

look upon me; 'both are favors of Heaven which occasion neither pride nor agitation to those who enjoy them.'

"I understood the lesson, and only felt the more annoyed, as you may suppose. They resolved to defer the drive until my cousin should awake; but when at the end of two hours I saw that he did not stir, I laid aside my rich riding-dress, and set myself to my embroidery, not without spoiling a good deal of silk and missing many stitches. I was indignant at the neglect of Albert, who over his books in the evening had forgotten his promised ride with me, and who had now left me to wait, in no very pleasant humor, while he quietly enjoyed his sleep. The day wore on, and we were obliged to give up our proposed excursion. My father, confiding in the assurance of the abbe, took his gun, and strolled out to kill a few hares. My aunt, who had less faith in the good man's opinion, went up stairs more than twenty times to listen at her nephew's door, but without being able to hear the faintest breathing. The poor woman was in an agony of distress. As for my uncle, he took a book of devotion, to try its effect in calming his inquietude, and began to read in a corner of the saloon with a resignation so provoking that it half tempted me to leap out of the window with chagrin. At length towards evening, my aunt, overjoyed, came in to inform us that she had heard Albert rise and dress himself. The abbe advised us to appear neither surprised nor uneasy, not to ask the count any questions, and to endeavor to divert his mind and his thoughts, if he evinced any signs of mortification at what had occurred.

"But if my cousin be not ill, then he is mad!" exclaimed I, with some degree of irritation.

"I observed my uncle change countenance at this harsh expression, and I was struck with sudden remorse. But when Albert entered without apologizing to any one, and without even appearing to be aware of our disappointment, I confess I was excessively piqued and gave him a very cold reception, of which, however, absorbed as he was in thought, he took not the slightest notice.

"In the evening, my father fancied that a little music would raise his spirits. I had not yet sung before Albert, as my harp had only arrived the preceding evening. I must not, my scientific Porporina, boast of my musical acquirements before you; but you will admit that I have a good voice, and do not want natural taste. I allowed them to press me, for I had at the moment more inclination to cry than to sing, but Albert offered not a word to draw me out. At last I yielded, but I sang badly, and Albert, as if I had tortured his ears, had the rudeness to leave the room after I had gone through a few bars. I was compelled to summon all my pride to my assistance to prevent me from bursting into tears, and to enable me to finish the air without breaking the strings of my harp. My aunt followed her nephew: my father was asleep; my uncle waited near the door till his sister should return, to tell him something of his son. The abbe alone remained to pay me compliments, which irritated me yet more than the indifference of the others. 'It seems,' said I to him, 'that my cousin does not like music.'

"On the contrary, he likes it very much," replied he, 'but it is according—'

"According to the manner in which one performs," said I, interrupting him.

"Yes," replied he, in no wise disconcerted, 'and to the state of

his mind. Sometimes music does him good, sometimes harm. You have, I am certain, agitated him so much that he feared he should not be able to restrain his emotion. This retreat is more flattering to you than the most elaborate praise.'

"The compliments of this Jesuit had in them something so sinister and sarcastic that it made me detest him. But I was soon freed from his annoyance, as you shall presently learn.

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 CHAPTER XXVIII.

"On the following day, my aunt, who never speaks unless strongly moved, took it into her head to begin a conversation with the abbe and the chaplain, and as, with the exception of her family affections which entirely absorb her, she is incapable of conversing on any topic but that of family honor, she was ere long deep in a dissertation on her favorite subject, genealogy, and laboring to convince the two priests that our race was the purest and the most illustrious, as well as the most noble, of all the families of Germany, on the female side particularly. The abbe listened with patience, the chaplain with profound respect, when Albert, who apparently had taken no interest in the old lady's disquisition, all at once interrupted her.

"It would seem, my dear aunt," said he, 'that you are laboring under some hallucination as to the superiority of our family. It is true that their titles and nobility are of sufficient antiquity, but a family which loses its name, abjures it in some sort, in order to assume that of a woman of foreign race and religion, gives up its right to be considered ancient in virtue, and faithful to the glory of its country.'

"This remark somewhat disconcerted the canoness, but as the abbe had appeared to lead profound attention to it, she thought it incumbent on her to reply.

"I am not of your opinion, dear child," said she; 'we have often seen illustrious houses render themselves still more so, and with reason, by uniting to their name that of a maternal branch, in order not to deprive their heirs of the honor of being descended from a woman so illustriously connected.'

"But this is a case to which that rule does not apply," answered Albert, with a pertinacity for which he was not remarkable. 'I can conceive the alliance of two illustrious names. It is quite right that a woman should transmit to her children her own name joined with that of her husband; but the complete abolition of the latter would appear to me an outrage on the part of her who would exact it, and an act of baseness on the part of him who would submit to it.'

"You speak of matters of very remote date, Albert," said the canoness, with a profound sigh, 'and are even less happy than I in the application of the rule. Our good abbe might, from your words, suppose that some one of our ancestors had been capable of such meanness. And since you appear to be so well informed on subjects of which I supposed you comparatively ignorant, you should not have made a reflection on this kind relative to political events, now thank God, long passed away!'

