon her soul.

Her father would not believe what was, nevertheless, the full, undeniable truth. How would he deal with the certainty that he had showed his old comrade the door unjustly when he at last came home and she confessed all, all that she had sinned and suffered? She was sure of one thing only—he, too, would not permit her child to be taken from her; and she cherished a single hope—the blow which Fate had dealt by destroying her tuneful voice would force him to pity, and perhaps induce him to forgive her. Oh, if she could only have conjured him here, opened her heart fully, freely to him, and learned from his own lips that he approved of her resistance!

During this period of quiet reflection many sounds and shouts which she had not heard before reached her room.

As they grew louder and more frequent, Barbara rose to approach the open window, but ere she reached it Frau Taut returned.

The visitor whom she had received was Adrian, her husband. He had come up the Trausnitz to make all sorts of arrangements, for something unusual was to happen which would bring even his Majesty the Emperor here.

These tidings startled Barbara.

Suppose that Charles was now coming to influence her by the heavy weight of his personality; suppose he——

But Frau Traut gave her no time to yield to these and other fears and hopes; she added, in a quiet tone, that his Majesty merely intended to invest his son-in-law, Ottavio Farnese, Duke of Parma, with the Order of the Golden Fleece in the Trausnitz courtyard. It would be a magnificent spectacle, and Barbara could witness it if she desired. One of the rooms in the second story of the ladies' wing where she lodged was still untenanted, and her husband would be responsible if she occupied it, only Barbara must promise not to attract attention to herself by any sound or gesture.

She yielded to this demand with eager zeal, and when Frau Traut perceived the girl's pale cheeks again flushed she wondered at the rapid excitability of this singular creature, and willingly answered the long series of questions with which she assailed her.

Barbara especially desired to hear particulars about the mother of Margaret of Parma, the wife of Ottavio Farnese, that Johanna Van der Gheynst who gave this daughter to the Emperor.

Then Barbara learned that she was a Netherland girl of respectable family, but of scarcely higher rank than her own; only she had been adopted by Count Bon Haagestraaten before the Emperor made her acquaintance.

"Was Johanna beautiful?" Barbara eagerly interrupted.

"I think you are far handsomer," was the reply, "though she, too, was a lovely creature."

Then Barbara wished to learn whether she was fair or dark, lively or quiet, and, finally, whether she had consented to give up her child; and Frau Traut answered that Johanna had done this without resistance, and her daughter was afterward reared first by the Duchess of Savoy, and later by Queen Mary, the regent of the Netherlands.

"How wisely the young lady acted," Frau Dubois concluded, "you yourself know. A crown now adorns her child's head for the second time, and you will soon see how the Emperor Charles bestows honours upon her husband. His Majesty understood how to provide for his daughter, who is his first child. Her former marriage, it is true, was short. Alessandro de' Medici, to whom she was wedded at almost too early an age, was murdered scarcely a year after their nuptials. Her present husband, the Duke of Parma, whom you will see, is, on the contrary, younger than she, but since the unfortunate campaign against Algiers, in which he participated, and after his recovery from the severe illness he endured after his return home, they

enjoy a beautiful conjugal happiness. His Majesty is warmly attached to his daughter, and the great distinction which he will bestow upon her husband to-day is given by no means least to please his own beloved child, though her mother was only a Jollanna van der Gheynst."

Barbara had listened to these communications with dilated eyes, but the speaker was now interrupted; the leech, Dr. Matthys, was announced, and immediately entered the room.

Barbara's outburst of rage had not lessened his sympathy for her, and in the interest of science he desired to learn what effect his remedies had had. Unfortunately, in spite of their use, no improvement was visible.

The strange absence of mind with which the girl, who usually answered questions so promptly and decidedly, now seemed scarcely to hear them, he attributed to the painful remembrance of her unseemly behaviour at their last meeting, and therefore soon left her, by no means satisfied with his visit. On the way, however, he told himself that it was unfair to blame the bird which had just been captured for fluttering.

When the leech had retired, Barbara regretted that she had answered him so indifferently. But the anticipation of seeing her imperial lover again dominated every thought and feeling. Besides, she again and again saw before her the figure of the young duke, whom she had never beheld, but whom Charles had married to the daughter of that Johanna who was said to have been neither more beautiful nor more aristocratic than she herself.

Frau Traut saw compassionately that she could not remain long quietly in any place, and that when the noon meal was served she scarcely tasted food.

As soon as the first blast of the horns rose from the gate of the citadel she urged departure like an impatient child, and her indulgent companion yielded, though she knew that the stately ceremonial would not begin for a long time.

The window which Adrian had assigned to the two women in a room which was to be occupied by them alone afforded a view of the entire courtyard, and from the arm-chair which Frau Traut had had brought for her Barbara gazed down into it with strained attention.

The first sound of the horns had saluted Ottavio Farnese.

Mounted on a spirited charger, he held aloft, as gonfaloniere of the Church, the proud banner to be whose bearer was deemed by the Dukes of

Parma one of their loftiest titles of honour.

He was greeted by the nobles present with loud acclamations, but was still booted and attired as beseemed a horseman. The cavaliers, officers, and pages who attended him entered the citadel in no regular order. But as Ottavio swung himself from his magnificently formed, cream-coloured steed, and issued orders to his train, Barbara could look him directly in the face and, though she thought him neither handsome nor possessed of manly vigour, she could not help admitting that she had rarely seen a young man of equally distinguished bearing. His every movement bore the impress of royal self-confidence, yet at the same time was unconstrained and graceful.

Now he disappeared in the wing of the building that united the ladies' rooms with the main structure opposite.

The Emperor Charles could not be here yet. His arrival would not have been passed by so quietly, and the imperial banner did not float either from the many-sided turret at the left end of the main building nor from the lofty roof of the ancient Wittelsbach tower. Great nobles, mounted on splendid chargers, constantly rode into the citadel, sometimes in groups, and were saluted by the blast of horns; nimble squires led the horses away, while ducal councillors, nobles, chamberlains, and ushers received the distinguished guests of the citadel and conducted them to the Turnitz, the huge banquet hall in the lower story of the main building, where the best of everything undoubtedly stood ready for them.

But every arrangement had already been made for the approaching ceremony—a broad wooden estrade was erected in the centre of the courtyard, and richly decorated with garlands of flowers, blossoming branches, flags, and streamers. At the back stood the Emperor's throne, covered with purple damask, and beside it numerous velvet cushions lay piled one upon another, waiting to be used.

Barbara's vivid imagination already showed her the course of this rare spectacle, and she gladly and confidently expected that the Emperor must turn his face toward her during the principal portion of the ceremony.

Now the carpet on the stage was drawn tighter by lackeys in magnificent liveries, and the final touches were given to its decorations; now priests entered the smaller building at the left of the courtyard. The balcony on one of these buildings was adorned with flowers, and the singers of St. Martin's Church in Landshut gradually filled it. Now—but here Barbara's quiet

observation suddenly ended; the air was shaken by the roar of cannon from the bastions of the citadel, and the signals of the warders' horns blended with the thunder of the artillery. At the same time the banners and streamers on every flagpole, stirred by a light breeze from the east, began to wave in the sunny August air. Then the blare of trumpets echoed, and a few minutes later from the Turnitz and the covered staircase between the main building and the right win; of the citadel the most brilliant body of men that Barbara had ever seen poured into the courtyard. They were the Knights of the Golden Fleece and the princes, counts, barons and knights, generals and colonels whom the Emperor Charles had invited to the Trausnitz citadel to attend the approaching solemn ceremonial.

What did she care for these dignitaries in gold, silver, and steel, velvet and silk, gems and plumes, when the enthusiastic cheers of this illustrious assemblage, the blare of trumpets, the thunder of cannon, and the ringing of bells loudly proclaimed the approach of him who, as their lord and master, stood far above them all? Would he appear on horseback, or had he dismounted at the gate and was advancing on foot? Neither. He was borne in a sedan chair. It was covered with gilding, and the top of the arched roof and each of the four corners were adorned with bunches of red and gold plumes, the colours of Philip of Burgundy, who more than a hundred years before had founded the order of the Golden Fleece.

Instead of lackeys, strong sergeants, chosen from the different regiments, bore the sedan chair. The gentlemen of the court—Prince Henry of Nassau, Baron Malfalconnet, and Don Luis Quijada, with Generals Furstenberg and Mannsfeld, Count Hildebrand Madrucci, the Master of the Teutonic Order, the Marchese Marignano, and others—were preceded by the stiff, grave, soldierly figure of the Duke of Alba, and, by the side of the platform, grandees and military commanders, Netherland lords, Italian, German, and Austrian princes, counts, barons, and knights had taken their places.

When the sedan chair was at last set on the ground in front of the lowest step of the platform, Barbara thought that her heart would burst; for while the singers in the balcony began the "Venite populi mundi," so familiar to her, and the cheers redoubled, Charles descended, and in what a guise she saw him again! He looked ten years older, and she felt with him the keen suffering which every step must cause.

This time it was not Quijada, but the Duke of Alba, who offered him the support of his mailed arm, and, leaning on it, he ascended the low stage.

While doing so he turned his back to Barbara, and as with bent figure and outstretched head he wearily climbed the two stairs leading to the platform, he presented a pitiable spectacle.

And have you loved this wreck of a man with all the fervour of your heart? the girl asked herself; does it still throb faster for him? could you even now expect from him a fairer happiness than from all these handsome warriors and nobles in the pride of their manly vigour? To this old man you have sacrificed happiness and honour, given up your father and the noblest, best of friends!

Fierce indignation for her own folly suddenly seized upon her with such overmastering power that she looked away from the sovereign toward the singers, who were summoning the whole world to pay homage to yonder broken-down man, as though he were a demigod.

A bitter smile hovered around her lips as she did so, but it vanished as swiftly as it had come; for when she again fixed her eyes upon the monarch, she would gladly have joined in the mighty hymn. As if by a miracle, he had become an entirely different person. Now he stood before the throne in the full loftiness and dignity of commanding majesty. A purple mantle fell from his shoulders, and the Duke of Alba was placing the crown on his head instead of the velvet cap.

Oh, no, she need not be ashamed of having loved this man, and she was not; for she loved him still, and was fully and joyously aware that whatever he suffered, whatever tortured and prematurely aged the man still in his fourth decade, no one on earth equalled him in intellect and grandeur.

And as pages then placed the velvet cushions on the carpet; as the Duke of Parma, the gonfaloniere on whose head rested the blessing of the representative of Christ, bent the knee before his imperial father-in-law, and the proud Alba and the other Knights of the Golden Fleece who were present did the same; as Charles, the grand master of the order, took from the cushion the symbol of honour which Count Henry of Nassau handed to him, and placed the golden sheepskin with the red ribbon around Duke Ottavio’s neck, while the plaudits, the ringing of bells, and the thunder of the artillery echoed more loudly than ever from the stone walls of the courtyard, tears filled Barbara’s eyes and, as when the Emperor passed at

the head of the bridal procession in Prebrunn, her voice again blended with the enthusiastic shouts of homage to the man standing in majestic repose before the throne, the man who was the most exalted of human beings.

She understood only a few words of the brief speech which the monarch addressed to the new Knight of the Golden Fleece. She saw for the first time the dignitaries of so many different nations upon whom she was gazing down, and most of whom she did not even know by name. But what did she care how they were called and who they were? Her eyes were fixed only on Charles and the young man in the armour artistically inlaid with gold, peach-coloured silver brocade, and white silk, who was kneeling before him.

Suppose that a son of hers should be permitted to share such an honour; suppose that Charles should some day bend down to her child and kiss his brow with the paternal affection which he had just showed to the young duke whom he had wedded to his daughter? And this daughter was the child of a mother who was her sister in sorrow, and had been her superior in nothing, neither in birth nor in beauty.

She said this to herself while she was intently watching the progress of the solemn ceremonial. How lovingly and with what enthusiastic reverence Ottavio was now gazing up into the face of his imperial father-in-law, and with what grateful fervour, as the youngest Knight of the Fleece, he kissed his hand! Not only outwardly but in heart—the warm light of their eyes revealed it—these men, so unlike in age and gifts, were united; yet Ottavio was not Charles's own son, as another would have been whom she wished to withhold from such a father, and in her selfish blindness to withdraw from the path to the summit of all earthly splendour and honour.

Who gave her the right to commit so great, so execrable a robbery?

What could she, the poor, deserted, scorned toy of a king—give to her child, and what the mightiest of the mighty yonder?

If he was ready to claim as his own the young life which she expected with hopeful yearning, it would thereby receive a benefit so vast, a gift so brilliant that all the wealth of love and care which she intended to bestow upon it vanished in darkness by comparison. Charles's resolve, which she had execrated as cruel, was harsh only against her who had angered him, and who could give him so little more; for her child it meant grandeur and

splendour, and thereby, she thought in her vain folly, the highest happiness attainable for human beings.

Still she gazed as though spellbound at the decorated stage, but the ceremony was already rapidly approaching its close. The great nobles surrounded the new Knight of the Fleece to congratulate him, the Duke of Alba first; but vouchsafed a few brief, gracious words only to a few dignitaries, and then, this time assisted by Quijada, descended to the sedan chair.

Barbara had learned from Frau Traut that his Majesty knew that she was here in the ladies' apartments. Would he now raise his eyes to her, though but for a brief space?

He was already standing at the door of the sedan chair, and until now had kept his gaze bent steadily upon the ground. Meanwhile he must be experiencing severe pain; she saw it by the lines around the corners of his mouth. Now he placed his sound right foot upon the little step; now, before drawing the aching left one after it, he turned toward Quijada, whose hand was supporting him under the arm; and now—no, she was not mistaken—now he raised his eyes with the speed of lightning toward the ladies' apartments, and for one short second his glance met hers. Then his head vanished in the sedan chair.

Nevertheless, he had looked toward her, and this was a great boon. With all her strength she made it her own, and soon she felt absolutely sure that when he knew she was so near him he had been unable to resist the desire to gaze once more into her face. Perhaps it was intended for a precious farewell gift.

As soon as the sedan chair, amid cheers and the blare of trumpets, had disappeared in the direction of the drawbridge and the great main entrance, Barbara retired to her room. Frau Traut knew not whether she ought to bless or bewail having obtained permission for her to witness the bestowal of the Fleece.

At any rate, another great transformation had taken place in this extremely impressionable young creature. Barbara's impetuous nature seemed destroyed and crushed, and the bright gaiety which had pleased Frau Dubois so much the first day of their meeting had greatly diminished. Only on special occasions her former fiery vivacity burst forth, but the

sudden flame expired as quickly as it had blazed and, dreamily absorbed in her own thoughts, she obeyed her with the docility of a child.

This swift and marked change in the disposition of her charge, whom Quijada and her own husband had described as so totally different, awakened her anxiety; yet it was easy to perceive that the volcano had not burned out, but was merely quiescent for the time.

During the night the dull indifference which she showed in the day abandoned her, and her attentive companion often heard her sobbing aloud.

It did not escape Frau Tract's notice that since Barbara had seen the Emperor again in the Trausnitz courtyard a mental conflict had begun which absorbed her whole being, but the girl did not permit her any insight into her deeply troubled soul.

CHAPTER IX.

The Emperor Charles departed on the morning after the bestowal of the Golden Fleece, and two days later Barbara willingly obeyed the leech's prescription to seek healing at the springs of Abbach on the Danube, a few miles south of Ratisbon, which was almost in the way of those returning thither from Landshut. The waters there had benefited the Emperor Charles fourteen years before, and Barbara remained there with Frau Traut and Lamperi, who had returned to her, until the trees had put on their gay autumn robes and were casting them off to prepare for the rest of winter.

The hope of regaining the melody of her voice induced her conscientiously to follow the physician's prescriptions but, like the sulphur spring of Abbach,[??] they produced no considerable effect.

Barbara's conduct had also altered in many respects.

The girl who had formerly devoted great attention to her dress, now often needed to be reminded by Frau Dubois of her personal appearance when she went with her to walk or to church.

She avoided all intercourse with other visitors to the spring after Ratisbon acquaintances had intentionally shunned her.

The Wollers' country residence, where she had formerly been a welcome guest for weeks every summer, was near Abbach. Anne Mirl was betrothed, and Nandl was on the eve of accepting a young suitor. Both were still warmly attached to their cousin, although they had been told that, by an open love intrigue, she had forfeited the right to visit the respectable home of modest maidens. But the man who had honoured her with his love was no less a personage than the Emperor Charles, and this circumstance only increased the sympathy which the sisters felt for their much-admired friend.

In spite of their mother's refusal to permit them to ride to the neighbouring town and visit Barbara, they did so, that they might try to comfort her; but though their unfortunate cousin received them and listened to them a short time, she earnestly entreated them to obey their mother and not come again.

Frau Traut perceived that she not only desired to guard the inexperienced girls from trouble, but that their visit disturbed her. The thoughts which were in her mind so completely absorbed her that she now studiously sought the solitude which she had formerly shunned like a misfortune.

Even Pyramus Kogel's short letter, informing her of her father's convalescence, and the news from the seat of war which Frau Traut communicated to her to divert her thoughts, and which she had usually anticipated with impatient expectation, awakened only a fleeting interest. Toward the end of the first week in September her companion could inform her that the Emperor Charles had met the Smalcalds at Ingolstadt and, in spite of a severe attack of the gout, had ridden—with his aching foot in linen bandages instead of in the stirrup—from regiment to regiment, kindling the enthusiasm of his troops by fiery words.

Then Barbara at last listened with more interest, and asked for other details.

Frau Dubois, to whom her husband from time to time sent messengers from the camp, now said that the encounter had not come to an actual battle and a positive decision, but his Majesty had heeded the shower of bullets less than the patter of a hailstorm, and had quietly permitted Appian, the astronomer, to explain a chart of the heavens in his tent, though the enemy's artillery was tearing the earth around it.

But even this could not reanimate the extinguished ardour of Barbara's soul; she had merely said calmly: "We know that he is a hero. I had expected him to disperse the heretics as the wolf scatters the sheep and destroy them at a single blow."

Then taking her rosary and prayer book, she went to church, as she did daily at this time. She spent hours there, not only praying, but holding intercourse with the image of the Madonna, from which she dill not avert her eyes, as though it was a living being. The chaplain who had been given to her associated with this devout tendency of his penitent the hope that Barbara would decide to enter a convent; but she rebuffed in the firmest manner every attempt to induce her to form this resolve.

In October the northeast wind brought cold weather, and Frau Traut feared that remaining for hours in the chilly brick church would injure her charge's health, so she entreated Barbara to desist. But when the latter, without heeding her warning, continued to visit the house of God as before,

and to stay the same length of time, Frau Dubois interposed a firm prohibition, and on this occasion she learned for the first time to what boundlessly vehement rebellion her charge could allow passion to carry her. True, soon after Barbara, with winning tenderness, besought her forgiveness, and it was readily granted, but Frau Traut knew of no other expedient than to fix the first of November, which would come in a few days, for their return to Ratisbon.

Barbara was startled.

During the night her companion heard her weeping vehemently, and her kind heart led her to her bedside.

With the affectionate warmth natural to her, she entreated the unhappy girl to calm herself, and to open her troubled heart to one who felt as kindly toward her as a mother; and before these friendly words the defiance, doubts, and fear which had closed Barbara's heart melted.

"You may take it from me," she cried, amid her streaming tears. "What can a poor girl give it save want and shame? Its father, on the contrary—If he adopts and rears it as his child—O Frau Traut! dare I, who already love it more than my own life, rob it of the happiness to which it has a right? If the Emperor acknowledges it, whether it is a boy or a girl, merciful Heaven, to what Magnificence, what splendour, what honour my child may attain! My brain often reels when I think of it. The little daughter of Johanna Van der Gheynst a Duchess of Parma, and why should he place the girl whom I shall perhaps give him in a more humble position? Or if Heaven should grant me a son, his father will raise him to a still greater height, and I have already seen him before me a hundred times as he hangs the Fleece on the red ribbon round his neck."

Here her voice, still uncertain, failed, but she allowed Frau Traut to clasp her to her heart and, in her joy at this decision, which relieved her of a grave anxiety, to kiss her brow and cheeks. She had at last perceived, the kindly consoler assured the weeping girl, what the most sacred duty commanded, and the course that promised to render her, after so much suffering, one of the happiest of mothers. All that had hovered before her as glittering dreams would be fulfilled, and when her child, as the Emperor's, took precedence of the highest and greatest in the land, she could say to herself that it owed this to the sacrifice which she, its mother, had voluntarily made for its sake.

Barbara had told herself the same thing in many lonely hours, and most frequently in the brick church at Abbach, opposite to the image of the Mater dolorosa. She whose intercession never remained unheard had yielded up, with an aching heart, her divine son, and she must imitate her. And how much easier was her fate than that of the stainless virgin, who beheld her child, the Redeemer of the world, die upon the cross, while hers, if she resigned him, would attain the highest earthly happiness!

Frau Traut by no means overlooked the vanity of these motives. She was only too well aware that there is no greater boon for a child than the mother's loyal, anxious love, and Barbara's delusion grieved her. She would gladly have cried: "Keep your child, overwhelm it with love, be good and unselfish, so that, in spite of your disgrace, it must honour you." But the Emperor's command and her husband's wish were paramount. Besides, as Barbara was situated, it could not help being better for the child if the father provided for its education.

The soul of her charge now lay before her like an open book. The spectacle of the brilliant honour bestowed upon Duke Ottavio Farnese had sowed in her heart the seeds which had now ripened to resolution. She could not know that the vivandiere's assistant on the highway, with her abandoned child, had cast the first germ into Barbara's mind. Moreover, she was content to be able to send such welcome tidings to the camp. The disclosure of the resolve which she had reached after such severe conflicts exerted a beneficial influence upon Barbara. Her eyes again sparkled brightly, and the indifference with which she had regarded everything that happened to herself and those about her vanished.

For the first time she asked where she was to find shelter in Ratisbon; the Emperor's command closed Wolf's house against her; the Prebrunn castle was only a summer residence, unfit for winter use. So it was necessary to seek new quarters, and Barbara did not lack proposals. But the answer from camp must be awaited, and it came sooner than Frau Dubois expected. The messenger who brought it was her husband. His Majesty, he said, rejoiced at Barbara's decision, and had commissioned him to take her at once to Ratisbon and lodge her in the Golden Cross. The imperial apartments were still at the monarch's disposal, and the owner of the house, whom Barbara did not wish to meet, had gone to Italy to spend the winter.

Herr Adrian did not mention what a favour the sovereign was showing Barbara by parting with his trusted servant for several days, but she told herself so with joyful pride, for she had learned how greatly Charles needed this man.

The Emperor had dismissed Quijada from attendance on his person. He knew the Castilian's value as a soldier, and would have deemed himself forgetful of duty had he withheld so able an assistant from the great cause which he was leading.

At the end of the first week in November Barbara again entered the Golden Cross in Ratisbon. The great house seemed dead, but Adrian, in his royal master's name, provided for the comfort of the women, who had been joined by Sister Hyacinthe.

In the name of Frau Dubois, to whom his Majesty gave it up, Adrian took possession of the Golden Cross, and as such Barbara was presented to the newly engaged servants, while his wife was known by them as a Frau Traut from the Netherlands.

No inhabitant of Ratisbon was informed of the return of their young fellow-citizen, and Barbara only went out of doors with her companion early in the morning or in the twilight, and always closely veiled. But few persons had seen her after her illness, and on returning home she often mentioned the old acquaintances whom she had met without being recognised by them. The apartments she occupied were warm and comfortable. The harp and lute had been sent from Prebrunn with the rest of her property, and though she would not have ventured to sing even a single note, she resolved to touch their chords again. Playing on the harp afforded her special pleasure, and Frau Traut fancied she could understand her thoughts while doing so. The tones often sounded as gentle as lullabies, often as resonant and impetuous as battle songs. In reply to a question from her companion, Barbara confessed that while playing she sometimes imagined that she beheld a lovely girl, sometimes a young hero clad in glittering armour, with the Golden Fleece on his neck, rushing to battle against the infidels.

When the women were sitting together in the evening, Barbara urged her companion, who was familiar with the court and with Charles's former life, to tell her about the Netherlands and Spain, Brussels and Valladolid, the wars, the monarch's wisdom, the journeys of Charles, his intercourse with

men and women, his former love affairs, his married life, his relatives and children, and again and again of Johanna Van der Gheynst, the mother of the Duchess Margaret of Parma. In doing so the clever native of Cologne never failed to draw brilliant pictures of the splendour of the imperial court. As a matter of course, Brussels, the favourite residence of the Dubois couple, was most honoured in the narrative, and Barbara could never hear enough of this superb city. Maestro Gombert had already aroused her longing for it, and Frau Traut made her, as it were, at home there.

So December and Christmas flew by. New Year's and Epiphany also passed, and when January was over and the month of February began, a guest arrived in Ratisbon from the household of the Emperor, who was now holding his court at Ulm. It was Dr. Mathys, the leech, who readily admitted that he had come partly by his Majesty's desire, partly from personal interest in Barbara's welfare.

The physician found her in the same mood as after the relapse. Obedient, calm, yielding, only often overpowered by melancholy and bitter thoughts and feelings, yet, on the other hand, exalted by the fact that the Emperor Charles, for her sake, was now depriving himself also of this man, whom he so greatly needed.

She awaited the fateful hour with anxious expectation. The twenty-fourth of February was the Emperor's birthday, and if it should come then, if the father and child should see the light of the world on the same day of the almanac, surely it must seem to Charles a favourable omen.

And behold!

On the day of St. Matthias—that is, the twenty-fourth of February, Charles's birthday-at noon, Frau Traut, radiant with joy, could despatch the waiting messenger to Ulm with the tidings that a son had just been born to his Majesty.

The next morning the child was baptized John by the chaplain who accompanied the women, because this apostle had been nearest to the Saviour's heart.

The young mother was not permitted to rejoice at the sight of her babe. Charles had given orders in advance what should be done hour by hour, and believed he was treating the mother kindly by refusing to allow her to enjoy the sight of the newborn child which could not remain with her.

This caused much weeping and lamenting, and such passionate excitement that the bereaved mother nearly lost her life; but Dr. Mathys devoted the utmost care to her, and did not leave Ratisbon until after three weeks, when he could commit the nursing to the experienced Sister Hyacinths.

But for the trouble in her throat, Barbara would have been physically as well as ever; her mental suffering was never greater.

She felt robbed and desolate, like the bird whose nestlings are stolen by the marten; for all that might have made her ruined life precious had been taken, and the man to whom she had surrendered her dearest treasure did not even express, by one poor word, his gratitude and joy. No, he seemed to have forgotten her as well as her future.

Frau Traut had left her with the promise that she would sometimes send her news of her boy's health, yet she, too, remained silent, and was deceiving her confidence. She could not know that the promise-breaker thought of her often enough, but that she had been most strictly forbidden by her imperial master to tell the boy's mother his abode or to hold any further intercourse with her.

How little Charles must care for her, since he now showed such deep neglect and found no return for all that she had sacrificed to him save cruel sternness! Yet the precious gift for which he was indebted to her must have afforded special pleasure to the man who attached such great value to omens, for it gave him the right to cherish the most daring hopes for the future of his boy. The fact that he was born on his father's birthday seemed to her an especial favour of heaven, and the old chaplain, who still remained with her, had discovered other singular circumstances which foreshadowed that the son would become the father's peer; for on the twenty-fourth of February Charles V had been crowned, and on the same day he had won at Pavia his greatest victory.

This had been the most brilliant day in the ruler's life, so rich in successes, and now it had also become the birthday of the boy whom she had given him and resigned that he might lead it to grandeur, splendour, and magnificence.

Nothing was more improbable than that the man whose faithful memory retained everything, and whose active mind discovered what escaped the notice of others, should have overlooked this sign from heaven. And yet she

vainly waited for a token of pleasure, gratitude, remembrance. How this pierced the soul and corroded the existence of the poor deserted girl, the bereaved mother, the unfortunate one torn from her own sphere in life!

At last, toward the end of March, the message so ardently desired arrived. A special courier brought it, but how it was worded!

A brief expression of his Majesty's gratification at the birth of the healthy, well-formed boy; then, in blunt words, the grant of a small annual income and an additional gift, with the remark that his Majesty was ready, to increase both generously, and, moreover, to give her ambition every support, if Barbara would enter a convent. If she should persist in remaining in the world, what was granted must be taken from her as soon as she broke her promise to keep secret what his Majesty desired to have concealed.

The conclusion was: "And so his Majesty once more urges you to renounce the world, which has nothing more important to offer you than memories, which the convent is the best place to cherish. There you will regain the favour of Heaven, which it so visibly withdrew from you, and also the regard of his Majesty, which you forfeited, and he in his graciousness, and in consequence of many a memory which he, too, holds dear, would gladly show you again."

This letter bore the signature of Don Luis Quijada, and had been written by a poor German copyist, a wretched, cross-eyed fellow, whom Wolf had pointed out to her, and whose hand Barbara knew. From his pen also came the sentence under the major-domo's name, "The Golden Cross must be vacated during the month of April."

When Barbara had read these imperial decisions for the second and the third time, and fully realized the meaning of every word, she clinched her teeth and gazed steadily into vacancy for a while. Then she laughed in such a shrill, hoarse tone that she was startled at the sound of her own voice, and paced up and down the room with long strides.

Should she reject what the most powerful and wealthy sovereign in the world offered with contemptible parsimony? No! It was not much, but it would suffice for her support, and the additional gift was large enough to afford her father a great pleasure when he came home.

Pyramus Kogel's last letter reported that his condition was improving. Perhaps he might soon return. Then the money would enable her to weave a joy into the sorrow that awaited him. It had always been a humiliating

thought that he had lost his own house and was obliged to live in a hired one, and at least she could free him from that.

It was evident enough that her pitiful allowance did not proceed from the Emperor's avarice; Charles only wished to force her to obey his wish to shut her for the rest of her life in a cloister. The mother of his son must remain concealed from the world; he desired to spare him in after years the embarrassment of meeting the woman whose birth was so much more humble than his own and his father's. Want should drive her from the world, and, to hasten her flight, the shrewd adept in reading human nature showed her in the distance the abbess's cross, and tried thereby to arouse her ambition.

But in her childhood and youth Barbara had been accustomed to still plainer living than she could grant herself in future, and she would have been miserable in the most magnificent palace if she had been compelled to relinquish her independence. Rather death in the Danube than to dispense with it!

She was young, healthy, and vigorous, and it seemed like voluntary mutilation to resign her liberty at twenty-one. But even had she felt the need of the lonely cell, quiet contemplation, and more severe penance than had been imposed upon her in the confessional, she would still have remained in the world; for the more plainly the letter showed how eagerly Charles desired to force her out of it, the more firmly she resolved to remain in it. How many hopes this base epistle had destroyed; it seemed as though it had killed the last spark of love in her soul!

Too much kindness leads to false paths scarcely more surely than the contrary, and the Emperor's cruel decision destroyed and hardened many of the best feelings in Barbara's heart, and prepared a place for resentment and hatred.

The great sovereign's love, which had been the sunshine of her life, was lost; her child had been taken from her; even the home that sheltered her, and which hitherto she had regarded as a token of its father's kindly care, was now withdrawn. A new life path must be found, but she would not set out upon it from the Golden Cross, where her brief happiness had bloomed, but from the place where she had experienced the penury of her childhood and early youth.

The very next afternoon she moved into Wolf's house. Sister Hyacinthe was obliged to return to her convent, so no one accompanied her except Frau Lamperi. She had become attached to Barbara, and therefore remained in her service instead of returning to the Queen of Hungary. True, she had not determined to do so until her mistress had promised to remain only a few weeks in Ratisbon at the utmost, and then move to Brussels, where she longed to be.

Ratisbon was no home for the Emperor's former favourite. Life in her native city would have been one long chain of humiliations, now that she had nothing to offer her fellow-citizens except the satisfaction of a curiosity which was not always benevolent.

But where should she go, if not to the country where her child's father lived, where, she had reason enough to believe, the infant would be concealed, and where she might hope to see again and again at a distance the man to whom hate united her no less firmly than love?

This prospect offered her the greatest attraction, and yet she desired nothing, nothing more from him except to be permitted to watch his destiny. It promised to be no happy one, but this fact robbed the wish of no charm.

Besides, the desire for a richer life again began to stir within her soul, and what sustenance for the eye and ear Gombert, Frau Traut, and now also Lamperi promised her in Brussels!

Her means would enable her to go there with the maid and live in a quiet way. If her father forgave her and would join her in the city, she would rejoice. But he was bound to Ratisbon by so many ties, and had so many new tales to relate in its taprooms, that he would certainly return to it. So she must leave him; it was growing too hot for her here.

