

highway and thrown helpless on the world without any other master, or any other protection than her own genius, so much care, so much activity and intensity of thought to produce such miserable results as the preservation and maintenance of certain objects and certain provisions, appeared an absurd perversion of human intelligence. She who possessed none and desired none of the world's riches, was grieved to see a lovely and generous soul suffer itself to be absorbed wholly in the business of looking after wheat, wine, wood, hemp, cattle, and furniture. If they had offered her all these goods, so much desired by the greater part of mankind, she would have asked, instead, a moment of her former happiness, her rags, the clear and lovely sky above her head, her fresh young love and her liberty upon the lagunes of Venice—all that was stamped on her memory in more and more glowing colors, in proportion as she receded from that gay and laughing horizon to penetrate into the frozen sphere which is called real life!

She felt her heart sink in her bosom when at nightfall she saw the old canoness, followed by Hans, take an immense bunch of keys, and make the circuit of all the buildings and all the courts, closing the least openings, and examining the smallest recesses into which an evil-doer could have crept; as if no one could sleep in security within those formidable walls, until the water of the torrent, which was restrained behind a neighboring dam came rushing and roaring into the trenches of the chateau, whilst in addition the gates were locked and the draw-bridge raised. Consuelo had so often slept, in her distant wanderings by the roadside, with no covering save her mother's torn cloak thrown over her for shelter! She had so often welcomed the dawn upon the snowy flagstones of Venice, washed by the waves, without having a moment's fear for her modesty, the only wealth she cared to preserve! "Alas!" said she, "how unhappy are these people in having so many things to take care of! Security is the aim of their pursuits by day and night, and so carefully do they seek it, that they have no time to find or enjoy it." Like Amelia, therefore, she already pined in her gloomy prison—that dark and sombre Castle of the Giants, where the sun himself seemed afraid to penetrate. But while the young baroness only thought of fetes, of dresses, and whispering suitors, Consuelo dreamt of wandering beside her native wave-washed shores—a thicket or a fisher-boat for her palace, the boundless heavens for her covering, and the starry firmament to gaze on!

Forced by the cold of the climate, and the closing of the castle gates, to change the Venetian custom which she had retained, of watching during a part of the night, and rising late in the morning, she at last succeeded, after many hours of sleeplessness, agitation, and melancholy dreams, in submitting to the austere law of the cloister, and recompensed herself by undertaking, alone, several morning walks in the neighboring mountain. The gates were opened and the bridges lowered at the first dawn of day, and while Amelia, secretly occupied in reading novels during one half the night, slept until awakened by the first breakfast bell, Porporina sallied forth to breathe the fresh air, and brush the early dew from the herbage of the forest. One morning, as she descended softly on tiptoe, in order to awaken no one, she mistook the direction she ought to take, among the numberless staircases and interminable corridors of the chateau, of which she had not yet informed herself. Embarrassed in a maze of galleries and passages, she passed through a sort of antechamber, which she

had never seen before, still expecting to find a way through it into the garden. But she merely reached the entrance of a little chapel, built in a beautiful but antique style, and dimly lighted from above by a circular window of stained glass in the vaulted ceiling, which threw a feeble light upon the centre of the pavement, and left the extremities of the building in mysterious gloom. The sun was still below the horizon, and the morning grey and foggy. At first, Consuelo thought herself in the chapel of the chateau, where she had heard mass the preceding Monday. She knew that the chapel opened upon the gardens; but before crossing it to go out, she wished to honor the sanctuary of prayer, and knelt upon the first step of the altar. But, as it often happens to artists to be preoccupied with outward objects in spite of their attempts to ascend into the sphere of abstract ideas, her prayer could not absorb her sufficiently to prevent her casting a glance of curiosity around her; and she soon perceived that she was not in the chapel, but in a place to which she had not before penetrated. It was neither the same shrine nor the same ornaments. Although this unknown chapel was very small, she could hardly as yet distinguish objects around her; but what struck Consuelo most was a marble statue kneeling before the altar, in that cold and severe attitude in which all figures on tombs were formerly represented. She concluded that she was in a place reserved for the sepulchres of some distinguished ancestors, and having become somewhat fearful and superstitious since her residence in Bohemia, she shortened her prayer, and rose to retire.