"If my observation disturb you, I shall detail the facts, in order to clear the memory of our ancestor, Withold, the last Count of Rudolstadt, of every imputation injurious to it. It appears to interest my cousin," he added, seeing that my attention had become riveted upon him, astonished as I was to see him engage in a discussion so contrary to his philosophical ideas and silent habits. "Know, then, Amelia, that our great-great-grandfather, Wratislaw, was only four years old when his mother, Ulrica of Rudolstadt, took it into her head to inflict upon him the insult of supplanting his true name—the name of his fathers, which was Podiebrad—by this Saxon name which you and I bear to-day—you without blushing for it, and I without being proud of it."

"It is useless, to say the least of it," said my uncle, who seemed ill at ease, "to recall events so distant from the time in which we live."

"It appears to me," said Albert, "that my aunt has gone much further back, in relating the high deeds of the Rudolstadts, and I do not know why one of us, when he recollects by chance that he is of Bohemian and not of Saxon origin—that he is called Podiebrad, and not Rudolstadt—should be guilty of ill-breeding in speaking of events which occurred not more than one hundred and twenty years ago."

"I know very well," said the abbe, who had listened to Albert, with considerable interest, "that your illustrious family was allied in past times to the royal line of George Podiebrad; but I was not aware that it had descended in so direct a line as to bear the name."

"It is because my aunt, who knows how to draw out genealogical trees, has thought fit to forget the ancient and venerable one from which we have sprung. But a genealogical tree, upon which our glorious but dark history has been written in characters of blood, stands yet upon the neighboring mountains."

"As Albert became very animated in speaking thus, and my uncle's countenance appeared to darken, the abbe, much as his curiosity was excited, endeavored to give the conversation a different turn. But mine would not suffer me to remain silent when so fair an opportunity presented itself for satisfying it. "What do you mean, Albert?" I exclaimed, approaching him.

"I mean that which a Podiebrad should not be ignorant of," he replied: "that the old oak of the Stone of Terror, which you see every day from your window, Amelia, and under which you should never sit down without raising your soul to God, bore, some three hundred years ago, fruit rather heavier than the dried acorns it produces to-day."

"It is a shocking story," said the chaplain, horror-struck, "and I do not know who could have informed the count of it."

"The tradition of the country, and perhaps something more certain still," replied Albert.—"You have in vain burned the archives of the family, and the records of history, Mr. Chaplain; in vain imposed silence on the simple by sophistry, on the weak by threats: neither the dread of despotic power, however great, nor even that of hell itself, can stifle the thousand voices of the past which awaken on every side. No, no! they speak too loudly, these terrible voices, for that of a priest to hush them! They speak to our souls in sleep, in the whisperings of spirits from the dead; they appeal to us in every sound we hear in the external world; they issue even from the trunks of the trees, like the gods of the olden time, to tell us of the crimes, the misfortunes, and the noble deeds of our ancestors!"

"And why, poor child," said the canoness, "why cherish in your mind such bitter thoughts—such dreadful recollections?"

"It is your genealogies, dear aunt—it is your recurrence to the times that are gone—which have pictured to my mind those fifteen monks hung to the branches of the oak by the hand of one of my ancestors—the greatest, the most terrible, the most persevering—he who was surnamed the Terrible—the blind, the invincible John Ziska of the Chalice!"

"The exalted, yet abhorred name of the chief of the Taborites, a sect which, during the war of the Hussites, surpassed all other religionists in their energy, their bravery, and their cruelty, fell like a thunderbolt on the ears of the abbe and the chaplain. The latter crossed himself, and my aunt drew back her chair, which was close to that of Albert. "Good Heaven!" she exclaimed, "of what and of whom does this child speak? Do not heed him, Mr. Abbe! Never—no, never—was our family connected by any ties, either of kindred or friendship, with the odious reprobate whose name has just been mentioned."

"Speak for yourself, aunt," said Albert, with energy; "you are a Rudolstadt to the heart's core, although in reality a Podiebrad. As for myself, I have more Bohemian blood in my veins—all the purer, too, for its having less foreign admixture. My mother had neither Saxons, Bavarians, nor Prussians, in her genealogical tree; she was of pure Slavonic origin. And since you appear to care little for nobility, I, who am proud of my descent, shall inform you of it, if you are ignorant, that John Ziska left a daughter, who married the lord of Prachalitz, and that my mother herself, being a Prachalitz, descends in a direct line from John Ziska, just as you yourself, my aunt descend from the Rudolstadts."

"It is a dream, a delusion, Albert!"

"Not so, dear aunt; I appeal to the chaplain, who is a God-fearing man, and will speak the truth. He has had in his hands the parchments which prove what I have asserted."

"I?" exclaimed the chaplain, pale as death.

"You may confess it without blushing, before the abbe," replied Albert, with cutting irony, "since you only did your duty as an Austrian subject, and a good Catholic, in burning them the day after my mother's death."

"That deed, which my conscience approved, was witnessed by God alone," falteringly replied the chaplain, terror-stricken at the disclosure of a secret of which he considered himself the sole human repository. "Who, Count Albert, could have revealed it to you?"

"I have already told you, Mr. Chaplain—a voice which speaks louder than that of a priest."

"What voice, Albert?" I exclaimed, with emotion.

"The voice which speaks in sleep," replied Albert.

"But that explains nothing, my son," said Count Christian, sighing.

"It is the voice of blood, my father," said Albert, in a tone so sepulchral that it made us shudder.

"Alas!" said my uncle, clasping his hands, "these are the same reveries, the same phantoms of the imagination, which haunted his poor mother. She must have spoken of it to our child in her last illness," he added, turning to my aunt, "and such a story was well calculated to make a lively impression on his memory."

