

fit her to succeed Corilla in that position, since she was definitely engaged at Paris for the following season.

Corilla regarded this rivalry, from which she had nothing whatever to apprehend, either present or future, without a touch of annoyance or of alarm; she even took a mischievous pleasure in displaying the coldly impudent incapacity of her rival, which was haunted by no difficulties.

In the full tide of his prosperity and success, (for the count had given him a very good engagement,) Anzoletto was weighed down by disgust and self-reproach, which prevented his enjoying his onerous good fortune. It was truly pitiful to see him dragging himself to rehearsals, linked to the arm of Corilla in her haughty triumph, pale, languid, handsome, as a man can be, ridiculously over-dressed, worn out like one overdone with adoration, fainting and unbraced among the laurels and the myrtles which he had so liberally and so indolently won. Even when upon the stage, when in the midst of a scena with his fiery mistress, he could not refrain from defying her by his haughty attitude and the superb languor of his impertinence. When she seemed to devour him with her eyes, he replied to the public by a glance, which appeared to say—"Fancy not that I respond to all this love! Far from it; he who shall rid me of it, shall serve me largely."

In real truth, Anzoletto, having been corrupted and spoiled by Corilla, poured out upon her those phials of selfishness and ingratitude, which she urged him to pour out against all the world beside. There was but one true, one pure sentiment which now remained in his heart; it was the indestructible love which he still cherished, in despite of all his vices, for Consuelo. He could divert his mind from it, thanks to his natural levity, but cure it he could not; and that love came back upon him as a remorse—as a torture—in the midst of his guilty excesses. Faithless to Corilla, given up to numberless intrigues—avenging himself to-day upon the count with Corilla, to-morrow amusing himself with some fashionable beauty—the third day with the lowest of their sex; passing from mystic appointments to open revelries, he seemed struggling to bury the past in the oblivion of the present. But in the midst of these disorders, a ghost seemed to haunt him; and sighs would burst from his breast, as he glided in his gondola at dead of night, with his debauched companions, beside the dark buildings of the Corte Minelli. Corilla, long since conquered by his cruel treatment, and inclined, as all base spirits are—to love the more in proportion as they are the more scorned and outraged—began herself to hate him, and to grow weary of her fatal passion.

One night as Anzoletto floated with Clorinda through the streets of Venice in his gondola, another gondola, shot by them rapidly—its extinguished lantern proving its clandestine errand. He scarcely heeded it; but Clorinda, who was ever on thorns from her fear of discovery, said to him—"Let us go slower; 'tis the count's gondola; I know his barcarole."

"Is it—Oh, then," cried Anzoletto, "I will overtake him, and find out what infidelity he is at to-night."

"No, no; let us go back," cried Clorinda. "His eye—his ear, is so quick. Do not let us intrude upon his leisure."

"On! I say, on!" cried Anzoletto to the gondolier; "I must overtake that gondola ahead of us."

Spite of all Clorinda's tears, all her entreaties, it was but a second ere the boats clasped together, and a burst of laughter from the other gondola

dola fell upon Anzoletto's ear. "Ah! this is fair war—it is Corilla enjoying the breeze with the count." As he spoke, Anzoletto jumped to the bow of his gondola, snatched the oar from his barcarole, and darting on the track of the other gondola, again grazed its side; and whether he heard his own name among Corilla's bursts of laughter, or whether he was indeed mad, he cried aloud, "Sweetest Clorinda, unquestionably, you are the loveliest and the dearest of your sex."

"I was just telling Corilla so," said the count, coming easily out of his cabin, and approaching the other barque. "And now as we have both brought our excursions to an end, we can make a fair exchange, as honest folks do of equally valuable merchandise."

"Count, you but do justice to my love of fair play," replied Anzoletto, in the same tone. "If he permit me, I will offer him my arm, that he may himself escort the fair Clorinda into his gondola."

The count reached out his arm to rest upon Anzoletto's; but the tenor, inflamed by hatred, and transported with rage, leaped with all his weight upon the count's gondola and upset it, crying with savage voice—"Signor count, *gondola for gondola!*" Then abandoning his victims to their fate, and leaving Clorinda speechless with terror and trembling for the consequences of his frantic conduct, he gained the opposite bank by swimming, took his course through the dark and tortuous streets, entered his lodging, changed his clothes in a twinkling, gathered together all the money he had, left the house, threw himself into the first shallop which was getting under way for Trieste, and snapped his fingers in triumph as he saw in the dawn of morning, the clock-towers and domes of Venice sink beneath the waves.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

In the western range of the Carpathian mountains, which separates Bohemia from Bavaria, and which receives in these countries the name of the Boehmer Wald, there was still standing, about a century ago, an old country seat of immense extent, called, in consequence of some forgotten tradition, the Castle of the Giants.—Though presenting at a distance somewhat the appearance of an ancient fortress, it was no more than a private residence, furnished in the taste, then somewhat antiquated, but always rich and sumptuous, of Louis XIV. The feudal style of architecture had also undergone various tasteful modifications in the parts of the edifice occupied by the Lords of Rudolstadt, masters of this rich domain.