But just as she was turning a last half-timid glance toward the kneeling statue which was scarce ten paces distant, she saw the marble figure unclasp its stony fingers, and make the sign of the cross.

Consuelo was on the point of fainting, yet she lacked power to withdraw her glaring eyes from that horrible statue. What held her firm in the conviction that it was but a statue, was perceiving that it did not hear the outcry which broke from her lips, and that it again folded its massive white hands, all unconscious in appearance of any exterior world.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HAD the ingenious and imaginative Anne Radcliffe found herself in the place of the candid and unskilful narrator of this true narrative, she would not have allowed so good an opportunity to escape, of conducting you, fair reader, through corridors, trap-doors, winding staircases, and subterranean passages, through half-a-dozen flowery and attractive volumes, to reveal to you only at the seventh, all the mysteries of her skilful labors. But the unsuperstitious reader, whom it is for me to entertain, would not probably lend herself so willingly at the present period, to the innocent stratagem of the romancer. Besides, as it might be difficult to make her believe them, we will give her the key to all our mysteries, as quickly as we can. And to explain two of them at once, we will confess that Consuelo, after some moments of self-collectedness, recognised, in the animated statue before her eyes, the old Count Christian, who was mentally reciting his morning prayers in his oratory, and in the sigh of compunction

which unconsciously escaped from him, the same mysterious sigh which she thought she had heard close beside her, on the evening when she sang the hymn to Our Lady of Consolation.

A little ashamed of her fears, Consuelo remained rooted to her place by veneration, and a dislike to interrupt a prayer so fervent. Nothing could be more solemn or more touching than to behold that old man, prostrate upon the stone pavement, offering his heart to God at the opening of the day, and steeped in a kind of heavenly ecstasy, which appeared to close his senses to all perception of the outward world. His noble features did not betray any emotion of grief. A gentle breeze, penetrating by the door which Consuelo had left open, agitated the semi-circle of silvery hair which still remained upon the back part of his head, and his massive brow, bald to the very crown, wore the lustrous yellowish hue of antique marble. Clad in an old-fashioned morning-gown of white flannel, falling about his slender frame like the frock of a monk, in stiff and massive draperies, gave him a certain resemblance to a monumental statue, so that Consuelo had to look at him twice after he had resumed his fixed attitude, to assure herself that her first impression was illusory.

After gazing at him attentively for a while, and changing her own position so as to see him in a better light, she inquired of her own heart, half unwittingly, still touched and imbued with veneration, whether such prayer as this old man put up to heaven could really be efficacious to the recovery of his hapless son, and whether a spirit so passively subjected to dogmatic rules, could at any time possess the warmth, the appreciation and the zealous love which Albert looked to find within the soul of his father. There was something mystical in the very soul of Albert. He also had led a life of devotion and contemplation, but according to all that Consuelo had heard from Amelia, according to all that she had beheld herself, since her abode in the castle, Albert had ever lacked the counsellor, the guide and the friend, who might have directed his imagination aright, softened the over-excitement of his feelings, and turned to tenderness the rugged fervor of his austere virtue. She saw that of necessity he must have felt himself alone among a family resolute either to contradict, or silently to pity him as either heretic or madman; she even felt something of the kind herself, in the half impatience which arose within her at sight of that impassive and interminable prayer put up to Heaven, as if for the purpose of casting upon Heaven the cares which it was for those, who prayed, inactive, to take themselves in the search after the fugitive, his recovery, his persuasion, and his restoration to reason. For there must, she thought, be some deep-rooted despair, to wrench a young man, so affectionate and kindly-natured, from the bosom of his friends, to render him altogether self-forgetful, and even to destroy within him the knowledge of the uneasiness and sorrow which his conduct must needs cause to his nearest and his dearest.