"That, brother, were impossible," replied the canoness, "Albert was not yet three years old when he lost his mother."

"It is more reasonable to suppose," said the chaplain, in a whisper, "that some of those accursed heretical documents, full of lies and tissues of impiety, which she had hoarded up from family pride, and which she had yet the virtue to deliver up to me at her last hour, must have been preserved in the house."

"Not one of these remained," returned Albert, who had not missed one syllable that the chaplain had uttered, though he spoke very low, and Albert was striding about in great agitation at the farthest extremity of the grand saloon. "You knew right well, Monsieur Chaplain, that you destroyed them all, and that the very day after her death, you searched and rummaged every corner of her apartments."

"Who has thus presumed to assist, or rather, bewilder your memory?" asked Count Christian sternly. "What unfaithful or imprudent servant has ventured to disturb your young spirit by a recital, of course, all exaggerated and distorted, of these domestic events?"

"No one, my father. On my religion and my conscience I swear it to you."

"The arch enemy of man has interfered in all this!" exclaimed the chaplain, in utter consternation.

"It would be more consistent with reason and with christianity," observed the abbe, "to conclude that Count Albert is endowed with a prodigious memory, and events, the sight of which rarely produce strong impressions on the minds of the young, have become fixed in his memory. All that I have seen of his extraordinary intellect leads me easily to accept the belief that his reason was most precociously developed, and as to his faculty of retaining the remembrance of things, I have often taken note of it as extraordinary."

"It only appears extraordinary to you, because you do not possess it in the least," replied Albert, drily. "For instance, you do not remember what you did in the year 1619, after Withold Podiebrad, the Protestant, the valiant and the faithful—your grand-sire, my dear aunt—the last who bore that name, reddened the Stone of Terror with his blood. You have forgotten, I would lay any wager, your own conduct at that crisis, Monsieur Abbe."

"I have indeed forgotten it entirely," said the abbe, with a sneering smile, which was in the very worst taste at a moment when it was becoming apparent to us all that Albert was totally out of his senses.

"Well, then," resumed Albert, in no sort disconcerted, "I will recall it to your memory. You went with all speed, and advised the Imperialist soldiers, who had done the deed, to take hiding or to fly, because the mechanics of Pilsen, who were courageous enough to boast themselves Protestants, and who adored Withold, were already about to avenge their lord's death, and bent on hewing them to pieces. Then you came to my ancestress, Ulrica, the terrified and trembling widow of Count Withold, and pledged yourself to make her peace with the Emperor Ferdinand II., to procure the preservation to her of all her possessions, of all her titles, of her own liberty, and the life of her children, if she would follow your advice, and pay your services at the rate of their weight in gold. She consented, or rather her maternal love, not she, consented to that act of weakness. She suspected no longer the martyrdom of her noble spouse. She was a Catholic by birth, and had abjured her own faith only through love

for him. She could not, therefore, contemplate the endurance of misery, proscription, persecution, in order to preserve to the children of Withold a faith to which he had signed his own adherence with his blood, and a name which he had rendered of late more famous than that of all his ancestors, whether they were called *Hussites*, *Calixtins*, *Taborites*, *Orphans*, *United Brethren*, or *Lutherans*. All these names, my dear Porporina, are the titles of different sects, which adhered to the heresies of John Huss and of Luther, and to which it is probable that branch of the Podiebrads from which we are descended had attached itself. 'At length,' continued Albert, 'the Saxon woman was terrified, and yielded. You took possession of the castle, compelled the withdrawal of the Imperialists, caused our territories to be respected, and made a public *auto da fe* of all our titles and hereditary archives. It was therefore that my aunt, to her own great satisfaction, has been prevented from re-establishing the genealogical tree of the Podiebrads, and has fallen back upon the more sterile pastures of the Rudolstadt. To reward your services you were made rich, vastly rich. Three months later, permission was given Ulrica to go to Vienna, there to embrace the knees of the Emperor, who very generously consented to her denationalizing her children and causing them to be educated by you in the Roman Catholic faith, and to be enrolled under those very banners against which their father and their forefathers had fought so valiantly and so long. We were incorporated, I and my sons, in the ranks of Austrian tyranny.

"You and your sons!" cried my aunt in despair, seeing that he was now utterly astray.

"Yes, my sons Sigismund and Rudolph," replied Albert, very seriously.

"Those are the names of my father and my uncle!" cried Count Christian. "Albert, where is your reason? Be yourself again, my son. Above a century has elapsed since those sad events were wrought out by the will of Providence."

Albert would not give up the point. He had persuaded himself, and would have persuaded us, that he was the same Wratisslaw, the son of Podiebrad, who bore the maternal name of Rudolstadt. He related to us all the events of his childhood, the distinct recollection which he preserved of the execution of Count Withold, an execution which he ascribed solely to the odious Jesuit, Dithmar, who, according to him, was no other than the abbe, his present tutor,—the deep hatred which he had entertained from his childhood upward for this Dithmar, for Austria, and in a word, for all Imperialists and Catholics. Beyond this recollection all appeared to become chaotic, and he uttered a thousand incomprehensible dicta about eternal and perpetual life, asserting the reappearance of men on earth, that John Huss was predestined to return to Bohemia a hundred years after his death—a prediction which, as he asserted, had already met its accomplishment—since, as he insisted, Luther was no other than John Huss resuscitated. In a word, his conversation became a confused jargon of heresy, superstition, dim metaphysics, and poetical raving, and yet all was uttered with such an air of conviction, with such a preservation of details, and with statements so interesting of what he pretended to have seen, not only in the person of Wratisslaw, but also in that of John Ziska, and I know not how many dead persons beside, whom he maintained to have been no other than previous incarnations of himself in a prior state of existence, that we all stood listening to him with open mouths, without