The family was of Bohemian origin, but had become naturalized in Germany, on its members changing their name, and abjuring the principles of the Reformation, at the most trying period of the Thirty Years' War. A noble and valiant ancestor, of inflexible Protestant principles, had been murdered on the mountain in the neighborhood of his castle, by the fanatic soldiery. His widow, who was of a Sax on family, saved the fortune and the life of her young children by declaring herself a Catholic, and entrusting to the Jesuits the education of the heirs of Rudolstadt. After two generations had passed away, Bohemia being silent and oppressed, the Austrian power permanently established, and the glory and misfortunes of the Reformation at last

apparently forgotten, the Lords of Rudolstadt peacefully practised the Christian virtues, professed the Romish faith, and dwelt on their estates in unostentatious state, like good aristocrats, and faithful servants of Maria Theresa. They had formerly displayed their bravery, in the service of their emperor, Charles VI; but it was strange that young Albert, the last of this illustrious and powerful race, and the only son of Count Christian Rudolstadt, had never borne arms in the War of Succession, which had just terminated; and that he had reached his thirtieth year without having sought any other distinction than what he inherited from his birth and fortune. This unusual course had inspired his sovereign with suspicion of collusion with her enemies; but Count Christian, having had the honor to receive the empress in his castle, had given such reasons for the conduct of his son as seemed to satisfy her. Nothing, however, had transpired of the conversation between Maria Theresa and Count Rudolstadt. A strange mystery reigned in the bosom of this devout and beneficent family, which for ten years a neighbor had seldom visited; which no business, no pleasure, no political agitation, induced to leave their domains; which paid largely and without a murmur all the subsidies required for the war, displaying no uneasiness in the midst of public danger and misfortune; which in fine seemed not to live after the same fashion as the other nobles, who viewed them with distrust, although knowing nothing of them but their praiseworthy deeds and noble conduct. At a loss to what to attribute this unsocial and retired mode of life, they accused the Rudolstadts sometimes of avarice, sometimes of misanthropy; but as their actions uniformly contradicted these imputations, their maligners were at length obliged to confine their reproaches to their apathy and indifference. They asserted that Count Christian did not wish to expose the life of his son—the last of his race—in these disastrous wars, and the empress had, in exchange for his services, accepted a sum of money sufficient to equip a regiment of hussars. The ladies of rank who had marriageable daughters admitted that Count Christian had done well; but when they learned the determination that he seemed to entertain of providing a wife for his son in his own family, in the daughter of the Baron Frederick, his brother—when they understood that the young Baroness Amelia had just quitted the convent at Prague, where she had been educated, to reside henceforth with her cousin in the Castle of the Giants—these noble dames unanimously pronounced the family of Rudolstadt to be a den of wolves, each of whom was more unsocial and savage than the others. A few devoted servants and faithful friends alone knew the secret of the family, and kept it strictly.

This noble family was assembled one evening round a table profusely loaded with game, and those substantial dishes with which our ancestors in Slavonic states still continued to regale themselves at that period, notwithstanding the refinements which the court of Louis XV. had introduced into the aristocratic customs of a great part of Europe. An immense hearth, on which burned huge billets of oak, diffused heat throughout the large and gloomy hall. Count Christian in a loud voice had just said grace, to which the other members of the family listened standing. Numerous aged and grave domestics, in the costume of the country—viz.: large mamaluke trousers, and long mustachios—moved slowly to and fro, in attendance on their honored masters. The chaplain of the castle was seated on the right of the count the young baroness on his left—"next his heart," as he was

went to say, with austere and paternal gallantry. The Baron Frederick, his junior brother, whom he always called his "young brother," from his being more than sixty years old, was seated opposite. The Canoness Wenceslawa of Rudolstadt, his eldest sister, a venerable lady of seventy, afflicted with an enormous hump, and a frightful leanness, took her place at the upper end of the table; while Count Albert, the son of Count Christian, the betrothed of Amelia, and the last of the Rudolstadts, came forward, pale and melancholy, to seat himself at the other end, opposite his noble aunt.

Of all these silent personages, Albert was certainly the one least disposed and least accustomed to impart animation to the others. The chaplain was so devoted to his masters, and so reverential towards the head of the family in particular, that he never opened his mouth to speak unless encouraged to do so by a look from Count Christian; and the latter was of so calm and reserved a disposition that he seldom required to seek from others a relief from his own thoughts.