She found old Ursel cheerful, and was less harshly received than at her last visit. True, Barbara came when she was in a particularly happy mood, because a letter from Wolf stated that he already felt perfectly at home in Quijada's castle at Villagarcia, and that Dona Magdalena de Ulloa was a lady of rare beauty and kindness of heart. Her musical talent was considerable, and she devoted every leisure hour to playing on stringed instruments and singing. True, there were not too many, for the childless woman had made herself the mother of the poor and sick upon her estates, and had even established a little school where he assisted her as singing-master.

So Barbara was at least relieved from self-reproach for having brought misfortune upon this faithful friend. This somewhat soothed her sorely burdened heart, and yet in her old, more than plain lodgings, with their small, bare rooms, she often felt as though the walls were falling upon her. Besides, what she saw from the open window in Red Cock Street was disagreeable and annoying.

When evening came she went to rest early, but troubled dreams disturbed her sleep.

The dawn which waked her seemed like a deliverance, and directly after mass she hurried out of the gate and into the open country.

On her return she found a letter from her father.

Pyramus Kogel was its bearer, and he had left the message that he would return the next day. This time her father had written with his own hand. The letters were irregular and crooked enough, but they were large, and there were not too many of them. He now knew what people were saying about her. It had pierced the very depths of his old heart and darkened his life. But he could not curse her, because she was his only child, and also because he told himself how much easier her execrable vanity had made the Emperor Charles's game. Nor would he give her up as lost, and his travelling companion. Pyramus, who was like a son to him, was ready to aid him, for his love was so true and steadfast that he still wished to make her his wife, and offered through him to share everything with her, even his honourable name.

If misfortune had made her modest, if it had crushed her wicked arrogance, and she was still his own dear child, who desired her father's blessing, she ought not to refuse the faithful fellow who would bring her this letter, but accept his proposal. On that, and upon that alone, his forgiveness would depend; it was for her to show how much or how little she valued it.

Barbara deciphered this epistle with varying emotions.

Was there no room for unselfish love in the breast of any man?

Her father, even he, was seeking to profit by that which united him to his only child. To keep it, and to secure his blessing, she must give her hand to the unloved soldier who had shown him kindness and won his affection.

She again glanced indignantly over the letter, and now read the postscript also. “Pyramus,” it ran, “will remain only a short time in Germany, and go from there directly to Brussels, where he is on duty, and thence to me in Antwerp.”

Barbara started, her large eyes sparkled brightly, and a faint flush suddenly suffused her cheeks. The “plus ultra” was forever at an end for her. Her boy was living in Brussels near his father; there she belonged, and she suddenly saw herself brought so near this unknown, brilliant city that it seemed like her real home. Where else could she hope to rid herself of the nightmares that oppressed her except where she was permitted to see the man from whom nothing could separate her, no matter how cruelly he repulsed her?

The only suitable place for her, he thought, was the cloister. No man, he believed in his boundless vanity, could satisfy the woman who had once received in his love.

He should learn the contrary! He should hear—nay, perhaps he should see—that she was still desired, in spite of the theft which he had committed, in spite of the cruelty with which Fate had destroyed the best treasure that it had generously bestowed.

The recruiting officer was certainly a handsome man and, moreover, of noble birth. Her father wished to have him for a son, and would forgive her if she gave him the hand for which he shed.

So let him be the one who should take her to Brussels, and to whom she would give the right of calling himself her husband.

Here her brow contracted in a frown, for the journey on which she was to set out with him would lead not only to the Netherlands, but through her whole life, perhaps to the grave.

Deep resentment seized upon her, but she soon succeeded in conquering it; only the question what she had to give her suitor in return for his loyal love could not be silenced. Yet was it she who summoned him? Did he not possess the knowledge of everything that might have deterred another from wooing her? Had she not showed him more than plainly how ill he had succeeded in gaining her affection? If, nevertheless, he insisted upon winning her, he must take her as she was, though the handsome young man would have had a good right to a heart full of love. Hers, so long as the

gouty traitor lived who had ruined her whole existence, could never belong entirely to another.

Once she had preferred the handsome, stately dancer to all other men. Might not this admiration of his person be revived? No—oh, no! And it was fortunate that it was so, for she no longer desired to love—neither him nor any one else. On the other hand, she resolved to make his life as pleasant as lay in her power. When what she granted him had reconciled her father to her, and she was in Brussels, perhaps she would find strength to treat Pyramus so that he would never repent his fidelity.

In the afternoon she longed to escape from the close rooms into the fresh air, and turned her steps toward Prebrunn, in order to see once more the little castle which to her was so rich in beautiful and terrible memories.

On the way she met Frau Lerch. The old woman had kept her keenness of vision and, though Barbara tried to avoid her, the little ex-maid stopped her and asked scornfully:

"Here in Ratisbon again, sweetheart? How fresh you look after your severe illness!—yet you're still on shank's mare, instead of in the gold coach drawn by white horses."

Barbara abruptly turned her back upon her and went home.

As she was passing the Town Hall Pyramus Kogel left it, and she stopped as he modestly greeted her.

Very distinguished and manly he looked in his glittering armour, with the red and yellow sash and the rapier with its large, flashing basket-hilt at his side; yet she said to herself: "Poor, handsome fellow! How many would be proud to lean on your arm! Why do you care for one who can never love you, and to whom you will appear insignificant to the end?"

Then she kindly clasped the hand which he extended, and permitted him to accompany her home. On the Haidplatz she asked him whether he had read the letter which he brought from her father.

He hesitatingly assented. Barbara lowered her eyes, and added softly:

"It is my own dear father to whom you have been kind, and my warmest gratitude is due to you for it."

The young officer's heart throbbed faster; but as they turned into Red Cock Street she asked the question:

“You are going from here to Brussels, are you not?”

“To Brussels,” he repeated, scarcely able to control his voice.

She raised her large eyes to him, and, after a hard struggle, the words escaped her lips:

“I learned in Landshut, and it was confirmed by my father’s letter, that you are aware of what I am accused, and that you know—I committed the sin with which they charge me.”

In the very same place where, on an evening never to be forgotten, he had received the first sharp rebuff from Barbara, she now confessed her guilt to him—he doubtless noticed it. It must have seemed like a sign from heaven that it was here she voluntarily approached him, nay, as it were, offered herself to him. But he loved her, and he would have deemed it unchivalrous to let her feel now that their relation to one another had changed. So he only exclaimed with joyous confidence:

“And yet, Barbara, I trustfully place happiness and honour in your beloved hands. You have long been clear to me, but now for the first time I believe confidently and firmly that I have found in you the very wife for me. The bitter trial imposed upon you—I knew it in Landshut—bowed your unduly obstinate nature, and if you only knew how well your modest manner becomes you! So I entreat permission to accompany you home.”

Barbara nodded assent, and when he had mounted the steep staircase of the house before her he stopped in front of the narrow door, and a proud sense of satisfaction came over him at the thought that the vow which he had made in this spot was now fulfilled.

Her father had failed to bend this refractory, wonderfully beautiful iron; he had hoped to try with better fortune, but Fate had anticipated him, and he was grateful.

Full of blossoming hopes, he now asked, with newly awakened confidence, whether she would permit him to cross her threshold as a suitor and become his dear and ardently worshipped wife, and the low “Yes” which he received in response made him happy.

A few days after he married her, and journeyed with her on horseback to the Netherlands.

On the way tidings of the battle of Muhlberg reached them. The Emperor Charles had utterly routed the Protestants. He himself announced his great

victory in the words, “I came, I saw, and God conquered.”

When Pyramus told the news to his young wife, she answered quietly, “Who could resist the mighty monarch!”

In Brussels she learned that the Emperor had taken the Elector of Saxony captive on the battlefield, but the Landgrave of Hesse had been betrayed into his power by a stratagem which the Protestants branded as base treachery, and used to fill all Germany with the bitterest hatred against him; but here Barbara’s wrath flamed forth, and she upbraided the slanderous heretics. It angered her to have the great sovereign denied his due reverence in her own home; but secretly she believed in the breach of faith.

CHAPTER X.

Three years passed.

Barbara occupied with her husband and the two sons she had given him a pretty little house in the modest quarter of Saint-Gery in Brussels.

Here the capital of wealthy, flourishing Brabant certainly looked very unlike what she had expected from Gombert's stories; and how little share she had had hitherto in the splendour which on the drive to Landshut she had expected to find in Brussels!

Since the musician had described the city, she had seen it distinctly before her in her vivid imagination. The lower portion, intersected by the river Senne and numerous canals, belonged to the rich, industrious citizens, the skilful artisans, and the common people; the upper, which occupied a hill, contained the great Brabant palace, the residence of the Emperor Charles. This edifice, which, though its exterior was almost wholly devoid of ornament, nevertheless presented a majestic aspect on account of its vast size, adjoined a splendid park, whose leafy groups of ancient trees merged into the forest of Soignies. Here also stood the palaces of the great nobles and, on the side of the hill which sloped to the lower city, the Cathedral of St. Gudule towered proudly aloft.

Much as Barbara had heard in praise of the magnificent market-place in the lower city, with its marvellous Town Hall, it was always the upper portion of Brussels she beheld when she thought of the capital. She had felt that she belonged to this quarter, where all who had any claim to aristocracy lived; here, near the palace and the beautiful leafy trees, her future home had been in her imagination.

The result was different, and now the longing for the brilliant Brussels on the hill was doubly strong. True, there dwelt also those who had the greatest power of attraction for her.

She was just returning home from the palace park, where stood a pleasant summer house in which Adrian Dubois lived with his wife and one child. It was this child especially that drew Barbara to the upper city as often as

possible, and constantly forced her thoughts to linger there and still to follow the “higher” of the imperial motto, which everywhere else she was compelled to renounce.

True, a limit was fixed to these visits to the Dubois couple. For one whole year Frau Traut had successfully concealed the child from the mother; then Barbara had once met the boy outside the house, and the way in which he was hurried out of her sight led to the conviction that this was her child, and Frau Dubois had imprudently betrayed the secret.

From this time Barbara knew that her John had been confided to the care of the valet and his wife. At last Frau Traut had been unable to resist her entreaties, and allowed her to see her son and hold him a short time in her arms.

He was a strong, splendid child, with his mother’s thick, curling locks and large blue eyes. Barbara thought that she had never seen a handsomer boy; and not only the Dubois, who had yielded their whole hearts to their nursling, but strangers also admired the magnificent development of this rare child. The young mother saw in him something grander, more perfect than the children of other human beings, even than the two boys whom she had given her husband, although little John usually repulsed her caresses.

In granting Barbara permission to see her child often, Frau Traut transgressed an explicit command of the Emperor and, to prevent the evil consequences which her sympathy might entail, she allowed the mother to rejoice in the sight of her little son only once a month, and then always for a short time.

During these interviews she was strictly forbidden to bestow even the smallest gift upon the boy.

To-day John had voluntarily approached the stranger to whom he owed his life, but whose passionate caresses at their first meeting had frightened him, to show her the little wooden horse that Adrian had just given him. This had made her happy, and on the way home the memory of her hidden treasure more than once brought a joyous smile to her lips.

At home she first sought her children. Her husband, who had now been appointed mustering officer, was on one of the journeys required by the service, which rarely permitted him to remain long in his own house.

Barbara did not miss him; nay, she was happiest during his absence.

After glancing into the nursery, she retired to her quiet chamber, where her harp stood and the lutes hung which often for hours supplied the place of her lost voice, and sat down at her spinning wheel.

She turned it thoughtfully, but the thread broke, and her hands fell into her lap. Her mind had again found the way to the house in the park and to her John, her own, wonderful, imperial child, and lingered there until from the next room the cry of an infant was heard and a woman's voice singing it to sleep. Frau Lamperi, who had made herself a part of the little household, and beheld in its master the incarnation of every manly virtue, was lulling the baby to rest. Beside it slept another child, a boy two years old. Both were hers, yet, though the infant raised its voice still louder, she remained at the spinning wheel, dreaming on.

In this way, and while playing on the harp and the lutes, her solitude was best endured. Her husband's journeys often led him through the whole Netherlands and the valley of the Rhine as far as Strasbourg and Basle, and her father had returned to Ratisbon.

She had found no new friends in Brussels, and had not endeavoured to gain any.

Loneliness, which she had dreaded in the heyday of her early youth, no longer alarmed her, for quiet reveries and dreams led her back to the time when life had been beautiful, when she had enjoyed the love of the greatest of mortals, and art had given her existence an exquisite consecration.

With the loss of her voice—she was now aware of it—many of the best things in her life had also ceased to exist. Her singing might perhaps have lured back her inconstant lover, and had she come to Brussels possessing the mastery of her voice which was hers during that happy time in May, her life would have assumed a totally different form.

Gombert, who had induced her to move hither, had urged her with the best intentions during their drive to Landshut to change her residence. When he did so, however, Barbara was still connected with the Emperor, and he was animated by the hope that the trouble in her throat would be temporary.

It would have been easy to throw wide to a singer of her ability the doors of the aristocratic houses which were open to him; for, except his professional comrades, he associated only with the wealthy nobles in the upper part of the city, who needed him for the brilliant entertainments

which they understood how to arrange so superbly. The Oranges, Egmont, Aremberg, Brederode, Aerschot, and other heads of the highest nobility in Brabant would have vied with one another to present her to their guests, receive her at their country seats, and invite her to join their riding parties. Where, on the contrary, could he expect to find a friendly reception for the wife of a poor officer belonging to the lower nobility, who was said to have forfeited the Emperor's favour, who could offer nothing to the ear, and to the eye only a peculiar style of beauty, which she could enhance neither by magnificent attire nor by any other arts?

Had she been still the Emperor Charles's favourite, or had he bestowed titles and wealth upon her, more might have been done for her; but as it was, nothing was left of the favour bestowed by the monarch save the stain upon her fair name. Deeply as Gombert regretted it, he could therefore do nothing to make her residence in Brussels more agreeable. He was not even permitted to open his own house to her, since his wife, who was neither more jealous nor more scrupulous than most other wives of artists, positively refused to receive the voiceless singer with the tarnished reputation.

Worthy Appenzelder associated exclusively with men, and thus of her Ratisbon friends not one remained except Massi, the violinist, and the Maltese choir boy, Hannibal Melas.

The little fellow had lost his voice, but had remained in Brussels and, in fact, through Barbara's intercession; for she had ventured to recommend the clever, industrious lad to the Bishop of Arras in a letter which reminded him of his kindness in former days, and the latter had been gracious, and in a cordial reply thanked her for her friendly remembrance. Hannibal had remained in the minister's service and, as he understood several languages and proved trustworthy, was received among his private secretaries.

The violinist Massi remained faithful and, as he became her husband's friend also, he was always a welcome guest in her house.

Her father had returned to Ratisbon. After he had acted as godfather to the oldest boy, Conrad, he could be detained no longer. Homesickness had obtained too powerful a hold upon him.

True, Barbara and her husband did everything in their power to make life in their home pleasant; but he needed the tavern, and there either the carousing was so noisy that it became too much for him, or people often

had very violent political discussions about liberty and faith, which he only half understood, though they used the Flemish tongue. And the Danube, the native air, the familiar faces! In short, he could not stay with his children, though he dearly loved his little godson Conrad; and it pleased him to see his daughter more yielding and ready to render service than ever before, and to watch her husband, who, as the saying went at home, "was ready to let her walk over him."

The husband's intention of making the unbending iron pliant was wholly changed; the recruiting officer whom his companions and subordinates knew and feared as one of the sternest of their number, showed himself to Barbara the most yielding of men. The passionate tenderness with which he loved her had only increased with time, and the stern soldier's subjection to her will went so far that, even when he would gladly have expressed disapproval, he usually omitted to do so, because he dreaded to lessen the favour which she showed him in place of genuine love, and which he needed. Besides, she gave him little cause for displeasure; she did her duty, and strove to render his outward life a pleasant one.

Even after her father had left her she remained a wife who satisfied his heart. He had learned the coolness of her nature in his first attempts to woo her in Ratisbon and, as at that time, he whom the service frequently detained from her for long periods regarded it as a merit.

So he wrote her father letters expressing his gratification, and the replies which the captain sent to Brussels were in a similar tone.

Barbara had obtained for him his own house, for which he had longed. He felt comfortable there, and what he lacked in his home he found at the Red Cock or the Black Bear. An elderly Landshut widow, a relative, acted as his housekeeper and provided in the best possible manner for his comfort.

Whoever met the stately mustering officer alone or arm in arm with his beautiful young wife, whose golden hair had grown out again, must have believed him a happy man; and so he would have been had not some singular habits which Barbara possessed made him uneasy. At first the reveries into which she often sank, and which were so unlike her former self, had been still worse. He did not know that the improvement had taken place since she had discovered her John's abode and been permitted sometimes to see him. Barbara's husband and father supposed that the child

which she had given to the Emperor was dead; both had placed this interpretation upon her brief statement that it had been taken from her, and afterward delicacy of feeling prevented any other allusion to this painful subject.

Besides this proneness to reverie, Barbara's husband was sometimes disturbed by the carelessness with which she neglected the most important domestic matters if there was an entertainment or exhibition which the Emperor Charles attended; and, finally, there was something in her manner to the children, whom Pyramus loved above all things, which disturbed, incensed, and wounded him, yet which he felt that neither threats nor stern interposition could change.

He possessed no defence against the reveries except a warning or a jesting word. Delight in brilliant spectacles was doubtless natural to her disposition, and as Pyramus not only loved but esteemed her, it was repugnant to his feelings to watch her. Yet when, nevertheless, he once followed her steps, he had found her, according to her expressed intention, among other women in St. Gudule's Cathedral. Her eyes, which he watched intently, were constantly turned toward the great personages whose presence adorned the festival—the Emperor and Queen Mary of Hungary.

These expeditions were evidently not to meet a lover, yet from that hour he cherished a conviction, mingled with a bitter sense of resentment, that she went to the festivals which his Majesty attended in order to see the man whom she had once loved, and whose image even now she could not wholly efface from her imagination, perhaps also from her heart.

For her manner to the children, on the contrary, he could find no plausible explanation. Her love for them was unmistakable. Yet what was the meaning of the compassionate manner with which she treated them, talked to them, spoke of them, until it nearly drove him frantic? She often treated the healthy, merry older boy as if he was ill and needed comfort, and the pretty infant in the cradle was addressed in the same way.

If he summoned up his courage and openly reproved her, she always answered in general terms, such as: "What do you mean? Are we not all born to suffer?" or, "Shall we envy them because they have entered life to endure pain and to die?"

Not until Pyramus, with sorrowful emotion, entreated her not to speak of the children as if they had been given to them for a punishment and not for

a joy, she imposed a certain degree of constraint upon herself and changed her manner of speech; yet the expression of her eyes revealed that she felt no really glad, unconstrained joy in her sons.

Though she denied it, she knew how to explain this manner to herself; for, after her attention had been directed to it, she secretly admitted that the sight of the two dear children who were wholly hers always reminded her of the third who had been taken from her, whom she was permitted to see very rarely, and only in secret, yet who, beside the others, seemed like a young lion beside modest lambs.

She cherished no desire for a new love, though the lukewarm blending of gratitude and good will which she bestowed upon her husband did not even remotely deserve this lofty name.

There was no lack of gallants in Brussels who noticed and were attracted by her, but whoever knew or had heard of Pyramus Kogel avoided interfering with his rights; for he was numbered among the best swordsmen in Brussels, and the air with which the tender-hearted husband wore his long rapier was decidedly threatening.

Besides, Barbara herself also knew how to protect herself against any intrusiveness with haughty sharpness.

To-day she was especially glad that Pyramus was absent on an inspecting tour. She had gratefully enjoyed the meeting with her John. Never had the light of his blue eyes seemed so sunny, his head with its fair curls so angelic in its beauty. His voice, too, had enraptured her by its really bewitching melody. The maternal gift of song would certainly descend to him, and perhaps it was allotted to the Emperor’s son to amaze his generation by the presence of hero and singer in one person, like a second King David.

Twilight had already shadowed the paths when she left the Dubois house, and on her way home she saw the Emperor approaching. She had slipped behind a statue as quickly as possible, and he could scarcely have recognised her, for the gloaming had already merged into partial darkness; but the mere thought of having been so near him quickened the pulsation of her heart.

The little gentleman at his side with the stiffly erect bearing and pompous walk was his son Philip, who was now visiting his father in Brussels, and expected to leave in a few days. How insignificant was the figure of the heir

of so many crowns! How the brother whom she had given to his imperial father would some day tower above him!

She again imagined all these things in the quiet of her room. The thought of this child cheered her heart, but it contracted again as she remembered the series of bitter humiliations which she had experienced in Brussels. Among the courtiers whom she had known so well in Ratisbon not one vouchsafed her anything more than a passing greeting; and the Queen of Hungary, to whom she would gladly have poured out her heart, had refused her repeated entreaties for an audience.

CHAPTER XI.

After the short walk in the park of his palace, during which Barbara had met him in the dusk, the Emperor Charles had dined with his son Philip and the Queen of Hungary. Now he entered his spacious study.

His feet were refusing their support more and more, and the fingers of his right hand, which the gout was now crippling, found it hard to grasp his cane.

He sank back in his arm-chair exhausted, closed his eyes, and laid his hand upon the clever pointed head of the greyhound which lay at his feet.

The short walk and the fiery wine which he had again enjoyed in abundance at dinner had increased the pain from which he was now never free, day or night, and it was some time ere Adrian could succeed in propping his infirm body comfortably.

At last Charles passed his handkerchief across his perspiring brow, and called to the majordomo.

Quijada eagerly approached, and the valet was respectfully leaving the room, but the Emperor's summons stopped him.

"I have something," Charles began, no longer able to maintain complete control over his voice, which was sometimes interrupted by the shortness of breath that had recently attacked him, "to say to you also—"

Here he hesitated, pointed to the window which overlooked the park, then, with a keen glance at the valet's face, continued:

"A ghost wanders about there. I have already seen it several times under the trees. True, it avoided approaching me. What still remains useful in this miserable body! But my eyes are sharp yet, and I recognised the spectre—it is the Ratisbon singer."

"Your Majesty knows," replied Quijada, "what befell her after the birth of the child, and that she is now living here in Brussels; but I was strictly forbidden to mention her name in your Majesty's presence."

"That command closed my lips also," said the valet.

“But what the hearing rejected forced itself upon the sight,” remarked Charles, gazing fixedly into vacancy. “Wherever I appear in public I see this woman, always this woman! It is not only the basilisk’s eye that has constraining power. I can not help perceiving her, yet I have as little desire to meet her gaze as to encounter vanity, worldly pleasure, folly, sin.”

“Then,” cried Quijada angrily, “it will be advisable to transfer her husband, who is in your Majesty’s service, from here to Andalusia or to the New World.”

“As if she would accompany him!” exclaimed the monarch with a scornful laugh. “No, my friend. This woman did not marry for her own pleasure, but to cause me sorrow or indignation. She succeeded, too, to a certain extent; but I do not war with women, least of all with one who is so unhappy. If we send her husband—who, moreover, is a useful fellow—across the ocean, she will stay here in Brussels, and we shall fare like the maid-servants who killed the cocks, and were then waked by the mistress of the house still earlier than before. Besides, one who earnestly seeks his true salvation will not remove from his path such a living memento, such a walking monitor of past sins and follies; and, finally, this woman is not wholly wrong in deeming herself an unusual person, cruelly as Heaven has destroyed her best gift. On no account—you hear me—shall she be wounded or injured for my sake so long as she reminds me only by her eyes that in happier days we were closely connected. But to-day the ghost ventured to draw nearer to me than is seemly, and I recognise the object. It entered the park, not on my account, but the boy’s—and, Adrian, from your house. I demand the whole truth! Did she find the way to the boy, and was your wife, who is usually a prudent woman, unwise enough to allow her to feast her eyes upon him?”

“She is the child’s mother,” the valet answered gently, “and your Majesty knows—”

“I know,” Charles interrupted the faithful attendant in a sterner tone than he commonly used to him, “that you were most positively forbidden to permit any one to approach the boy, least of all the person who gazes at him with greedy eyes, and from whom might proceed measureless perils. Your wife, Adrian, who is tenderly attached to the child, will now suffer the most painfully for the disobedience. It must go away from here, go at once, and to a distant country—to Spain. If politics and Heaven permit, I shall soon

follow.—You, Luis, will now arrange with Adrian the best plan for the removal. The work must be accomplished in the utmost secrecy. The boy shall grow up in the wholesome air of the country. No one who surrounds him must be permitted even to suspect to whom he owes his life. This child shall be simple in his habits, devout, and modest, far from flattery and spoiling, among other lads of plain families, who know nothing of heresy and court follies. This innocent child's soul, at least, shall not be corrupted at its root. I consecrated him to the Saviour, and as a pure sacrifice he must receive him from his father's hand. I have given him a beautiful charge. In the monastery his prayers will remove the guilt of him who gave him life. The pardon for which the mother refused to strive, the son, consecrated to Jesus Christ our Lord, will struggle to obtain."

With uplifted gaze he interrupted himself. His eyes flashed with a fiery light, and his voice gained an imperious tone, which showed no trace of the asthmatic trouble that had just affected it as he added: "But the secret which even the reckless mother has hitherto known how to guard must be kept. Not even your wife, Luis, not even our sister, Queen Mary, must learn what is being accomplished."

Then he added more quietly: "The opportunity to take the boy to Spain is favourable. Our son, Don Philip, will return in three weeks to Valladolid. The child can be carried in his train. It will disappear among the throng, for an actual army forms the tail of the comet. I will hear your proposal to-morrow. Who is to take charge of him on the way? Where can a suitable shelter for the boy be found in Spain?"

This announcement fell upon the valet like a thunderbolt, for little John, who regarded him and his wife as his parents, had become as dear to the childless couple as if he was their own. To part from the beautiful, frank, merry boy would darken Frau Traut's whole life. He, Adrian, had warned her, but she had been unable to resist the entreaties of the sorely punished mother. Cautiously as Barbara's visits had been managed, the infirm monarch's eye had maintained its keenness of vision here also.

Now his wife must pay dearly for her weakness and disobedience. Frau Traut was threatened, too, with another loss. Massi, the most intimate friend of their house, also expected to return to Spain in the Infant Philip's train, to spend the remainder of his days there in peace. Permission to depart had been granted to him a few hours before.

Little John was fond of this frequent visitor of his foster-parents, who could whistle so beautifully and knew how to play for him upon a blade of grass or a comb; but this was not the only reason which made Adrian think of giving the Emperor's son to the musician's care for the journey to Spain, where Massi's wife and daughter were awaiting his return at Leganes, near Madrid. In this healthfully located village lived a pastor and a sacristan of whom the musician had spoken, and who perhaps later might take charge of the child's education.

Adrian informed Don Luis and then the monarch of all this, and as Quijada knew Massi to be a trustworthy man, and described him to his royal master, Charles entered into negotiations with him.

The result was that a formal compact was concluded between Dubois and the musician, which granted the violinist considerable emoluments, but bound him and his family by oath to maintain the most absolute secrecy concerning the child's origin. Moreover, Massi himself knew nothing about the boy's parents except that they belonged to the most aristocratic circles, and he was inclined to believe little John to be Quijada's son.

The sovereign himself examined the agreement, and at its close made Frau Traut take a special oath to preserve the most absolute secrecy about everything concerning the boy to every one, even Barbara.

What Adrian had expected happened. The Emperor's command to take her darling from her affected his wife most painfully. With eyes reddened by weeping, and an aching heart, she awaited the day of departure.

On the evening before the journey she was sitting by the child's couch to enjoy the sight of him as much as possible. Wholly absorbed in gazing at his infantile grace and patrician beauty, she did not hear the door open, and started in terror at the sound of footsteps close behind her.

Her husband had ushered the Emperor and Quijada, on whose arm he was leaning, into the nursery without announcing his entrance. She involuntarily pressed her finger on her lips to intimate that the child must not be roused from its slumber; but the gesture was instantly followed by the profound bow due to the sovereign, and then, with tears in her eyes, she held the light so that it might fall upon the face of the lovely child.

A flush tinged the livid features of the invalid, prematurely aged monarch, and at a wave of his hand the foster-mother left him and his

companion alone with the little one. Charles gazed suspiciously around the small, neat room.

Not until he had assured himself that he was alone did he look closely at the son who lay with flushed cheeks on the white pillows of his little bed in the sound slumber of childhood.

Rarely had he seen a more beautiful boy. How finely chiselled were these childish features, how thick and wavy the curls that clustered around his head! The golden lustre which shone from them had also brightened his mother's hair. And the smile on the cherry lips of the slightly open mouth. That, too, was familiar to him. The child had inherited it from Barbara. Memories which had long since paled in his soul, oppressed by suffering and disappointment, regained their vanished forms and colours, and for the first time in many months a smile hovered upon his lips.

What an exquisite image of the Creator was this child! and he might call it his own, and if, as he intended, it grew up an innocent, happy lad, it would also become a genuine man, with a warm heart and simple, upright nature, not a moving marble figure, inflated by pompous self-conceit, incapable of any deep feeling, any untrammelled emotion, like his son Philip. Then it might happen that from love, from a real living impulse of the heart, he would fall upon his neck; then——

He stretched both hands towards the little bed and, obeying a mighty impulse of paternal affection, bent toward the boy to kiss him. But ere his lips touched the child's he again gazed around him like a thief who is afraid of being caught. At last he yielded to the longing which urged him, and kissed little John—his, yes, his own son—first on his high, open brow, and then on his red lips.

How sweet it was! Yet while he confessed this a painful emotion blended with the pleasure.

He had again thought of Barbara, of her first kiss and the other joys of the fairest May-time of his life, and the anxious fear stole upon him that he might give sin a power over his soul which, after undergoing a heavy penance, he thought he had broken.

Nothing, nothing at all, he now said to himself, ought to bind him to the woman whom he had effaced from the book of his life as unworthy, rebellious, lost to salvation; and, in a totally different mood, he again gazed

at the child. It already wore the semblance of an angel in the gracious Virgin's train, and it should be dedicated to her and her divine Son.

Then the boy drew his little arm from under his head.

How strong he was! how superbly the chest of this child not yet four years old already arched! This bud, when it had bloomed to manhood, might prove itself, as he himself had done in his youth, the stronger among the strong. He carefully examined the harmoniously developed little muscles. What a knight this child promised to become! Surely it was hardly created for quiet prayer and the inactive peace of the cloister! He was still free to dispose of the boy. If he should intrust his physical development to the reliable Quijada, skilled in every knightly art, and to Count Lanoi, famed as a rider and judge of horses; confide the training of his mind and soul to the Bishop of Arras, the learned Frieslander Viglius, or any other clever, strictly religious man, he might become a second Roland and Bayard —nay, if a crown fell to his lot, he might rival his great-grandfather, the Emperor Max, and—in many a line he, too, had done things worthy of imitation—him, his father. The possession of this child would fill his darkened life with sunshine, his heart, paralyzed by grief and disappointment, with fresh pleasure in existence throughout the brief remainder of his earthly pilgrimage. If he, the father, acknowledged him and aided him to become a happy, perhaps a great man, this lovely creature might some day be a brilliant star in the firmament of his age.

Here he paused. The question, "For how long?" forced itself upon him. He, too, during the short span of youth had been a hero and a victorious knight. With secure confidence he had undertaken to establish for himself and his family a sovereignty of the world which should include the state and the Church. "More, farther," had been his motto, and to what stupendous successes it had led him! Three years before he had routed at Muhlberg his most powerful rivals. As prisoners they still felt his avenging hand.

And now? At this hour?

The hope of the sovereignty of the world lay shattered at his feet. The wish to obtain the German imperial crown for his heir and successor, Philip, had proved unattainable. It was destined for his brother, Ferdinand of Austria, and afterward for the latter's son, Maximilian. To lead the defeated German Protestants back to the bosom of the Holy Church appeared more and more untenable. Here in the Netherlands the heretics, in consequence of

the Draconian severity of the regulations which he himself had issued, had been hung and burned by hundreds, and hitherto he had gained nothing but the hatred of the nation which he preferred to all others. His bodily health was destroyed, his mind had lost its buoyancy, and he was now fifty years old. What lay before him was a brief pilgrimage—perchance numbering only a few years—here on earth, and the limitless eternity which would never end. How small and trivial was the former in comparison with the latter, which had no termination! And would he desire to rear for the space of time that separates the grave from the cradle the child for whom he desired the best blessings, instead of securing for him salvation for the never-ceasing period of eternal life?