the power of either interrupting or contradicting him. My uncle and aunt, who were ineffably horror-stricken by these hallucinations, which were in their eyes actually impious, were anxious, at least, to penetrate them to the bottom, for they had never developed themselves openly at any prior period; and in order to cure, it was necessary, beyond doubt, to comprehend them. The abbe persisted in endeavoring to attribute the whole matter to a joke, and to make us believe that the Count Albert's temper was a compound of malicious drollery, and that he was amusing himself by mystifying us with his unparalleled erudition. 'He has read so much,' said he, 'that he can re-word the history of all ages, chapter by chapter, with such minute details, that no one who hears him, how little inclined he may be soever to give credit to the marvellous, can easily doubt that he must have been present at the scenes which he describes so much to the life.' The canoness, who, in her ardent devotion, is not, after all, very far removed from superstition, and who was beginning to believe her nephew on his word, took the abbe's insinuations altogether in a false light, and told him that she would advise him to keep his jocose explanations for some gay occasion, and then made an earnest effort to induce Albert to retract the efforts of which his head was so full.

"Beware, aunt!" exclaimed Albert, impatiently, 'beware lest I be compelled to tell you who you are. Hitherto I have avoided the knowledge, but something is whispering to me, even now, that the Saxon Ulrica is beside me!'

"What, my poor son," she answered, 'do you take me for that kind and devoted ancestress who had wit to preserve to her descendants independence, life, and the honors which they still enjoy? Do you think that she is raised to life in my person? Well, Albert, I love you so well that I would do yet more than she for you; I would sacrifice my life if I were able at this very moment to give rest and peace to your perturbed spirit.'

Albert gazed at her for some seconds with eyes of blended sternness and affection, but at length, kneeling down before her, he exclaimed, 'No, no, you are an angel, and you were a communicant of old in the wooden chalice of the Hussites. But the Saxon woman is here, notwithstanding, and already several times her voice has this day echoed in my ears.'

"Beware lest it should prove to be I," said I in my turn, persisting in the endeavor to give a gay turn to the whole subject, 'and at all events blame me not that I would not surrender you to the executioners in the year 1619.'

"You, my mother!" he then cried, gazing on me with an expression that really alarmed me; 'for if it be so, I cannot pardon you. God caused me, when born again, to be born of a stronger woman; he rebaptised me in my own substance, which had been lost, I know not how, in the blood of Zisca. Amelia, look not at me, above all, speak not to me, for it is your blood that inflicts upon me all that I this day endure.'

And with these words he left the room hastily, and we all stood disconcerted at the fatal discovery which we had made, at length, of the total derangement of his intellects.

It was at that time about two hours after noon; we had dined very quietly; Albert had drunk nothing but water, so that we could not even deceive ourselves into the idea that his hallucinations were the result of intoxication. My aunt and the chaplain, who fancied

that he must be exceedingly ill, rose at once and followed him, in order to give him their care. But what is quite incomprehensible, he had already disappeared, as if by enchantment. He was not to be found in his own apartment, nor in that of his mother, where he was often wont to conceal himself, nor in any corner of the castle. He was sought for in the gardens, in the warden, in the surrounding woods, among the mountains, but far or near, no one had laid eyes on him. Not a track of his footsteps were to be discovered. Thus passed the day and night. Not a soul in the house closed an eye or lay down to rest.

The whole family went to prayers, and the servants were on foot until daybreak, seeking him with torches. The next day passed amid the like solicitudes, the next night amid the like terrors. I cannot describe to you the terrors which I suffered—I, who had never before known what it is to suffer, never had to tremble during all my life before at any domestic events of importance. I begun seriously to believe that Albert had either committed suicide, or made his escape forever. I fell into convulsions, and afterwards contracted a violent fever. I had still a remnant of love left within me, in spite of all the terror with which this fatal and fantastical being inspired me. My father still kept up his courage enough to go out hunting daily, in the conviction that he should one day find Albert in the woods. My poor aunt, consumed by her sorrow, but still courageous and energetic, nursed me tenderly, and endeavored to keep up the courage of every one. My uncle prayed both night and day, and when I observed his faith and stoical resignation to the will of heaven, I regretted that I could not participate in his devotion.

The abbe affected a little annoyance. 'It is true,' said he, 'that Albert has never before departed in the like manner from my presence, but he has always appeared to stand in need of moments of solitude and self-examination.' It was his idea that the only mode of conquering these notions of his, was never to contradict them. In fact, this under-bred person was a mere selfish and subtle intriguer, who only cared to gain the large salary attached to his duties as tutor and in order to make them last as long as possible, had deliberately deceived the family as related to his good offices. Engaged in his own pleasures or occupations, he had abandoned Albert to his own utmost irregularities. It is probable that he had often seen him sick, and often in his fits of delirium, but undoubtedly he had always given free scope to all his fantasies. One thing is certain, that he had possessed the ability to conceal them from all who had the means of giving us information concerning them, as all the letters which my uncle ever received on the subject of his son, were filled with admiration of his manners and person, and congratulations on his advantages of bearing and appearance. Albert seems nowhere to have left the impression on any mind that he was either ill in body or in mind. Whatever he may be now, his mental existence during these eight years is to this very hour an impenetrable secret, withheld from all of us. At the expiration of three days, the abbe, seeing that he did not return, and fearing that his own prospects would be ruined by this catastrophe, left the castle, stating himself that he was setting out for Prague, whither, according to his assertions, the wish to obtain some rare book might have led his pupil. 'He is,' said he, 'like those rare men who bury themselves alive in their searches after knowledge, and who forget the whole world in the pursuit of their innocent

passion.' So, with such consolation as his words imparted, the abbe took himself away and we saw him no more.