Baron Frederick was of a less thoughtful character and more active temperament, but he was by no means remarkable for animation.—Although mild and benevolent as his eldest brother, he had less intelligence and less enthusiasm. His devotion was a matter of custom and politeness. His only passion was a love for the chase, in which he spent almost all his time, going out each morning and returning each evening, ruddy with exercise, out of breath, and hungry. He ate for ten, drank for thirty, and even showed some sparks of animation when relating how his dog Sapphire had started the hare, how Panther had unkenneled the wolf, or how his falcon Attila had taken flight; and when the company had listened to all this with inexhaustible patience, he dozed over quietly near the fire in a great black leathern arm-chair, and enjoyed his nap until his daughter came to warn him that the hour for retiring was about to strike.

The canoness was the most conversable of the party. She might even be called chatty, for she discussed with the chaplain, two or three times a week, for an hour at a stretch, sundry knotty points touching the genealogy of Bohemian, Hungarian, and Saxon families, the names and biographies of whom, from kings down to simple gentlemen, she had on her finger ends.

As for Count Albert, there was something repelling and solemn in his exterior, as if each of his gestures had been prophetic, each of his sentences oracular to the rest of the family.—By a singular peculiarity inexplicable to any one not acquainted with the secret of the mansion, as soon as he opened his lips, which did not happen once in twenty-four hours, the eyes of his friends and domestics were turned upon him; and there was apparent on every face a deep anxiety, a painful and affectionate solicitude; always excepting that of the young Amelia, who listened to him with a sort of ironical impatience, and who alone ventured to reply, with the gay or sarcastic familiarity which her fancy prompted.

This young girl, exquisitely fair, of a blooming complexion, lively, and well formed, was a little pearl of beauty; and when her waiting-maid told her so, in order to console her for her cheerless mode of life, "Alas!" the young girl would reply, "I am a pearl shut up in an oyster, of which this frightful Castle of the Giants is the shell." This will serve to show the reader what sort of a petulant bird was shut up in so gloomy a cage.

On this evening the solemn silence which weighed down the family

particularly during the first course (for the two old gentlemen, the canoness, and the chaplain were possessed of a solidity and regularity of appetite which never failed), was interrupted by Count Albert.

"What frightful weather," said he, with a profound sigh. Every one looked at him with surprise; for if the weather had become gloomy and threatening during the hour they had been shut up in the interior of the castle, nobody could have perceived it, since the thick shutters were closed. Everything was calm without and within, and nothing announced an approaching tempest.

Nobody, however, ventured to contradict Albert; and Amelia contented herself with shrugging her shoulders, while the clatter of knives and forks, and the removal of the dishes by the servants, proceeded, after a moment's interruption, as before.

"Do not you hear the wind roaring amid the pines of the Boehmer Wald, and the voice of the torrent sounding in your ears?" continued Albert, in a louder voice, and with a fixed gaze at his father.

Count Christian was silent. The baron, in his quiet way, replied, without removing his eyes from his venison, which he hewed with athletic hand, as if it had been a lump of granite; "yes, we had wind and rain together at sunset, and I should not be surprised were the weather to change to-morrow."

Albert smiled in his strange manner, and everything again became still; but five minutes had hardly elapsed when a furious blast shook the lofty casements, howled wildly around the old walls, lashing the waters of the moat as with a whip, and died away on the mountain tops with a sound so plaintive, that every face, with the exception of Count Albert's, who again smiled with the same indefinable expression, grew pale.

"At this very instant," said he, "the storm drives a stranger towards our castle. You would do well, Sir Chaplain, to pray for those who travel beneath the tempest, amid these rude mountains."

"I hourly pray from my very soul," replied the trembling chaplain, "for those who are cast on the rude paths of life amid the tempests of human passions."

"Do not reply, Mr. Chaplain," said Amelia, without regarding the looks or signs which warned her on every side not to continue the conversation. "You know very well that my cousin likes to torment people with his enigmas. For my part, I never think of finding them out."

Count Albert paid no more attention to the raileries of his cousin than she appeared to pay to his discourse. He leaned an elbow on his plate, which almost always remained empty and unused before him, and fixed his eyes on the damask table-cloth, as if making a calculation of the ornaments on the pattern, though all the while absorbed in a reverie.

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### CHAPTER XXIII.

A FURIOUS tempest raged during the supper, which meal lasted just two hours, neither more nor less, even on fast days, which were religiously observed, but which never prevented the count from indulging his customary habits, no less sacred to him than the usages of the Ro-

ish Church. Storms were too frequent in these mountains, and the immense forests which then covered their sides imparted to the echoes a character too well known to the inhabitants of the castle, to occasion them even a passing emotion. Nevertheless, the unusual agitation of Count Albert communicated itself to the rest of the family, and the baron, disturbed in the usual current of his reflections, might have evinced some dissatisfaction, had it been possible for his imperturbable placidity to be for a moment ruffled. He contented himself with sighing deeply, when a frightful peal of thunder, occurring with the second remove, caused the carver to miss the choice morsel of boar's ham, which he was just then engaged in detaching.