No! This beauty, this strength, should be consecrated to no vain secular struggle, but to Heaven. The boy when he matured to a correct judgment would thank him for this decision, which was really no easy one for his worldly vanity.

Then he reverted to the wish with which he had approached the child's couch. The son, from gratitude, should take upon himself for his father and, if he desired, also for his refractory mother, what both had neglected—the care for their eternal welfare—in prayer and penance.

By consecrating him to Heaven and rearing him for a peaceful existence in God, far from the vain pleasures of the world and the court he had done his best for his son and, as if he feared that the sight of his beautiful, strong boy might shake his resolution, he turned away from him and called Quijada.

While Charles in a fervent, silent prayer commended John to the favour of Heaven, the most faithful of his attendants was gazing at the sovereign's son. Hitherto Heaven had denied him the joy of possessing a child. How he would have clasped this lovely creature to his heart if it had been his! What a pleasure it would have been to transmit everything that was excellent and clever in himself to this child! To devote it to a monastic life was acting against the purpose of the Providence that had dowered it with such strength and beauty.

The Emperor could not, ought not to persist in this intention.

While he was supporting his royal master through the dark park he ventured to repeat what Adrian and his wife had told him of the strength

and fearlessness of the little John, and then to remark what rare greatness this boy promised to attain as the son of such a father.

"The highest of all!" replied Charles firmly. "He only is truly great who in his soul feels his own insignificance and deems trivial all the splendour and the highest honours which life can offer; and to this genuine greatness, Luis, I intend to rear this young human plant whose existence is due to weakness and sin."

Quijada again summoned up his courage, and observed:

"Yet, as the son of my august ruler, this child may make claims which are of this world."

"What claims?" cried the Emperor suspiciously. "His birth?—the law gives him none. What earthly possessions may perhaps come to him he will owe solely to my favour, and it would choose for him the only right way. Claims—mark this well, my friend—claims to the many things which will remain of my greatness and power when I have closed my pilgrimage beneath the sun, can be made by one person only—Don Philip, my oldest son and lawful heir."

Not until after he had rested in his study did Charles resume the interrupted conversation, and say:

"It may be that this boy will grow up into a more brilliant personality than my son Philip; but you Castilians and faithful servants of the Holy Church ought to rejoice that Heaven has chosen my lawful son for your king, for he is a thorough Spaniard, and, moreover, cautious, deliberate, industrious, devout, and loyal to duty. True, he knows not how to win love easily, but he possesses other means of maintaining what is his and still awaits him in the future. My pious son will not let the gallows become empty in this land of heretical exaltation. Had the Germans put him in my place, he would have become a gravedigger in their evangelical countries. He never gave me what is called filial affection, not even just now in the parting hour; yet he is an obedient son who understands his father. Instead of a heart, I have found in him other qualities which will render him capable of keeping his heritage in these troubled times and preserving the Holy Church from further injury. If I were weaker than I am, and should rear yonder splendid boy, who charmed you also, Luis, under my own eyes with paternal affection, many an unexpected joy might grow for me; but I still have an immense amount of work to do, and therefore lack time to toy with

a child. It is my duty to replace this boy's claims, which I can not recognise, with higher ones, and I will fulfill it."

CHAPTER XII.

During this conversation the violinist Massi had been to take leave of Barbara. Pyramus, after a short stay at home, had been obliged to depart again to an inspection in Lowen, and the musician was sorry not to find his friend. He did not know to whom the child that had been intrusted to his care belonged, and, as he had bound himself by a solemn oath to maintain secrecy toward every one, he did not utter a word to Barbara about the boy and the obligations which he had undertaken.

The parting was a sad one to the young wife, for in Massi she lost not only a tried friend, but as it were a portion of her former life. He had been a witness of the fairest days which Fate had granted her; he had heard her sing when she had been justified in feeling proud of her art; and he had been intimate with Wolf Hartschwert, whom she remembered with affectionate interest, though he had only informed her once in a brief letter that he was prospering in Villagarcia and his new position. While with tearful eyes she bade Massi farewell, she gave him messages of remembrance to Wolf; and the violinist, no less agitated than herself, promised to deliver them. He was hopefully anticipating a cheerful evening of life in the midst of his family. Existence had promised Barbara higher things, but she seemed to have found the power to be content. At least he had heard no complaint from her lips, and her husband had often told him of the happiness which he had obtained through her in marriage. So he could leave her without anxiety; but she, even in the hour of parting, was too proud to offer him a glimpse of her desolate life, whose fairest ornaments were memories.

When he left her the young wife felt still poorer than before, and during the sleepless night which in imagination she had spent with her imperial child in the Dubois house, and in the days of splendour and misery at Ratisbon, she determined to clasp once more the hand of her departing friend when he set out with the Infant Philip’s train.

Although it was to start early in the morning, she was in the square in ample time, partly because she hoped to see the Emperor in the distance.

The throng that followed Philip really did resemble an army.

Barbara had already often seen the short, slender ‘Infant’, with his well-formed, fair head and light, pointed beard, who held himself so stiffly erect, and carried his head as high as if he considered no one over whom his glance wandered worthy of so great an honour.

It seemed strange to her, too, how well this man, naturally so insignificant in person, succeeded in giving his small figure the appearance of majestic dignity. But how totally unlike him his father must have looked in his youth! There was something austere, repellent, chilling, in the gaze which, while talking with others, he usually fixed upon the ground, and, in fact, in the whole aspect of the son. How brightly and frankly, on the contrary, his father’s eyes, in spite of all his suffering, could sparkle even now! How easy it would be for him to win hearts still!

If he would only come!

But this time he did not accompany his son. Philip was on horseback, but a magnificent empty coach in the procession would receive him as soon as he left Brussels.

He wished to present a gallant appearance in the saddle on his departure, and a more daintily, carefully clad cavalier could scarcely be imagined.

His garments fitted like a glove, and were of faultless fineness. Queen Mary, the regent, rode at his side, and the Brabant nobles, the heads of the Brussels citizens, and his Spanish courtiers formed his retinue. The leaders of the Netherland nobility were figures very unlike in stature and size to Philip; but he could vie in haughty majesty with any of them. Not a limb, not an expression lacked his control a single instant. He desired to display to these very gentlemen in every inch of his person his superior power and grandeur, and especially not to be inferior to them in chivalrous bearing.

To a certain extent he succeeded in doing so; but his aunt, Queen Mary, seemed unwilling to admit it, for just when he showed his arrogant dignity most plainly a smile by no means expressive of reverence hovered around the mouth of the frank royal huntress.

Barbara had soon wearied of gazing at the magnificent garments and horses of these grandees. As Charles did not appear, the only person in the endless procession who attracted her attention was Massi, whom she soon discovered on his insignificant little horse; but he did not heed her eager

signals, for he was talking earnestly to the occupant of the large litter borne by two mules that moved beside him.

Barbara tried to force her way to him, and when she succeeded her cheeks suddenly burned hotly, and a swift dread checked her progress; for from the great window of the litter a wonderfully beautiful little head, covered with fair curls, looked forth, and two little arms were extended toward the violinist.

How gleefully this child's eyes sparkled! how his whole little figure seemed instinct with joy and life while gazing at the horseman at the side of the street who was having a hard struggle with his refractory stallion!

No one knew this boy better than she, for it was her own son, the imperial child she had given to the Emperor. At the same time she thought of her other two boys, and her face again wore a compassionate expression. Not they, but this little prince from fairyland was her first-born, her dearest, her true child.

But where were they taking her John? What had Massi to do with him? Why should the boy be in Philip's train?

There was only one explanation. Her child was being conveyed to Spain.

Had the father heard that she had discovered his abode, and did he wish to remove it from the mother whom he hated?

Was it being taken there merely that it might grow up a Castilian?

Did Charles desire to rear it there to the grandeur and splendour for whose sake she had yielded him?

Yet whatever was in view for John, he would be beyond her reach as soon as the ship to which he was being conveyed weighed anchor.

But she would not, could not do without seeing him! The light of day would be darkened for her if she could no longer hope to gaze at least now and then into his blue eyes and to hear the sound of his clear, childish tones.

"This too! this too!" she hissed, as if frantic; and as the guards forced her out of the procession she followed it farther and farther through the heat and dust, as though attracted by some magnetic power.

Her feet moved involuntarily while her gaze rested on the litter, and she caught a glimpse sometimes of a golden curl, sometimes of a little hand, sometimes of the whole marvellously beautiful fair head.

Not until the train stopped and the lords, ladies, and gentlemen who were escorting Philip turned their horses and left him did she recollect herself. To follow these horsemen, coaches, carts, litters, and pedestrians just as she was would have been madness. Her place was at home with her husband and children. Ten times she repeated this to herself and prepared to turn back; but the force which drew her to her child was stronger than the warning voice of reason.

At any rate, she must speak to Massi and learn where he was taking the boy. He had not yet seen her; but now, as the train stopped, she forced her way to him.

Amazed at meeting her, he returned her greeting, and granted her request to let her speak with him a few minutes.

Greatly perplexed, he swung himself from the saddle, flung his bridle to a groom, and followed her under a mountain-ash tree which stood by the roadside. Barbara had used the time of his dismounting to gaze at her child again, and to impress his image upon her soul. She dared not call to him, for she had sworn to keep the secret, and the boy, who so often repulsed her eager advances, would perhaps have turned from her if she had gone close to him and attempted to kiss him through the window.

This reserve was so hard for her that her eyes were full of tears when Massi approached to ask what she desired. She did not give him time for even a single question, but with frantic haste inquired who the boy in the litter was, and where he intended to take him.

But her friend, usually so obliging, curtly and positively refused to give her any information. Then forming a hasty resolve, Barbara besought him if it were possible to take her with him to his home. Life in her own house had become unendurable. If a nurse was wanted for this child, no matter to whom it might belong, let him give her the place. She would devote herself to the boy day and night, more faithfully than any mother, and ask no wages for it, only she would and must go to Spain.

Massi had listened to her rapid words in warm; nay, he was thoroughly startled. The fire that flashed from Barbara’s blue eyes, the anguish which her quivering features expressed, suggested the thought that she had lost her reason, and with sympathizing kindness he entreated her to think of his friend her husband, and her splendid boys at home. But when she persisted that she must go to Spain, he remembered that a bond of love had once

united her to his friend Wolf Hartschwert, and in bewilderment he asked if it was the knight who attracted her there.

“If you think so, yes,” she exclaimed. “Only I must go to Spain, I must go to Spain!”

Again Massi was seized with the conviction that he was dealing with a madwoman, and as the procession started he only held out his hand to her once more, earnestly entreated her to calm herself, sent his remembrances to her husband and children, and then swung himself into the saddle.

Barbara remained standing by the side of the road as if turned to stone, gazing after the travellers until the dust which they raised concealed them from her gaze. Then she shook her head and slowly returned to Brussels.

Pyramus would come home at noon. Lamperi and the maid might provide the meal and attend to the rest of the household affairs. It was far past twelve, and it would still be a long time before she went home, for she must, yes, must go up to the palace park and to the Dubois house to inquire where her soul must seek her child in future.

Her feet could scarcely support her when she entered the dwelling.

Startled at her appearance, Frau Traut compelled the exhausted woman to sit down. How dishevelled, nay, wild, Barbara, who was usually so well dressed, looked! But she, too, that day did not present her usual dainty appearance, and her eyes and face were reddened by weeping. Barbara instantly noticed this, and it confirmed her conjecture. This woman, too, was bewailing the child which the cruel despot had torn from her.

“He is on the way to Spain!” she cried to the other. “There is nothing to conceal here.”

Frau Traut started, and vehemently forbade Barbara to say even one word more about the boy if she did not wish her to show her the door and close it against her forever.

But this was too much for the haughty mother of the Emperor’s son. The terrible agitation of her soul forced an utterance, and in wild rebellion she swore to the terrified woman that she would burden herself with the sin of perjury and break the silence to which she had bound herself if she did not confess to her where Massi was taking her boy. She would neither seek him nor strive to get possession of him, but if she could not imagine where and with what people he was living, she would die of longing. She would have

allowed herself to be abused and trodden under foot in silence, but she would not suffer herself to be deprived of the last remnant of her maternal rights.

Here Adrian himself entered the room; but Barbara was by no means calmed by his appearance, and with a fresh outburst of wrath shrieked to his face that he might choose whether he would confide to her, the mother, where his master was taking the child or see her rush from here to the market place and call out to the people what she had promised, for the boy's sake, to hold secret.

The valet saw that she would keep her word and, to prevent greater mischief, he informed her that the violinist Massi was commissioned to take her son to Spain to rear him in his wife's native place until his Majesty should alter his plans concerning him.

This news produced a great change in the tortured mother. With affectionate, repentant courtesy, she thanked the Dubois couple and, when Frau Traut saw that she was trying to rearrange her hair and dress, she helped her, and in doing so one woman confessed to the other what she had lost in the child.

Adrian's yielding had pleased Barbara. Besides, during the years of her intercourse with Massi she had heard many things about his residence—nay, every member of his household—and therefore she could now form a picture of his future life.

So she had grown quieter, though by no means perfectly calm.

Her husband, who must have already returned from his journey, and had not found her at home, would scarcely receive her pleasantly, but she cared little for that if only he had not been anxious about her, and in his joy at seeing her again did not clasp her tenderly in his arms. That would have been unbearable to-day. She would have liked it best if Massi would really have taken her with him as her child's nurse to Leganes, his residence. Thereby she would have reached the place where she thought she belonged—by the side of the child, in whom she beheld everything that still rendered her life worth living.

Nevertheless, on her way home she thought with maternal anxiety of her two boys; but the nearer she approached the unassuming quarter of the city where she lived the more vividly she felt that she did not belong there, but in the part of Brussels whence she came.

Her own home was far more richly and prettily furnished than her old one in Red Cock Street, but it did not yet satisfy her desires, and she did not feel content in it. To-day a slight feeling of aversion even came over her as she thought of it.

Perhaps the best plan would have been for her to put an end to this misery, and, instead of returning, make a pilgrimage to Compostella in Spain, and while doing so try to find her John in Leganes. But even while yielding to these thoughts Barbara felt how sinful they were. Did not her little house look attractive and pretty? It was certainly the prettiest and neatest in the neighbourhood, and as she drew nearer pleasure at the thought of seeing her children again awoke. An unkind reception from her husband would have been painful, after all.

But she was to receive no greeting at all from him. Pyramus had been detained on the way. Barbara felt this as a friendly dispensation of Providence. But something else spoiled her return home. Conrad, her oldest boy, two-year-old Conrad, who was already walking about, beginning to prattle prettily, and who could show the affection of his little heart with such coaxing tenderness, came toward her crying, and when she took him up rested his little burning head against her cheek.

The little fellow's forehead and throat were aching.

Some illness was coming on.

The child himself asked to be put in his little bed, the physician was summoned, and the next morning the scarlet fever broke out.

When the father returned, the youngest chill had also been attacked by the same fell disease, and now a time came when Barbara, during many an anxious hour of the night, forgot that in distant Spain she possessed another child for whose sake she had been ready to rob these two dear little creatures, who so greatly needed her, of their mother. This purpose weighed upon her conscience like the heaviest of sins while she was fighting against Death, which seemed to be already stretching his hand toward the oldest boy.

When one evening the physician expressed the fear that the child would not survive the approaching night, she prayed with passionate fervour for his preservation, and meanwhile it seemed as though a secret voice cried: "Vow to the gracious Virgin not to give the Emperor's son a higher place in your heart than the children of the man to whom a holy sacrament unites

you! Then you will first make yourself worthy of the dear imperilled life in yonder little bed."

Thrice, four times, and oftener still, Barbara raised her hands to utter this vow, but ere she did so she said to herself that never, never could she wholly fulfil it, and, to save herself from a fresh sin, she did not make it.

But with what anxiety she now gazed at the glowing face of the fevered boy whenever the warning voice again rose!

At midnight the little sufferer's eyes seemed to her to shine with a glassy look, and when, pleading for help, he raised them to her, her heart melted, and in fervent, silent prayer she cried to the Queen of Heaven, "Spare me this child, make it well, and I will not think of the Emperor's son more frequently nor, if I can compass it, with warmer love than this clear creature and his little brother in the cradle."

Scarcely had these words died on her lips than she again felt that she had promised more than she had the power to perform. Yet she repeated the vow several times.

During the whole terrible night her husband stood beside her, obeying every sign, eagerly and skilfully helping in many ways; and when in the morning the doctor appeared she was firmly convinced that her vow had saved the sick boy's life. The crisis was over.

Henceforth, whenever the yearning for the distant John seized upon her with special power, she thought of that night, and loaded the little sons near her with tokens of the tenderest love.

On that morning of commencing convalescence her husband's grateful kiss pleased her.

True, during the time that followed, Pyramus succeeded no better than before in warming his wife's cold heart, but Barbara omitted many things which had formerly clouded his happiness.

The Emperor Charles had again gone to foreign countries, and therefore festivals and shows no longer attracted her. She rarely allowed herself a visit to Frau Dubois, but, above all, she talked with her boys and about them like every other mother. It even seemed to Pyramus as though her old affection for the Emperor Charles was wholly dead; for when, in November of the following year, agitated to the very depths of his being, he brought her the tidings that the Emperor had been surprised and almost captured at

Innsbruck by Duke Maurice of Saxony, who owed him the Elector's hat, and had only escaped the misfortune by a hurried flight to Carinthia, he merely saw a smile, which he did not know how to interpret, on her lips. But little as Barbara said about this event, her mind was often occupied with it.

In the first place, it recalled to her memory the dance under the lindens at Prebrunn.

Did it not seem as if her ardent royal partner of those days had become her avenger?

Yet it grieved her that the man whose greatness and power it had grown a necessity for her to admire had suffered so deep a humiliation and, as at the time of the May festival under the Ratisbon lindens, the sympathy of her heart belonged to him to whom she had apparently preferred the treacherous Saxon duke.

The treaty of Passau, which soon followed his flight, was to impose upon the monarch things scarcely less hard to bear; for it compelled him to allow the Protestants in Germany the free exercise of their religion, and to release his prisoners, the Elector John Frederick of Saxony and the Landgrave Philip of Hesse.

Whatever befell the sovereign she brought into connection with herself. Charles's motto had now become unattainable for him, as since her loss of voice it had been for her. Her heart bled unseen, and his misfortune inflicted new wounds upon it. How he, toward whom the whole world looked, and whose sensitive soul endured with so much difficulty the slightest transgression of his will and his inclination, would recover from the destruction of the most earnest, nay, the most sacred aspirations of a whole life, was utterly incomprehensible to her. To restore the unity of religion had been as warm a desire of his heart as the cultivation of singing had been cherished by hers, and the treaty of Passau ceded to the millions of German Protestants the right to remain separated from the Catholic Church. This must utterly cloud, darken, poison his already joyless existence. Spite of the wrong he had done her, how gladly, had she not been lost to art, she would now have tried upon him its elevating, consoling power!

From her old confessor, her husband, and others she learned that Charles scarcely paid any further heed to the political affairs of the German nation, which had once been so important to him; and with intense indignation she

heard the fellow-countrymen whom her husband brought to the house declare that, in her German native land, Charles was now as bitterly hated as he had formerly been loved and reverenced.

The imperial crown would lapse to his brother; Ferdinand's son, Maximilian, now Charles's son-in-law, was destined to succeed his father, while the Infant Philip must in future be content with the sovereignty of Spain, the Netherlands, Charles's Italian possessions, and the New World.

For years Barbara had believed that she hated him, but now, when the bitterest envy could have desired nothing more cruel, with all the warmth of her passionate heart she made his suffering her own, and it filled her with shame and resentment against herself that she, too, had more than once desired to see her own downfall revenged on him.

Her soul was again drawn toward the sorely punished man more strongly than she would have deemed possible a short time before and, after his return to Brussels, she gazed with an aching heart at the ashen-gray face of the sufferer, marked by lines of deep sorrow.

Now he really did resemble a broken old man. Barbara rarely mingled with the people, but she sometimes went with her husband and several acquaintances outside the gate, or heard from the few intimate friends whom she had made, the neighbours, and the peddlers who came to her house, with what cruel harshness the heretics were treated.

When the monarch, it was often said, was no longer the Charles to whom the provinces owed great benefits and who had won many hearts, but his Spanish son, Philip, the chains would be broken, and this shameful bloodshed would be stopped; but her husband declared such predictions idle boasting, and Barbara willingly believed him because she wished that he might be right.

In the officer's eyes all heretics deserved death, and he agreed with Barbara that the Emperor Charles's wisdom took the right course in all cases.

His son Philip was obedient to his father, and would certainly continue to wield the sceptre according to his wishes.

The breath of liberty, which was beginning to stir faintly in the provinces through which he so often travelled, could not escape Pyramus's notice, but he saw in it only the mutinous efforts of shameless rebels and misguided

men, who deserved punishment. The quiet seclusion in which Barbara lived rendered it easy to win her over to her husband's view of this noble movement; besides, it was directed against the unhappy man whom she would willingly have seen spared any fresh anxiety, and who had proved thousands of times how much he preferred the Netherlands to any other of his numerous kingdoms.

Hitherto Barbara had troubled herself very little about political affairs, and her interest in them died completely when a visitor called who threw them, as well as everything else, wholly into the shade.

CHAPTER XIII.

Wolf Hartschwert had come to Brussels and sought Barbara.

Her husband was attending to the duties of his office in the Rhine country when she received her former lover. Had Pyramus been present, he might perhaps have considered the knight a less dangerous opponent than seven years before, for a great change had taken place in his outer man. The boyish appearance which at that time still clung to him had vanished and, by constant intercourse with the Castilian nobility, he had acquired a manly, self-assured bearing perfectly in harmony with his age and birth.

As he sat opposite to Barbara for the first time, she could not avert her eyes from him and, with both his hands clasped in hers, she let him tell her of his journey to Brussels and his efforts to find her in the great city. Meanwhile she scarcely heeded the purport of his words; it was enough to feel the influence exerted by the tone of his voice, and to be reminded by his features and his every gesture of something once dear to her.

He appeared like the living embodiment of the first beautiful days of her youth, and her whole soul was full of gratitude that he had sought her; while he, too, had the same experience, though his former passion had long since changed into a totally different feeling. He thought her beautiful, but her permitting their hands to remain clasped so long now agitated him no more than if she had been a dear, long-absent sister.

When Barbara was told who awaited her in the sitting roam and, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, clad in a light morning gown which was very becoming to her, had hastened to greet him, his heart had indeed throbbed faster, and it seemed as though an unexpected Easter morning awaited the old buried love; but she had scarcely uttered his name and exchanged a few words of greeting in a voice which, though no longer hoarse, still lacked melody, than the flood of newly awakened emotions swiftly ebbed again.

She was still only half the Wawerl of former days, whose musical voice had helped to make her the queen of his heart. So he had soon regained the

calmness which, in Spain and on the journey here, he had expected to test at their meeting. Even the last trace of a deeper emotion passed away when she told him of her husband, her children, and her gray-haired father in Ratisbon, for the hasty, almost reluctant manner with which this was done perplexed and displeased him. True, he could not know that from the first moment of their meeting her one desire had been to obtain news of her stolen son. Everything else appeared trivial in comparison. And what constraint she was forced to impose upon herself when, not hearing her cautious introductory question, he told her about Villagarcia, his peerless mistress, Doha Magdalena de Ulloa, and his musical success! Not until he said that during the winter he would be occupied in training the boy choir at Valladolid did she approach her goal by inquiring about the welfare of the violinist Massi.

Both he and his family were in excellent health, Wolf replied. Rest in his little house at Leganes seemed to have fairly rejuvenated him.

Now Barbara herself mentioned the boy whom Massi had taken to Spain in the train of the Infant Don Philip.

How this affected Wolf!

He started, not only in surprise, but in actual alarm, and eagerly demanded to know who had spoken to her about this child in connection with the violinist.

Barbara now said truthfully that she had seen Massi with her own eyes in the Infant's train. So beautiful a boy is not easily forgotten, and she would be glad to hear news of him.

Wolf, however, seemed reluctant to talk of this child. True, he hastily remarked, he sometimes visited him at the request of his gracious mistress, but he had no more knowledge of his real origin than she or Dona Magdalena de Ulloa. The latter supposed the boy to be her husband's child, and in her generosity therefore interested herself doubly in the forsaken boy, though only at a distance and through his mediation; for his own part, he could never believe the fair-haired, pink-and-white Geronimo to be a son of the dark-skinned, black-eyed Don Luis. True, the stony silence which the major-domo maintained toward all questions concerning the lad would neither permit him to soothe his wife nor confirm her fear. At any rate, Geronimo must be the son of some great noble. This was perfectly apparent

from his bearing, the symmetry of his limbs, his frank, imperious nature—nay, from every movement of this remarkable child.

At this assurance Barbara's soul glowed with proud maternal joy. Her blue eyes sparkled with a brighter light, and the sunny, radiant glance with which she thanked Wolf for his information exerted an unexpected influence upon him, for he shrank back as though the curtain which concealed a rare marvel had been lifted and, drawing a long breath, gazed into her beautiful, joyous face.

It seemed as if the luminous reflection of the proud, noble, and pure delight which shone upon him from her eyes had beamed in little Geronimo's a few weeks before when he rushed up to him to show his hunting spoils, a fitchet and several birds which he had killed with his pretty little cross-bow, a gift from Dona Magdalena. And Barbara's wavy golden hair, the little dimple in her cheek! Geronimo must be her child; this wonderful resemblance could not deceive.

"Barbara," he cried, pressing his hand to his brow with deep emotion, "Geronimo is—gracious Virgin!—the handsome, proud, deserted boy may be——"

But an imperious gesture from the young wife closed his lips; Frau Lamperi had just led her two boys, beautifully dressed as they always were when any distinguished visitor called upon their mother, into the room. The expression of radiant happiness which had just illumined her features vanished at the sight of the little ones, and she commanded the children to be taken away at once.

She looked so stern and resolute that her faithful maid lacked courage to make any sign of recognising the knight, whom she had known while she was in the regent's service.

When the door had closed behind the group, Barbara again turned to her friend, and in a low tone asked, "And suppose that you saw aright, and Geronimo were really my child?"

"Then—then," Wolf faltered in bewilderment, "then Don Luis would—But surely it can not be! Then, after all, Quijada would be—"

Here a low laugh from Barbara broke the silence, and with dilated eyes he learned who Geronimo's parents were.

Then the knight listened breathlessly to the young mother's account of the robbery of her child, and how, in spite of her own boys and the vow which she had made the Dubois couple not to follow the Emperor's son, she lived only in and through him.

"The Emperor Charles!" cried Wolf, as if he now understood for the first time what he might so easily have guessed if the fair-haired boy had not grown up amid such extremely plain surroundings. The belief that Geronimo owed his life to Quijada had been inspired by Massi himself.

But while the knight was striving to accustom himself to this wholly novel circle of ideas, Barbara, with passionate impetuosity, clasped his right hand and placed it on the crucifix which hung on her rosary.

Then she commanded her astonished friend to swear to guard this secret, which was not hers alone, from every living being.

Wolf yielded without resistance to her passionate entreaties, but scarcely had he lowered the hand uplifted to take the oath than he urged her at least to grant him permission to restore Dona Magdalena's peace of mind; but Barbara waved her hand with resolute denial, hastily exclaiming: "No, no, no! Don Luis was the tool in every blow which Charles, his master, dealt at my happiness and peace. Let the woman who is dear to him, and who is already winning by her gifts the child's love, which belongs to me, and to me alone, now feel how the heart of one who is deceived can ache."

Here, deeply wounded, Wolf burst into a complaint of the harshness and injustice of such vengeance; but Barbara insisted so defiantly upon her will that he urged her no further, and seized his hat to retire.

Deep resentment had taken possession of him. This misguided woman, embittered by misfortune, possessed the power of rendering the greatest benefit to one infinitely her superior in nobility of soul, and with cruel defiance she refused it.

His whole heart was full of gratitude and love for Dona Magdalena, who by her unvarying kindness and elevating example had healed his wounded soul, and no ignoble wish had sullied this great and deep affection. Although for years he had devoted to her all the ability and good will which he possessed, he still felt deeply in her debt and, now that the first opportunity of rendering her a great service presented itself, he was deprived of the possibility of doing it by the woman who had already destroyed the happiness of his youth.

So bitter was the resentment which filled his soul that he could not bring himself to seek her on the following day; but she awaited him with the sorrowful fear that she had saddened the return of her best and truest friend. Besides, she was now beginning to be tortured by the consciousness of having broken or badly fulfilled the vow by which she had won from the Holy Virgin the life of her sick Conrad. Why had she sent her boys away the day before, instead of showing them to the friend of her youth with maternal joy? because her heart had been full of the image of the other, whose rare beauty and patrician bearing Wolf had so enthusiastically described. True, her pair of little boys would not have borne comparison with the Emperor's son, yet they were both good, well-formed children, and clung to her with filial affection. Why could she not even now, when Heaven itself forced her to be content, free herself from the fatal imperial "More, farther," which, both for the monarch and for her, had lost its power to command and to promise?

When, on the evening after Wolf's visit, she bent over the children sleeping in their little bed, she felt as a nurse may who comes from a patient who has succumbed to a contagious disease and now fears communicating it to her new charge. Suppose that the gracious intercessor should punish her broken vow by raising her hand against the children sleeping there? This dread seized the guilty mother with irresistible power, and she wondered that the cheeks of the little sleepers were not already glowing with fever.

She threw herself penitently on her knees before the priedieu, and the first atonement to be made for the broken vow was apparent. She must allow Wolf to restore peace to Dona Magdalena's troubled mind. This was not easy, for she had cherished her resentment against this woman's husband, through whom she had experienced bitter suffering, for many years. His much-lauded wife herself was a stranger to her, yet she could not think of her except with secret dislike; it seemed as if a woman who bore the separation from the man she loved so patiently, and yet won all hearts, must go through life—unless she was a hypocrite—with cold fish blood.

Besides——

What right had this lady to the boy to whom Barbara gave birth, whose love would now be hers had it not been wrested from her? What was denied to her would be lavished upon this favoured woman, and when she

bestowed gifts upon the glorious child for whom every pulse of her being longed, and repaid his love with love, it was regarded as a fresh proof of her noble kindness of heart. To withhold from this woman something which would give her fresh happiness and relieve her of sorrow might have afforded her a certain satisfaction. To bless those who curse and despitefully use us was certainly the hardest command; but on the priedieu she vowed to the Virgin to fulfil it, and in a calmer mood than before she bent over the boys to kiss them.

The next day glided by in painful anxiety, for Wolf did not return. The following morning and afternoon also passed without bringing him. Not until the rays of the setting sun were forcing their way through the pinks and rose bushes with which Pyramus kept her window adorned throughout the year, because she loved flowers, and the vesper bells were chiming, did her friend return.

This time she had dressed her boys with her own hands, and when, through the door which separated her from the entry, she heard Wolf greet them with merry words, her heart grew lighter, and the swift thanksgiving which she uttered blended with the dying notes of the bells.

Leading Conrad by the hand, and carrying the three-year-old youngest boy in his arms, Wolf entered the room.

The child of a former love easily wins its way to the heart of the man who has been obliged to resign her. Wolf's eyes showed that he was pleased with Barbara's merry lads, and she thanked him for it by the warmest reception.

Not until after he had said many a pleasant word to her about the little boys, and jested with them in the manner of one who loves children, did he resume his grave manner and confess that he could not make up his mind to leave Barbara without a farewell. He was glad to find her in the possession of such treasures, but his time was limited, and he must, unfortunately, content himself with this last brief meeting.

While speaking, he rose to leave her; but she stopped him, saying in a low tone: "Surely you know me, Wolf, and are aware that I do not always persist in the resolves to which my hasty temper urges me. It shall not be my fault if the peace of your Dona Magdalena's soul remains clouded longer, and so I release you from your vow so far as she is concerned."

Then, for the first time since their meeting, the familiar, pleasant "Wawerl" greeted her, and with tearful eyes she clasped his outstretched hands.

Wolf had just told her that his time was short; but now he willingly allowed himself to be persuaded to put down his sword and hat, and when Frau Lamperi brought in some refreshments, he recognised her, and asked her several pleasant questions.

It seemed as though Barbara's change of mood had overthrown the barrier which her stern refusal had raised between them. Calm and cheerful as in former days he sat before her, listening while, in obedience to his invitation, she told him, with many a palliation and evasion, about her married life and the children. She made her story short, in order at last to hear some further particulars concerning the welfare of her distant son.

What Wolf related of the outward appearance of her John, to whose new name, Geronimo, she gradually became accustomed, Barbara could complete from her vivid recollection of this rare child. He had remained strong and healthy, and the violinist Massi, his good wife, and their daughter loved the little fellow and cared for him as if he were their own son and brother.