The course which they had fallen upon of never arguing with him, and of affecting calmness while feeling consternation, seemed to the firm and well-balanced mind of the girl either a culpable piece of neglect or a blunder the most obvious. She saw in it something of that peculiar pride and self-conceit which is imposed by a narrow and intolerant creed on people who consent to wear the bands of self-righteousness, and who can see but one road to heaven, and that traced by the undeviating finger of the priest.

"Heavenly powers!" exclaimed Consuelo, half praying mentally;

"Is it possible that the expansive, ardent, charitable soul of Albert, devoid as it is of human passions, can be less acceptable in your sight than those patient and slothful spirits which submit themselves to the injustice of the world, and see truth and justice daily violated on this earth? Could he be acting under Satanic inspiration, who when a child at the first dawning of intellect, gave his toys and decorations to the children of poverty? and who, when early reflection began to mature, would have abandoned all his wealth for the consolation of human suffering? And can these mild and gentle nobles, who deplore the woes of others with barren tears, or solace them with ineffective griefs, be wise in the belief that they are gaining heaven by mere prayers and acts of submission to the Emperor or the Pope, rather than by great works and greater sacrifices? No, Albert is not a madman. A voice cries to me from the bottom of my heart that he is the finest type of a good, just man that ever had its being from the hands of Nature. If he have his painful visions, if fantastic ideas have obscured his reason—if even, as they suppose, he be deranged, it is blind contradiction, it is the craving for sympathy—it is the loneliness of the heart, that have brought him to a condition deplorable. Have not I seen the cell in which Tasso was immured for a madman, and felt that what they called madness might have been but the indignation of genius burning beneath oppression? Have not I heard in the saloons of Venice the august saints and martyrs of Christianity treated as fools and madmen—they whose histories called forth my tears and awoke wild musings in my childhood? And what right have these folk, this pious old man, this timid canoness, who believe, nevertheless, in the miracles of saints and the genius of poets, to pronounce on their child a sentence of shame and reprobation which should attach to knaves and weak fools only? Mad! no. But madness is horrible, repulsive—it must be God's judgment on great crimes. How should a man become mad by excess of virtue? And were it so, I should deem the being, bowed beneath the weight of a misery so unmerited, entitled to the respect no less than to the pity of men; and had I become mad—had I blasphemed when I became awake to Anzoleto's infidelity, should I have lost all right to the encouragement and spiritual support of Christians? Would they have cast me out, or let me die in the street saying—'There is no help for her, through over-misery she has lost her reason?' Yet it is thus they treat this hapless Albert. They feed him, clothe him, tend him, render him, in fact, the alms of a puerile affection. They converse not with him—if he question, they hold silence; if he seeks to persuade, they bow the head, or turn away from him in horror. When his very disgust of solitude, drives him into solitudes deeper yet, they await his return, praying God to watch over him and to bring him back to them safe and sound, as though the ocean rolled between him and the objects of his affection. And yet they believe he is not far off—they call on me to sing in order to awaken him, as though he slept a lethargic sleep in the thickness of some wall, or within the cavity of some huge hollow tree. And yet they have neither explored the secrets of this antique dwelling, nor hollowed out the entrails of this cavernous rocky region. Ah! were I Albert's aunt or father, I would not have left stone on stone until I had recovered him; not a tree should have stood erect in the forest till he had been restored to my arms."

Absorbed in sad musings, Consuelo had listened noiselessly from

Count Christian's oratory—had found, she knew not how, the gate into the country. She wandered among the forest paths, seeking the wildest and most intricate, led by romantic heroism, and burning with the desire of finding Albert.

Yet in all this, there was nothing of vulgar attraction, or imprudent fantasy prompting her to do this. It was not the handsome and enthusiastic youth, whom she sought to encounter, but the hapless noble, whom she hoped to save or at least to soothe; as she would have done for an old and hapless hermit, or as a child which had strayed from its mother. She mused, and undertook her pilgrimage, as Joan of Arc mused, and undertook to deliver her country. Nor did she dream that such a project would be regarded with ridicule, or that Amelia herself, led by the cry of kinship, would have failed to attempt or succeed in the same.