"It cannot be helped," said the baron, directing a compassionating smile towards the poor carver, who was quite downcast with his mishap.

"Yes, uncle, you are right," exclaimed Count Albert, in a loud voice, and rising to his feet; "it cannot be helped. The Hussite is down; the lightning consumes it; Spring will revisit its foliage no more."

"What say you, my son?" asked the old count, in a melancholy tone. "Do you speak of the huge oak of the Schreckenstein?"\*

"Yes, father; I speak of the great oak to whose branches we hung up some twenty monks the other day."

"He mistakes centuries for weeks just now," said the canoness in a low voice, while she made the sign of the cross. "My dear child," she continued, turning to her nephew, "if you have really seen what has happened, or what is about to happen, in a dream, as has more than once been the case, this miserable withered oak, considering the sad recollections associated with the rock it shaded, will be no great loss."

"As for me," exclaimed Amelia, "I am delighted that the storm has rid us of that gibbet, with its long, frightful skeleton arms, and its red trunk which seemed to ooze out blood. I never passed beneath it when the breeze of evening moved amid its foliage, without hearing sighs as if of agony, and commending my soul to God while I turned away and fled."

"Amelia," replied the count, who just now appeared to hear her words for the first time perhaps for days, "you did well not to remain beneath the Hussite as I did for hours, and even entire nights. You would have seen and heard things which would have chilled you with terror and never have left your memory."

"Pray, be silent," cried the young baroness, starting and moving from the table where Albert was leaning: "I cannot imagine what pleasure you take in terrifying others every time you open your lips."

"Would to Heaven, dear Amelia," said the old baron, mildly, "it were indeed but an amusement which your cousin takes in uttering such things."

"No, my father; I speak in all seriousness. The oak of the Stone of Terror is overthrown, cleft in pieces. You may send the woodcutters to-morrow to remove it. I shall plant a cypress in its place, which I shall name, not the Hussite, but the Penitent, and the Stone of Terror shall be called the Stone of Expiation."

"Enough, enough, my son!" exclaimed the agonized old man. "Banish these melancholy images, and leave it to God to judge the actions of men."

\* "Stone of Terror,"—a name not unfrequently used in these regions.

"They have disappeared, father—annihilated with the impetuosity of torture which the breath of the storm and the fire of Heaven have scattered in the dust. In place of pendent skeletons, fruits and flowers rock themselves amid the zephyrs on the new branches; and in place of the man in black who nightly lit up the flames beside the stake, I see a pure celestial soul, which hovers over my head and yours. The storm is gone—the danger over; those who travelled are in shelter; my soul is in peace, the period of expiation draws nigh, and I am about to be born again."

"May what you say, O well-beloved child, prove true!" said Christian, with extreme tenderness; "and may you be freed from the phantoms which trouble your repose. Heaven grant me this blessing, and restore peace, and hope, and light to my son!"

Before the old man had finished speaking, Albert leaned forward, and appeared to fall into a tranquil slumber.

"What means this?" broke in the young baroness; "what do I see?—Albert sleeping at table? Very gallant, truly!"

"This deep and sudden sleep," said the chaplain, surveying the young man with intense interest, "is a favorable crisis, which leads me to look forward to a happy change, for a time at least, in his situation."

"Let no one speak to him, or attempt to arouse him," exclaimed Count Christian.

"Merciful Heaven," prayed the canoness, with clasped hands, "realize this prediction, and let his thirtieth year be that of his recovery!"

"Amen!" added the chaplain devoutly. "Let us raise our hearts with thanks to the God of Mercy for the food which he has given us, and entreat him to deliver this noble youth, the object of so much solicitude."

They rose for grace, and every one remained standing, absorbed in prayer, for the last of the Rudolstadt. As for the old count, tears streamed down his withered cheeks. He then gave orders to his faithful servants to convey his son to his apartment, when Baron Frederick, considering how he could best display his devotion towards his nephew, observed with childish satisfaction; "Dear brother, a good idea has occurred to me. If your son awakens in the seclusion of his chamber, while digestion is going on, bad dreams may assail him. Bring him to the saloon, and place him in my large arm-chair. It is the best one for sleeping in the whole house. He will be better there than in bed, and when he awakens he will find a good fire and friends to cheer his heart."

"You are right, brother," replied Christian, "let us bear him to the saloon and place him on the large sofa."

"It is wrong to sleep lying after dinner," continued the baron; "I believe, brother, that I am aware of that from experience. Let him have my arm-chair—yes, my arm-chair is the thing."