The musician, it is true, lived plainly enough, but there was no want of anything in the modest country house with the gay little flower garden. Nor did the boy lack playmates, though they were only the children of the farmers and townspeople of Leganes. Clad but little better than they, he shared their merry, often rough games. Geronimo called the violinist and his wife father and mother.

Then Barbara desired a more minute description of his dress, and when Wolf, laughing, confessed that he wore a cap only when he went to church, and on hot summer days he had even met him barefoot, she clasped her hands in astonishment and dismay. Not until her friend assured her that among the thin, dark-haired Spaniards, with their close-cropped heads and flashing black eyes, he, with his fluttering golden curls and free, graceful movements, looked like a white swan among dark-plumaged ducks, did she raise her head with a contented expression, and the sunny glance peculiar to her again reminded her friend of the Emperor's son.

His lofty brow, Wolf said, he had inherited from his father, and his mind was certainly bright; but what could be predicted with any certainty

concerning the intellectual powers of a boy scarcely seven years old? The pastor Bautista Bela was training him to piety. The sacristan Francisco Fernandez ought to have begun to teach him to read a year ago; but until now Geronimo had always run away, and when he, Wolf, asked the worthy old man, at Dona Magdalena's request, whether he would undertake to instruct him in the rudiments of Latin, as well as in reading and writing, he shook his head doubtfully.

Here a smile hovered around the speaker's lips, and, as if some amusing recollection rose in his mind, he went on gaily: "He's a queer old fellow, and when I repeated my question, he put his finger against his nose, saying: 'Whoever supposes I could teach a young romper like that anything but keeping quiet, is mistaken. Why? Because I know nothing myself.' Then the old man reflected, and added, 'But—I shall not even succeed in keeping this one quiet, because he is so much swifter than I."

"And is the Emperor Charles satisfied with such a teacher for his son?" asked Barbara indignantly.

"Massi had described the sacristan to Don Luis as a learned man," replied Wolf. "But I have now told his Majesty of a better one."

"Then you have talked to the Emperor?" asked Barbara, blushing.

Her friend nodded assent, and said mournfully: "My heart still aches when I recall the meeting. O Wawerl! what a man he was when, like a fool, I persuaded him in Ratisbon to hear you sing, and how he looked yesterday!"

"Tell me," she here interrupted earnestly, raising her hands beseechingly.

"It can scarcely be described," Wolf answered, as if under the spell of a painful memory. "He could hardly hold himself up, even in the arm-chair in which he sat. The lower part of his face seems withered, and the upper-even the beautiful lofty brow—is furrowed by deep wrinkles. At every third word his breath fails. One of his diseases, Dr. Mathys says, would be enough to kill any other man, and he has more than there are fingers on the hand. Besides, even now he will not take advice, but eats and drinks whatever suits his taste."

Barbara shook her head angrily; but Wolf, noticing it, said: "He is the sovereign, and who would venture to withhold anything on which his will is set? But his desires are shrivelling like his face and his body."

“Is the man of the ‘More, farther,’ also learning to be content?” asked Barbara anxiously. Wolf rose, answering firmly: “No, certainly not! His eyes still sparkle as brightly in his haggard face as if he had by no means given up the old motto. True, Don Luis declares that rest is the one thing for which he longs, and you will see that he knows how to obtain it; but what he means by it only contains fresh conflicts and struggles. His ‘Plus ultra’ had rendered him the greatest of living men; now he desires to become the least of the least, because the Lord promises to make the last the first. I was received by the regent like a friend. She confided to me that he often repeats the Saviour’s words, ‘Go, sell all that thou halt, and follow me.’ He is determined to cast aside throne, sceptre, and purple, power and splendour, and Don Luis believes that he will know how to gratify this desire, like every other. What a resolution! But there are special motives concealed beneath it. Nothing but death can bring repose to this restless spirit, and if he finds the quiet for which he longs, what tasks he will set himself! Don Philip promises, as an obedient son, to continue to wield the sceptre according to the policy of the father who intrusts it to him.”

“And then?” asked Barbara eagerly.

“Then will begin the life in the imitation of Christ, which hovers before him.”

“Here in the Brabant palace?” interposed Barbara incredulously. “Here, where his neighbours, the brilliant nobles, enjoy life in noisy magnificence; here, among the ambassadors, the thousand rumours from the Netherlands, Italy, and Spain; here, where the battle against the heretical and liberty-loving yearnings of the citizens never ceases—how can he hope to find peace and composure here?”

“He is far from it,” Wolf eagerly interrupted. “‘Farewell till we meet again at no distant day upon Spanish soil!’ were the parting words of my gracious mistress. Will you promise secrecy?”

Barbara held out her hand with a significant glance; but Wolf, in a lower tone, continued: “He expects to find in Spain the peaceful spot for which he longs. There he will commend himself to the mercy of God, and prepare for the true life which death is to him. There he expects to be free from time-killing business, and to grant his mind that which he has long desired and a thousand duties forced him to withhold. There, in quiet leisure, he hopes to strive for knowledge and to penetrate deeply into all the new things which

were discovered, invented, created, and improved during his reign, and of which he was permitted to learn far too little thoroughly. He will endeavour to gain a better understanding of what stirs, fires, angers, and divides the theologians. He desires to pursue in detail the vast new discoveries of the astronomers, which even amid the pressure of duties he had explained to him. His inquisitive mind seeks to know the new discoveries of navigation, the distant countries which it brought to view. He hopes to search into the plans and works of the architects of fortifications and makers of maps and, by no means least, he is anxious to become thoroughly familiar with the inventions of mechanicians, which have so long aroused his interest."

"He liked to talk to me about these things, and the power of the human intellect, which now shows the true course of the sun and stars," Barbara interrupted with eager assent. "He often showed me the ingenious wheelwork of his Nuremberg clocks. Once—I still hear the words—he compared the most delicate with the thousandfold more sublime works of God, the vast, ceaseless machinery of the universe, where there is no misplaced spring, no inaccurately adjusted cog in the wheels. Oh, that glorious intellect! What hours were those when he condescended to point out to a poor girl like me the eternal chronometers above our heads, repeat their names, and show the connection between the planets and the course of earthly events and human lives! O Wolf! how glorious it was! How my modest mind increased in strength! And when I listened breathlessly, and he saw how I bowed in mute admiration before his greatness and called me his dear child, his attentive pupil, and pressed his lips to my burning brow, can I ever forget that?"

She sobbed aloud as she spoke and, overwhelmed by the grief which mastered her, covered her face with her hands.

Wolf said nothing. Another had robbed him of the woman he loved, and the greatest anguish of his life was not yet wholly conquered; but in this hour he felt that he had no right to be angry with Barbara, for it was to the greatest of great men that he had been forced to yield. He need not feel it a disgrace to have succumbed to him.

"Wawerl!" he again exclaimed, "in spite of the pleasant peace which I have found, I could envy you; for once, at least, the sun of love shone with full radiance into your soul. Your experience proves how bright and long is the afterglow if it is only real. This light, I believe, can never be

extinguished, no matter how dense is the gloom which shadows life's pathway."

"Yes, indeed, Wolf," she replied dully, with a sorrowful shake of the head. "The gloomy night of which you speak has come, and it will last on and on with unvarying darkness, from year to year, perhaps until the end. What you call light is the remembrance of a single brief month of May. Does it possess the power to render me happy? No, my friend, a thousand times no! It only saves me from despair. But, in spite of everything"—and here her eyes sparkled radiantly—"in spite of all this, I would not change places with any one on earth; for, however dark clouds may conceal the sun, when in quiet hours it once breaks through them, Wolf, how brilliant everything grows around me!"

While speaking, she passed her hand across her brow and, as though seized with shame for her frank confession, exclaimed: "But we will let this subject drop. Only you must know one thing more. I shall never be wholly impoverished. What the past gave me was too rich and great; what I expect from the future is too precious for that. It is growing up in distant Spain and, if Heaven accepted the great sacrifice which I once made for the boy whom you call Geronimo, if he receives what I besought for him at that time and on every returning day, then, Wolf, I shall bear the burden of my woe like a light garland of rose leaves. Nay, more. Charles will regain his youth sooner than—be it in love or hate—he will ever forget me. This child guarantees that. It is and will always remain a bridge between us. He, too, can not forget the son, and if he does——"

"No, Barbara, no," interrupted Wolf, carried away by her passionate warmth. "The Emperor Charles is constantly thinking of his fair-haired boy. No one has told me so; but if he seeks in Spain the rest for which he longs, the thought of Geronimo—I am sure of that—is not the least powerful cause which draws him thither."

"Do you really think so?" asked Barbara with feverish anxiety.

"Yes," he answered firmly. "This very morning he commanded Don Luis to take the child from Leganes to Villagarcia and commit the education of Geronimo to his wife, that he may find him what he expects and desires."

Here he paused, and Barbara inquired uneasily, "And did he say nothing of Geronimo's mother—of me?"

Wolf shook his head with silent compassion, and then reluctantly admitted: “I ventured to mention you, but, with one of those looks which no one can resist—you know them—he ordered me to be silent.”

Barbara’s cheeks flamed with resentment and shame, but she only said, smiling bitterly: “Grief is grief, and this new sorrow does not change the old one. He knows best that I am something more than the poor officer’s wife in the Saint-Gory quarter; but I look down, with just pride, on all the others who believe me to be nothing else. Now and always, even long after I am dead, the world will be obliged to recognise the claim which elevates me far above the throng: I am the mother of an Emperor’s son!”

She had uttered these words with uplifted head; but Wolf gazed in wondering admiration into the beautiful face, radiant with proud self-satisfaction.

He wished to leave her with this image before his soul, and therefore hurriedly extended his hand and said farewell, after promising to fulfil her entreaty never to come to Brussels without showing by a visit that he remembered her.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pyramus Kogel, on his return, saw nothing of the deep impression which Wolf's visit had made upon Barbara. She merely mentioned it, and carelessly said that the friend of her youth had been delighted with the children.

The news that reached her ears about what was happening in the world awakened her interest, it is true, but she took no trouble to ask for tidings. When, the following year, her husband informed her that the Emperor's only son was about to conclude a second marriage, with Mary Tudor, of England, and Charles was to commit to Philip the sovereignty of the Netherlands, Spain, Naples, and Milan, she received it as if she had already known it.

What she learned through the neighbours of the increasing number of executions of obdurate heretics she deemed the wise measures of a devout and conscientious government.

To the children Barbara was a careful mother. She rarely went to visit the Dubois couple. Frau Traut either could not or was not allowed to tell her anything about her child, except that he was thriving under the maternal care of Dona Magdalena, to whom he had been confided.

The next winter, during which Charles reached his fifty-fourth year, his health failed so noticeably that the physicians despaired of his recovery. The Brabant palace was constantly besieged by people of all classes inquiring about the condition of the still honoured and by many deeply beloved monarch, and Barbara almost daily asked for news of him. She usually entered the palace clad in black and closely veiled, for she had many acquaintances among the attendants.

Adrian was inaccessible, because his master could not spare him a single hour, but she saw his substitute, Ogier Bodart, who had served the Emperor in Ratisbon. From him she learned how the sufferer passed the night, how the day promised, and whether the physician's opinion awakened hope or fear. He even told her that his Majesty was occupying himself with his last

will, the payment of his debts, the arrangement of the succession, and the choice of his burial place.

All this occupied Barbara's mind so deeply, and the long waiting to see Bodart often robbed her of so much time, that her housewifely and maternal duties suffered, yet her patient husband endured it a long while indulgently. But once, when he summoned up courage and cautiously blamed her, she quietly admitted that he was right, but added that she had never concealed from him the tie which bound her to the Emperor Charles, and now that Death was stretching his hand toward him, she must be permitted to obtain news of his welfare.

The strong man silenced his dissatisfaction, and placed no obstacles in her way. He was grateful for the maternal solicitude which she showed the children.

His kindly nature secretly approved of her spending a longer time in the Cathedral of St. Gudule than usual, praying for the royal sufferer who was so seriously ill. The man whom she could not forget was dying and, moreover, was his sovereign.

Spring at last brought an improvement in the monarch's health, and with it Barbara's return to her household duties.

A great change took place in the Dubois home during the spring after Charles's convalescence. The exhausting care of the Emperor had made Adrian seriously ill and, in spite of the objections and bitter complaints of his beloved and honoured master and his own desire to continue in his service, he was forced to resign his office, which was committed to his assistant Bodart.

One day Barbara met Dr. Mathys at the ex-valet's sick-bed. The kindly leech was amazed at her youthful appearance, and also at the obstinacy of her throat ailment; but he encouraged her, for he had recently seen marvellous effects produced by the old Roman baths at Ems, which were not difficult to reach, and advised her to use them as soon as possible. She must inform him of the result, if he was permitted to visit the Netherlands again.

Then Barbara asked if he intended to leave the master whose life was preserved by his skill; but he only shook his big head, smiling, and said that the Emperor and he belonged together, like the soul and the body, but

whether his Majesty would remain in Brabant much longer was an open question.

Barbara now remembered Wolf's communication, and when the rumour spread that the Emperor Charles was inclined to give up his rulership and commit the sceptre and crown to his son Philip, she knew that this time also Charles would execute the plan which he had matured after years of consideration.

Through her friend she knew the motives which urged him to renounce power and grandeur and retire to solitude; but to her it seemed certain that, above all other reasons, longing for the fair, curly-headed boy, his son and hers, had induced him to take this great and admirable step.

Gradually her maternal heart attributed to her John alone the desire of the world-weary earthly pilgrim to lay aside the purple and return to Spain.

Though Barbara at this time rarely left her own fireside, her husband might often have wished that she would return to the conduct of the previous winter, for he perceived the torturing anxiety which was consuming her.

She could gaze for hours into vacancy, absorbed in profound meditation and reveries, or play on the harp and lute, softly humming old songs to herself. If at such times Pyramus asked, lovingly and modestly, that he might not expose himself to an angry rebuff, what was burdening her soul, his wife gave evasive answers or told him about the physician's advice, and described how different the lives of both would be if she could regain the lost melody of her voice. But when he, who did not grudge the woman he loved the very best of everything, joyfully offered from his savings the sum necessary to send her and Frau Lamperi to Ems, in order, if possible, to commence the cure at once, she asserted that, for many reasons, she could not begin this summer the treatment which promised so much. True, the bare thought that if might once again be allotted to her to raise her heart in song filled her with the same blissful hope as ever; but if the report, which constantly grew more definite, did not deceive, the Emperor's formal abdication was close at hand, and to attend this great event seemed to her a duty of the heart, a necessity which she could not avoid. In many a quiet hour she told herself that Charles, when he had divested himself of all his honours and become a mere man like the rest of the world, would draw nearer to her boy, and through him to her. As an ordinary mortal, he would

be able to love, like every other father, the child that attracted him to Spain. If in his life of meditation, far from the tumult of the world, the strife for knowledge should lead him to look back into the past, and in doing so he again recalled the days to which he owed his greatest happiness, could he help remembering her and her singing?

How often she had heard that the knowledge of self was the highest goal of thought to the philosopher, and as such Charles would certainly retire into seclusion, and, as surely as she desired to be saved, he had wronged her and must then perceive it. Probably there were thousands of more important things in which he had to bury himself, but the boy would remind him of her and the injury which he had done.

Never had she more deeply admired the grandeur of her imperial lover, and with entire confidence she believed that this stupendous act of renunciation would mark the beginning of a new life for her and her child.

September and the first half of October passed like a fevered dream.

The abdication would certainly take place.

Charles had resolved to transfer all the crowns which adorned him to his son Philip, and retire to a Spanish monastery.

Barbara also learned when and where the solemn ceremony was to take place. Day after day she again mingled with the visitors to the palace, and on the twenty-first of October she saw the eleven Knights of the Golden Fleece, to whom he wished to restore the office of grand master, enter the palace chapel.

How magnificently these greatest of all dignitaries were attired! how all that she saw of this rare event in the palace chapel reminded her of the solemn ceremonial at the Trausnitzburg at Landshut, and her resolve to surrender her child, that it might possess the same splendour and honours as its sister’s husband!

The wishes cherished at that time were still unfulfilled; but the father would soon meet the son again, and the greater affection this peerless boy aroused in Charles, the more surely he would know how to bestow on him honours as high or higher than he gave the daughter of Johanna Van der Gheynst.

Five days after the assembling of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, the solemn ceremony of the abdication would take place in the great hall which

joined the palace chapel.

She must obtain admittance to it. Her husband did what he could to aid her and soothe her excitement by the gratification of so ardent a wish, but his efforts were vain.

Barbara herself, however, did not remain idle, and tried her fortune with those of high and low estate whom she had known in the past.

She could not trust to forcing her way in on the day of the ceremony of abdication, for every place in the limited space assigned to spectators had been carefully allotted, and no one would be permitted to enter the palace without a pass. When, after many a futile errand, she had been refused also by the lord chamberlain, she turned her steps to Baron Malfalconnet's palace.

He had just swung himself into the saddle, and Barbara found him greatly changed. The handsome major-domo had grown gray, his bright face was wrinkled, and his smiling lips now wore a new, disagreeable, almost cruel expression of mockery. He probably recognised his visitor at once, but the meeting seemed scarcely to afford him pleasure. Nevertheless, he listened to her.

But as soon as he heard what she desired, he straightened himself in the saddle, and cried: "When I wished to present you to his Majesty—do you remember?—at Ratisbon, you hastily wheeled your horse and vanished. Now, when you desire to bid farewell to our sovereign lord, I dutifully follow the example you then set me."

As he spoke he put spurs to his horse and, kissing his hand to her, dashed away. Barbara, wounded and disappointed, gazed after the pitiless scoffer.

She had knocked in vain where she might hope for consideration; only the young man of middle height who, carrying a portfolio under his arm, now approached her and raised his black secretary's cap, had been omitted, though he, too, was one of the old Ratisbon friends, and his position with the Bishop of Arras gave him a certain influence.

It was the little Maltese choir boy, Hannibal Melas, who owed so much to her recommendation.

He asked sympathizingly what troubled her and, after Barbara had confided to him what she had hitherto vainly desired, he referred her unasked to his omnipotent master, who was to enter King Philip's service,

and proposed that she should come to his office early the next morning. Thence he would try to take her to the minister, who had by no means forgotten her superb singing. His Eminence had mentioned her kindly very recently in a conversation with the leech.

The following morning Barbara went to the great statesman's business offices. Hannibal was waiting for her.

It was on Saint Raphael's day, which had attracted his fellow-clerks to a festival in the country. Granvelle had given the others leave of absence, but wished to keep within call the industrious Maltese, on whose zeal he could always rely.

Without stopping his diligent work at the writing-desk, the secretary begged Barbara to wait a short time. He would soon finish the draught of the new edict for which his Eminence and the Councillor Viglius were waiting in the adjoining chamber. The pictures on the walls of the fourth room were worth looking at.

Barbara followed his advice, but she paused in the third room, for through the partly open door she heard Granvelle's familiar voice.

Curious to see what changes time had wrought, she peered through the by no means narrow crack and overlooked the minister's spacious office, where he was now entirely alone with the Councillor Viglius.

The Bishop of Arras had scarcely altered since their last meeting, only his appearance had become somewhat more stately, and his clever, handsome face was fuller.

The Councillor Viglius, whom Barbara looked directly in the face, did not exactly profit by the contrast with Granvelle, for the small figure of the Frieslander barely reached to the chin of the distinguished native of tipper Burgundy, but his head presented a singular and remarkably vivid colouring. The perfectly smooth hair and thick beard of this no longer young man were saffron yellow, and his plump face was still red and white as milk and blood. It was easy to perceive by his whole extremely striking appearance that he was rightly numbered among the Emperor's shrewdest councillors. Barbara had heard marvellous tales of his learning, and it was really magnificent in compass and far more important than his keen but narrow mind. This time the loquacious man was allowing the Bishop of Arras to speak, and Barbara listened to his words and the councillor's answers with eager attention.

They were talking about the approaching abdication, and who knew the Emperor Charles better than these far-seeing men, who were so near his person?

If only she had not been obliged to believe this, for what she heard from them showed in sombre lines what her heart had clothed with golden radiance.

Everything Wolf had told her concerning the motives which induced Charles to devote himself for the remainder of his life to quiet contemplation seemed to her as credible as to the knight himself. But he had received what he knew from Queen Mary of Hungary, who interpreted her royal brother's conduct like an affectionate sister, or thought it advisable to represent it in the most favourable light.

It had not occurred to the warm-hearted, straightforward Wolf to doubt the royal lady's statement; but Barbara had regarded her friend's explanation of the Emperor's wonderful act of renunciation as she would have gazed at a citadel founded on a rock with towers rising to the clouds, and in imagination had followed to his solitude the world-weary philosopher, the father yearning for the child he had missed so long. But how pitilessly what she heard here overthrew the proud edifice! how cruelly it destroyed what she had deemed worthy of the greatest admiration, what had rendered her happy and reanimated her wishes and her hopes!

The wise Granvelle foresaw how the world would judge his master's abdication, and described it to the Frieslander. It bore a fateful resemblance to the regent's interpretation, her friend's opinion, and her own, and the shrewd Viglius accompanied this narrative with so scornful a laugh that it made her heart ache.

"This is what will be said," concluded the Bishop of Arras, summing up his previous statements, "of the wise scorner of the world upon the throne, who cast aside sceptre and crown in order, as a pious recluse, to secure the salvation of his soul and, like a second Diogenes, to listen to the wealth of his thoughts and investigate the nature of things."

"If only the pure spring from which the Greek dipped water in the hollow of his hand was not changed to a cellar full of fiery wine, his hermit fare to highly seasoned pasties, stuffed partridges, frozen fruit juices, truffled pheasants, and such things! But everybody to his taste! The world will be deceived. Unless you wish to blind yourself, your Eminence, you will admit

that I have seen correctly the most powerful motives for this unequalled act."

Barbara saw the bishop shake his head in dissent and, while she was listening with strained ears to his explanation, Viglius, as if singing bass to Granvelle's tenor, repeated again and again at brief intervals, in a low tone, the one word, "Debts," while his green eyes sparkled, sometimes as if asking assent, sometimes combatively.

He believed that the weight of financial cares was causing the Emperor Charles's abdication. Like a wise man, he said, he would place his own burden of debt upon his son's shoulders. His Majesty usually uttered exactly the opposite of his real opinions, and therefore, in the outline of his abdication speech, he twice emphasized how great a debt of gratitude Don Philip owed him for the Heritage which while still alive he bequeathed to him. True, besides the debts, crowns and kingdoms in plenty passed to Charles's successor; but the father, so long as he drew breath, would not give up the decision of the most important questions of government, and therefore this abdication, after all, was merely an excellent means of divesting himself of burdensome obligations, embellished with a certain amount of humbug.

The Bishop of Arras made no weighty protest against this severe speech; nay, he even said, in a tone of assent, that the Emperor Charles's tireless intellect would continue to direct political events. Besides, he could safely commit the execution of his conclusions and commands to his obedient and dutiful heir.

"The world," he added, "will not fare badly by this arrangement; but you, Viglius, can not forget the religious liberty which his Majesty promised to the Germans."

"Not until the end of my life!" cried the Frieslander, his green eyes flashing angrily.

Granvelle protested that this act of indulgence weighed heavily upon him also; but at that time a refusal would have occasioned a new war, which, according to human judgment, would have resulted in loss and the establishment of heresy in the Netherlands. Maurice of Saxony, he reminded the councillor, did not fall until a year later, and then as a conqueror, on the battlefield.

His Majesty's abdication, he went on with calm deliberation, was, however, not exactly as Viglius supposed. The desire to rid himself of troublesome debts had only hastened the Emperor's resolution. The principal motive for this momentous act he could state most positively to be the increasing burden of his physical sufferings. To this was added the feeling, usually found most frequently among gamblers, that the time to win or, in his Majesty's case, to succeed was past. Lastly, Charles really did long for less disturbance from the regular course of business, the reception of ambassadors, the granting of audiences.

"In short," he concluded, "he wants to have an easier life, and, besides, if the despatches and orders leave him time for it, to occupy himself with his favourite amusements—his clocks and pieces of mechanism. Finally, his sufferings remind him often enough of the approach of death, and he hopes by religious exercises to secure his place in the kingdom of heaven."

"So far as politics and the table give him leisure for it," interposed the Frieslander. "He doesn't seem inclined to make his penance too severe. Quijada is now preparing the penitential cell, and it is neither in the burning Thebais nor in the arid sands of the desert, but in one of the most delightful and charming places in Spain. May our sovereign find there what he seeks! You are aware of the paternal joys which await him through the boy Geronimo?"

"Where did you learn that?" Granvelle interrupted in a startled tone, and Barbara held her breath and listened with twofold attention.

"From his Majesty himself," was the reply. "He intended his son for the monastery. He longs to see him again, because he is said to be developing magnificently; but he wished to know whether it would not be safer to remove him from the world before his arrival, for, if necessary, he could give up meeting him. If he should discover his father's identity, it might easily fill him with vanity, and in Villagarcia he was learning to prize knightly achievements above the service of the Most High. It would not do to leave him in the world; unpleasant things might come from it. As King Philip's sole heir was the sickly Don Carlos——"

"His son Geronimo might aspire to the crown," interrupted Granvelle. "He expressed the same doubts to me also. What I heard of the child induced me to plead that he might be allowed to grow up in the world

untrammelled. If any one understands how to defend himself against unauthorized demands, it is Don Philip."

"So I, too, think, and advised," replied Viglius. "Poor boy! His father of late holds on to thalers more than anxiously and, if I am correctly informed, the education of his son has hitherto cost his Majesty no more expense than the maintenance of the mother. Wise economy, your Eminence! Or what shall it be called?"

"As you choose," replied the bishop in an irritated tone. "What do you know about the boy's mother?"

"Nothing," replied the Frieslander, "except what my friend Mathys told me lately. He said that before she lost her voice she was a perfect nightingale. She might recover it at Ems, and so the leech proposed to the Emperor to give her a sum of money for this purpose."

"And his Majesty?" asked Granvelle.

"Remained faithful to his habit of not sullying his reputation by extravagance," replied the Frieslander, laughing.

"Suffering, misfortune!" sighed Granvelle. "As a long period of rain produces fungi in the woods, so this terrible pair calls to life one pettiness after another in the rare man in whom once every trait of character was great and glorious. I knew the boy's mother. Many things might be said of her, among them good, nay, the best ones. As to the boy, his Majesty informed Don Philip of his existence. It was in Augsburg. He does not seem at all suited for the monastic life, and therefore I shall continue to strive to preserve him from it."

"And if his Majesty decides otherwise?"

"Then, of course—" answered Granvelle, shrugging his shoulders. "But the draught must be composed, and there are more important matters for us to discuss."

As he spoke he rang the bell on the table at his side, and Hannibal obeyed his master's summons. In doing so he passed Barbara, who started as if bewildered when she heard him approach.

He went up to her in great surprise, but ere he could utter the first words she clutched his arm, whispering: "I am going, Hannibal. His Eminence did not entirely forget me. If he can receive me, send word to my house."

Scarcely able to control herself, Barbara set out on her way home. The words she had heard had shaken the depths of her soul like an earthquake.

The news that Charles intended to confine in a monastery the boy whom she had given up to him that he might bestow upon him whatever lay within his imperial power poisoned her joy in the future. How often this man lead inflicted bleeding wounds upon her heart! Now he trampled it under his cruel feet. Two convictions had lent her the strength not to despair: she felt sure that his love for her could never have been extinguished had the power of her art aided her to warm Charles's heart, and she was still more positive that the father would raise to splendour and magnificence the boy whom she had given him.

And now?

He had refused the leech's request to help her regain the divine gift to which, according to his own confession, he owed the purest joys; and her strong, merry child he, its own father, condemned to disappear and wither in the imprisonment of a cloister. This must not be, and on her way home she formed plan after plan to prevent it.

Pyramus attributed her sometimes depressed, sometimes irritable manner to the disappointment of her wish.

What she had just learned and had had inflicted upon her filled her with hatred of life.

Her two boys scarcely dared to approach their mother, who, unlike her usual self, harshly rebuffed them.

At twilight Hannibal Melas appeared, full of joyous excitement. Granvelle sent Barbara word that the doorkeeper Mangin would show her a good seat. His Eminence desired to be remembered to her, and said that only those who had been closely associated with his Majesty would be admitted to this ceremony, and he knew that she ranked among the first of these.

Barbara's features brightened and, as she saw how happy it made the Maltese to be the bearer of so pleasant a message, she forced herself to give a joyous expression to her gratitude. In the evening, and during a sleepless night, she considered whether she should make use of the invitation. What she had expected for herself and her child from Charles's abdication had been mere chimeras of the brain, and what could this spectacle offer her?

She would only behold with her eyes what she had often enough imagined with the utmost distinctness—the great monarch divested of his grandeur and all his dignities.

But Granvelle's message that she was one cf those who stood nearest to the abdicating sovereign constantly echoed in her ears, and her absence from this ceremony would have seemed to her unnatural—nay, an offence against something necessary.

Her husband was pleased with the great minister's kindness to his wife. He had nothing to do in the palace, but he intended to look for the children, who had gone there before noon with Frau Lamperi, that they might get the best possible view of the approach of the princes and dignitaries.

Barbara herself was to use a litter. The ex-'garde-robiere' had helped her put on her gala attire, and Pyramus assured his wife that every one would consider her the handsomest and most elegant lady in the galleries. She knew that he was right, and listened with pleasure, deeply as resentment and disappointment burdened her soul.

Then the knocker on the door rapped. The litter-bearers had probably come. But no! The Flemish maid, who had opened the door, announced that a messenger was waiting outside with a letter which he could deliver only to the master or the mistress.

Pyramus went into the entry, and his long absence was already making Barbara uneasy, when he returned with bowed head and, after many words of preparation, informed her that her father was very ill and, finally, that apoplexy had put a swift and easy end to his life.

Then a great and genuine grief seized upon her with all its power. Everything that the simple-hearted, lovable man, who had guarded her child hood so tenderly and her girlhood with such solicitude and devotion, had been to her, returned to her memory in all its vividness. In him she had lost the last person whose right to judge her conduct she acknowledged, the only one whom she had good reason to be sure cared for her welfare as much as, nay, perhaps more than, his own.

The litter, Granvelle's message, the Emperor's abdication ceremony, everything that had just wounded, angered, and disturbed her, was forgotten.

She gently refused the consolation of her husband, who in the captain had lost a dear friend and sincerely mourned his death, and entreated him to leave her alone; but when her sons returned and joyously described the magnificent spectacle on which they had feasted their eyes outside of the palace, she drew them toward her with special tenderness, and tried to make them understand that they would never again see the good grandfather who had loved them all so dearly.

But the older boy, Conrad, only gazed at her wonderingly, and asked why she was weeping; and the younger one did not understand her at all, and went on talking about the big soldier who wanted to lift him on his piebald horse. To the child death is only slumber, and life being awake to new games and pleasures.

Barbara said this to her husband when he wished to check the merry laughter of the little ones, and then went to her chamber.

There she strove to think of the dead man, and she succeeded, but with the memory of the sturdy old hero constantly blended the image of the feeble man who to-day was voluntarily surrendering all the gifts of fortune which she—oh, how willingly! would have received for the son whom he desired to withdraw from the world.

The next morning Hannibal Melas came to ask what had kept her from the ceremony. He learned it in the entry from Frau Lamperi, and Barbara's tearful eyes showed him what deep sorrow this loss had caused her. Her whole manner expressed quiet melancholy. This great, pure grief had come just at the right time, flowing, like oil upon the storm-lashed waves, over hatred, resentment, and all the passionate emotions by which she had previously been driven to the verge of despair.

She did not repulse the witness of her lost happiness, and listened attentively while Hannibal told her about the memorable ceremony which he had attended.

True, his description of the lofty hall in the Brabant palace where it took place, the chapel adjoining it, and the magnificent decorations of flowers and banners that adorned it, told nothing new to Barbara. She was familiar with both, and had seen them garlanded, adorned with flags and coats of arms, and even witnessed the erection of the stage in the hall and the stretching of the canopy above it.

The Emperor had appeared upon the platform at the stroke of three, leaning upon his crutch and the shoulder of William of Orange. His son Philip and the Queen of Hungary followed, and all took their seats upon the gilded thrones awaiting them. The blithe, pleasant Archduke Maximilian of Austria, the Duke of Savoy, who was expecting a great winning card in the game of luck of his changeful life, the Knights of the Golden Fleece, and the highest of the Netherland nobles, the councillors, the governor, and the principal military officers also had places upon the stage.