"At length, when seven days of mortal anguish had expired, and we had begun utterly to despair, my aunt, happening to pass by Albert's open door, in the afternoon, saw him seated in his arm-chair, caressing his dog, which had followed him mysteriously in his journey. His garments were neither soiled nor rent, but the gold embroideries were tarnished, as if he had been dwelling in a damp place, or had been passing his nights in the open air. His shoes did not show as though he had walked far, but his beard and hair shewed that for a long time past he had utterly neglected the care of his person. From that day forth he has constantly refused either to shave his beard, or powder his hair, like other men of his rank. That is what made you fancy that he looks like a ghost.

"My aunt rushed up to him with an exclamation of surprise.

"What ails you, my dear aunt?" said he, kissing her hand; "one would suppose you had not seen me in the last century."

"Unhappy boy!" she answered, "it is seven days since you have left us; seven days of anguish, seven nights of horror, that we have sought you, bewept you, prayed for you!"

"Seven days!" cried Albert, gazing at her in wonder; "seven hours you mean, I fancy; for I went out this morning to take a walk, and here I am home in time to sup with you. How then can I have alarmed you so by so short an absence?"

"Ah! I have made a slip of the tongue," she answered readily, afraid of aggravating his mood. "I meant to say seven hours, of course. I grew uneasy, because you are not wont to take such long walks; and, again, I had a horrible dream this evening. I was very silly, indeed."

"Ah, my dear good aunt," said Albert, still kissing her hands, "you dote on me still as if I were a little child. I hope my father has not been equally alarmed about me."

"By no means! He is waiting supper for you; you must be very hungry?"

"No, not very. I made a very good dinner."

"Where, and when, Albert?"

"Here at noon, with all of you, my good aunt; where else? You have not come to yourself, I see; oh! how much I reproach myself for so alarming you. But how could I foresee it?"

"You know that it is often thus with me. Let me then enquire what you have eaten, and where you have slept since you left us."

"How should I be disposed to eat or sleep since this morning?"

"And do you not feel ill?"

"Not a particle."

"Nor fatigued? I doubt not you have walked far, and climbed the hills—such walks are very toilsome. Where have you been?"

"Albert covered his eyes with his hand, as if he were anxious to recollect himself, but he could tell nothing.

"I suppose I walked," he said at length, "as I did when I was a child, without seeing anything, for I must admit that I know nothing about it. I suppose I was very absent. You know I have never had the power of giving you the facts when you questioned me."

"And while you were travelling have you paid no more attention than of old to what you saw?"

"Sometimes, yes—sometimes, no. I remember much that I have seen, but, thank God! I forget much more."

"Why thank God?"

"Because there is so much misery to be seen in the world," said he, rising, with a gloomy expression, which my aunt had not previously observed in him. She saw that it would not do to prolong the conversation with him, and hurried away to announce his son's return to my uncle. No one in the house as yet knew it; no one had seen him come in. His return had left no visible marks more than his departure.

"My poor uncle, who had borne his sorrow with so much constancy and courage, was found wanting in the first moments of joy. He fainted away, and, when Albert made his appearance, was the most altered of the two; but in that time Albert, who, since his long journeying, had seemed insensible to every emotion, was once more entirely changed, and different from all that he had been hitherto. He offered his father a thousand caresses, became very uneasy at seeing the change which had taken place in him, and was anxious to learn the cause of it. But when they felt themselves capable of telling him the reasons of it, he never could understand what had passed, and everything he said bore on it such a stamp of sincerity and good faith, that they could not doubt that he was really ignorant where he had been during his seven days' absence."

"What you tell me," said Consuelo, "is like a dream, and is more like, my dear baroness, to set me musing, than to put me to sleep. How can it be that a man should live seven days unconscious of all things?"

"This is nothing to what I have yet to tell you, and until you have seen with your own eyes that instead of exaggerating I extenuate matters, and abridge them, you will, I can easily conceive, have no trouble to believe me. I tell you that which I myself have seen; and I sometimes ask myself, even now, whether Albert is a sorcerer, or is merely amusing himself at our expense. But it is growing late, and I am exhausting your good-nature."

"I rather am exhausting yours," said Consuelo; "you must be tired of talking. Let us, if you will, put off the sequel of this strange tale till to-morrow evening."

"To-morrow be it then," said the young baroness, taking leave of her with a kiss.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

THE strange story to which she had been listening kept Consuelo long awake. The night, dark, rainy, and full of wild resounding gusts, added not a little to superstitious dreams, of which she had never dreamed before. "Is there, then," she mused with herself, "some strange destiny which weighs down certain beings? How can this girl, who has been speaking to me for the last half hour, have so offended Providence, when she is so frank and sincere as to her wounded self-love, and her bright dreams overcast? Nay, how can I myself so have sinned as to deserve such a disruption of my love, such a shock to my heart? And, alas! what can this frenzied Albert of Rudolstadt have committed, that he has thus lost all self-knowledge, and all self-governance? What detestation could have moved Prov-

dence so to abandon Anzoleto to all depraved senses and perverse temptations?"