Christian very well knew that were he to refuse his brother's offer, it would vex and annoy him: the young count was therefore propped up in the hunter's leathern chair, but he remained quite insensible to the change, so sound was his sleep. The baron placed himself on another seat, and warming his legs before a fire worthy of the times of old, smiled with a triumphant air whenever the chaplain observed that Albert's repose would assuredly have happy results. The good soul proposed to give up his map as well as his chair, and to join the

family in watching over the youth; but after some quarter of an hour he was so much at ease that he began to sneeze after so lusty a fashion as to drown the last faint and now far distant gusts of the storm.

The castle bell, which only rang on extraordinary occasions, was now heard, and old Hans, the head domestic, entered shortly afterwards with a letter, which he presented to Count Christian without saying a word. He then retired into an adjoining apartment to await his master's commands. Christian opened the letter, cast his eyes on the signature, and handed the paper to the young baroness, with a request that she would peruse the contents. Curious and excited, Amelia approached a candle, and read as follows:—

"ILLUSTRIOUS AND WELL-BELOVED LORD COUNT:—

"Your Excellency has conferred on me the favor of asking a service at my hands. This, indeed, is to confer a greater favor than all those which I have already received, and of which my heart fondly cherishes the remembrance. Despite my anxiety to execute your esteemed orders, I did not hope to find so promptly and so suitably the individual that was required; but favorable circumstances having concurred to an unforeseen extent in aiding me to fulfill the desires of your Highness, I hasten to send a young person who realizes at least in part, the required conditions. I therefore send her only provisionally, that your amiable and illustrious niece may not too impatiently await a more satisfactory termination to my researches and proceedings."

"The individual who has the honor to present this is my pupil, and in a measure my adopted child; she will prove, as the amiable baroness has desired, an agreeable and obliging companion, as well as a competent musical instructress. In other respects, she does not possess the necessary information for a governess. She speaks several languages, though hardly sufficiently acquainted with them perhaps to teach them. Music she knows thoroughly, and she sings remarkably well. You will be pleased with her talents, her voice, her demeanor, and not less so with the sweetness and dignity of her character. Your Highness may admit her into your circle without risk of her infringing in any way on etiquette, or affording any evidence of low tastes. She wishes to remain free as regards your noble family, and therefore will accept no salary. In short, it is neither as a duenna nor as a servant, but as companion and friend to the amiable baroness, that she appears: just as that lady did me the honor to mention in the gracious *post scriptum* which she added to your Excellency's communication."

"Signor Corner who has been appointed ambassador to Austria, awaits the orders for his departure; but these he thinks will not arrive before two months. Signora Corner, his worthy spouse and my generous pupil, would have me accompany them to Vienna, where she thinks I should enjoy a happier career. Without perhaps agreeing with her in this, I have acceded to her kind offers, desirous as I am to abandon Venice, where I have only experienced annoyance, deception, and reverses. I long to revisit the noble German land, where I have seen so many happy days, and renew my intimacy with the venerable friends, left there. Your Highness holds the first place in this old, worn-out, yet not wholly chilled heart, since it is actuated by eternal affection and deepest gratitude. To you, therefore, illustrious signor, do I commend and confide my adopted child, requesting

on her behalf hospitality, protection, and favor. She will repay your goodness by her zeal and attention to the young baroness. In three months I shall come for her, and offer in her place a teacher who may contract a more permanent engagement.

"Awaiting the day on which I may once more press the hand of one of the best of men, I presume to declare myself, with respect and pride, the most humble and devoted of the friends and servants of your Highness, chiarissima, stimatissima, illustrissima.

NICOLAS PORPORA.

*"Chapel Master, Composer, and Professor of Vocal Music.*

*"VENICE, the — of — 17—."*

Amelia sprang up with joy on perusing this letter, while the old count, much affected, repeated—"Worthy Porpora! respectable man! excellent friend!"

"Certainly, certainly," exclaimed the Canoness Wenceslawa, divided between the dread of deranging their family usages and the desire of displaying the duties of hospitality towards a stranger, "we must receive and treat her well, provided she do not become weary of us here."

"But, uncle, where is this precious mistress and future friend?" exclaimed the young baroness, without attending to her aunt's reflections. "Surely she will shortly be here in person. I await her with impatience."

Count Christian rang. "Hans," said he, "by whom was this delivered?"

"By a lady, most gracious lord and master."

"Where is she?" exclaimed Amelia.

"In her post-carriage at the drawbridge."

"And you have left her to perish outside, instead of introducing her at once?"

"Yes, madam; I took the letter, but forbade the postilion to slacken rein or take foot out of the stirrup. I also raised the bridge behind me until I should have delivered the letter to my master."

"But it is unpardonable, absurd, to make guests wait outside in such weather. Would not any one think we were in a fortress, and that we take every one who comes for an enemy? Speed away then, Hans."