Barbara knew every name that Hannibal mentioned. It seemed as if she saw the broken-down Emperor, his son Philip with his head haughtily thrown back, his favourite, the omnipotent minister, Ruy Gomez, the Prince of Eboli, who with his coal-black hair and beard would have resembled Quijada if, instead of the soldierly frankness of the major-domo, an uneasy, questioning expression had not lurked in his dark eyes, the brilliant Bishop of Arras, who had again so kindly placed her under obligation to him, and the Frieslander Viglius, who had dropped into her soul the wormwood whose bitterness she still tasted, and whose motto, “The life of mortals is a watch in the night,” seemed to flash from his green eyes. Not a single woman had been admitted to the distinguished assembly of the States-General, the city magistrates, and illustrious invited guests, who as spectators sat on benches and chairs opposite to the stage, and this placed the kindness of Granvelle, whom the Netherland dignitaries were said to detest, in a still brighter light.

The ceremony had been opened by the great speech of Philibert of Brussels, which the young Maltese described as a masterpiece of the finest rhetorical art. At the close of this address a solemn silence pervaded the hall, for the Emperor Charles had risen to take leave of his faithful subjects.

One might have heard a leaf fall, a spicier walk, as, supported by the arm of William of Orange, he raised the notes of his address and began to read.

At this information Barbara remembered how Maurice of Saxony had supported the Emperor at the May festival at Prebrunn. William of Orange, too, was still young. She had often seen him, and what deep earnestness rested on his noble brow! how open and pure was the glance of his clear eyes, yet how penetrating and inexorably keen it could also be! She had noticed this at the assembly of the Knights of the Golden Fleece, when he looked at King Philip with bitter hate or certainly with dislike and scorn.

Was this man chosen to avenge Charles's sins upon his son and heir? Could the Prince of Orange be destined to deal with the new king as Maurice of Saxony had treated his imperial father? Would the resentment which, since the day before, had again filled her soul have permitted her to prevent it had she possessed the power?

The Emperor's speech had treated of his broken health and the necessity of living in a milder climate. Then Don Philip had been described by his father as a successor whose wisdom equalled his experience. This called a smile to Barbara's lips.

Philip was said to be an industrious, devout man, fond of letter-writing, and full of intrigue, but only his father would venture to compare him with himself, with Charles V.

He, the son, probably knew how vacant and lustreless his eyes were, for he usually fixed them on the ground; and what fulness of life, what a fiery soul had sparkled only a short time ago, when she saw him in the distance, from those of the man whom she certainly was not disposed to flatter!

Then the Emperor had reviewed his whole reign, mentioned how many wars he had waged, how many victories he had won and, finally, had reminded his son of the gratitude he owed a father who during his lifetime bestowed all his possessions upon him and, as it were, descended into the grave in order to make him earlier the heir of all his power and wealth.

Now Barbara fancied that again—she knew not for what hundredth time—the Frieslander's exclamation, "Debts! debts!" rang in her ears, and at the same time she thought of the boy in Spain who had here been disinherited, and must be hidden in a monastery that the other son of the same father, the diminutive upstart Philip, puffed up with arrogance, might sleep more quietly. For one son the unjust man whom she loved was ready to die before his last hour came, in order to give him all that he possessed; for the other he could find nothing save a monk's cowl. Instead of the yearning for John, of which Wolf had spoken and she, blind fool, believed, he thought of him with petty fears of the claims by which he might injure his favoured brother. No warm impulse of paternal tenderness stirred the breast of the man whose heart was hardened, who understood how to divest himself of the warmest love as he now cast aside the crown and the purple of royalty.

These torturing thoughts so powerfully affected Barbara that she only half heard what Hannibal was saying about the Emperor's admonition to his

son to hold fast to justice, law, and the Catholic Church. But when Granvelle's faithful follower, in an agitated tone, went on to relate how Charles had besought the forgiveness of Providence for all the sins and errors which he had committed, and added that he would remember all who had rendered him happy by their love and obedience in every prayer which he addressed to the Being to whom the remnant of his life should be devoted, the ex-singer's breath came quicker, her small hands clinched, and the question whether she had failed in love and obedience before he basely cast her off forced itself upon her mind, and with it the other, whether he would also include in his prayers her whom he had ill-treated and mortally insulted.

These thoughts lent her features so gloomy an expression that it would have offended the Emperor Charles's ardent admirer if he had noticed it. But the scene which, with tears in his eyes, he now described absorbed his attention so completely that he forgot everything around him and, as it were, gazed into his own soul while picturing to himself and his listener how the monarch, with a pallid, ashen countenance, had sunk back upon his throne and wept like a child.

At this spectacle the whole assembly, even the sternest old general, had been overwhelmed by deep emotion, and the spacious hall echoed with the sobs and groans of graybeards, middle-aged men and youths, warriors and statesmen.

Here the young man's voice failed and, weeping, with unfeigned emotion he covered his agitated face with his handkerchief.

When he regained his composure he saw, with a shade of disappointment, that Barbara's eyes had remained dry during the description of an event in which he himself and so many stronger men had shed burning tears.

Yet, when Barbara was again alone she could not drive from her mind the image of her broken-down, weeping lover. Doubtless she often felt moved to think of him with deep pity; but she soon remembered the conversation to which she had listened in the apartments of the Bishop of Arras, and her belief in the genuineness of those tears vanished.

CHAPTER XV.

The winter came and passed. Instead of leaving the Netherlands, the Emperor Charles remained nearly a year in Brussels. He lived in a modest house in Lion Street and, although he had resigned the sovereignty, nothing was done in the domain of politics to which he had not given his assent.

Barbara, more domestic than ever before, was leading a dream life, in which she dwelt more with her beloved dead and her child in Spain than with her family at home. She thought of the boy's father sometimes with bitter resentment, sometimes with quiet pity. Outward circumstances rendered it easier for her to conceal these feelings, for Pyramus attributed the melancholy mood which sometimes overpowered her to grief for her father.

Her husband left the settlement of the business connected with her inheritance solely to her. There were many letters to be written and, as she had become unfamiliar with this art, Hannibal faithfully aided her.

Dr. Hiltner, of Ratisbon, to whom, in spite of his heretical belief, she intrusted the legal business of the estate, acted wisely and promptly in her behalf. Thus the sale of the house which she had purchased for the dead man, and the disposal of her father's share in the Blomberg business, brought her far more money than she had expected.

It seemed as though Fate desired to compensate her by outward prosperity for the secret sorrow which, in spite of her husband's affectionate solicitude and the thriving growth of her two boys, she could not shake off.

In one respect she regarded the money which this winter brought her as a genuine blessing, for it seemed to invite her to go to Ems and do all in her power for the restoration of her voice. The hoarseness was now barely perceptible in her speech, and Dr. Mathys, whom she visited in April, encouraged her, and told her of really marvellous cures wrought by the famous old springs.

When May came and the trees and shrubs in leafy Brussels adorned themselves with new buds, she could not help thinking more frequently, as usual in this month, of her wasted love and of the man for whom it had

bloomed and who had destroyed it. So she liked to pass through Lion Street in her walks, for it led her by his house. She might easily meet him again there, and she longed to see his face once more before the departure for Spain, which would remove him from her sight forever.

And behold! One sunny noon he was borne toward her in a litter. She stopped as though spellbound, bowing profoundly; her glance as he passed met his, and he waved his emaciated hand—yes, she was not mistaken—he waved it to her.

For an instant it seemed as if a crimson rose had bloomed in the midst of winter snows. She had been as sure that he had not forgotten her as that she herself had not ceased to think of him.

Now her confidence was, as it were, confirmed by letter and seal, and this made her happy.

The man in the litter had been only the wreck of the Charles whom she loved; even the fiery light in his eyes, though not extinguished, had appeared subdued and veiled. Other women would probably have thought him repulsively plain, but what did she care for his looks? Each of them was still a part of the other, for her image lived in his soul, as his dwelt in hers.

Barbara did not take as long a walk as usual; but when she was again approaching the house occupied by the abdicated sovereign, Dr. Mathys came toward her. The expression of his broad, dignified face suited the bright May morning; nay, she imagined that his step was lighter and less sedate than usual.

During the whole decade which they had known each other he had never flattered her, but to-day, after the first greeting, he began his conversation with the question:

“Do you know, Frau Barbara, that you were never more beautiful and charming than just at this very time? Perhaps it is the mourning which is so becoming to your pink-and-white complexion and the somewhat subdued lustre of your golden hair. But why do I feed your vanity with such speeches? Because I think that our gracious lord, who for many a long day has not bestowed even the least side glance upon any of your bewitching sex, noticed the same thing. And now you will presently be obliged to admit that the old messenger of bad news in Ratisbon, whom you requited so ill for his unpleasant errand, can also bring good tidings; for the Emperor

Charles—in spite of the abdication, he will always be that until he, too, succumbs to the power which makes us all equal—his Majesty sends you his greetings, and the message that he desires to do what he can to restore to you the art in which you attained such rare mastery. He places at your disposal—this time, at least, he was not economical—a sum which will take you to the healing springs four or five times, nay, oftener still."

Barbara had listened thus far, speechless with joyful surprise. If it was Charles to whom she owed her recovery, the gift of song which it restored would possess tenfold value for her, if that was conceivable. She was already beginning to charge the leech to be the bearer of her gratitude and joy, but he did not let her finish, and went on to mention the condition which his Majesty attached to this gift.

Barbara must never mention it to any one, and must promise the physician to refrain from all attempts to thank him either in person or by letter in short, to avoid approaching him in any way.

The old physician had communicated this stipulation—which his royal patient had strictly associated with the gift—to Barbara in the emphatic manner peculiar to him, but she had listened, at first in surprise, then with increasing indignation. The donation which, as a token of remembrance and kind feeling, had just rendered her so happy, now appeared like mere alms. Nay, the gift would make her inferior to the poorest beggar, for who forbids the mendicant to utter his "May God reward you"?

Charles kept her aloof as if she were plague-stricken. Perhaps it was because he feared that if he saw her once he might desire a second and a third meeting. But no matter. She would accept no aid at the cost of so severe an offence to her pride, least of all when it came from the man who had already wounded her soul often and painfully enough.

The startled physician perceived what was passing in her mind, and when, not passionately as in her youth, but with cool composure, she requested Dr. Mathys to tell his master that it would be as impossible for her to accept a gift for which she could not express her thanks as to give alms without wishing well to the recipient, the leech eagerly endeavoured to persuade her to use the sum bestowed according to the donor's wish. But Barbara firmly persisted in her refusal, and when she parted from the old man he could not be angry with her, for, as in the garden of the little

Prebrunn castle, he could not help saying to himself that the wrong was not wholly on the side of the independent young woman.

The result in this case was the usual one when the weaker party succeeds in maintaining itself against the superior power of the stronger. Barbara set out on her way home with her head proudly erect, but she soon asked herself whether this victory was not too dearly purchased. In a few months John was to meet his father, and then might there not be cause to fear that the opposition which she, his mother, had offered to the Emperor, in order to escape an offence to her own pride, would prove an injury to the son? She stopped, hesitating; but after a brief period of reflection, she continued her walk. What she had done might vex the monarch, but it must rather enhance than lower her value in his eyes, and everything depended upon that. Charles would open the path to high honours and royal splendour to the son of a haughty mother rather than to the child of a narrow-minded woman, who would receive a gift without being suffered to express her thanks.

She had done right, and rejoiced that this time she had obeyed the voice of her imperious soul. She no longer desired to meet again the man whom she loved. Her wish to look into his eyes once more before his death or hers was fulfilled, and his glance, which had certainly been the last that he could give her, had expressed the kind feeling and forgiveness for which she had secretly yearned. So what he had done was surely not intended to wound her. She understood his desire to obtain peace of mind and his fear of entering into communication with her again, and from this time it once more became a necessity to her to include him in her prayers.

She left her home with a lighter heart, better satisfied with herself than she had been for years. The Emperor Charles could not help thinking of her now as she desired. The love which she had never wholly withdrawn was again his, and the feeling of belonging to him exalted her pride and brightened her clouded soul.

Frau Lamperi accompanied her, and marvelled at her mistress’s happy mood. Besides, the Ems waters and the excellent advice of the physician to whose care she intrusted herself exerted a beneficial influence upon her ailment.

Her mourning garb prevented her from taking any part in the gay life of the watering-place, but she found pleasure in watching it.

When she returned to Brussels, Pyramus thought she looked as young as in her girlhood, and every wish that her husband fancied he could read in her eyes was gratified with loving eagerness.

But the preparations for war against France allowed him only a short time to remain in Brussels, and during his absence Barbara enjoyed unlimited freedom.

The Emperor had sailed for Spain, Queen Mary had retired from the regency, and Duke Emanuel Philibert of Savoy had taken it in her place. King Philip remained in the Netherlands, and it was said in his praise that he showed the boundless arrogance characteristic of him in a less offensive way, and had acquired more affable manners.

Barbara often longed to seek an audience with him.

But what would it avail?

Philip was perhaps the very person who would be glad to have his half-brother disappear in a monastery.

Yet the yearning to hear some news of her child would not be silenced. Of the distant Emperor, who was said to be near his end, and spent his days and sleepless nights in the monastery of San Yuste in prayer and severe mortification, as the most pious of monks, she thought with sympathizing affection.

The following year Barbara went to Ems again, this time no longer in mourning robes, but scarcely less magnificently attired than many a Rhenish noble's wife, who was also seeking health and amusement there. The property she had inherited, and which the conscientious Pyramus would not touch, and Frau Lamperi's skilful fingers had accomplished this. Though the materials which she selected were not the most costly, her aristocratic bearing made them appear valuable. She still possessed the pearl necklace and other ornaments of more prosperous days, and on festal occasions they did not remain in a chest.

She by no means lacked notice, partly on her own account, partly in consequence of the conversations with which Granvelle, who visited the springs for a short time, honoured her, while he kept entirely aloof from all the other guests. This favour on the part of so famous and powerful a statesman induced many of the most aristocratic ladies and nobles to seek her, and many who had been attracted solely by curiosity were charmed

with the entertaining sprightliness of the beautiful woman, and admitted her to their very exclusive circle.

This time the springs proved still more beneficial than when she first used them, and the hope of soon being able to exercise her beloved art again gained new and solid foundation.

This occupied a large share of her thoughts, but a still greater one was filled with the yearning for her John, of whom, in spite of many inquiries, she could hear nothing.

When, in her quiet home life, the monotony of her days oppressed her more heavily, she often remembered Ems, and the pleasures and attention which the next summer there would bring her. Now that the great, passionate emotions which had been devoted to others were at rest, she began to think more of her own person. It seemed desirable to show herself to advantage, and though she longed for her recovery above all for the sake of her art and the pleasure which its exercise afforded her, she was already secretly thinking how she could use it to restore and obtain satisfaction for her paralyzed self-esteem.

In consequence of the victory of St. Quentin, Brussels was filled with festal joy; but Barbara took very little part in the numerous festivities which followed one another, and again went to Ems.

When she returned, much benefited, her first visit was to the Dubois house in the park. Unfortunately, it was futile; but when, a few weeks before the battle of Gravelines, she repeated it for the second time, she met the couple, now advancing in years, out of doors, and saw that some good fortune had come to them.

Usually she had always been received here with a certain shade of embarrassment, but to-day her coming seemed to please Herr Adrian. From the great arm-chair, which he now never left, he held out his hand to her, and Frau Traut’s merry eyes looked a glad welcome.

After the first greetings, they eagerly expressed their joyful amazement at the clear tones of her voice. Then Frau Dubois exchanged a significant glance with her husband, and now Barbara learned that a letter had arrived from San Yuste that very morning, which contained little except pleasant news of his Majesty and John.

While speaking, Adrian drew from his doublet the precious missive, showed it to the young wife as cautiously as a fragile ornament which we are reluctant to let pass out of our hands, and said in an agitated voice:

"The writer is no less a personage than Dona Magdalena de Ulloa. May Heaven reward her for it!"

Barbara gazed beseechingly into his wrinkled face, and from the inmost depths of her heart rose the cry: "Oh, let me see it, for I—you know it—I am his mother!"

"So she is," said the old man in a tone of assent, nodded his long head, whose hair was now snow-white, and glanced questioningly at his wife. The answer was an assent.

Adrian clasped his chin—during the period of his service he had always worn it smooth-shaven, but the white stubble of a full beard was now growing on it—in his emaciated hand, and asked Barbara if she understood Spanish.

Her knowledge of it was very slight; but Frau Traut, who, like her husband, had mastered it during the long years of intercourse with the Castilian court, now undertook to put the contents of the letter into German.

This was not difficult, for she had already been obliged to read it aloud three times to Adrian, who could no longer decipher written characters.

The address was not omitted; it had pleased them both. It ran as follows:

"To his Majesty's good and faithful servant, Adrian Dubois, from his affectionate friend of former days, Dona Magdalena de Ulloa, wife of Don Luis Mendez Quijada, Lady of Villagarcia."

Frau Trout read these noble names aloud to Barbara proudly, as if they were her own; but before she went on Adrian interrupted—

"As to friendship, you may think, Frau Barbara, that Dona Magdalena is showing me far too much honour in using those words; but I would still give my right hand for that lovely creature with her kindly soul. When, just after Don Luis married her, his Majesty took her young husband away, she entreated me most earnestly to look after him, and I could sometimes be of assistance. To be sure, we broke many a piece of bread together in war and peace in the same service. Ah, Frau Barbara! I am far better off here than I deserve to be; but sometimes my heart is ready to break when I think of my Emperor, and that I must leave the care of him to others."

“But it is hard enough for the major-domo and his Majesty to do without you,” said Frau Traut importantly. “Don Luis, the letter says, would gladly have written with his own hand, but he had not a single leisure moment; for, since Adrian had gone, he was obliged to be at hand to serve his Majesty by day as well as by night. My husband’s successor, Bodart, whom he trained for the service, is skilful and makes every effort, but he can not replace Adrian to his suffering master.”

Then Frau Traut looked more closely at the letter, and began to translate its contents.

“Of course,” she began, “San Yuste is not like Brussels; but if they think there that his Majesty lives like a monk and submits to the rules of the monastery, they are misinformed.”

Here she lowered the sheet; but Barbara’s cheeks were glowing with impatient interest, and she exclaimed with urgent warmth: “Oh, please, read on! But where—it is probably in the letter—where is our child?”

“One thing after the other, as the letter communicates it,” replied the translator in a reproving tone; but her husband nodded soothingly to Barbara, and said:

“Only this first: Our John is near his father, and there is something especially good about him toward the end. Dona Magdalena is a true Castilian—first the King, then her husband, then the others according to their rank. It is different here and in your country. Patience and you, Frau Barbara, have been bad friends ever since I knew you.”

Barbara’s sorrowful smile confirmed this statement, and when Frau Traut at last went on, the tone of her voice betrayed how little she liked interruptions just now.

“You were informed of his Majesty’s safe landing at Quiposcoa. It was pitiful to see how the people in his train who did not belong to the number of those who were to accompany him to Jarandilla behaved at the parting from their beloved master. The body-guards flung their halberds on the pavement, and there were plenty of tears and lamentations. On St. Blasius’s day—[February 3, 1557]—his Majesty at last entered San Yuste. Don Luis, as you know, had gone before to get the house in readiness for his master. One could scarcely imagine a pleasanter spot, for there is no greener valley than that of San Yuste in the whole range of the Carpetano Mountains, nay, perhaps in all Spain. It is difficult to describe how everything is growing

and blossoming here now, in the month of May. The little garden of the house is well kept and full of beautiful orange trees. While blossoming, they exhale the most exquisite perfume, and his Majesty enjoys the delicious fragrance which the wind bears to him.

"In your noisy Brussels it is hard to imagine how quiet it can be here, dear Senor Adrian. Nothing is to be heard save the carol of a bird, the rippling of a clear stream flowing swiftly through the valley, and at intervals the distinct notes of the little bells and cymbals upon the clocks which his Majesty brought with him. Even their ticking is often audible. At certain hours the ringing of the monastery bells blends solemnly and softly with the silence. The Hieronymites in the monastery are pious monks. His Majesty sometimes listens to their choir. Its music is very fine since Sir Wolf Hartschwert, whom you also know, has taken charge of it.

"From all this, you will perceive that the master, with whom your faithful soul doubtless often dwells, is supplied—restricted by no monastic discipline—with whatever suits his taste. He frequently devotes himself for hours to religious exercises, and also retires to the black-draped room with the coffin, which you know; but the old industry and secular cares pursued him here. Mounted messengers come and go continually, but they are not allowed to remain near the house.

"Even in Brussels he can scarcely have written and answered more letters than he does here.

"If only the body would prosper as well as the mind. That is as active and alert as ever. But the body—the body! O Senor Adrian! I fear that the end is not far distant, although our royal sufferer looks better than at his arrival.

"'The eating!' Dr. Mathys complains; but you know well enough how that is.

"Three days have passed since I began this letter. You are aware of most of what concerns your beloved master; now for my husband.

"He has never had service so arduous as here, for the grand prior, Don Luis de Avila, is nothing to his Majesty except a dear old brother in arms, with whom he is fond of talking about the past. Everything rests on my poor husband. He said, a short time ago, that he would no longer endure playing the host to everybody who comes to San Yuste, being agent for everybody in Spain who desires anything from the Emperor Charles, and at the same time constantly caring for the person of the sick sovereign. This life, he

thinks, may suit a person who has taken leave of his property and the world, but he still clings to both, and especially to me, the poor wife who has been parted from him so long. He has served the Emperor twenty-five years, and during this time he lost all his brothers in the war. The estates came to him, and how long they have already been deprived of the master's eye!

"Don Luis told the Emperor Charles all this, yet he refused him leave of absence to go to Villagarcia. Instead, I was obliged to move near my husband, and am now living with Geronimo, in the wretched village of Cuacos, which is easily reached from San Yuste. There I finally arrived with the boy whom the Virgin, in her inexhaustible mercy, gave to me, a poor, childless woman, to make me happy, although on his account I wronged my lord and husband by a sinful suspicion.

"Here I must begin my letter for the third time.

"It was fortunate that Geronimo left Massi and Leganes, for he was allowed to grow up there like a little savage. Before learning to obey, he was permitted to command.—No one opposed him, so in Villagarcia the first thing necessary was to accustom him to discipline, obedience, and the manners of the nobles. The trouble was not great, and how richly the boy rewarded it! He is now in his twelfth year, and how your good wife would stare, Adrian, if she could see her nursling again! Do not suppose that it is blind partiality when I say that few handsomer lads could be found in all King Philip's dominions. His figure is slender and only slightly above middle height; but how erect and noble is his bearing, how symmetrically his pliant form is developing! His delicately cut features and large blue eyes glow with the bold courage which fills his soul, and which he displays in riding, hunting, and fencing. He still has his wealth of fair, waving locks. Among a thousand other boys no one will overlook him. Don Luis, too, admits that he was born to dignity and honour. Every chivalrous and royal virtue is in his blood. Even his mother could not sully it."

Here Frau Traut paused to look at Barbara, who had listened, panting for breath.

She was sorry that she had not omitted the last sentence, but in the zeal of translating it had unconsciously escaped her lips, and, as she found no softening word, she went on:

"Geronimo has become a dear child to me. He thinks that I am his own mother, and clings to me with filial affection. To lead such a son to this

august father was the greatest joy that Heaven has bestowed upon me.

"Dressed as my page, he rode with me to Jarandilla to meet his Majesty. He was to present to the imperial master, of whose near relationship he had no idea, a little basket filled with beautiful oranges from our garden in Villagarcia, which you know.

"The young horseman, who understands how to wheel his steed, swung himself from the saddle close beside his Majesty, bent the knee with noble grace, raised his little plumed hat, and, pressing his left hand upon his heart, presented the little gift to his sovereign and master. As the weather was mild, the latter sat in an open sedan chair, and when he saw Geronimo he scanned him with the keen glance of the ruler, and then looked inquiringly at my husband. Don Luis nodded the answer which he desired to receive, and a bright smile flitted over his emaciated, corpselike features. Then he accepted the oranges, stroked his son's curls, addressed a few questions to him, which he answered modestly but aptly, and then called to my husband, 'This boy must remain near me.'

"Oh, what pleasure all this gave me! Now Geronimo goes in and out of his Majesty's apartments freely, and my reason for writing this letter is an incident I happened to witness, and which will please you, Adrian, and your good wife, as it filled my heart with fervent gratitude. So listen: When the Emperor meets Geronimo in the presence of strangers, he seems to take neither more nor less notice of him than of the other pages who come to San Yuste. Only he often calls him, asks a question, or gives him some trivial commission. Others would scarcely notice it, but I see the brightening of his eyes as he does so.

"Recently I looked through the open door which leads from his Majesty's work-room into the garden, and what did the Virgin permit me to behold?—Geronimo, who was alone with the Emperor, picked up a sheet of paper that had fluttered to the ground and handed it to him. Then the Emperor Charles suddenly raised his poor hands oh, how they are disfigured by the gout!—laid them on the boy's temples, drew his head nearer, and kissed his brow and eyes! Charles V, the fugitive from the world, the man crushed by sorrow and disappointment, did that! This kiss—Don Luis believes it also—sealed the son's acceptance into his father's heart."

Here Frau Traut let the sheet fall. Her voice had failed during the last sentences; now she exclaimed amid her tears, "The Emperor's kiss!" and

her husband, no less deeply stirred by emotion, cried, “The Emperor Charles—no one knows as well as I what that means—the Emperor Charles, whose heart compels him to kiss some one.”

Here Barbara rose with flushed cheeks, panting for breath.

She felt as if she must cry aloud to these good people: “What do you know about my lover’s kiss? I, I alone, not you, you poor, good man, could tell you. Insignificant and wretched as I may be, no woman on earth can boast of prouder memories, and now that he has also kissed his child and mine, everything is forgiven him.”

Silently, with hurrying breath, she stood before the agitated couple, who were waiting for some remark, some outburst of gratitude and delight; but there was only a quivering of the lips, and her blue eyes flashed with a fiery light.

What was the matter with her?

Frau Train turned anxiously to her husband to ask, in a whisper, whether joy had turned the poor young mother’s brain; but Barbara had already recovered her composure, and, passing her hand quickly across her brow, murmured softly, “It came over me too strongly.”

Then she thanked them with earnest warmth; yet when Frau Traut praised Dona Magdalena’s heavenly goodness, she nodded assent, it is true; but she soon took her leave—she felt paralyzed and dazzled.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the way home Barbara often pressed her left hand with her right to assure herself that she was not dreaming.

This time she found her husband in the house. At the first glance Pyramus saw that something unusual had happened; but she gave him no time to question her, only glanced around to see if they were alone, and then cried, as if frantic: “I will bear it no longer. You must know it too. But it is a great secret.” Then she made him swear that he, too, would keep it strictly, and in great anxiety he obeyed.

He, like Barbara’s father, had supposed that the Emperor’s son had entered the world only to leave it again. Barbara’s “I no longer have a child; it was taken from me,” he had interpreted in the same way as the old captain, and, from delicacy of feeling, had never again mentioned the subject in her presence.

While taking the oath, he had been prepared for the worst; but when his wife, in passionate excitement, speaking so fast that the words fair tumbled over one another, told him how she had been robbed of her boy; how his imperial father had treated him; how she had longed for him; what prayers she had uttered in his behalf; how miserable she had been in her anxiety about this child; and, now, that Dona Magdalena’s letter permitted her to cherish the highest and greatest hopes for the boy, the tall, strong man stood before her with downcast eyes, like a detected criminal, his hand gripping the edge of the top of the table which separated her from him.

Barbara saw his broad, arched chest rise and fall, and wondered why his manly features were quivering; but ere she had time to utter a single soothing word, he burst forth: “I made the vow and will be silent; but to-morrow, or in a year or two, it will be in everybody’s mouth, and then, then My good name! Honour!”

Fierce indignation overwhelmed Barbara, and, no longer able to control herself, she exclaimed: “What did it matter whether Death or his father snatched the child from me? The question is, whether you knew that I am his mother, and it was not concealed from you. Nevertheless, you came and

sought me for your wife! That is what happened! And—you know this—you are as much or little dishonoured by me, the mother of the living child, as of the dead one. Out upon the honour which is harmed by gossip! What slanderous tongues say of me as a disgrace I deem the highest honour; but if you are of a different opinion, and held it when you wooed me, you would be wiser to prate less loudly of the proud word ‘honour,’ and we will separate.”

Pyramus had listened to these accusations and the threat with trembling lips. His simple but upright mind felt that she was right, so far as he was concerned, and she was more beautiful in her anger than he had seen her since the brilliant days of her youthful pride. The fear of losing her seized his poor heart, so wholly subject to her, with sudden power and, stammering an entreaty for forgiveness, he confessed that the surprise had bewildered him, and that he thought he had showed in the course of the last ten years how highly, in spite of people’s gossip, he prized her. He held out his large honest hand with a pleading look as he spoke, and she placed hers in it for a short time.

Then she went to church to collect her thoughts and relieve her overburdened heart. Boundless contempt for the man to whom she was united filled it; yet she felt that she owed him a debt of gratitude, that he was weak only through love, and that, for her children’s sake, she must continue to wear the yoke which she had taken upon herself.

His existence henceforth became of less and less importance to her feelings and actions, especially as he left the management of their two boys to her. He had reason to be satisfied with it, for she provided Conrad with the best instruction, that the might choose between the army and the legal profession; his younger brother she intended for the priesthood, and the boy’s inclination harmonized with her choice.

The fear that the Emperor Charles might yet commit the child she loved to the monastery never left her. But she thought that she might induce Heaven to relinquish its claim upon her John, whom, moreover, it seemed to have destined for the secular life, by consecrating her youngest child to its service.

While she did not forget her household, her mind was constantly in Spain. Her walks were usually directed toward the palace, to inquire how

the recluse in San Yuste was faring, and whether any rumour mentioned her imperial son.

After the great victory gained by Count Egmont against the military forces of France, eleven months after the battle of St. Quentin, there was enough to be seen in Brussels. The successful general was greeted with enthusiastic devotion. Egmont's name was in every one's mouth, and when she, too, saw the handsome, proud young hero, the idol, as it were, of a whole nation, gorgeous in velvet, silk, and glittering gems, curbing his fiery steed and bowing to the shouting populace with a winning smile, she thought she caught a glimpse of the future, and beheld the predecessor of him who some day would receive similar homage.

Why should she not have yielded to such hopes? Already there was a rumour that the daughter of the Emperor and that Johanna Van der Gheynst, who had been Charles's first love, Margaret of Parma, her own son's sister, had been chosen to rule the Netherlands as regent.

Why should less honours await Charles's son than his daughter?

But the festal joy in the gay capital was suddenly extinguished, for in the autumn of the year that, in March, had seen Ferdinand, the Emperor's brother, assume the imperial crown, a rumour came that the recluse of San Yuste had closed his eyes, and a few days after it was verified.

It was Barbara's husband who told her of the loss which had befallen her and the world. He did this with the utmost consideration, fearing the effect of this agitating news upon his wife; but Barbara only turned pale, and then, with tears glittering in her eyes, said softly, "He, too, was only a mortal man."

Then she withdrew to her own room, and even on the following day saw neither her husband nor her children. She had long expected Charles's death, yet it pierced the inmost depths of her being.

This sorrow was something sacred, which belonged to her and to her alone. It would have seemed a profanation to reveal it to her unloved husband, and she found strength to shut it within herself.

How desolate her heart seemed! It had lost its most distinguished object of love or hate.

Through long days she devoted herself in quiet seclusion to the memory of the dead, but soon her active imagination unfolded its wings again, and

with the new grief mingled faint hopes for the boy in Spain, which increased to lofty anticipations and torturing anxiety.

The imperial father was dead. What now awaited the omnipotent ruler's son?

How had Charles determined his fate?

Was it possible that he still intended him for the monastic life, now that he had become acquainted with his talents and tastes?

Since Barbara had learned that her son had won his father's heart, and that the Emperor, as it were, had made him his own with a kiss, she had grown confident in the hope that Charles would bestow upon him the grandeur, honours, and splendour which she had anticipated when she resigned him at Landshut, and to which his birth gave him a claim. But her early experience that what she expected with specially joyful security rarely happened,—constantly forced upon her mind the fear that the dead man's will would consign John to the cloister.

So the next weeks passed in a constant alternation of oppressive fears and aspiring hopes, the nights in torturing terrors.

All the women of the upper classes wore mourning, and with double reason; for, soon after the news of the Emperor's death reached Brussels, King Philip's second wife, Mary Tudor, of England, also died. Therefore no one noticed that Barbara wore widow's weeds, and she was glad that she could do so without wounding Pyramus.