Overpowered at last by weariness, she slept, and lost herself in a maze of unmeaning and inconsequential dreams. Twice or thrice she awoke and slept again, ignorant where she was, and fancying herself still on her journey. Porpora, Anzoleto, the Count Zustiniani, and Corilla, all floated before her, repeating strange and dolorous words, charging her with crimes, the penalty of which she seemed to hear, without any memory of their commission. But all her other visions waned before that of Count Albert, who ever flitted across her eyes, with his black beard, his glassy eye, and his gold-laced sable garb, now sprinkled with tears, like a moist cloth.

At length, awaking with a start, she saw Amelia, already dressed, all fresh and smiling, by her bed-side.

"Do you know, dear Porporina," said the young baroness, kissing her on the brow, "that you, too, have something strange about you? Am I fated to live with supernatural persons? for certainly you, too, are one. I have been watching you asleep this half hour, to see if you are prettier than I by daylight. I confess I should be vexed if you were, for though I have utterly and earnestly discarded all my love of Albert forever, I should be piqued to see him smitten with you. What would you have? He is the only man here. Hitherto I the only woman. Now we are two, and we shall have a crow to pick if you outshine me wholly."

"You love to jest!" said Consuelo, "but it is not kind of you. But leave off such nonsense, and tell me what there is odd about me. Perhaps I am grown uglier than ever; I dare say it is so."

"To tell you the truth, Nina, my first look at you this morning, with your pale face, your great eyes, half shut, and rather fixed than sleeping, and your thin arm lying on the coverlid, did give me a momentary triumph. Then, as I gazed on you still, I grew frightened at your motionless attitude, and your truly royal air. Your arm is queen-like, I insist on it; and your calmness has a dominion and a power in it of which I can give no account. Now I think you horribly beautiful, and yet there is gentleness in all your aspect. Tell me what you are, who at once attract and alarm me. I am ashamed of all the follies I told you of myself last night. As yet you have told me nothing of yourself, and yet you are aware of almost all my faults."

"If I have a queenly air, I certainly never dreamed I had it," replied Consuelo, with a wan smile. "It must be the sad air of a dis-crowned one. As to my beauty, I have always considered that more than doubtful; but as to my opinion of you, my dear Baroness Amelia, I have no doubt of your frankness or kindness."

"Oh! frank I am—but are you so, Nina? Surely, you look as if you had the nobleness of truth; but are you communicative? I fancy not."

"It would not have become me to be so the first. It was for you, new patroness and mistress of my destiny, to make the first advances to me."

"You are right; but your good sense chills me. If I seem too hairbrained you won't preach at me too much, will you?"

"I have no right to do so at all. I am your music-mistress—no more. Besides, I am a poor girl of the people, and how should I presume to aspire above my place?"

"You a poor girl of the people, my proud Porporina? Oh! it can-

not be—impossible! I would rather believe you the mysterious child of some princely race. What was your mother's profession?"

"She was a singer, as I am!"

"And your father?"

Consuelo was speechless; she had not prepared answers for all the rash familiar questions of the young headlong baroness. In truth, she had never heard her father named, nor had thought of enquiring if she had a father.

"Come!" said Amelia, bursting out laughing, "it is so: I was sure of it; your father was some Spanish Grandee, or Doge of Venice."

But to Consuelo such expressions sounded light—almost insulting. "And so," she said, "I presume an honest mechanic, or a poor artist, has not the right to transmit to his children any natural distinctions! Must the children of the poor be necessarily coarse and deformed?"

"My aunt Wenceslawa would hold that to be a sarcasm!" said the baroness, laughing louder yet. "Come, dear Nina, pardon me if I have made you a little angry, and let me build a better romance upon you, in my head. But dress yourself quickly, my dear; the bell is going to ring, and my aunt would rather let all the family die of hunger than breakfast without you. I will help you to open your trunks. I am sure you have brought some pretty dresses from Venice, and that you will put me up to the last fashions—me, who have lived here so long among savages."

Consuelo gave her the keys, scarce listening to her, while she made haste to dress her hair, and Amelia hastened to open the trunks, which she expected to find full of clothes; but, to her great surprise, she saw nothing but old music books, loose sheets of music, tattered with much use, and manuscripts apparently undecipherable.

"Ah! what is all this?" she cried, wiping the dust from her pretty fingers; "you have a mighty odd wardrobe, my child."

"They are treasures; treat them with respect, baroness. Some are autographs of the greatest masters, and I would rather lose my voice than miss returning them to Porpora, who lent them to me." Amelia opened another box, which was filled with ruled paper, treatises on music, and other works on composition, harmony, and counterpoint.

"Ah! I understand," said she, laughing. "This is your jewel box."

"I have no other," replied Consuelo, "and I trust that you will often use this one."

"Well—well—I see that you are a stern mistress. But may I ask you, my dear Nina, where you have put your dresses?"

"There, in that little paper box," said Consuelo, going to fetch it, and showing the baroness a little black silk dress, neatly and freshly folded.

"Is this all?" asked Amelia.

"That is all, except my travelling dress," said Consuelo. "But when I have been a few days here I will make another, just like this, that I may have a change."

"Ah, my dear, then you are in mourning?"

"Perhaps so, signora," said Consuelo, sadly.