Hans remained motionless as a statue. His eyes alone expressed regret that he could not obey the wishes of his young mistress; but a cannon-ball whizzing past his ear would not have deranged by a hair's-breadth the impassive attitude with which he awaited the sovereign orders of his old master.

"The faithful Hans, my child," said the baron slowly, "knows nothing but his duty and the word of command. Now then, Hans, open the gates and lower the bridge. Let every one light torches, and bid the stranger welcome."

Hans evinced no surprise in being ordered to usher the unknown into a house where the nearest and best friends were only admitted after tedious precautions. The canoness proceeded to give directions for supper. Amelia would have set out for the drawbridge; but her uncle, holding himself bound in honor to meet his guest there, offered his arm to his niece, and the impatient baroness was obliged to proceed majestically to the castle gate, where the wandering fugitive Consuelo had already alighted.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

DURING the three months that had elapsed since the Baroness Amelia had taken it into her head to have a companion, less to instruct her than to solace her weariness, she had in fancy pictured to herself a hundred times the form and features of her future friend. Aware of Porpora's crusty humor, she feared he would send some severe and pedantic governess. She had therefore secretly written to him to say (as if her desires were not law to her doting relatives,) that she would receive no one past twenty-five. On reading Porpora's answer she was so transported with joy that she forthwith sketched in imagination a complete portrait of the young musician—the adopted child of the professor, young, and a Venetian—that is to say, in Amelia's eyes, made expressly for herself, and after her own image.

She was somewhat disconcerted, therefore when, instead of the blooming, saucy girl that her fancy had drawn, she beheld a pale, melancholy, and embarrassed young person; for, in addition to the profound grief with which her poor heart was overwhelmed, and the fatigue of a long and rapid journey, a fearful and almost fatal impression had been made on Consuelo's mind by the vast pine forest tossed by the tempest, the dark night illuminated at intervals by livid flashes of lightning, and, above all, by the aspect of this grim castle, to which the howlings of the baron's kennel and the light of the torches borne by the servants, lent a strange and ghastly effect. What a contrast with the *firmamento lucido* of Marcello—the harmonious silence of the nights at Venice—the confiding liberty of her former life, passed in the bosom of love and joyous poesy! When the carriage had slowly passed over the drawbridge, which sounded hollow under the horses' feet, and the portcullis fell with a startling clang, it seemed to her as if she had entered the portals of the "Inferno" of Dante; and, seized with terror, she recommended her soul to God.

Her countenance therefore showed the symptoms of extreme agitation when she presented herself before her hosts; and the aspect of Count Christian, his tall, wasted figure, worn at once by age and vexation, and dressed in his ancient costume, completed her dismay. She imagined she beheld the spectre of some ancient nobleman of the middle ages; and looking upon everything that surrounded her as a dream, she drew back, uttering an exclamation of terror.

The old count, attributing her hesitation and paleness to the jolting of the carriage and the fatigue of the journey, offered his arm to assist her in mounting the steps, endeavoring at the same time to utter some kind and polite expressions. But the worthy man, on whom Nature had bestowed a cold and reserved exterior, had become, during so long a period of absolute retirement, such a stranger to the usages and conventional courtesies of the world, that this timidity was redoubled; and under a grave and severe aspect he concealed the hesitation and confusion of a child. The obligation which he considered himself under to speak Italian, a language which he had formerly known tolerably well, but which he had almost forgotten, only added to his embarrassment; and he could merely stammer out a few words, which Consuelo heard with difficulty, and which she took for the unknown and mysterious language of the Shades.

Amelia, who had intended to throw herself upon Consuelo's neck,

and at once appropriate her to herself, had nothing to say—such is the reserve imparted, as if by contagion, even to the boldest natures, when the timidity of others seems to shun their advances.

Consuelo was introduced into the great hall where they had supped. The count, divided between the wish to do her honor and the fear of letting her see his son while buried in his morbid sleep, paused and hesitated; and Consuelo, trembling and feeling her knees give way under her, sank into the nearest seat.

"Uncle," said Amelia, seeing the embarrassment of the count, "I think it would be better to receive the signora here. "It is warmer than in the great saloon, and she must be frozen by the wintry wind of our mountains. I am grieved to see her so overcome with fatigue, and I am sure that she requires a good supper and a sound sleep much more than our ceremonies. Is it not true, my dear signora?" added she, gaining courage enough to press gently with her plump and pretty fingers the powerless arm of Consuelo.

Her lively voice, and the German accent with which she pronounced her Italian, reassured Consuelo. She raised her eyes to the charming countenance of the young baroness, and, looks once exchanged, reserve and timidity were alike banished. The traveller understood immediately that this was her pupil, and that this enchanting face at least was not that of a spectre. She gratefully received all the attentions offered her by Amelia, approached the fire, allowed her cloak to be taken off, accepted the offer of supper, although she was not the least hungry; and, more and more reassured by the kindness of her young hostess, she found at length the faculties of seeing, hearing, and replying.