She walked on rapidly, undeterred by any obstacle. The silence of the mighty woods neither saddened nor alarmed her spirits. She saw the slot of wolves in the sand, yet felt no apprehensions of their gaunt and famished pack. She fancied herself impelled by a protecting hand from heaven. Knowing Tasso by heart, so often had she sung him whole nights through on the lagunes, she fancied herself sheltered by a talisman, as the noble Ubaldo in search of Rinaldo through the perils of the enchanted forest. Swift and light-footed she passed through briars, over rocks, her eyes beaming and her cheeks glowing with a sort of secret pride. Never in her days of scenic heroism had she looked handsomer, yet she thought no more of herself at this instant than she did when she trod the boards of the theatre.

From time to time she paused to think and recollect herself; doubting what she should do in case of meeting him; conscious that she knew nothing of the deep mysteries which disturbed him; aware that she saw but dimly through a poetic veil, and with eyes dazzled by these novel visions. Again she felt something more than ardor and devotion to bring back to the society of the common-place people among whom he had lived a man so superior to herself, a madman so wise and learned, while she knew herself to lack the eloquence, the learning to persuade so singular a being. She went, however, confident that heaven would inspire her at the moment of need, and though convinced that she was destitute of historic and religious lore, she was yet convinced that there was more power, as she half whispered to herself, in the resolution of her own sympathizing heart, than in all the studied doctrine of his parent, kind and gentle as they were, yet undecided and cold as the mists on the snow-wreaths of their native mountains.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AFTER going and returning many times to and fro amid the winding paths of that wilderness, scattered at random over a hilly and broken district, she came at length upon an elevation, so covered with splintered rocks and ruined walls, that it was not easy to discern whether the hand of man or of time had been the most destructive. It was no more now than a hill of fragments, where once had stood a

village, burned by the orders of the terrible blind man, the dread Calixtin chief, John Ziska, from whom Albert imagined himself to be descended, and perhaps was so in reality. During a dark and gloomy night, so ran the tale, that fierce and indefatigable warrior, having given orders to his troops to attack the Giant's Castle, then garrisoned for the king of Saxony, had heard one of his soldiers exclaim angrily, "that cursed blind man fancies that every one can do without daylight as well as himself," whereat, turning to one of his disciples who drew his ear, enquired according to the guidance of memory, or that instinct which directed him in lieu of the other senses, "Is there not a village hereaway?" and being answered in the affirmative, he desired the mutinous soldier to go at once and fire the village, telling him that the flames would give ample light by which to manoeuvre and to fight. The terrible order was given and executed, and aided by the glare of the burning village, the Taborites stormed the Giant's Castle, and Ziska was in quiet possession of it before the morning. On the following day, at dawn, he was informed that in the midst of the ruins of the burnt village, there was standing on a sort of a platform, whence the soldiers had observed the attack of the fortress, a young and thriving oak, not a leaf of which had been withered by the heat, having escaped destruction, as it would seem, owing to its roots being watered by a deep cistern beneath its shade.

"I know the cistern well," cried Ziska. "Ten of our people were drowned in it; and since that day the stone which covers it never has been raised. Well, let it remain, and serve them for a monument, since we are not of those who believe that souls perish because the bodies rot in unconsecrated ground. Let the bones of our brothers rot where they lie, since their souls are alive, and doing battle for us, though we see them not. For the inhabitants of the village, they have received their punishment; for the oak, it has been preserved for another destiny than giving shade to miscreants. We have need of a gallows; bring me the twenty Augustin monks whom we took in their convent yesterday, and hang them high on the branches of the brave oak. That ornament will give it all its ancient health."

It was done as quickly as commanded, and from that day the oak was named the *Hussite*, the stone over the cistern, the *Stone of Terror*, and the ruined village on the deserted hill, the *Shreckenstein*. Consuelo had already heard this tale of horror from the Baroness Amelia, with all its terrible details; but, since hitherto she had seen it only from a distance, save during the night of her arrival at the castle, she would not have recognized it, had she not discovered on casting her eyes downward into the deep ravine, through which wound the high road, the fragments of the thunderstricken oak, which no villager or vassal of the castle had dared to remove, owing to the superstitious awe which had attached for centuries to that monument of horror, that contemporary of the fierce John Ziska.