A part of the elaborate funeral rites which King Philip arranged in Brussels during the latter part of December in honour of his dead father was the procession which afforded the authorities of the Brabant capital an opportunity to display the inventive faculty, the love of splendour, the learning, and the wit which, as members of flourishing literary societies, they constantly exercised. In the pageant was a ship with black sails, at whose keel, mast, and helm stood Hope with her anchor, Faith with her chalice, and Love with the burning heart. Other similar scenic pieces made the sincerity of the grief for the dead questionable, and yet many real tears were shed for him. True, the wind which swelled the sails of the sable ship bore also many an accusation and curse; among the spectators of the procession there were only too many whose mourning robes were worn not for the dead monarch, but their own nearest relatives, whom his pitiless edicts had given to the executioner as readers of the Bible or heterodox.

These displays, so pleasing to the people of her time and her new home, were by no means great or magnificent enough for Barbara. Even the most superb show seemed to her too trivial for this dead man.

She was never absent from any mass for the repose of his soul, and she not only took part outwardly in the sacred ceremony, but followed it with fervent devotion. As a transfigured spirit, he would perceive how she had once hated him; but he should also see how tenderly she still loved him.

Now that he was dead, it would be proved in what way he had remembered the son whom, in his solitude, he had learned to love, what life path John had been assigned by his father.

But longingly as Barbara thought of Spain and of her boy, often as she went to the Dubois house and to the regent's home to obtain news, nothing could be heard of her child.

Many provisions of the imperial will were known, but there was no mention of her son. Yet Charles could not have forgotten him, and Adrian protested that it would soon appear that he had not omitted him in his last will, and this was done in a manner which indicated that he knew more than he would or could confess.

All this increased Barbara's impatience to the highest degree, and induced her to watch and question with twofold zeal. On no account would she have left the capital during this period of decision, and, though her husband earnestly entreated her to go to the springs, whose waters had proved so beneficial, she remained in Brussels.

In August she saw King Philip set out for Spain, and Margaret of Parma, her son's sister, assume the government of the Netherlands as regent.

On various occasions she succeeded in obtaining a near view of the stately-lady, with her clever; kindly and, spite of the famous down on her upper lip, by no means unlovely features, and her attractive appearance gave Barbara courage to request an audience, in order to learn from her something about her child. But the effort was vain, for the duchess had had no news of the existence of a second son of her father; and this time it was Granvelle who prevented the regent from receiving the woman who would probably have spoken to her of the boy concerning whose fate King Philip had yet reached no determination.

Barbara spent the month of October in depression caused by this fresh disappointment, but it, too, passed without bringing her any satisfaction.

It seemed almost foolish to lull herself further with ambitious expectations, but the hope a mother's heart cherishes for her child does not die until its last throb; and if the Emperor Charles's will did not give her John his rights, then the gracious Virgin would secure them, if necessary, by a miracle.

Her faithful clinging to hope was rewarded, for when one day, with drooping head, she returned home from another futile errand, she found Hannibal Melas there, as bearer of important news.

The Emperor's last will had a codicil, which concerned a son of his Majesty; but, a few days before his end, Charles had also remembered Barbara, and commissioned Ogier Bodart, Adrian's successor, to buy a life annuity for her in Brussels. Hannibal had learned all this from secret despatches received by Granvelle the day before. Informing her of their contents might cost him his place; but how often she had entreated him to think of her if any news came from Valladolid of a boy named Geronimo or John, and how much kindness she had showed him when he was only a poor choir boy!

At last, at last the most ardent desire of the mother's heart was to be fulfilled. She saw in the codicil the bridge which would lead her son to splendour and magnificence, and up to the last hour of his life the Emperor Charles had also remembered her.

She felt not only relieved of a burden, but as if borne on wings. Which of these two pieces of news rendered her the happier, she could not have determined. Yet she did not once think of the addition to her income. What was that in comparison to the certainty that to the last Charles did not forget her!

It made her husband happy to see her sunny cheerfulness. Never had she played and romped with the children in such almost extravagant mirth. Nay, more! For the first time the officer's modest house echoed with the singing of its mistress.

Though her voice was no longer so free from sharpness and harshness as in the old days, it by no means jarred upon the ear; nay, every tone revealed its admirable training. She had broken the long silence with Josquin's motet, "Quia amore langueo," and in her quiet chamber dedicated it, as it

were, to the man to whom this cry of longing had been so dear. Then, in memory of and gratitude to him, other religious songs which he had liked to hear echoed from her lips.

The little German ballads which she afterward sang, to the delight of her boys, deeply moved her husband's heart, and she herself found that it was no insult to art when, with the voice that she now possessed, she again devoted herself to the pleasure of singing.

If the codicil brought her son what she desired, she could once more, if her voice lost the sharpness which still clung to it, serve her beloved art as a not wholly unworthy priestess, and then, perchance, she would again possess the right, so long relinquished, of calling herself happy.

She would go the next day to Appenzelder, who always greeted her kindly when they met in the street, and ask his advice.

If only Wolf had been there!

He understood how to manage women's voices also, and could have given her the best directions how to deal with the new singing exercises.

It seemed as though in these days not one of her wishes remained unfulfilled, for the very next afternoon, just as she was dressing to call upon the leader of the boy choir, the servant announced a stranger.

A glad presentiment hurried her into the vestibule, and there stood Sir Wolf Hartschwert in person, an aristocratic cavalier in his black Spanish court costume. He had become a man indeed, and his appearance did not even lack the "sosiego," the calm dignity of the Castilian noble, which gave Don Louis Quijada so distinguished an appearance.

True, his greeting was more eager and cordial than the genuine "sosiego"—which means "repose"—would have permitted. Even the manner in which Wolf expressed his pleasure in the new melody of Barbara's voice, and whispered an entreaty to send the children and Frau Lamperi—who came to greet him—away for a short time, was anything but patient.

What had he in view?

Yet it must be something good.

When the light shone through her flower-decked window upon his face, she thought she perceived this by the smile hovering around his lips. She was not mistaken, nor did she wait long for the joyous tidings she expected;

his desire to tell her what, with the exception of the regent—to whom his travelling companion, the Grand Prior Don Luis de Avila, was perhaps just telling it as King Philip's envoy—no human being in the Netherlands could yet know, was perhaps not much less than hers to hear it.

Scarcely an hour before he had dismounted in Brussels with the nobleman, and his first visit was to her, whom his news must render happy, even happier than it did him and the woman in the house near the palace, whose heart cherished the Emperor's son scarcely less warmly than his own mother's.

On the long journey hither he had constantly anticipated the pleasure of telling every incident in succession, just as it had happened; but Barbara interrupted his first sentence with an inquiry how her John was faring.

"He is so well that scarcely ever has any boy in the happiest time of his life fared better," was the reply; and its purport, as well as the tone in which it was uttered, entered Barbara's heart like angels' greetings from the wide-open heavens. But Wolf went on with his report, and when, in spite of hundreds of questions, he at last completed the main points, his listener staggered, as if overcome by wine, to the image of the Virgin on the pilaster, and with uplifted hands threw herself on her knees before it.

Wolf, unobserved, silently stole away.

CHAPTER XVII.

The following afternoon Wolf sought Barbara again, and now for the first time succeeded in relating regularly and clearly what, constantly interrupted by her impatience, he had told in a confused medley the day before. Pyramus, as usual, was away, and Barbara had taken care that no one should interrupt them.

Deep silence pervaded the comfortable room, and Wolf had seated himself in the arm-chair opposite to the young wife when, at her entreaty, he began to tell the story again. She had informed him of Dona Magdalena's letter, and that it took her to the Emperor's residence in San Yuste. At that point her friend's fresh tidings began.

In the spring of the previous year Wolf had again been summoned from Valladolid, where in the winter he directed the church singing as prinnen of the religious music, to Cuacos, near San Yuste, where Quijada's wife lived with her foster-son Geronimo. From there he had often gone with Dona Magdalena and the boy to the Emperor's residence, and frequently saw him.

The account given in the letter written by Quijada's wife also applied to the last months of the imperial recluse's existence. Doubtless he sometimes devoted himself to pious exercises and quiet meditation, but he was usually busied with political affairs and the reading and dictating of despatches. Even at that time he received many visitors. When Geronimo came from Cuacos, he was permitted to go in and out of his apartments freely, and the Emperor even seemed to prefer him to Don Carlos, his grandson, King Philip's only son, who was destined to become the head of his house; at least, Charles's conduct favoured this opinion.

On his return to Spain he had made his grandson's acquaintance in Valladolid.

He was a boy who had well-formed, somewhat sickly features, and a fragile body. Of course the grandfather felt the deepest interest in him, and the influence of the famous victor in so many battles upon the twelve-year-old lad was a most beneficial one.

But Charles had scarcely left Valladolid when the passionate boy's extremely dangerous tastes burst forth with renewed violence. The recluse student of human nature had probably perceived them, for when his tutor, and especially the young evildoer's aunt, Juana, the Emperor Charles's daughter, earnestly entreated him to let the grandson, whose presence would disturb him very little, come to San Yuste, because his influence over Don Carlos would be of priceless value, the grandfather most positively refused the request.

On the other hand, the Emperor had not only tolerated his son Geronimo near him, but rejoiced in his presence, for the quiet sufferer's eyes had sparkled when he saw him. Wolf himself had often witnessed this delightful sight.

How Barbara's heart swelled, how eagerly she listened, as Wolf described how well founded was his Majesty's affection for this beautiful, extremely lovable, docile, true-hearted, and, moreover, frank, boy!

True, he showed as yet little taste for knowledge and all that can be learned from books; but he devoted himself with fiery zeal to the knightly exercises which since his Majesty's death Quijada himself was directing, and in which he promised to become a master. Besides, by appealing to his ambition, he could be induced to put forth all his powers, and, if his teachers aimed at what they studiously omitted, it would not be difficult to make a scholar of him.

He had not remained unnoticed by any of the great lords who had sought the Emperor in Sal Yuste and met him. The Venetian ambassador Bodoaro, had asked the name of the splendid young noble.

Even when Death was already stretching hi hand toward the Emperor, he was still overburdened with business, and the heretical agitation which was discovered at that time in Spain had caused him much sorrow, especially as men and women whom he knew personally, belonging to the distinguished families of Posa and De Rojas, has taken part in it.

The monarch's end came more quickly than was expected. He had been unable to attend the auto-da-fe at which the heretics were committed to the flames. He would have done so gladly, and after this mournful experience even regretted that he had granted the German misleader, Luther, the safe conduct promised.

Before a fatal weakness suddenly attacked him his health had been rather better than before; then his voice failed, and Quijada was compelled to kneel beside his bed that he might understand what he wished to impress upon him. While doing so, the dying man had expressed the desire that Don Luis would commend Geronimo to the love of his son Philip.

He had also remembered the love of better days, and when Barbara insisted upon learning what he had said of her, Wolf, who had heard it from Don Luis, did not withhold it.

He had complained of her perverse nature. Had she obediently gone to the convent, he might have spared himself and her the sorrow of holding her so rigidly aloof from his person. Finally, he had spoken of her singing with rapturous delight. At night the "Quia amore langueo" from the Mary motet had echoed softly from his lips, and when he perceived that Don Luis had heard him, he murmured that this peerless cry of longing, reminded him not of the earthly but the heavenly love.

At these words Barbara hid her face in her hands, and Wolf paused until she had controlled the sobs which shook her breast.

Then he went on, she listening devoutly with wet eyes and clasped hands.

The Archbishop of Toledo was summoned, and predicted that Charles would die on the day after to-morrow, St. Matthew's day. He was born on St. Matthias's day, and he would depart from life on St. Matthew's,—[September 12, 1558]—Matthias's brother and fellow-disciple.

So it was, and Barbara remembered that his son and hers had also seen the light of the world on St. Matthias's day.

Charles's death-agony was severe. When Dr. Mathys at last said softly to those who were present, "Jam moritur,"—[Now he is dying]—the loud cry "Jesus!" escaped his lips, and he sank back upon the pillows lifeless.

Here Wolf was again obliged to give his weeping friend time to calm herself.

What he now had to relate—both knew it—was well suited to transform the tears which Barbara was shedding in memory of the beloved dead to tears of joy.

While she was wiping her eyes, Wolf described the great anxiety which, after Charles's death, overpowered the Quijadas in Villagarcia.

The codicil had existed, and Don Luis was familiar with its contents. But how would King Philip take it?

Dona Magdalena knew not what to do with herself in her anxiety.

The immediate future must decide Geronimo's fate, so she went on a pilgrimage with her darling to the Madonna of Guadelupe to pray for the repose of the Emperor's soul, and also to beseech the gracious Virgin mercifully to remember him, Geronimo.

Until that time the boy had believed Don Luis and his wife to be his parents, and had loved Dona Magdalena like the most affectionate son.

He had not even the slightest suspicion that he was a child of the Emperor, and was perfectly satisfied with the lot of being the son of a grandee and the child of so good, tender, and beautiful a mother.

This exciting expectation on the part of the Quijadas lasted nearly a whole year, for it was that length of time before Don Philip finally left the Netherlands and reached Valladolid.

He spent the anniversary of his father's death in the monastery of Del Abrojo.

There, or previously, he had read the codicil in which his imperial father acknowledged the boy Geronimo as his son.

Barbara now desired to learn the contents of the codicil and, as Wolf had told her yesterday how the boy's fate had changed, he interrupted his narrative and obeyed her wish.

As a widower, Charles confessed that he had had a son in Germany by an unmarried woman. He had reason to wish that the boy should assume the robe of a reformed order, but he must be neither forced nor persuaded to do so. If he wished to remain in the world, he would settle upon him a yearly income of from twenty to thirty thousand ducats, which was to pass also to his heirs. Whatever mode of life he might choose, he commanded his son Philip to honour him and treat him with due respect.

As on the day before, when Barbara had only learned in general terms what the codicil contained, her soul to-day, while listening to the more minute particulars, was filled with grateful joy.

Her sacrifice had not been vain. For years the fear of seeing her son vanish in a monastery had darkened her days and nights, and Quijada and Dona Magdalena had also probably dreaded that King Philip might confide

his half-brother to a reformed order, for the monarch had by no means hastened to inform the anxious pair what he had determined.

It was not until the end of September that, upon the pretext of hunting, he went to the monastery of San Pedro de la Espina, a league from Villagarcia, and ordered Don Luis to seek him there with the boy. He was to leave the latter wholly unembarrassed, and not even inform him that the gentleman whom he would meet was the King.

His decision, he had added in the chilling manner characteristic of him, would depend upon circumstances.

Quijada, with a throbbing heart, obeyed, but Geronimo had no suspicion of what awaited him, and only wondered why his mother took so much trouble about his dress, since they were merely going hunting. The tears glittering in her eyes he attributed to the anxiety which she often expressed when he rode with the hunters on the fiery young Andalusian which his father had given him. He was then twelve years and a half old, but might easily have been taken for fourteen.

"It was a splendid sight," Wolf went on, "as the erect figure of the dark Don Luis, on his powerful black stallion, galloped beside the fair, handsome boy with his white skin and blue eyes, who managed his spirited dun horse so firmly and joyously.

"Dona Magdalena and I followed them on our quiet bays. Her lips moved constantly, and her right hand never stirred from the rosary at her belt while we were riding along the woodland paths.

"To soothe her, I began to talk about the pieces of music which his Majesty had brought from Brussels, but she did not hear me. So I remained silent until the monastery glimmered through the trees. The blood left her cheeks, for at the same moment the thought came to us both that King Philip was taking him to the monks.

"But we had scarcely time to confide what we feared to each other ere the blast of horns echoed from the forest.

"Then, to calm the anxious mother's heart, I remarked, 'His Majesty would not have the horns sounded in that way if he were taking the pious brothers a new companion,' and Dona Magdalena's wan cheeks again flushed slightly.

“The forest is cleared in front of the monastery, but it surrounds on all sides the open glade amid whose grass the meadow saffron was then growing thickly.

“I can still see Geronimo as he swung himself from the saddle to gather some of the flowers. His mother needed them as medicine for a poor woman in the village.

“We stopped behind the last trees, where we had a good view of the glade. Don Luis left the boy to himself for a time; but when the blast of horns and the baying of the hounds sounded nearer, he ordered him, in the commanding tone he used in teaching him to ride, to remount.

“Geronimo laughed, thrust the flowers hastily into his saddlebag, and with a bold leap vaulted on his horse’s back.

“A few minutes after, the King rode out of the forest.

“He was mounted on a noble bay hunting charber, and wore a huntsman’s dress.

“No rider can hold a slender figure more erect.

“His haughty head, with the fair, pointed beard, was carried slightly thrown back, which gave him an especially arrogant appearance.

“When he saw Quijada, he raised his riding-whip with a significant gesture to his lips. We, too, understood what it meant, and Don Luis knew him far better than we.

“He greeted the King without the least constraint, as if he were merely a friend of noble birth, then beckoned to Geronimo, and the introduction was only the brief words, ‘My son’ and ‘The Count of Flanders.’

“The boy raised his little plumed hat with frank courtesy and, while bowing in the saddle, forced his dun horse to approach the King sideways. It was no easy matter, and seemed to please his Majesty, for a smile of satisfaction flitted over his cold features, and we heard him exclaim to Quijada, ‘A horseman, and, if the saints so will, a knight well pleasing to Heaven.’

“What more he said to the boy we learned later. The words which by the movement of his lips we saw that he added to the exclamation were, ‘Unless our noble young friend prefers to consecrate himself in humility to the service of the highest of all Masters.’

“He had pointed to the monastery as he spoke. Geronimo did not delay his reply, but, crossing himself, answered quickly:

“‘I wish to be a faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, but only in the world, fighting against his foes.’

“Philip nodded so eagerly that his stiff white ruff was pushed awry, and then, with patronizing approval, added: ‘So every nobleman ought to think. You, my young friend, saw a short time ago at the auto-da-fe in Valladolid how a considerable number of Spanish gentlemen of the noblest blood expiated at the stake the mortal sin of heresy. A severe punishment, and a terrible end! Would you perhaps have preferred to see his Majesty’s mercy grant them their lives?’

“‘On no account, my Lord Count,’ cried Geronimo eagerly. ‘There is no mercy for the heretic.’

“His Majesty now summoned the two knights who attended him and, while one held his horse, he dismounted.

“At a sign from Quijada, Geronimo now also sprang to the ground, and gazed wonderingly at the stranger, whom, on account of his fair beard, he supposed to be a Netherland noble; but Dona Magdalena could bear to remain under the trees no longer, and I followed her to the edge of the meadow. The King advanced toward the boy, and stood before him with so proud and dignified a bearing that one might have supposed his short figure had grown two heads taller.

“Geronimo must have felt that some very distinguished personage confronted him, and that something great awaited him, for he involuntarily raised his hat again. His wavy golden locks now fell unconfined around his head, his cheeks glowed, and his large blue eyes gazed questioningly and with deep perplexity into the stranger’s face as he said slowly, with significant emphasis: ‘I am not the man whom you suppose. Who, boy, do you think that I might be?’

“‘Geronimo turned pale; only one head could be lifted with so haughty a majesty, and suddenly remembering the face which he had seen upon many a coin, sure that he was right, he bent the knee with modest grace, saying, “Our sovereign lord, his Majesty King Philip.”’

“‘I am he,’ was the reply. ‘But to you, dear boy, I am still more.’

“‘As he spoke he gave him his hand, and, when Geronimo rose, he said, pointing to his breast: ‘Your place is here, my boy; for the Emperor Charles, who is now enjoying the bliss of heaven, was your father as well as mine, and you, lad, are my brother.’

“Then passing his arm around his shoulders, he drew him gently toward him, lightly imprinting a kiss upon his brow and cheeks; but Geronimo, deeply moved, pressed his fresh red lips to his royal brother’s right hand. Yet he had scarcely raised his head again when he started, and in an agitated tone asked, ‘And Don Luis—and my dear mother?’

“‘Continue to love and honour them,’ replied the King.—‘Explain the rest to him, Don Luis. But keep what has happened here secret for the present. I will present him myself to our people as my brother. He received in holy baptism the name of John, which in Castilian is Juan. Let him keep it.—Give me your hand again, Don Juan d’Austria.—[Don John of Austria] —A proud name! Do it honour.’

“He turned away as he spoke, mounted with the aid of one of his knights, waved his hand graciously to Quijada and, while his horse was already moving, called to him, ‘My brother, Don Juan, will be addressed as your Excellency.’

“He took no notice of Dona Magdalena, probably because she had appeared here either without or against his orders, and thus offended one of the forms of etiquette on which he placed so much value. So his Majesty neither saw nor heard how the son of an Emperor and the brother of a King rushed up to his foster-mother, threw himself into her outstretched arms, and exclaimed with warm affection, ‘Mother! my dear, dear mother!’”

Barbara had listened weeping to this description, but the last sentence dried her tears and, like Frau Traut a short time ago, her friend regretted that he had not exercised greater caution as he heard her, still sobbing, but with an angry shrug of the shoulders, repeat the exclamation which her son—ay, her son only—had poured forth from his overflowing heart to another woman.

So Wolf did not tell her what he had witnessed in Villagarcia, when Don Juan and Dona Magdalena had fallen into each other’s arms, and that when he asked about his real mother the lady answered that she was an unfortunate woman who must remain away from him, but for whom it would be his duty to provide generously.

Directly after, on the second day of October, Wolf added, the King had presented her son to the court as his Excellency, his brother Don John of Austria!

He, Wolf, had set off for Brussels with the grand prior that very day, and, as his ship sailed from Spain before any other, he had succeeded in being the first to bring this joyful news to the Netherlands and to her.

When Wolf left Barbara, it seemed as though what had hitherto appeared a bewildering, happy dream had now for the first time been confirmed. The lofty goal she had striven to reach, and of which she had never lost sight, was now gained; but a bitter drop of wormwood mingled with the happiness that filled her grateful heart to overflowing. Another woman had forced herself into her place and robbed her of the boy's love, which belonged to her and, after his father's death, to her alone.

Every thought of the much-praised Dona Magdalena stirred her blood. How cruel had been the anguish and fears which she had endured for this child she alone could know; but the other enjoyed every pleasure that the possession of so highly gifted a young creature could afford. She could say to herself that, of all sins, the one farthest from her nature was envy; but what she felt toward this stealer of love fatally resembled sharp, gnawing ill will.

Yet the bright sense of happiness which pervaded her whole being rendered it easy for her to thrust the image of the unloved woman far into the shade, and the next morning became a glorious festival for her; she used it to pay a visit to the Dubois couple, and when she told them what she had heard from Wolf, and saw Frau Traut sob aloud in her joy and Adrian wipe tears of grateful emotion from his aged eyes, her own happiness was doubled by the others' sympathy.

Barbara had anticipated Wolf, but while going home she met him on his way to the Dubois house. He joined her, and still had many questions to answer.

During the next few days her friend helped her compose a letter to her son; but he was constantly obliged to impose moderation upon the passionate vehemence of her feelings. She often yielded to his superior prudence, only she would not fulfil his desire to address her boy as "your Excellency."

When she read the letter, she thought she had found the right course.

Barbara first introduced herself to John as his real mother. She had loved and honoured his great father with all the strength of her soul, and she might boast of having been clear to him also. By the Emperor Charles's command he, her beloved child, had been taken from her. She had submitted with a bleeding heart and, to place him in the path of fortune, had inflicted the deepest wounds upon her own soul. Now her self-sacrifice was richly rewarded, and it would make her happier than himself if she should learn that his own merit had led him to the height of fame which she prayed that he might reach.

Then she congratulated him, and begged him not to forget her entirely amid his grandeur. She was only a plain woman, but she, too, belonged to an ancient knightly race, and therefore he need not be ashamed of his mother's blood.

Lastly, at Wolf's desire, she requested her son to thank the lady who so lovingly filled her place to him.

Her friend was to give this letter himself to Don John of Austria, and he voluntarily promised to lead the high-minded boy to the belief that his own mother had also been worthy of an Emperor's love.

Lastly, Wolf promised to inform her of any important event in her son's life or his own. During the last hour of their meeting he admitted that he was one of the few who felt satisfied with their lot. True, he could not say that he had no wishes; but up to this hour he had desired nothing more constantly and longingly than to hear her sing once more, as in that never-to-be-forgotten May in the Ratisbon home. He might now hope, sooner or later, to have this wish, too, fulfilled. These were kind, cheering words, and with a grateful ebullition of feeling she admitted that, after his glad tidings, she, too, again felt capable of believing in a happy future.

So the friends from childhood bade each other farewell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

During the following days Barbara's life path was illumined by the reflection of the happiness bestowed by the wonderful change in the fate of her child of sorrow, who now promised to become a giver of joy to her.

Doubtless during the ensuing years many dark shadows fell upon her existence and her heart; but when everything around and within was gloomy, she only needed to think of the son whom she had given the Emperor, and the constantly increasing brilliancy of his career, to raise her head with fresh confidence. Yet the cloud obscuring her happiness which she found it hardest to bear proceeded directly from him.

He had probably mentioned her to his royal brother, and revenues had been granted her far exceeding poor Wawerl's dreams, and doubtless a reflection of the admiration which her son earned fell upon her, and her pride was greatly increased. Moreover, she could again devote herself without fear to her ardently beloved art, for even honest old Appenzelder declared that he liked to listen to her, though her voice still lacked much of the overpowering magic of former days. She was in a position, too, to gratify many a taste for whose satisfaction she had often yearned, yet she could not attain a genuine and thorough new sense of happiness.

The weeks which, a few years after her John's recognition, she spent with self-sacrificing devotion beside her husband's couch of pain, which was to become his deathbed, passed amid anxiety and grief, and when her affectionate, careful nursing proved vain, and Pyramus died, deep and sincere sorrow overpowered her. True, he had not succeeded in winning her to return his tender love; but after he had closed his eyes she realized for the first time what a wealth of goodness and fidelity was buried with him and lost to her forever.

Her youngest boy, soon after his father's death, was torn from her by falling into a cistern, and she yielded herself to such passionate grief for his loss that she thought she could never conquer it; but it was soon soothed by the belief that, for the sake of this devout child, whose training for a religious life had already commenced, Heaven had resigned its claims upon

John, and that the boy was dwelling in the immediate presence of the Queen of Heaven.

Thus, ere she was aware of it, her burning anguish changed into a cheerful remembrance. Earlier still—more than two years after Wolf's departure—tidings closely associated with the sorrow inflicted through her John had saddened her. The ship which was to bear the loyal companion of her youth to Spain was wrecked just before the end of the voyage, and Wolf went down with it. Barbara learned the news only by accident, and his death first made her realize with full distinctness how dear he had been to her.

The letter which she had addressed to her son was lost with the man in whom Fate had wrested from her the last friend who would have been able and willing to show her John clearly and kindly a correct picture of his mother's real character.

For two years she had hoped that Wolf would complete her letter in his own person, and tell her son how her voice and her beauty had won his father's heart. Quijada had known it; but if he spoke of her to his wife and foster-son, it was scarcely in her favour—he cared little for music and singing.

So the loss of this letter seemed to her, with reason, a severe misfortune. What she now wrote to John could hardly exert much influence upon him. Yet she did write, this time with the aid of Hannibal. But the new letter, which began with thanks for the financial aid which the son had conferred upon his mother through his royal brother, was distasteful both to her pride and her maternal affection. Half prosaic, half far too effusive, it gave a distorted idea of her real feelings, and she tore it up before giving it to the messenger.

Yet she did not cease to hope that, in some favourable hour, the heart of the idol of her soul would urge him to approach his mother; but year after year elapsed without bringing her even the slightest token of his remembrance, and this omission was the bitter drop that spoiled the happiness which, after the death of her youngest boy, was clouded by no outward event.

When at last she addressed herself to John in a third letter, which this time she dictated to Hannibal as her heart prompted, she received an answer, it is true, though not from him, but from Dona Magdalena.

In kind words this lady urged her not to write to “her”—Dona Magdalena’s—son in future. She had taught him to think of the woman who bore him with fitting respect, but it would be impossible for him to maintain the relation with her. She must spare her the explanation of the reasons which made this appear to be an obstacle to his career. Don John would prove in the future, by his care for her prosperity and comfort, that he did not forget her. She had no right, it is true, to counsel her; but when she transported herself into the soul of the woman who had enjoyed the love of the Emperor Charles, and on whom Heaven had bestowed a son like John of Austria, she felt sure that this woman would act wisely and promote her real welfare if she preferred communion with her Saviour, in the quiet of a cloister, to the bustle of life amid surroundings which certainly were far too humble for her.

Barbara felt wounded to the inmost depths of her being by this letter. Had the officious adviser, who had certainly despatched the reply without her son’s knowledge, been within her reach, she would have showed her how little inclination she felt to be patronized by the person who, after alienating the son’s heart from his mother, even presumed to dictate to her to rob herself of her last claim upon his regard.

True, in one respect she agreed with the writer of the letter.

Precisely because it appeared as if Heaven had accepted her sacrifice and the grandeur for which she had made it seemed to be awaiting her son, she ought to attempt nothing that might impede his climbing to the height, and her open connection with him might easily have placed stones in his path. His elevation depended upon King Philip, whose boundless pride had gazed at her from his chilling face.

So she resolved to make no more advances to her child until the day came—and a voice within told her that come it must—when he himself longed for his own mother. Meanwhile she would be content with the joy of watching his brilliant course from the distance.

The miracles which she had anticipated and prayed for in his behalf were accomplished. First, she heard that Count Ribadavia’s splendid palace would be prepared for her son, that the sons of noble families would be assigned to attend him, and that a body-guard of Spaniards and Germans and a train of his own were at his command.

Then she learned in what a remarkable manner Elizabeth of Valois, the King's new wife, favoured the lad of thirteen. At the taking of the oath by which the Cortes recognised Don Carlos as the heir to the throne, John had been summoned directly after the Infant as the first person entitled to homage.

Next, she learned that he had entered the famous University of Alcala de Henares.

And his classmates and friends? They were no less important personages than Don Carlos himself and Alessandro Farnese, John's nephew, the son of that Ottavio at whose admission as Knight of the Golden Fleece Barbara had made at Landshut the most difficult resolution of her life.

He was said to share everything with these distinguished companions, and to be himself the handsomest and most attractive of the illustrious trio. He was particularly inseparable from Alessandro, the son of the woman now ruling as regent in Brussels, who was John's sister.

What reply would he have made to this illustrious scion of one of the most ancient and noble royal races if a letter from her had reached him, and the duke's son had asked, "Who is this Frau Barbara Blomberg?" or, as she now signed herself, "Madame de Blomberg"?

The answer must have been: "My mother."

Oh, no, no, never!

It would have been cruel to expect this from him; never would she place her beloved child, her pride, her joy, in so embarrassing a position.

Besides, though she could only watch him from a distance, thanks to his generosity or his brother's, she could lead a pleasant life. To sun herself in his glory, too, was sufficiently cheering, and must satisfy her.

He spent three years at the University of Aleala, and nothing but good news of him reached her. Then she received tidings which gave her special joy, for one of the wishes she had formed in Landshut was fulfilled. He had been made a Knight of the Golden Fleece, and how becoming the jewel on the red ribbon must be to the youth of one-and-twenty! How many of her acquaintances belonging to the partisans of the King and Spain came to congratulate her upon it! Because John had become Spanish, and risen in Spain to the position which she desired for him, she wished to become so, and studied the Spanish language with the zeal and industry of a young girl.

She succeeded in gaining more and more knowledge of it, and, finally, through intercourse with Spaniards, in mastering it completely.

At that time the prospects for her party were certainly gloomy; the heretical agitation and the boldness of the rebellious enthusiasts for independence and liberty surpassed all bounds.

The King therefore sent the Duke of Alba to the Netherlands to restore order, and, with the twenty thousand men he commanded, make the insurgents feel the resistless power of offended majesty and the angered Church.

Barbara and her friends greeted the stern duke as a noble champion of the faith, who was resolved to do his utmost. The new bishoprics, which by Granvelle's advice had been established, the foreign soldiers, and the Spanish Inquisition, which pursued the heretics with inexorable harshness, had roused the populace to unprecedented turmoil, and induced them to resist the leading nobles, who were indebted to the King for great favours, to the intense wrath of these aristocrats and the partisans of Spain.

Barbara, with all her party, had welcomed the new bishoprics as an arrangement which promised many blessings, and the foreign troops seemed to her necessary to maintain order in the rebellious Netherlands. The cruelty of the Inquisition was only intended to enforce respect for the edicts which the Emperor Charles, in his infallible wisdom, had issued, and the hatred which the nobles, especially, displayed against Granvelle, Barbara's kind patron, the greatest statesman of his time and the most loyal servant of his King, seemed to her worthy of the utmost condemnation.