Whilst the domestics served supper, the conversation naturally turned on Porpora, and Consuelo was delighted to hear the old count speak of him as his friend, his equal—almost as his superior. Then they talked of Consuelo's journey, the route by which she had come, and the storm which must have terrified her. "We are accustomed at Venice," replied Consuelo, "to tempests still more sudden and perilous; for in our gondolas, in passing from one part of the city to another, we are often threatened with shipwreck even at our very thresholds. The water which serves us instead of paved streets, swells and foams like the waves of the sea, dashing our frail barks with such violence against the walls, that they are in danger of destruction before we have time to land. Nevertheless, although I have frequently witnessed such occurrences, and am not naturally very timid, I was more terrified this evening than I have ever been before, by the fall of a huge tree, uprooted by the tempest in the mountains and crashing across our path. The horses reared upright, while the postilion in terror exclaimed—'It is the Tree of Misfortune!—it is the Hussite which has fallen!' Can you explain what that means, Signora Baronessa?"

Neither the count nor Amelia attempted to reply to this question; they trembled while they looked at each other. "My son was not deceived," said the old man. "Strange! strange in truth!"

And excited by his solicitude for Albert, he left the saloon to rejoin him, while Amelia, clasping her hands, murmured: "There is magic here, and the devil in presence bodily."

These strange remarks re-awakened the superstitious feeling which Consuelo had experienced on entering the castle of Rudolstadt. The sudden paleness of Amelia, the solemn silence of the old servants in

their red liveries—whose square bulky figures and whose lack-lustre eyes, which their long servitude seemed to have deprived of all sense and expression, appeared each the counterpart of his neighbors—the immense hall wainscotted with black oak, whose gloom a chandelier loaded with lighted candles did not suffice to dissipate; the cries of the screech-owl, which had recommenced its flight round the castle, the storm being over; even the family portraits and the huge heads of stags and boars carved in relief on the wainscoting—all awakened emotions of a gloomy cast that she was unable to shake off. The observations of the young baroness were not very cheering. "My dear signora," said she, hastening to assist her, "you must be prepared to meet here things strange, inexplicable, often unpleasant, sometimes even frightful; true scenes of romance which no one would believe if you related them, and on which you must pledge your honor to be silent forever."

While the baroness was thus speaking the door opened slowly, and the Canoness Wenceslawa, with her hump, her angular figure, and severe attire, the effect of which was heightened by the decorations of her order which she never laid aside, entered the apartment with an air more affably majestic than she had ever worn since the period when the Empress Maria Theresa, returning from her expedition to Hungary, had conferred on the castle the unheard-of honor of taking there a glass of hippocras and an hour's repose. She advanced towards Consuelo, and after a couple of courtesies and a harangue in German, which she had apparently learned by heart, proceeded to kiss her forehead. The poor girl, cold as marble, received what she considered a death salute, and murmured some inaudible reply.

When the canoness had returned to the saloon, for she saw that she rather frightened the stranger than otherwise, Amelia burst into laughter long and loud.

"By my faith," said she to her companion, "I dare swear you thought you saw the ghost of Queen Libussa; but calm yourself; it is my aunt, and the best and most tiresome of women."

Hardly had Consuelo recovered from this emotion when she heard the creaking of great Hungarian boots behind her. A heavy and measured step shook the floor, and a man with a face so massive, red, and square, that those of the servants appeared pale and aristocratic beside it, traversed the hall in profound silence, and went out by the great door which the valets respectfully opened for him. Fresh shuddering on Consuelo's part, fresh laughter on Amelia's followed.

"This," said she, "is Baron Rudolstadt, the greatest hunter, the most unparalleled sleeper, and the best of fathers. His nap in the saloon is concluded. At nine he rises from his chair, without on that account awaking, walks across this hall without seeing or hearing anything, retires to rest, and wakes with the dawn, alert, active, vigorous as if he were still young, and bent on pursuing the chase anew with falcon, hound, and horse."

Hardly had she concluded when the chaplain passed. He was stout, short, and pale as a dropsical patient. A life of meditation does not suit the dull Slavonian temperament, and the good man's obesity was no criterion of robust health. He made a profound bow to the ladies, spoke in an under tone to a servant, and disappeared in the track of the baron. Forthwith old Hans and another of these automatons, which Consuelo could not distinguish, so closely did they resemble each other, took their way to the saloon. Consuelo, unable

any longer even to appear to eat, followed them with her eyes. Hardly had they passed the door, when a new apparition, more striking than all the rest, presented itself at the threshold. It was a youth of lofty stature and admirable proportions, but with a countenance of corpse-like paleness. He was attired in black from head to foot, while a velvet cloak trimmed with sable and held by tassels and clasps of gold, hung from his shoulders. Hair of ebon blackness fell in disorder over his pale cheeks, which were further concealed by the curls of his glossy beard. He motioned away the servants who advanced to meet him, with an imperative gesture, before which they recoiled as if his gaze had fascinated them. Then he turned towards Count Christian, who followed him.