"Pardon me, I pray. I ought to have known from your manner that you were sad at heart, and I love you even better so. We shall sympathise with each other all the more quickly. For I also have

causes enough for sorrow, and might as well wear mourning now for the husband who is destined for me. Ah, my dear Nina, be not scared at my wildness, it is often put on to conceal deep sorrows."

They kissed each other affectionately, and went down into the breakfast room, where they were waited for.

Consuelo saw at a glance that her modest black dress, and white handkerchief, closed quite to her chin by a brooch of jet, had given the canoness a favorable opinion of her. The old Count Christian was something less reserved, and all were as affable to her as on the previous evening. The Baron Frederick, in his courtesy, had refrained from going out hunting this day, but he could not find a word to say, though he had prepared a thousand courtesies in advance for the care she was about to take of his daughter. But he sat down by her at the table, and loaded her plate so assiduously that he had no time to attend to his own meal. The chaplain enquired of her concerning their order of processions in Venice, the luxury and decorations of the churches, and the like, and seeing by her replies that she had much frequented them; learning moreover, that it was in them she had been taught to sing, he showed her much consideration.

As to Count Albert, Consuelo scarce dared raise her eyes to him, for no other reason than that about him only was she curious. She knew not what notice he had taken of her. Only as she crossed the room she saw his reflection in a mirror, and observed that he was dressed with some taste, though always in black. It was evidently the figure of a man of noble rank, but his dishevelled hair and beard, and his darkly pale complexion, gave him the aspect of wearing the neglected head of a handsome fisher of the Adriatic, on the shoulders of a nobleman.

The music of his voice, however, soon attracted Consuelo, and ere long she took the courage to look at him. She was surprised then to find in him the air and manners of an extremely sensible man. He spoke little, but with judgment, and when she rose he offered her his hand—without looking at her it is true, for he had not done her that honor since the previous evening—but with much courtesy and grace. She trembled from head to foot as she placed her hand in that of the romantic hero of all the strange tales she had heard the last evening. She expected to find it cold, as that of a corpse. But it was soft and warm, as that of a gentleman. To say the truth, Consuelo could scarce admit the fact. Her internal agitation rendered her almost giddy, and Amelia's eye, which followed her every movement, would have completed her confusion, had she not armed herself with dignity to confront the sly and heedless girl. She returned the low bow which Albert made her, as he led her to a seat, but not a glance, much less a word, was exchanged between them.

"Do you know, O, false Porporina," said Amelia in her ear, as she came down to sit close beside her, "that you are working wonders on my cousin?"

"I certainly have not seen it yet," said Consuelo.

"That is because you do not deign to observe his manners toward me. For a year past he has not offered me his hand to come, or to go, and lo! now he is executing it with all grace. It is true that he is now in one of his most lucid intervals. One would say that you had brought him both reason and health. But trust not too much to appearances, Nina. It will be with you as with me. After three days' cordiality he will not even remember your existence."

"I see," said Consuelo, "this at least, that I must get used to joking."

"Is it not true, little aunt," whispered Amelia, addressing the canoness, who had just taken her seat beside her and Amelia, "that my cousin is quite charming to our dear Porporina?"

"Do not ridicule him, Amelia," Wenceslawa answered, gently. "Mademoiselle will learn the cause of our regrets speedily enough."

"I am not ridiculing him, aunt, but Albert is quite well this morning, and I rejoice to see him, as I have not seen him so before, since I have been here. If he were shaved, and had his hair powdered, like the rest of the world, no one would believe he had ever been sick."

"His calm and healthful aspect does strike me favorably," said the canoness, "but I never dare to hope for the continuance of so favorable a state of things."

"How noble and good an expression he has," said Consuelo, eager to gratify the canoness.

"Do you think so?" said Amelia, riveting on her a sportive, yet half-malicious, glance.

"Yes, I do think so," said Consuelo, firmly, "and I told you so last night, mademoiselle. No human face ever inspired me with more respect."

"Ah! dear girl!" cried the canoness, changing at once from her stiff manner, and clasping Consuelo's hand affectionately. "Good hearts readily recognise each other. I feared that my poor nephew would alarm you. It is such sorrow to me to perceive the disgust which some faces show on observing his sufferings. But you have kind feelings, I see clearly, and you have distinguished at once that this ailing and blighted frame contains a noble spirit, worthier of a better lot."

Consuelo was moved almost to tears by the words of the good old canoness, and kissed her withered hand respectfully. Her heart felt and sympathised more deeply with the old hunchback than with the brilliant and frivolous Amelia.

They were soon interrupted by the Baron Frederick, who, counting on his courage more than on his power, came up with the idea of asking a favor of la Signora Porporina. More awkward with ladies than even his elder brother—for that sort of awkwardness seemed to be so far a family ailment that it was scarcely wonderful to see it developed into wild rudeness in the case of Albert—he began to stammer out an address full of excuses, which Amelia undertook to translate to Consuelo. "My father asks you," said she, "if you feel courage enough to undertake a little music after so tedious a journey, and if it will not be imposing too much on your good nature, to ask you to hear my voice, and judge of my method."

"With all my heart," said Consuelo, jumping up quickly, and going to the piano.

"You will see," whispered Amelia, arranging her music on the desk, "that this will soon put Albert to flight, in spite of both our bright eyes."

And, in fact, Amelia had scarcely begun her prelude, before Albert rose and left the room on tip-toe, as if he hoped that he should not be seen.