The predictions and visions of Count Albert had also invested the place with a touching and tragic character, so that even Consuelo felt a thrill of terror as she found herself seated on that *Stone of Terror* so unexpectedly. Nor was her alarm wholly groundless, for, since in the belief not only of Albert, but of all the mountaineers, the hill was invested with strange terrors and haunted by terrible apparitions. Close as it was to the castle, the *Shreckenstein* was often the haunt of wild beasts, safe from the pursuit not only of the hunters by profession, but even of Count Frederick and of his trusty heath-bound

The impassive baron cared not, it is true, much for the demons which were held to haunt the spot; but he did dread, in his own peculiar line, a pernicious influence which he believed to threaten all dogs which drank of the clear rills which burst out on all sides from the rocky hill, issuing probably from the dreaded cistern, that ancient burial place of the Hussites. So that he sternly recalled his greyhound Sapphyr, or his double-nosed Pankin, whensoever they invaded the neighborhood of the *Schreckenstein*.

Ashamed, however, of her own weakness, Consuelo determined on the instant to conquer it, and resolved as a duty to sit a moment longer on the fatal stone, and to retire from it only with the slow pace becoming a determined spirit. But just as she withdrew her gaze from the blasted oak, which lay perhaps a hundred feet below her in the gorge, to look on nearer objects, she perceived that she was no longer alone on the *Stone of Terror*, but that a strange figure had seated itself beside her, without giving token of its approach by the slightest sound.

It was a round, gaping head, moving to and fro, on a deformed body, lean and distorted as that of a grasshopper, covered with an indescribable costume belonging to no date or country, and so dilapidated as to be more than slovenly. The figure was still in no degree alarming beyond its strangeness, and the suddenness of its appearance, for it showed no symptoms of hostility—on the contrary, a soft and caressing smile played around its wide mouth, and a mild, child-like expression softened down the want of intellect, which was evident from its wandering eye and hurried gestures. Yet Consuelo, when she found herself alone with an idiot, in a place where assuredly no person could come to her aid, was really afraid, in spite of the numerous reverences and affectionate smiles which the poor fool offered to her. She judged it for the best to return his smiles, and bows, so to avoid irritating him, but she arose in haste, and hurried away, pale and trembling.

The idiot did not offer to follow or recall her, but jumped on the *Stone of Terror*, following her with his eyes, jumping about, and throwing his hands and arms wildly to and fro, articulating many times in succession certain Bohemian words of which Consuelo could not comprehend the import.

When she saw that he did not attempt to molest her, she recovered courage to look at and listen to him, reproaching herself with the dread she felt of his natural deformity and mental affliction. Then she began to weave a hundred wild fancies concerning the cause and nature of his insanity, and concerning the contempt and hatred of men which she supposed him to be undergoing while under the especial protection of Providence.

The idiot, seeing that she slackened her pace, and seeming to comprehend the gentleness of her looks, began to talk to her in Bohemian with extreme volubility, and in a voice the softness of which was strangely contrasted by the hideousness of his appearance. Not comprehending him at all, Consuelo thought to offer him alms, and drew a coin from her pocket, which she laid on a large stone, first lifting it on high that he might see it. But the idiot only laughed the louder, rubbing his hands, and crying in bad German. "Useless! useless! Zdenko needs it not. Zdenko needs nothing. Zdenko is happy, very happy. Zdenko has consolation! consolation! consolation!" Then, as if he suddenly remembered a word which he had long been seeking, he cried out with delight, and quite intelligibly, though very ill pro-

nounced, the words, "*Consuelo! Consuelo! Consuelo! Consuelo, da mi alma!*"

Consuelo stopped short in astonishment, and addressing him in Spanish, asked, "Wherefore do you address me thus? Who taught you that name? How came you to understand the language which I speak?"