"I assure you, father," said he, in a sweet voice and winning accents, "that I have never felt so calm. Something great is accomplished in my destiny, and the peace of heaven has descended on our house."

"May God grant it, my child!" exclaimed the old man, extending his hand to bless him.

The youth bent his head reverently under the hand of his father; then raising it with a mild and sweet expression, he advanced to the centre of the hall, smiled faintly, while he slightly touched the hand which Amelia held out to him, and looked earnestly at Consuelo for some seconds. Struck with involuntary respect, Consuelo bowed to him with downcast eyes; but he did not return the salutation, and still continued to gaze on her.

"This is the young person," said the canonesse in German "whom—" But the young man interrupted her with a gesture which seemed to say, "Do not speak to me—do not disturb my thoughts." Then slowly turning away, without testifying either surprise or interest, he deliberately retired by the great door.

"You must excuse him, my dear young lady," said the canonesse; "he—"

"I beg pardon, aunt, for interrupting you," exclaimed Amelia; "but you are speaking German, which the signora does not understand."

"Pardon me, dear signora," replied Consuelo, in Italian; "I have spoken many languages in my childhood, for I have travelled a good deal. I remember enough of German to understand it perfectly. I dare not yet attempt to speak it, but if you will be so good as to give me some lessons, I hope to regain my knowledge of it in a few days."

"I feel just in the same position," replied the canonesse, in German. "I comprehend all the young lady says, yet I could not speak her language. Since she understands me, I may tell her that I hope she will pardon my nephew the rudeness of which he has been guilty in not saluting her, when I inform her that this young man has been seriously ill, and that after his fainting fit he is so weak that probably he did not see her. Is not this so, brother?" asked the good Wenceslawa, trembling at the falsehood she had uttered, and seeking her pardon in the eyes of Count Christian.

"My dear sister," replied the old man, "it is generous in you to excuse my son. The signora, I trust, will not be too much surprised on learning certain particulars which we shall communicate to her to-morrow with all the confidence which we ought to feel for a child of Porpora, and I hope I may soon add, a friend of the family."

It was now the hour for retiring, and the habits of the establishment

were so uniform, that if the two young girls had remained much longer at table, the servants would doubtless have removed the chairs and extinguished the lights, just as if they had not been there. Besides, Consuelo longed to retire, and the baroness conducted her to the elegant and comfortable apartment which had been set apart for her accommodation.

"I should like to have an hour's chat with you," said she, as soon as the canonesse, who had done the honors of the apartment, had left the room. "I long to make you acquainted with matters here, so as to enable you to put up with our eccentricities. But you are so tired that you must certainly wish, in preference, to repose."

"Do not let that prevent you, signora," replied Consuelo; "I am fatigued, it is true, but I feel so excited that I am sure I shall not close my eyes during the night. Therefore talk to me as much as you will please, with this stipulation only, that it shall be in German. It will serve as a lesson for me; for I perceive that the Signor Count and the canonesse as well, are not familiar with Italian."

"Let us make a bargain," said Amelia. "You shall go to bed to rest yourself a little, while I throw on a dressing-gown and dismiss my waiting-maid. I shall then return, seat myself by your bedside, and speak German so long as we can keep awake. Is it agreed?"

"With all my heart," replied Consuelo.

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#### CHAPTER XXV.

"Know, then, my dear," said Amelia, when she had settled herself as aforesaid—"but now that I think of it, I do not know your name," she added, smiling. "It is time, however, to banish all ceremony between us; you will call me Amelia, what shall I call you—"

"I have a singular name, somewhat difficult to pronounce," replied Consuelo. "The excellent Porpora, when he sent me hither, requested me to assume his name, according to the custom which prevails among masters towards their favorite pupils. I share this privilege, therefore, with the great Huber, surnamed Porporina; but, in place of Porporina, please to call me simply Nina."

"Let it be Nina, then, between ourselves," said Amelia. "Now, listen, for I have a long story to tell you; and if I do not go back a little into the history of the past, you will never understand what took place in this house to-day."

"I am all attention," replied the new Porporina. "Of course my dear Nina," said the young baroness, "you know something of the history of Bohemia."

"Alas!" replied Consuelo, "as my master must have informed you, I am very deficient in information. I know somewhat of the history of music, indeed; but as to that of Bohemia or any other country, I know nothing."

"In that case," replied Amelia, "I must tell you enough of it to render my story intelligible. Some three hundred years ago, the people among whom you find yourself, were great, heroic, and unconquerable. They had, indeed, strange masters, and a religion which they did not very well understand, but which their rulers wished to