"It is a great thing," said Amelia, still speaking in a whisper, "that he did not bang the doors together furiously, as he very often does when I am singing. He is quite amiable, one might say gallant to-day."

The chaplain now approached the harpsichord, hoping, as it would seem, to mask Albert's flight; the rest of the family stood around in a semicircle, to hear Consuelo's judgment of her pupil.

Amelia dashed bravely into an air of Pergolesi's *Archilles in Scyros*, and sang it intrepidly from end to end, with a fresh shrill voice, accompanied by so comical a German accent, that Consuelo, who never had heard aught the least like it, could hardly restrain a smile, at every word. She had no need to listen to four bars, before she saw that the young baroness had no true notion, no intelligence for music whatsoever. A flexible tone she had, and good lessons she might have taken, but her character was too trifling to allow of her studying anything faithfully. For the same reason she had no distrust whatever of her own powers, but hammered away with German matter-of-fact coolness at the most difficult and daring passages, and banging her accompaniment most strenuously, correcting her time as she best might, adding time to the bars following other bars which she had curtailed, and so utterly changing the character of the music, that Consuelo would really have doubted what she was listening to had the music not been before her eyes.

Nevertheless, Count Christian, who knew nothing at all about the matter, but who imagined his niece to be as shy as he would have been in her place, kept crying, to encourage her, "Very well—very well, Amelia! Beautiful music—truly beautiful music!"

The canoness, who was but little better informed, looked anxiously into Consuelo's eyes, to read her opinion; and the baron, who liked no music but the tantaras of the hunting-horn, and believing that her song was above his comprehension, confidently expected the approval of the judge. The chaplain also was charmed with her flourishes, nothing like which had ever reached his ears before Amelia's arrival at the castle, and nodded his great head to and fro, in absolute contentment.

Consuelo saw that to tell them the truth bluntly would be to thunderstrike the whole family. She reserved herself, therefore, for the enlightenment of her pupil in private, on all that she had forgot, and all that she had to learn; praised her voice, asked some questions as to her studies, approved the masters she had been taught, and forbore to tell her that she had studied the wrong end foremost.

The party then separated, all very well pleased with a trial which had really been a very severe one to Consuelo. She was obliged to go and shut herself up in her own room, with the music she had heard so profaned, and to read it over with her eyes, and sing it mentally, in order to efface from her brain the disagreeable impression which she had received.

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#### CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN the family came together again in the evening, Consuelo, who was beginning to be more at her ease with these people, with whom she was gradually becoming acquainted, answered the questions, which, in their turn, they took courage to ask her, concerning her country, her art, and her travels, less briefly and more freely than

she had cared to do before. She, however, still carefully avoided, according to the rule which she had laid down to herself, to speak of her own concerns, and talked of the things among which she had lived, without any allusion to the part she had played therein. It was all in vain that the inquisitive Amelia endeavored to turn the conversation to points which should compel her to enter upon her own personal career, for Consuelo, easily perceiving her artifices, did not for a single instant betray the incognito which she had resolved to maintain. It would be difficult to explain why she found a peculiar charm in this sort of mystery. Several reasons conduced to it. In the first place she had promised, nay, even sworn, to Porpora to hold herself in such secrecy and solitude as should render it impossible for Anzoletto to discover her traces, even if he should endeavor to do so. A very needless precaution, by the way, for Anzoletto was now occupied only by his career and success at Venice.

In the second place, Consuelo, who was of course desirous of gaining the esteem and regard of a family which had so kindly granted a temporary asylum to her while thus sorrowful and deserted, felt instinctively that she should be much better regarded as a simple musician, a pupil of Porpora's, and a teacher of singing, than as a *prima donna*, a woman of the theatre, and a celebrated *cantatrice*. She knew that such a situation, once avowed, would leave her a very difficult part to play with that simple and religious family; and it is more than probable, that even in despite of Porpora's introduction, the arrival of the actress Consuelo, the wonder of San Samuel, would have surprised and dismayed them. But if these two powerful motives had not existed, Consuelo would have still felt an anxious desire to conceal from every one the splendors and the misery of her destiny. Everything in her whole life was so singularly complicated, her power with her weakness, her glory with her love, that she could not raise a corner of her mask without uncovering some wounded spot.

This renunciation of vanities, which might have solaced another woman, proved the salvation of this courageous being. In renouncing all compassion, as well as all human glory, she felt celestial strength come to her aid. "I must regain some portion of my former happiness," she said; "that which I so long enjoyed, and which consisted in loving and being beloved. The moment I sought the world's admiration it withdrew its love, and I have paid too dear for the honors men bestowed in place of their good-will. Let me begin again, obscure and insignificant, that I may be subjected neither to envy nor ingratitude, nor enmity on the earth. The least token of sympathy is sweet, and the highest testimony of admiration is mingled with bitterness. If there be proud and strong hearts to whom praise suffices, and whom triumph consoles, I have cruelly experienced that mine is not of the number. Alas! glory has torn my lover's heart from me; let humility yield me in return at least some friends."

It was not thus that Porpora meant. In removing Consuelo from Venice, and from the dangers and agonies of her love, he only intended to procure her some repose before recalling her to the scene of ambition, and launching her afresh into the storms of artistic life. He did not know his pupil. He believed her more of a woman—that is to say, more impressionable than she was. In thinking of her, he did not fancy her as calm, affectionate, and busied with others, as she had already been able to become, but plunged in tears and de-