The scorn with which the rebels, after the compromise signed by the highest nobles, had called themselves Geusen, or Beggars, and endangered repose, would have been worthy of the severest punishment. What induced these people to risk money and life for privileges which a wise policy of the government—this was the firm conviction of those who shared Barbara's views—could not possibly grant, was incomprehensible to her, and she watched the course of the rebels with increasing aversion. Did they suppose their well-fed magistrates and solemn States-General, who never looked beyond their own city and country, would govern them better than the far-sighted wisdom of a Granvelle or the vast intellect of a Viglius, which comprised all the knowledge of the world?

What they called their liberties were privileges which a sovereign bestowed. Ought they to wonder if another monarch, whom they had deeply angered, did not regard them as inviolable gifts of God? The quiet comfort of former days had been clouded, nay, destroyed, by these patriots. Peace could be restored only by the King's silencing them. So she wished the Spaniards a speedy success, and detested the efforts of independent minds; above all, of William of Orange, their only too clear-sighted, cautious, devoted leader, also skilled in the arts of dissimulation, in whom she recognised the most dangerous foe of Spanish sovereignty and the unity of the Church.

When, by the Duke of Alba's orders, the Counts Egmont and Horn were executed one June day in the market place of Brussels, opinions, even of members of the Spanish party, were divided, especially as Count Egmont was a Catholic, and had acted finally according to the views of the government.

Barbara sincerely lamented his terrible end, for she had seen in him a brilliant model for her John. In hours of depression, the sudden fall of this favourite of the people seemed like an evil omen. But she would not let these disquieting thoughts gain power over her, for she wished at last to enjoy life and, as the mother of such a son, felt entitled to do so.

She regarded this cruel deed of Alba as a false step at any rate, for, though she kept so far aloof from the Netherland burghers and common people, she perceived what deep indignation this measure aroused.

Meanwhile the Prince of Orange, the spirit and soul of this execrable rebellion, had escaped the sentence of the court.

Nevertheless, she regarded Alba with great admiration, for he was a man of ability, whom the Emperor Charles had held in high esteem. Besides, after her husband's death the haughty noble had been courteous enough to assure her of his sympathy.

Moreover, a time was just approaching in which she withdrew too far from this conflict to follow it with full attention, for her son's first deed of heroism became known in Brussels.

The King had appointed John to the command of the fleet, and sent him against the pirates upon the African coast. He could now gather his first laurels, and to do everything in her power for the success of his arms, Barbara spent the greater portion of her time in church, praying devoutly. In

September he was greeted in Madrid as a conqueror, but her joy was not unclouded; for the Infant Don Carlos had yielded up his young life in July as a prisoner, and she believed him to be her John's best friend, and lamented his death because she thought that it would grieve her hero son.

But this little cloud soon vanished, and how brilliantly the blue sky arched above her the next year, when she learned that Don John of Austria had received the honourable commission of crushing the rebellion of the infidel Moriscoes in Andalusia! Here her royal son first proved himself a glorious military hero, and his deeds at the siege of Galera and before Seron filled her maternal heart with inexpressible pride. The words which he shouted to his retreating men: "Do you call yourselves Spaniards and not know what honour means? What have you to fear when I am with you?" echoed in her ears like the most beautiful melody which she had ever sting or heard.

Yet a dark shadow fell on these radiant joys also; her John's friend and foster-father, Don Luis Quijada, had been wounded in these battles, and died from his injuries. Barbara felt what deep pain this would cause her distant son, and expressed her sympathy to him in a letter.

But the greatest happiness was still in store for her and for him. On the 7th of October, 1571, the young hero, now twenty-four years old, as commander of the united fleets of Spain, Venice, and the Pope, gained the greatest victory which any Castilian force had ever won over the troops of the infidels.

Instead of the name received at his baptism, and the one which he owed to his brother, that of Victor of Lepanto now adorned him. Not one of all the generals in the world received honours even distantly approaching those lavished upon him. And besides the leonine courage and talent for command which he had displayed, his noble nature was praised with ardent enthusiasm. How he had showed it in the distribution of the booty to the widow of the Turkish high admiral Ali Pasha! This renowned Moslem naval commander had fallen in the battle, and his two sons had been delivered to Don John as prisoners. When the unfortunate mother entreated him to release the boys for a large ransom, he restored one to her love with the companions for whose liberty he had interceded, with a letter containing the words, "It does not beseem me to keep your presents, since my rank and birth require me to give, not to receive."

These noble words were written by Barbara Blomberg's son, the boy to whom she gave birth, and who had now become just what her lofty soul desired.

After the conquest of Cyprus, the Crescent had seriously threatened the Cross in the Mediterranean, and it was Don John who had broken the power of the Turks.

Alas, that her father could not have lived to witness this exploit of his grandson! What a happy man the victory of Lepanto, gained by his "Wawerl's" son, would have made him! How the fearless old champion of the faith would have rejoiced in this grandchild, his deeds, and nature!

And what honours were bestowed upon her John!

King Philip wrote to him, "Next to God, gratitude for what has been accomplished is due to you." A statue was erected to him in Messina. The Pope had used the words of Scripture, "There was a man sent by God, and his name was John." Now, yes, now she was more than rewarded for the sacrifice of Landshut; now the splendour and grandeur for which she had longed and prayed was far, far exceeded.

This time it was gratitude, fervent gratitude, which detained her in church. The child of her love, her suffering, her pride, was now happy, must be happy.

When, two years later, Don John captured Tunis, the exploit could no longer increase his renown.

At this time also happened many things which filled the heart of a woman so closely connected with royalty sometimes with joy, sometimes with anxiety.

In Paris, the night of St. Bartholomew, a year after her son had chastised the Moslems at Lepanto, dealt the French heretics a deep, almost incurable wound, and in the Netherlands there were not gallows enough to hang the misguided fanatics.

Yet this rebellious nation did not cease to cause the King unspeakable difficulties and orthodox Christians sorrow. On the sea the "Beggars" conquered his Majesty's war ships; Haarlem, it is true, had been forced by the Spanish troops to surrender, but what terrible sacrifices the siege had cost where women had taken part in the defence with the courage of men!

And, in spite of everything, Alba's harshness had been futile.

Then Philip recalled him and put in his place the gentle Don Luis de Requesens, who had been governor in Milan. He would willingly have made peace with the people bleeding from a thousand wounds, but how could he concede the toleration of the heretical faith and the withdrawal of the troops on which he relied? And how did the rebels show their gratitude to him for his kindness and good will?

The Beggars destroyed his fleet, and, though the brother of William of Orange had been defeated upon the Mooker-Heide, this by no means disheartened the enraged nation, resolved upon extremes, and their silent but wise and tireless leader.

In Leyden the obstinacy of the foes of the King and the Church showed itself in a way to which even Barbara and her party could not deny a certain degree of admiration. True, the nature of the country aided the rebels like an ally. Mortal warriors could not contend against wind and storm. But he who from without directed the defence here, who had issued the order to break through the dikes, and then with shameful effrontery had founded in the scarcely rescued city a university which was to nurture the spirit of resistance in the minds of the young men, was again the Prince of Orange; and who else than he, his shrewdness and firmness, robbed Requesens of gratitude for his mildness and the success of his honest labours?

But how much easier was the part of the leader of the enemy, who in Brussels had escaped the fate of Egmont, than the King's kindly disposed governor! When Barbara chanced to hear the men of the people talking with each other, and they spoke of "Father William," they meant the Prince of Orange; and with what abuse, both verbally and in handbills, King Philip and the Spanish Government were loaded!

To Barbara, as well as to the members of her party, William of Orange, whom she often heard called the "Antichrist" and "rebel chief," was an object of hatred. Now he frustrated the kind Requesens's attempt at mediation, and it was also his fault that two provinces had publicly revolted from the Holy Church. The Protestant worship of God was now exercised as freely there as in Ratisbon. Like William of Orange, most of the citizens professed the doctrine of Calvin, but there was no lack of Lutherans, and the clergyman whose sermons attracted the largest congregations was Erasmus Eckhart, Barbara's old acquaintance, Dr. Hiltner's foster-son, who during the Emperor Charles's reign had come to the Netherlands as an army

chaplain, and, amid great perils, was said to have lured thousands from the Catholic Church. Deeply as her sentiments rebelled, here, too, Barbara had become his preserver; for when the Bloody Council had sentenced him to the gallows, she had succeeded, with great difficulty, through her manifold relations to the heads of the Spanish party, in obtaining his pardon. A grateful letter from Frau Sabina Hiltner had abundantly repaid her for these exertions.

The boldness with which William of Orange, who was himself the most dangerous heretic and rebel, protested that he was willing to grant every one full religious liberty, had no desire to injure the Catholic Church in any way, and was even ready to acknowledge the supremacy of the King, could not fail to enrage every pious Catholic and faithful subject of King Philip.

To spoil a Requesens's game was no difficult task for the man who, though by no means as harmless as the dove, was certainly as wise as the serpent; but that the Duke of Alba, the tried, inflexible commander, had been obliged to yield and retire vanquished before the little, merry, industrious, thoroughly peaceful nation which intrusted itself to the leadership of William of Orange, had been too much for her and, when it happened, seemed like a miracle.

What spirits were aiding the Prince of Orange to resist the King and the power of the Church so successfully? He was in league with hell, her old confessor said, and there were rumours that his Majesty was trying to have the abominable mischief-maker secretly put out of the world. But this would have been unworthy of a King, and Barbara would not believe it.

In the northern provinces the Spanish power was only a shadow, but in the southern ones also hatred of the Spaniards was already bursting into flames, and Requesens was too weak to extinguish them.

The King and Barbara's political friends perceived that Alba's pitiless, murderous severity had injured the cause of the crown and the Church far more than it had benefited them. Personally, he had treated her on the whole kindly, but he had inflicted two offences which were hard to conquer. In the first place, he urged her to leave Brussels and settle in Mons; and, secondly, he had refused to receive her Conrad, who had grown up into a steady, good-looking, but in no respect remarkable young man, in one of his regiments, with the prospect of promotion to the rank of officer.

In both cases she had not remained quiet and, at the second audience which the duke gave her, her hot blood, though it had grown so much cooler, played her a trick, and she became involved in a vehement argument with him. In the course of this he had been compelled to be frank, and she now knew that Alba had persuaded her to change her residence at the King's desire, and why it was done.

She afterward learned from acquaintances that the duke had said one was apt to be the loser in a dispute with her; yet she had yielded, though solely and entirely to benefit her John, but she could not help confessing to herself that her residence in the capital could not be agreeable to him. The highest Spanish officials and military commanders lived there, as well as the ambassadors of foreign powers, and it was not desirable to remind them of the maternal descent of the general who now belonged to the King's family.

The case was somewhat similar, as Alba himself had confessed to her, with regard to her son Conrad's promotion to the rank of an officer; for if he attained that position he might, as the brother of Don John of Austria, make pretensions which threatened to place the hero of Lepanto in a false, nay, perhaps unpleasant position. This, too, she did not desire. But in removing from Brussels she had possibly rendered Don John a greater service than she admitted to herself, for, since her son's brilliant successes had made her happy and her external circumstances had permitted it, she had emerged from the miserable seclusion of former years.

Her dress, too, she now suited to the position which she arrogated to herself. But in doing so she had become a personage who could scarcely be overlooked, and she rarely failed to be present on the very occasions which brought together the most aristocratic Spanish society in Brussels.

So, after a fresh dispute with Alba, in which the victor on many a battlefield was forced to yield, she had obtained his consent to retire to Ghent instead of Mons.

True, the duke would have preferred to induce her to go to Spain, and tried to persuade her to do so by the assurance that the King himself desired to receive her there.

But she had been warned.

Through Hannibal Melas and other members of her own party she had learned that Philip intended, if she came to Spain, to remove her from the

eyes of the world by placing her in a convent, and never had she felt less inclination to take the veil.

Her departure from Brussels had done Alba and his functionaries a service, for she had constantly forced herself into the government building to obtain news of her son.

The great and opulent city of Ghent, the birthplace of the Emperor Charles, of which he had once said to Francis I, the King of France, that Paris would go into his glove (Gant), had been chosen by Barbara for several reasons. The principal one was that she would find there several old friends of former days, one of whom, her singing-master Feys, had promised to accept her voice and enable her to serve her art again with full pleasure.

The other was Hannibal Melas, who before Granvelle's fall had been transferred there as one of the higher officials of the government.

She also entered into relations with other heads of the Spanish party, and thus found in Ghent what she sought. The pension allowed her enabled her to hire a pretty house, and to furnish it with a certain degree of splendour. A companion, for whom she selected an elderly unmarried lady who belonged to an impoverished noble family, accompanied her in her walks; a major-domo governed the four men-servants and the maids of the household; Frau Lamperi retained her position as lady's maid; the steward and cook attended to the kitchen and the cellar; and two pages, with a pretty one-horse carriage, lent an air of elegance to her style of living.

For the religious service, which was directed by her own chaplain, she had had a chapel fitted up in the house, according to the Ratisbon fashion. The poor were never turned from her door without alms, and where she encountered great want she often relieved it with a generosity far beyond her means. Under the instruction of Maestro Feys, she eagerly devoted herself to new exercises in singing. Doubtless she realized that time and the long period of hoarseness had seriously injured her voice, but even now she could compare with the best singers in the city.

Thus Barbara saw her youthful dreams of fortune realized—nay, surpassed—and in the consciousness of liberty which she now enjoyed, elevated by the success gained by the person she loved best, she again followed her lover's motto. With the impelling "More, farther" before her eyes, she took care that she did not lack the admiration for which she had

never ceased to long, and to which, in better days, she had possessed so well-founded a claim.

Now a lavish and gracious hospitality, as well as her relationship to the greatest and most popular hero of his time, must give her what she had formerly obtained through her art; for she rarely sang in large companies, and when she did so, no matter how loudly her hearers expressed their delight, she could not regain the old confident security that she was justly entitled to it. But she could believe all the more firmly that the acknowledgments of pleasure which she reaped from her little evening parties were sincere. They even gained a certain degree of celebrity, for the kitchen in her house was admirably managed, and whatever came from it found approval even in the home of the finest culinary achievements. But it was especially the freedom—though not the slightest indecorum was permitted—with which people met at "Madame de Blomberg's," as she now styled herself, that lent her house so great an attraction, and finally added the more aristocratic members of her party to the number of her guests.

The very different elements assembled in her home were united by Barbara's unaffected vivacity and frank, enthusiastic temperament, receptive to the veriest trifle. These evening entertainments rarely lacked music; but she had learned to retire into the background, and when there were talented artists among her guests she gave them the precedence. The way in which she understood how to discover and bring out the best qualities of every visitor rendered her a very agreeable hostess.

Maestro Feys made her acquainted with his professional friends in Ghent, and her opinion of music was soon highly valued among them. Where women choirs were being trained, she was asked to join them, and often took a part which seemed to the others too difficult. Thus Barbara was heard and known in larger circles, and she had the pleasure of hearing her admirable training and excellent method of delivery praised by the director of the choir of the Cathedral of Saint Bavon, one of the greatest musicians in the Netherlands. But it afforded her special gratification when a choir of Catholic women chose her for their leader. She devoted a large portion of her time and strength to it, and felt honoured and elevated by its progress and admirable performances.

Although nearly fifty, she was still a very fine-looking woman. The few silver threads which now mingled in her hair were skilfully concealed by Lamperi's art, and few ladies in Ghent were more tastefully and richly apparelled.

Among the guests who thronged to her house there was no lack of elderly gentlemen who would gladly have married the vivacious, unusual woman, who was so nearly connected with the royal family, and lived in such luxurious style.

Never had she had more suitors than at this time; but she had learned the meaning of a loveless marriage, and her heart still belonged to the one man to whom, notwithstanding the deep wounds he had inflicted, she owed a brief but peerlessly sublime happiness.

She could not even have bestowed upon her husband the alms of a sincere interest, for, in spite of the increasing number of social and musical engagements which filled her life, one thought alone occupied the depths of her soul—her John, his renown, grandeur, and honour.

Her son Conrad had no cause to complain of lack of affection from his mother, but the victor of Lepanto was to her the all-animating sun, the former only a friendly little star. Besides, she rarely saw him now, as he was studying in Lowen.

As she had modelled her housekeeping after that of the Castilian nobles, and her guests almost exclusively belonged to the royal party, she also sought Spanish houses or those of the city magistrates who were partisans of the King.

News of her son would be most fully supplied there, and many an officer whom she met had served under her John, and willingly told the mother what he admired and had learned from him. The young Duke of Ferdinandina, a Spanish colonel, who had studied with John in Alcala, and then fought by his side at the conquest of Tunis, stirred her heart most deeply by his enthusiastic admiration for the comrade who was his superior in every respect.

All the pictures of Don John, the young officer who had shared his tent declared, gave a very faint idea of his wonderful beauty and bewitching chivalrous grace. Not only women's hearts rushed to him; his frank, lovable nature also won men. As a rider in the tournament, in games of ball and quarter staff, he had no peer; for his magnificently formed body was like

steel, and he himself had seen Don John share in playing racket for six hours in succession with the utmost eagerness, and then show no more fatigue than a fish does in water. But he was also sure of success where proof of intellect must be given. He did not understand where Don John had found time to learn to speak French, German, and Italian. Moreover, he was thoroughly the great noble. On the pilgrimage which he made to Loretto he had distributed more than ten thousand ducats among the poor. The piety and charity which distinguished him—he had told him so himself—owed to the lady who reared him, the widow of the never-to-be-forgotten Don Luis Quijada. His eye filled with tears when he spoke of her. But even she, Barbara, could not love him more tenderly or faithfully than this admirable woman. Up to the day she insisted upon supplying his body linen. The finest linen spun and woven in Villagarcia was used for the purpose, and the sewing was done by her own skilful hands. Nothing of importance befel him that he did not discuss with Tia in long letters.—["Tia," the Spanish word for aunt.]

Barbara had listened to the young Spaniard with joyous emotion until, at the last communication, her heart contracted again.

How much that by right was hers this worm snatched, as it were, from her lips! What delight it would also have given her to provide her son's linen, and how much finer was the Flanders material than that made at Villagarcia! how much more artistically wrought were Mechlin and Brusse laces than those of Valladolid or Barcelona!

And the letters!

How many Dona Magdalena probably possessed! But she had not yet beheld a single pen stroke from her son's hand.

Yet she thanked the enthusiastic young panegyrist for his news, and the emotion of displeasure which for a short time destroyed her joy melted like mist before the sun when he closed with the assurance that, no matter how much he thought and pondered, he could find neither spot nor stain the brilliantly pure character of her son, irradiated by nobility of nature, the favour of fortune, and renown.

The already vivid sense of happiness which filled her was strongly enhanced by this description of the personality of her child and, in a period which saw so many anxious and troubled faces in the Netherlands, a sunny radiance brightened hers.

She felt rejuvenated, and the acquaintances and friends who declared that no one would suppose her to be much older than her famous son, whose age was known to the whole world, were not guilty of undue exaggeration.

Heaven, she thought, would pour its favour upon her too lavishly if the report that Don John was to be appointed Governor of the Netherlands should be verified.

It was not in Barbara's nature to shut such a wealth of joy into her own heart, and never had her house been more frequently opened to guests, never had her little entertainments been more brilliant, never since the time of her recovery had the music of her voice been more beautiful than in the days which followed the sudden death of the governor, Requesens.

Meanwhile she had scarcely noticed how high the longing for liberty was surging in the Netherland nation, and with how fierce a glow hatred of the Spanish tyrants was consuming the hearts of the people.

But even Barbara was roused from her ecstasy of happiness when she heard of the atrocities that threatened the provinces.

What did it avail that the King meanwhile left the government to the Council of State in Brussels? Even furious foes of Spain desired to see a power which could be relied upon at the head of the community, even though it were a tool of the abhorred King. The danger was so terrible that it could not fail to alarm and summon to the common defence every individual, no matter to what party he might belong; for the unpaid Spanish regiments, with unbridled violence, rioting and seeking booty, capable of every crime, every shameful deed, obedient only to their own savage impulses, were already entering Brabant.

Now many a Spanish partisan also hoped for deliverance from the Prince of Orange, but he took advantage of the favour of circumstances in behalf of the great cause of liberty. The "Spanish" in Ghent heard with terror that all the heads of the royalist party who were at the helm of government had been captured, that province after province had revolted, and would no longer bow to the despot. Philip of Croy, Duke of Aerschot, had been appointed military governor of Brabant.

The inhabitants of Ghent now saw the States-General meet within the walls of their city, in order, as every other support failed, to appeal for aid to foreign powers, and entreat "Father William," who could do everything, to guard the country from the rebellious soldiery. Even those who favoured

Spain now relied upon his never-failing shrewdness and energy until the King sent the right man.

Then the rumour that King Philip would send his brother Don John of Austria, that, as his regent, he might reconcile the contending parties, strengthened into authentic news, and not only the Spanish partisans hailed it with joyous hope, for the reputation of military ability, as well as of a noble nature, preceded the victor of Lepanto.

Barbara received these tidings through the distinguished City Councillor Rassingham, who invited her for the first time to a meeting of the Spanish party in his magnificent home—an honour bestowed, in addition to herself, upon only a few women belonging to the highest social circles, and which she probably owed to the summons to Don John. The members of the States-General who favoured the King were also to be present at this assembly, and a banquet would follow the political discussions. This invitation promised to lend fresh distinction to her social position, and open a sphere of activity which suited her taste.

The King's cause was hers, and to be permitted to work for it gained a special charm by her son's appointment to be governor of the country, which filled her with mingled anxiety and joy. If he were regent, every service which she rendered the party would benefit him personally.

Yet it was not perfectly easy for her to accept Rassingham's invitation.

Nothing could be more desirable and flattering than to obtain admittance to this house, from which all foreign and doubtful elements were excluded with special care, but she would be obliged to remain there until late at night, and this was difficult to reconcile with certain duties she had undertaken.

Her old music teacher, Feys, to whom she was so much indebted, had been attacked by slow fever, and she had received him in her house five days ago, and provided with loving devotion for his nursing. The bachelor of seventy had been so ill cared for in his lonely, uncomfortable home that her kind heart had urged her to take charge of him.

She had left him only a few hours since he had been under her roof, and if the banquet at the Rassinghams, after the deliberations, lasted until a very late hour, she would, for the sake of her invalid guest, great as was the sacrifice, attend only the former.

Yet she was pleased at the thought of sharing this festal assembly, and she, her companion, and Lamperi all went into ecstasies over the dress she intended to wear, which had just arrived from Brussels.

Maestro Feys passed a restless night, and Barbara watched beside his couch for hours. In the morning she allowed herself a little sleep, but she was obliged at noon to dress for the assembly, which was to begin before sunset.

She had just sat down to have her hair arranged, which occupied a long time, when one of the pages handed her a letter brought by a mounted courier.

She opened it curiously, and while reading it her cheeks paled and flushed as in the days of her youth. Then it dropped into her lap, and for a moment she remained motionless, with closed eyes, as though stupefied.

Then, rising quickly, she again read the violet-scented missive, written on the finest parchment.

"Your son," ran the brief contents—"your son, who has so long been separated from his mother, at last desires to look into her eyes. If the woman who gave him birth wishes to make him feel new and deep gratitude, let her hasten at once to Luxemburg, where he has been for several hours in the deepest privacy. The weal and woe of his life are at stake."

The letter, written in the German language, was signed "John of Austria."

Panting for breath, Barbara gazed a long time into vacancy. Then, suddenly drawing herself up proudly, she exclaimed to Lamperi: "I'll dress my hair myself. Yesterday Herr De la Porta offered me his travelling carriage. The major-domo must go to him at once and say that Madame de Blomberg asks the loan of the vehicle. Let the page Diego order post and courier horses at the same time. The carriage must be ready in an hour."

"But, Madame," cried the maid, raising her hands in alarm and admonition, "the Rassinghams are expecting you. The honour! Every one who is well disposed in the States-General will be there. Who knows what the party has in store for you? And then the banquet! What may there not be to hear!"

"No matter," replied Barbara. "The chaplain—I'll speak to him-must send the refusal. No summons from Heaven could be more powerful than

the call that takes me away. Bestir yourself! There is not an instant to lose."

Frau Lamperi retired with drooping head. But when she had executed her mistress's orders and returned, Barbara laid her hand upon her shoulder, whispering: "You can keep silence. I am going to Luxemburg. He who calls me is one whom you saw enter the world, the hero of Lepanto. He wants his mother. At last! at last! And I—"

Here tears stifled her voice, and obeying the desire to pour out to another the overflowing gratitude and love which had taken possession of her soul, she threw herself upon the gray-haired attendant's breast, and amid her weeping exclaimed: "I shall see him with these eyes, I can clasp his hand, I shall hear his voice—that voice—His first cry—A thousand times, waking and sleeping, I have fancied I heard it again. Do you remember how they took him from me, Lamperi?

"To think that I survived it! But now—now If that voice lured me to the deepest abyss and called me away from paradise, I would go!"

The maid's old eyes also overflowed, and when Barbara read her son's letter aloud, she cried: "Of course there can be no delay, even if, instead of the Rassinghams, King Philip himself should send for you. And I—may I go with you? Oh, Madame, you do not know what a sweet little angel he was from his very birth! We were not allowed to show him to you. And it was wise, for, had you seen him, it would have broken your poor mother heart to give him up."

She sobbed aloud as she spoke. Barbara permitted her to accompany her, though she had intended to take her companion, and would have preferred to travel with the woman of noble birth.

Besides, she could have confided the care of her sick guest to Lamperi more confidently than to the other. But the faithful old soul's wish to see the boy whose entrance into the world she had been permitted to greet was too justifiable for her to be able to refuse it.

How much Barbara had to do before her departure! Most of the time was consumed by the suffering maestro and the arrangements which she had to make for him. She did not leave his bedside until the arrival of the sister who was to assist her companion in nursing her old friend until her return. She certainly would not be absent long; the important things John had to say might probably require great haste, while, on the contrary, whatever needed time for execution could be comfortably despatched during his stay

in the Netherlands. So she assured Feys, who regarded her as his good angel and felt her departure painfully, that she would soon be with him again, and then gave the order to ask Hannibal Melas, in her name, to pay frequent visits to the sick maestro. It was very hard for her to leave him and neglect the duties which she had undertaken, but in the presence of the summons addressed to her every other consideration must be silent.

When Barbara returned to her own apartments Lamperi was still busied with the packing.

Several dresses—first of all the new Brussels gown and its belongings, even the pomegranate blossoms which the garden city of Ghent had supplied as something rare in November for her mistress's adornment—were placed carefully in the largest trunk, while Barbara, overpowered by inexpressible restlessness, paced the room with hasty steps from side to side.

Only when one or another article was taken from a casket or box did she pause in her walk. Among the things selected was the pearl necklace which Charles had given her, and the only note her royal lover had ever written, which ran, "This evening, quia amore langueo." This she laid with her own hand among the laces and pomegranate blossoms, for this cry of longing might teach her son what she had once been to his father. When John had seen her and felt how clear he was to her, he must become aware that he had another mother besides the Spanish lady whom he called "Tia," and who made his underclothing; then he could no more forget her than that other woman.

Lastly, she summoned the major-domo and told him what he must do during her absence, which she thought would not exceed a week at the utmost. The guests invited for Wednesday must be notified; the women's choir must be requested to excuse her non-appearance; Sir Jasper Gordon, her most faithful admirer, an elderly Englishman, must learn that she had gone away; but, above all, writing tablet in hand, she directed him how to provide for her poor, what assistance every individual should receive, or the sums of money and wood which were to be sent to other houses to provide for the coming winter. She also placed money at the majordomo's disposal for any very needy persons who might apply for help while she was out of reach.

Before the November sun had set she entered the La Porta travelling carriage. The chaplain, whom she referred to the major-domo for any matters connected with the poor, gave his blessing to the departing traveller, whose cheerful vivacity, after so many severe trials, he admired, and whose "golden heart," as he expressed it, had made her dear to him. The servants gathered at the door of the house, bowing silently, and her "Farewell, till we meet again!" fell from her lips with joyous confidence.

While on the way she reflected, for the first time, what John could desire of her for the "weal and woe of his life." It was impossible to guess, yet whatever it might be she would not fail him.

But what could it be'

Neither during the long night journey nor by the light of day did she find a satisfactory answer. True, she had not thought solely of her son's entreaty. Her whole former life passed before her.

How much she had sinned and erred! But all that she had done for the man to whom the posthorses were swiftly bearing her seemed to her free from reproach and blameless. Every act and feeling which he had received from her had been the best of which she was capable.

Not a day, scarcely an hour, had she forgotten him; for his sake she had endured great anguish willingly, and, in spite of his mute reserve—she could say so to herself—without any bitter feeling. How she had suffered in parting from her child she alone knew. Fate had raised her son to the summit of earthly grandeur and saved him from every clanger. Providence had adorned him with its choicest gifts. When she thought of the last account of him from the Duke of Ferdinandina, it seemed to her as if his life had hitherto resembled a triumphal procession, a walk through blooming gardens.

What could he mean by the "woe" after the "weal"?

John was to her the embodied fulfilment of the most ardent prayers. The blessings she had besought for him, and for which she had placed her own heart on the rack, had become his-glory and splendour, fame and honour.

She had not been able to give them to him, and undoubtedly he owed much to his own powers and to the favour of his royal brother, but Barbara was firmly convinced that her prayers had raised him to his present grandeur.

What more could now be given to him? Everything the human heart desires was already his. His happiness was complete, and during recent years this, too, had cheered her heart and restored her lost capacity for the enjoyment of life. She had been carried to the very verge of recklessness whenever bitter grief had oppressed her heart.

Her greatest sorrow had been that she was not permitted to see and embrace him, and the knowledge that another filled the place in his heart which belonged to her; but lesser troubles had also gnawed at her soul.

It had been especially hard to bear that, as the object of the greatest Emperor's love and the mother of his son, she had so long felt that she was reluctantly tolerated, and not really recognised in the circles which should have been hers also. Moreover, the consciousness of exercising an art over which she had once attained a mastery, yet never being able to shake off the painful doubt whether the applause that greeted her performance was genuine, spoiled many a pleasant hour.

Still, all these things had probably been only the tribute which she was compelled to pay for the proud joy of being the mother of such a son.

Now she at last felt safe from these malicious little attacks. She had gained a good social position; she was not only valued as a singer, but always sought wherever the women of Ghent were earnestly pursuing music and singing. The invitation to the Rassinghams flung wide the doors which had formerly been closed against her, and she might be sure of not being deemed the least important among the ladies of her party to whose hearts the cause of King and Church was dear.

When she returned to Ghent, even if Don John had not been appointed governor, she might even have ventured to make her house the rendezvous of the heads of the royalist party.

But now that her son entered the Netherlands as the leader, the representative of the sovereign, to reign in Philip's name, everything she could wish was attained, and his father's "More, farther," had lost all meaning for her.

She could meet her happy son as a happy mother; she said this to herself with a long breath. These thoughts had animated her restless half slumber during the nocturnal drive, and she still dwelt upon them all the following day.

Toward evening they reached Luxemburg. At the gate, where every carriage was stopped, the guards asked her name.

At the reply the inspector of taxes bowed profoundly, and signed to the Spanish officer behind him.

He was waiting for her, by the command of the captain-general, who longed to see her, and with the utmost courtesy undertook the office of guide.

Then the carriage rolled on again, and turned into the magnificent park of a palace, which belonged to the royal governor, Prince Peter Ernst von Mansfeld.

A gentleman dressed in black, whose bright eyes revealed an active mind, while the expression of his well-formed features inspired confidence, Don John's private secretary, Escovedo, of whose shrewdness and fidelity Barbara had often heard, ushered her into the apartments assigned to her.

In two hours, he said, the captain-general would be happy to receive her. He first wished her to rest completely after the fatiguing journey.

Barbara dismissed, without making use of their services, the pages whom he placed at her disposal. The more than luxurious meal which was served soon afterward she scarcely touched; the impetuous throbbing of her heart choked her breathing so that she could scarcely speak to Lamperi.

With eager zeal the maid tried to induce her to put on the fresh and extremely tasteful Brussels gala robe. The candlesticks, with the dozens of candles, the elegant silver dishes, the whole manner of the reception, led her to make the suggestion. But Barbara had scarcely noticed these magnificent things.

Her every thought and feeling centred upon the son whom she was now actually to see with her own eyes, whose hand she would touch, whose voice she would hear.

The splendid costume did not suit such a meeting after a long separation, so solemn a festal hour of the heart.

A heavy black silk which she had brought was more appropriate for this occasion. Only she allowed the pomegranate blossoms, which had remained perfectly fresh, to be fastened on her breast, that her dress might not look like mourning. While Lamperi was putting the last touches to her toilet, a priest came for her, as Escovedo had arranged, exactly two hours after her

arrival. This was Father Dorante, Don John's confessor, an elderly man with a face in which earnest piety was so happily mingled with kindly cheerfulness that Barbara rejoiced to know that such a guardian of souls was at her son's side.

While he was descending the stairs with her, Barbara noticed one of the searching glances he secretly cast at her, and wondered what this man's pure, keen eyes had probably discovered.

The spacious apartment into which she was now ushered was hung with costly bright-hued Oriental rugs.

"Gifts from the widow of the Turkish lord high admiral," the priest whispered, pointing to the superb textures, and Barbara nodded. She knew how he had obtained them, but the passionate agitation of her soul deprived her of the power to inform the monk of this knowledge, of which probably she would usually have boasted to a friend of her son so worthy of all respect.

The folding doors of the adjoining room were open. Surely John was there, and how gladly she would have rushed toward it! But the confessor asked her to sit down, as the captain-general still had several orders to give. Then he entered the other room.

Barbara, panting for breath, looked after him and, as she glanced through the open door, it seemed as though her heart stood still.

Yonder aristocratic gentleman, in the full prime of youthful beauty, must be her son.

The man from whom she had so long been parted looked like the apparition of the Count Egmont, at whom she had once gazed full of admiration, with the wish that her John might resemble him; only she thought her John, with his open brow and floating, waving golden locks, far handsomer than the unfortunate victor of St. Quentin and Gravelines.

How noble and yet how easy was the bearing of the dignitary, who was still less than thirty years old!

His figure was only slightly above middle height. What gave it the air of such royal stateliness?

Certainly it was not merely his dress, which consisted wholly of velvet, silk, and satin, with the gold of the Fleece that hung below the lace ruff at his throat. True, the colours of the costume were becoming. Dark violet and

golden yellow alternated in the slashed doublet and wide breeches. His father had worn similar apparel when he confessed his love for her.

Should Barbara regard this as a good omen or an evil one?

He was not yet aware of her arrival for, completely absorbed in the subject of their conversation, he was talking with his private secretary Escovedo.

How animated his beautiful features became! how leonine he looked when he indignantly shook his head with its wealth of golden hair!

Oh, yes! Women's hearts must indeed fly to him, and Barbara now understood what she had heard of the beautiful Diana of Sorrento, and the no less beautiful Alaria Mendoza, and their love for him.

Thus she had imagined him. Yet no! His outer man, in its proud patrician beauty and winning charm, even surpassed her loftiest expectation. One thing alone surprised her: the seriousness of his youthful features and the lines upon his lofty brow.

Why did her favourite of fortune bear these traces of former anxieties?

Now the priest interrupted him. Had he told her John of her entrance?

Yet that was scarcely possible, for his face revealed no trace of filial pleasure. On the contrary. He rallied his courage, as if he were about to step into a cold river, straightened himself, and pressed his right hand, clinched into a fist, upon his hip. Perhaps—the saints be praised!—Father Dorante might have reminded him of something else, for he turned to Escovedo again and gave him an order.

Then he waved his hand, flung back his handsome head as King Philip was in the habit of doing, but in a far nobler, freer manner, hastily passed his hand through his wavy hair, as if to strengthen his courage, and then walked slowly, with haughty, almost arrogant dignity, to the door.

On the threshold he paused and looked at her. How bright were the large blue eyes which now gazed at Barbara with an expression far more searching than joyous.

Yet even while, with one hand resting on the back of the chair and the other pressed upon her panting bosom, she was striving to find the right words, Don John's glance brightened.

She was not mistaken. He had dreaded this meeting, and now with joyful surprise was asking himself whether this could be the woman who had been described to him as a showy, extremely whimsical, perverse person, who used her son's renown to obtain access to aristocratic houses and as many pleasures as possible.

She must at any rate have been remarkably beautiful, and how wonderfully her delicately chiselled features had retained a charm which is usually peculiar to youth! how well the now dull gold of her thick tresses harmonized with the faint flush on the almost unwrinkled face! and how dignified was the bearing of her figure, still slender, in spite of her matronly increase in flesh!

No wonder that she had once fired the heart of his distinguished father! Now—that sunny glance could not deceive Barbara—now her appearance had ceased to be unpleasant to him; nay, perhaps even pleased him. And now she could bear it no longer; from the inmost depths of her heart rose the cry: "John, my child! My dear, dear son!"

Again, with the speed of lightning, the question darted through Don John's mind: "Is this the woman whose voice, I was told, offended the ear? Spiteful, base slander!" How fervent, how gentle, how full of tender affection her cry had sounded! Not even from the lips of Doha Magdalena, his much-loved "Tia," had his own name ever echoed so musically as from those of yonder woman, whom he had just shrunk from meeting as though it were an inevitable misfortune.

Shame, regret, love, seethed hotly within him. It was long since he had felt emotion like that which mastered him when her tearful eyes again met his, and now, in the enthusiastic soul of this favourite of fortune, whose lofty flight neither glory, nor fame, nor disappointment could paralyze, in the bosom of this good, high-minded young human being stirred the consciousness that a great new happiness was in store for him, and from his lips rang the cry for which Barbara had waited so long with vain yearning, "Mother!" and again "Mother!"

It seemed to her as if the bright sun had suddenly burst in its full, dazzling radiance from midnight darkness. Three swift steps took her to Don John and, no longer able to control herself, she seized one of the hands which he had extended to her to kiss it; but his chivalrous nature forbade

him to permit this, and at the same moment he had obeyed the impulse to kiss the face upturned to his with such loving tenderness.

On the way she had pondered long over the question how she should address him; but now she knew that she need not call him “Your Excellency,” far less “Your Highness.” To impose so severe a constraint upon her poor, poor heart was no longer required and, though interrupted by low sobbing, she again cried with all the fervour of the most tender maternal love: “My son! My dear, dear child!”

Then suddenly the words she had vainly sought came voluntarily, and in fluent speech she told him how her heart had so long consumed itself with yearning for him, and that she had now left everything behind to obey his summons; and he thanked her with eager warmth by raising the hand which clasped his to his lips.

What he desired of her would be hard for her to do, but now that he knew her it was far harder to ask. Yet it must be done, because upon this might perhaps depend the great hopes which he fixed upon the future, and which would atone for what had so cruelly embittered and poisoned the past.

Barbara gazed more intently into the noble face whose blooming youthful beauty had just delighted her, and in doing so perceived far more distinctly the sorrowful, anxious expression which she had formerly thought she noticed. In pained surprise she inquired what cause he, whom Heaven had hitherto loaded with its most precious gifts, had to complain of Fate, as whose spoiled favourite she, like all the rest of the world, had believed him happy.

He laughed softly, but with such keen bitterness that it pierced her to the heart, and the bright flush with which joy had suffused her cheeks suddenly vanished.

Her favourite of Fortune indignantly rejected the belief that he had reason to look back upon his past life with gratitude and pleasure.

It was incomprehensible and, carried away by the violent agitation which seized upon her, she described with fiery vivacity how the conviction that he had gained everything which her hard sacrifice and her prayers had sought, had beautified her life and helped her to bear even the most painful trials with quiet submission, nay, with joyous gratitude.

Stimulated by the power of the extraordinary things which she had experienced, she described in a ceaseless flow of vivid words how she had torn her child from her soul in order to place it in the path which was to lead to fame, splendour, and honour—in short, to everything that adorns and lends value to life.

"And why, in the name of all the saints," she concluded, "why must I now tell myself that I endured this great suffering in vain, and that what filled my heart with joy was only an idle delusion? Yet I watched your steps as the hunter follows the trail of the game. I saw how every fresh onset led you to greater splendour, higher renown, and more exalted grandeur."

His cheeks, too, had now flushed. What life was still pulsing in the veins of this woman, already past her youth! with what impressive power she understood how to describe what moved her! Yet how mistaken was the view to which maternal love and the desire of her heart had led her artist nature! She had seen only the light, not the shadow, the darkness, the gloom, which had clouded his course of fame.

To secure splendour and grandeur for him, she had yielded to the most cruel demand, and what had been the result of this sacrifice? What had she gained by it?

How had the happiness in which she fancied she saw him revelling been constituted?

The power of the newly awakened experiences bore him away also, and he described no less vividly what he had suffered.

Yes, indeed! He had not lacked great successes, far-reaching renown, high honours, and some degree of glory. But what a tale he—not yet thirty—now related! He, the son of an Emperor, the brother of a powerful King, who was adorned by as many crowns as there were fingers on his hand!

He had been King Philip's servant and useful commander in chief, nothing more.

And now he described the sovereign's cold nature, unfeeling calculation, and offensive suspicion. He, Don John, the not all unworthy son of the great Emperor Charles, was not born to obey all his life, and allow himself to be turned to account, worn out, and abused for the benefit of another. He, too, might lay claim to the right of governing a kingdom of his own as its ruler, benefactor, and Mehrer.

After Lepanto, the crowns of the Morea and Albania had been offered to him. Then, after he had conquered Tunis for his brother Philip, he had wished to reign over that country as its king. Had it been ceded to him, large provinces would have been taken from the infidels. This, it might have been supposed, was sufficient reason for Philip to intrust it to his government. But although the Holy Father in Rome and other rulers had recognised the justice of these wishes, his royal brother could not be persuaded to grant his just demands, and destroyed these hopes with cruel coldness. He had not even been induced to recognise him as Infant, as a lawful member of his family.

With trivial pretexts, and promises which he never intended to fulfil, the hypocritical, selfish, niggardly man had repulsed, delayed, and put him off.

So his life had been spoiled by the most cruel disappointments, by a succession of the bitterest wrongs. Since Lepanto, no pure happiness had bloomed again for him. He was a miserable, disappointed, ill-treated man, who could never regain his former happiness until he obtained, on his own account, what he himself called greatness, honour, glory, and power. The gifts, no, the more than well-earned payments for which he was indebted to the King, were only a bodiless shadow, a caricature of these lofty gifts of Heaven.

His mother, alarmed, cried in terror, “What an ambition!”

But Don John, with increasing excitement, exclaimed: “Yes, mother! I am so ambitious that, if I knew there was another man who more ardently desired renown and honour, I would throw myself out of this window. ‘Who does not struggle ward, falls back!’ has long been my motto, and I am struggling upward and know the goal.”

A startling suspicion seized Barbara, and with anxious caution she whispered:

“Do I see aright? You have learned from Flanders and Brabant how bitterly King Philip is hated there, and you now hope to contend with him for the crown of the Netherlands? The victory you, my hero, my general, you would surely attain—” But here she was interrupted.

Don John cut short her words with the cry, “Mother!” and then went on indignantly: “If any one else had given me this advice, I would deprive him of any inclination to repeat it. God granted Don Philip the sovereignty. My oath, my honour, forbid me to rise against him. He has lost all claim to my

love, my gratitude, but he is sure of the fidelity of his ill-treated brother. Besides," he added proudly, "my wishes mount higher."

Barbara had listened to her son with the utmost eagerness; now, taking a locket from the breast of his doublet, he whispered:

"Do you know whom this lovely picture represents? No? Well, these are the features of the fairest and most unfortunate of women. Mary Stuart, the hapless Queen of Scotland, the devout, patient sufferer for our holy faith, looks at you from this frame. She does not refuse me her hand. The Holy Father in Rome and the Guises in France approve the bold enterprise; but I shall take the army under my command by sea to England. I am sure of victory in this conflict. With the most beautiful of women, I shall gain the crown which I need and which will best suit me."

"John!" Barbara exclaimed, carried away by the daring of this proposal, and her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm. "This desire is worthy of you and your great father. If I can aid you in its realization——"

"You can," Don John eagerly interrupted; "for the first step is to gain the consent of the States-General to despatch the army, which must now be sent back to Spain, thither by sea. When the troops are once on the way they will steer to England, instead of southward. But even to embark these forces I shall need the consent of the representatives of the country. Therefore, difficult as it is for me, the words must be uttered: Your residence in the provinces will prevent my obtaining it. Spare me the mention of my reasons; but the circumstance that you always opened your house to the Spanish party must fill the King's enemies with distrust of you. Besides, it is scarcely credible; but you must believe Escovedo, to whom I owe this information. How petty people in the provinces can be about such matters! An edict was recently issued which commands the removal of every official who can not prove that the union of the parents who gave him life was consecrated by the Holy Church. Alas, mother, that I should be compelled to wound you at our first meeting! But if your love is as great as your every glance tells me, as you have just confessed with such touching warmth ——"

"And as I shall confess," she cried impetuously, "so long as a single breath stirs this bosom; for I love you, John—love you with all the strength of this poor, sorely tortured soul. But, child, child! What you ask of me—It comes so unexpectedly—you have no suspicion how deeply it pierces into

the very heart of my life. I must leave the country which has become my home, the city where prejudice and enmity greeted me, and where I have now obtained the position that befits me. A venerable sick man is in my house, longing for the return of the nurse who left him for your sake. My poor—The rest that I must cast aside and abandon is more than I can enumerate now. Nor could I, this request bewilders me so—Give rue a little time to collect my thoughts, for you see—But if you look at me so, John, I can—Yet no!—It certainly is not necessary that I should say yes or no at once. I must first learn whether you—whether the sacrifice I made for your glory and grandeur—it was in Landshut, you know—whether it was really so useless, whether you are in reality as unhappy as you, the fame-crowned, beloved, and lauded child of an Emperor, would have me believe, or whether—Forgive me, John, but before I make this terribly difficult decision I must—yes, I must see clearly. As surely as your hero soul harbours no falsity, it would be unworthy of you to show your mother a distorted image of your inner life; you must confess whether you—"

"Whether," Don John, with a smile of sorrowful bitterness, here interrupted the deeply troubled woman—"whether, in order to soften your heart, I am not painting in blacker colours than reality requires. Oh, how little you know me yet! I would rather this tongue should wither than that I should unchivalrously permit it to deviate one straw's breadth from the truth in order to attain a selfish purpose. No, mother! My description of the grief which often overpowers this soul was far too lukewarm. If your first sacrifice was intended to make me a happy man, its effect was no stronger than the light of the candle which is burned amid the radiance of the noonday sun. Perhaps I should have been happier had I been allowed to grow up in modest circumstances under your tender care; for then my course would have been long and steep, and I should have been forced to climb many steps to reach the point where barriers are fixed to ambition. But as it is, I began at the place which many of the best men regard as the highest goal. The great man whom you loved understood life better than you. Had I obeyed his wish, and in the stillness of the cloister striven for blessings which do not belong to this world, this miserable existence would have seemed less unendurable to me, then doubtless a much wider space would have separated me from despair; for I am so unhappy, mother, that I envy the poor peasant who in the sweat of his brow gathers the harvest which his sterile fields produce; for years I have been as wretched as the

captive lion in its cage, the lover whose bride is torn from him on the marriage day. Imagine the wish as a woman, and beside her a magician who, by virtue of the power which he possesses, cries, 'The fulfilment of every desire you strive to attain shall be forever withheld,' and you will have an idea of the devastated existence of the pitiable man who, if it were not sinful, would curse those who gave him the life in which he has long seen nothing save the horrible, jeering spectre of disappointment."

"Stop!" moaned Barbara sorrowfully, pressing her hand upon her brow as if frantic. "So even my hardest sacrifice was futile, and what rendered life valuable to my foolish heart was mere delusion and bewildering deception. What I beheld raising you to the stars, as though with eagles' wings, was a clogging weight; what seemed to me at a distance the bright sunshine irradiating your path, was a Will-o'-the-wisp luring to destruction. What I thought white, was black, the radiant daylight was dusk and the darkness of night. Oh, if it were really granted me Yet, child, you certainly do not know what you are asking. So, before it comes to the final decision, let me put this one more question: Do you believe, really and firmly, that if the confidence of the States-General permits you to take your army by sea, and you lead it in England and succeed in winning the crown and hand of this—whether she is guilty or not—beautiful, devout, and, whatever errors she has committed, desirable Queen, that the troubles which it is so hard for your ambitious soul to bear will then vanish? When you have won the woman for whom you yearn, the throne, and the sceptre, will your sore heart be healed and happiness make its joyous entry, and also remain in your soul, that is so hard to satisfy? For—I see and feel it—it is carried away by the 'More, farther,' of your father. Can you, my John, have you really the firm conviction that, if this lofty desire is fulfilled, you will be content and believe that you have found the summit and the limit of your feverish struggle upward and forward?"

"Yes, and again yes," cried Don John in a tone of immovably firm belief, while his large eyes beamed upon his mother with an expression of full and genuine trust. "The vainglory which your first sacrifice brought me was the source of this life full of bitter disappointment. The hand of Mary Stuart, the lovely martyr, the woman so lavishly endowed with every mental and physical gift, for whom my heart has yearned ever since I saw her picture, and the crown of England, the symbol of genuine majesty, will transform disappointment into the fulfilment which Heaven has hitherto denied me. If

these both fall to the lot of the son, the mother's sacrifice will not have been in vain; no, it will bring him golden fruit, for the success of this enterprise will bestow upon your John, besides the fleeting radiance, the sun whence the light emanates. It will raise him to the height to which he aspires, and for which Fate destined him."

Here he hesitated, for the agitated face of Escovedo, who entered with a despatch in his hand, showed that something unexpected and startling had occurred.

The secretary, Don John's friend and counsellor, did not allow himself to be intimidated by the angry gesture with which his master waved him back, but handed him the paper, exclaiming in a tone ringing with the horror the news had inspired: "Antwerp attacked by his Majesty's rebellious troops, those in Alst, headed by their Eletto—burned to ashes, plundered, destroyed!"

With a hasty snatch Don John seized the parchment announcing the misfortune, and read it, panting for breath.

The Council of Antwerp had addressed it to King Philip, and sent a copy to him, the newly appointed governor.

When he let the hand which held the paper fall, he was deadly pale, and gazed around him as though seeking assistance.

Then his eyes met those of his mother who, seized with anxious fears, was watching his every movement, and he handed her the fatal sheet, with the half-sorrowful, half-disdainful exclamation:

"And I am to lead this abused people back to love the man who sent them the Duke of Alba, that he might heal their wounds with his pitiless iron hand, and who let the poor, brave fellows in his service starve and go in rags until, in fierce despair, they seized for themselves what their employer denied."

The sheet Barbara's son had handed to her trembled in her hand as she read half aloud: "It is the greatest commercial city in Europe, the fosterer of art, knowledge, manufactures, and the Catholic faith, which never wavered in obedience to the King, hurled in a single day from the height of honour and happiness to a gulf of misery, and become a den of robbers and murderers, who know nothing of God and the King. Old men, women, and children have been slaughtered by them without distinction, the goods

belonging partly to foreign owners have been stolen and burned, and the magnificent Town Hall, with all its treasures of documents and patents, has become a prey of the flames."

"Horrible! horrible!" cried Barbara, and Don John repeated her words, and added in a hollow tone: "And this happened yesterday, on the selfsame Sunday which saw me ride into the Netherlands! These are the bonfires which redden the heavens on my arrival!"

"William of Orange will call them incendiary flames crying aloud for vengeance," fell in half-stifled accents from Barbara's lips.

"And this time with some reason," replied Don John in a tone of assent, "for the men who kindled them are mercenaries of the King, formerly our own troops, who have been driven to desperation." Then he continued passionately: "And Philip sends me—me, a man of the sword—to these provinces. What is the warrior to do here? This blade is too good to deal the death-blow to the body which is already bleeding from a thousand wounds. If, nevertheless, I did it, I should destroy the most productive fountain of the King's wealth. It is not a man who can fight and command an army and a navy that is needed here, but a woman who understands how to mediate and to heal. The King sent me to this country not to gather fresh laurels, but to be shipwrecked, and with bleeding brow return defeated. Oh, I see through him! But I also know—Heaven be praised!—what I owe to myself, my father's son. If the States-General permit me to take the troops away by sea, I will gain the woman and the crown that are beckoning to me in another country, and his Majesty may send a more pliant regent of either sex to the provinces to continue the battle with William of Orange, who fights with weapons which my straightforward nature and firm sword ill understand how to meet. This sheet places the decision before me. Real, genuine glory, the fairest of wives, and a proud crown—or defeat and ruin."

The close of this outpouring of the young hero's heart sounded like a manly, irrevocable resolution; but his mother laid her hand upon his arm, and said quietly, "I will go."

A sunny glance of gratitude from her son rested upon her; she, however, only bent her head slightly and went on as calmly as if she had found the strength to be content, but with warm affection:

"My first sacrifice was vain. May the second not only aid you to gain the splendour of a crown, but, above all, instil into your soul the satisfaction

with that longed-for highest happiness which your mother's heart desires for you!"

Then Don John obeyed the mighty impulse of his soul to pour forth to his mother the gratitude and love which her unselfish retirement wrung from him. His arms clasped her closely and tenderly, and never had he rewarded even his foster-mother in Villagarcia for her love and faithfulness with a more affectionate kiss.

"My gratitude will die only with myself," he cried as he released her. "Blessed be the day on which I found my own mother! It led you, dear lady, not only to your John, but to his love."

Escovedo, moved to the depths of his heart, had listened in surprise to this outburst of feeling from the famous son of the Emperor, whom he loved, to whom he had devoted his fine intellect and wealth of experience, and for whom it was appointed that he should die.

Thus ended Don John's meeting with his mother, which he had dreaded as an inevitable evil. Alba, who described her as an extremely obstinate woman, had advised him to use a stratagem to induce her to yield to his wish and leave the Netherlands. He was to represent that his sister, the Duchess Margaret, who was holding her court at Aquila, in the Abruzzi Mountains, invited her to visit her in order to make her acquaintance. She would not resist this summons, for she had often made her way to the government building, and took special pleasure in the society of the aristocratic Spaniards. When she was once on board a ship, she would be obliged to submit to being carried to Spain, whence her return could easily be prevented.

To set such a snare for this woman had been impossible for Don John. Truth and love had sufficed to induce her to fulfil his wish.

Senor Escovedo had witnessed much that was noble during this hour, but especially a mother whom in the future he could remember with gratitude and joy; for Don John's confidant knew that of all he saw and heard here not a word was false and feigned, yet he knew better than any other man his master's heart and every look. Barbara, too, believed her son no less confidently, and as the shout of victory reaches combatants lying on the ground, wounded by lances and arrows, the cry of a secret voice within her soul, sorely as she was stricken, great as was the sacrifice and suffering which she had imposed upon herself, called upon her to rejoice in the

highest of all gifts—the love of her child, to whom hitherto she had been only a dreaded stranger.

She could not yet obtain a clear insight into the result of the promise which she had given her son; it seemed as though a veil was drawn over her active mind.

Yet again and again she asked herself what power could have induced her to grant so quickly and unconditionally to the son a demand which in her youth she would have refused, with defiant opposition, even to his ardently loved father. But she took as little trouble to find the answer as she felt regret for her compliance.

The world to which she returned after this hour had gained a new aspect. She had not understood the real nature of the former one. The exclamation which her son's confession had elicited she still believed after long reflection. What she had deemed great, was small; what had seemed to her light and brilliant, was dark. What she had considered worthy of the greatest sacrifice was petty and trivial; no fountain of joy, but a fierce torrent of new wishes constantly surpassing one another. With their boundless extent they had of necessity remained unfulfilled. Thus woe on woe, and at the same time the painfully paralyzing feeling of the hostility of Fate had been evoked from its surges and, instead of happiness, they had brought sorrow and suffering.

Pride in such a son had been the delight of her life; henceforth, she felt it, she must seek her happiness, her joys, elsewhere, and she knew also where, and realized that she was receiving higher for smaller things. Instead of sharing his renown, she had gained the right to share his misfortune and his griefs.

The more and the more eagerly she pondered in silence, the more surely she perceived that earthly glory and magnificence, which she had thought the greatest blessings, were only a series of sunbeams, swiftly following one another, which would be clouded by one shadow after the other until darkness and oblivion ingulfed them.

Like every outward splendour, fame dazzles the eyes of men. It would dim her son's—she knew it now—whether he looked backward to the past or forward to the future. The greatness he had gained he overlooked; what awaited him in the future, having lost his clearness of vision and impartiality, he was disposed to overvalue.

From her eyes, on the contrary, this knowledge removed veil after veil.

It was a vain delusion which led him to the belief that the Scottish and English crowns possessed the power to render him happy, and end his struggle for new and higher honours; for royalty also belonged to the glory whose worthlessness she now perceived as plainly as the reflection of her own face in the surface of the mirror.

Barbara saw her son for only a few more fleeting hours; the “Spanish fury” which destroyed the flower of Antwerp doubled his business cares, forbade any delay, and imperiously claimed his whole time and strength.

The mother watched his honest labours sorrowfully. She knew that the chivalrous champion of the faith, the sincere enthusiast, to whom nothing was higher than honour and the stainless purity of his name, must succumb to his most eminent foe, the Prince of Orange, with his tireless, inventive, thoroughly statesmanlike intellect, which preserved the power of seeing in the darkness, and did not shrink from deceit where it would promote the great cause which she did not understand, but to which he consecrated every drop of his heart’s blood, every penny of his property.

Her son came to the country as a Spaniard and the brother of the hated Philip on the day of the most abominable crime history ever narrated, and which his followers committed; and who stood higher in the hearts of the people of the Netherlands than their beloved helper in need, their “Father William”?

She saw her son go to this hopeless conflict like a garlanded victim to the altar. She had nothing to aid him save her prayers and the execution of the heavy sacrifice which she had resolved to make. The collapse of her belief, wishes, and expectations produced a transformation of her whole nature. A world of ideas had crumbled into fragments before and within her, and from their ruins a new one suddenly sprang up in her strong soul. Where yesterday her warlike temper had defied or resisted, to-day she retired with lowered weapons. To contend against her son, and force her new knowledge upon him, would have seemed to her foolish and fruitless, for she desired and expected nothing more from him than that he should keep for her the love she had won.

So she yielded to his desire without resistance. However his destiny might turn, he should be obliged to admit that his mother had omitted

nothing in her power to open to him the path which, according to his own opinion, might lead to the height for which he longed.

She made use of his affectionate readiness to serve her only so far as to beg him to take charge of her son Conrad. He did so willingly, and endeavoured to induce the young man to enter the priesthood. He wished to spare him the disappointments which had marred his own life, but Conrad preferred the army.

His mother did not forget him, and did everything in her power for him. He remained on terms of affectionate union with her, but he did not see her again until the gold of her hair was changed to silver, and he himself had risen to the rank of colonel.

This was to happen in Spain. Barbara had gone there by way of Genoa under the escort of Count Faconvergue, commander of the German mercenaries, and while doing so had been treated with the respect and distinguished consideration which was her due as the mother of Don John of Austria, who had now acknowledged her.

Like every other wish of her son, Barbara had fulfilled with quiet indulgence his desire that she would not again enter the Netherlands and Ghent.

From Luxemburg she directed what should be done with her house, her servants, and the recipients of her alms. Hannibal Melas relieved her of the care of Maestro Feys, which she had undertaken, and under his faithful nursing the old musician was granted many more years of life. The Maltese also distributed among her poor the large sums which the sale of Barbara's property produced.

In Spain she was received with the utmost consideration by the Marquis de la Mota, Dona Magdalena de Ulloa's brother, and later by the lady herself. But at first there was no real bond of affection between these women, and this was Barbara's fault, for Dona Magdalena's experience was the same as Don John's. She perceived with shame how greatly she had undervalued Don John's mother—nay, how much she had wronged her—but her sedulous efforts to make amends for the error produced an effect upon Barbara different from her expectations; for the great lady's manner seemed like a confession of guilt, and kept alive the memory of the anguish of soul which Dona Magdalena had so often inflicted upon her.

The early death of the young hero whom both loved so tenderly first drew them together. Barbara had witnessed with very different feelings from Dona Magdalena and her brother how the former regarded every false step of Don John, and especially that of his expedition to England, as a heavy misfortune, and as such bewailed it. Dona Magdalena had been firmly convinced that the spell of fame which surrounded the victor of Lepanto, and the irresistible lovableness characteristic of his whole nature, would finally win the hearts of the Netherlanders, and even induce the Prince of Orange, whose friendship Don John himself hoped to gain, to join hands with him in the attempt to work for the welfare of his country.

Barbara knew that this expectation deceived him.

Toleration and liberty were the blessings which the Prince of Orange desired to win for his people, and both were hateful to her son, reared at the Spanish court, as she herself saw in them an encroachment upon the just demands of the Church and the claims of royalty. Fire and water could harmonize more easily than these two men, and Barbara foresaw which of them in this conflict would be the extinguishing flood.

She perceived how waterfall after waterfall was quenching the flames which burned in Don John's honest soul for the supposed welfare of the nation intrusted to him. He was reaping hatred, scorn, and humiliation wherever he had hoped to win love and gratitude in the Netherlands. His royal brother left him in the lurch where he was entitled to depend upon his assistance. But when Philip let the mask fall and showed openly how deeply he distrusted the glorious son of his dead father, and to what a degree his ill will had risen—when he committed the cruel crime of having Escovedo, the devoted, loyal friend and counsellor of the victor of Lepanto, assassinated in Madrid, where he had come to labour in his master's cause—the most ambitious and sensitive of hearts received the deathblow which was to put an end to his famous career and his young life.

Scarcely two years after Barbara's meeting with Don John, the Emperor Charles's hero son died. Even in the Netherlands he had remained to the last victor on the battlefield. Alessandro Farnese, his dearest friend, his companion in youth, in study, and in war, had valiantly supported him with his good sword; but his faithful friendship had been unable to heal the sufferings which wore out Don John's strong body and brave soul when, to

the severest political failures, was added the bloody treachery of his royal brother.

The death of this son doubtless first taught Barbara with what cruel anguish a mother's heart can be visited; but her John had not really died to her. Accustomed to love him from a distance, she continued to live in and with him, and in her thoughts and dreams he remained her own.

At first, without leaving the lay condition, she had joined the Dominican Sisters in the Convent of Santa Maria la Real at Cebrian; but even the slight constraint which life behind stone walls imposed upon her still seemed unendurable, so she retired to the little city of Colindres, in the district of Loredo. There stood the deserted house of Escovedo, the murdered friend and counsellor of her John and, as everything under its roof reminded her of the beloved dead, it seemed the most fitting spot in which to pass the remnant of her days. In it she led an independent but quiet, secluded life. She spent only a few maravedis for her own wants, while she used the thousands of ducats which, after her son's death, King Philip awarded her as an annual income, to make life easier for the poor and the sick whom she affectionately sought out.

With every tear she dried she believed that she was showing the best honour to her son's memory.

She was denied the pleasure of placing a flower upon his grave, for King Philip had done his dead brother the honour which he withheld from him during life and, though only as a corpse, received him among the members of his illustrious race. His coffin had been entombed in the cold family vault of the Escurial, where no sunbeam enters.

But Barbara needed no place associated with his person in order to remember him; she always felt near him, and memories were the vital air which nourished her soul. Music remained the best ornament of her solitary existence, and never did the forms of the son and the father come nearer to her than when she sang the songs—or in after years played them on the harp and lute—to which her imperial lover had liked to listen.

The memory of her John’s father now taught her to change the “More, farther,” of his motto into the maxim, “Learn to be content,” the memory of the son, that every sacrifice which we make for the happiness of another is futile if, besides splendour and glory, fame and honour, it does not also gain the spiritual blessings whose possession first lends those gifts genuine value. These much-envied favours of Fortune had little to do with the indestructible monument which she erected in her heart to her son and her lover. What built it and lent it eternal endurance were the modest gifts of the heart.

She now knew the names of the blessings which might have guided her boy to a loftier happiness and, full of the love which even death could not assail and lessen, mourned by many, Barbara Blomberg, at an advanced age, closed her eyes upon the world.

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

A live dog is better than a dead king
Always more good things in a poor family which was once rich
Attain a lofty height from which to look down upon others
Before learning to obey, he was permitted to command
Catholic, but his stomach desired to be Protestant (Erasmus)
Dread which the ancients had of the envy of the gods
Grief is grief, and this new sorrow does not change the old one
Harder it is to win a thing the higher its value becomes
No happiness will thrive on bread and water
Shuns the downward glance of compassion
That tears were the best portion of all human life
The blessing of those who are more than they seem
The greatness he had gained he overlooked
To the child death is only slumber
Who does not struggle hard, falls back
Whoever will not hear, must feel

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