But to all these enquiries Consuelo awaited a reply in vain, for the idiot did nothing but jump about, repeating the word in a hundred different tones, apparently charmed with himself, and reiterating it like a bird which has picked up some articulate word, and delights to intermingle it with its natural strains.

As she returned toward the castle, Consuelo mused deeply on this odd occurrence, and at first tried to remember the face of the idiot who thus recognized and named her at first sight, as one of the Venetian vagabonds and beggars, whom she had been wont to meet on the quays and on the place of St. Mark; but though many recurred easily to her recollection, the idiot of the *Stone of Terror* had no place among them.

But as she crossed over the Pont Levis, a more logical and far more interesting explanation of what had passed, occurred to her. She resolved to enlighten herself carefully as to her suspicions, and went so far even as to congratulate herself that her expedition had not been altogether unsuccessful.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHEN she again found herself in the midst of that melancholy and dejected family, while she now felt both hope and animation, she began to reproach herself for the severity with which she had judged these worthy and afflicted persons. Count Christian and the canoness ate not a morsel during breakfast; Amelia was in desperately ill-humor, and the chaplain dared not indulge his unflagging appetite. So soon as they rose from the table, the count stopped sadly for a moment at the window, gazed out upon the sandy road, across the warren, by which he hoped that Albert might return homeward, and then shook his head sadly, as who should say, "Here is another day ill begun, which will terminate as ill."

Consuelo tried to divert their thoughts by playing some of Porpora's latest religious compositions, to which they ever listened with unflinching interest and admiration. It grieved her to feel their grief, and yet not dare inform them of the better hopes she cherished. But when she saw the count resume his book, and the canoness her needle—when she found herself called upon to decide whether a certain ornament in the centre of the embroidery ought to have white or blue points, she could not refrain from returning in her thoughts to Albert, whom she fancied dying in his hideous catalepsy upon some lonely rock in the forest, or perhaps a prey to wolves and serpents, while under the industrious fingers of Wenceslawa a thousand brilliant flowers were glowing on the tapestry, watered perchance at intervals by a furtive but sterile tear.

As soon as she had an opportunity of questioning Amelia, who was

in the pouts, she inquired of her who was the strangely dressed foe who roamed the country, laughing idiotically at all whom he met.

"Oh! it is Zdenko," replied Amelia. "Have you not met him before in your rambles? One is certain to meet him sooner or later, for he has no settled abode."

"I saw him this morning for the first time, and fancied him the spirit of the Schreckenstein."

"Ah! is it there you have been wandering since day-break. I almost begin to think you mad yourself, my dear Nina, to go alone at dawn into those desert spots, where you might well meet worse customers than an inoffensive idiot such as Zdenko."

"Some hungry wolf, perhaps," said Consuelo, smiling, "But I fancy that your father, the baron's, rifle is a safeguard against such for the whole country."

"I do not speak of wild beasts only," said Amelia. "The country is infested, more than you imagine, with the most dangerous animals on earth, brigands and vagabonds. Whole tribes of families, ruined in the wars, roam about, demanding alms at the pistol's muzzle. Besides which, there are swarms of Egyptian Zingari, whom the French have honored us by calling Bohemians, as if they were aboriginal natives of our mountains. These people, rejected on all sides, and cowardly enough before armed men, might be bold enough to a handsome young girl, like you; and your adventurous walks might expose you to risks which should not be lightly encountered by a person so reasonable as you affect to be."

"Dear baroness," replied Consuelo, "although you seem to think so lightly of the fangs of a wolf, in comparison of the dangers which, as you say, threaten me, I confess that I should fear them far more than the Zingari. They are old acquaintances of mine, and I cannot fancy how one should fear beings so weak, so poor, and so persecuted. On the contrary, I have always felt that I could so speak to those people as to win their confidence, for if they be ill clad, and despised on all sides, it is impossible for me to avoid feeling a strong interest in them."

"Bravo! my dear," cried Amelia, with increased bitterness; "you have got so far, even, as Albert's fine sentiments in behalf of beggars, bandits, and aliens; nor shall I be surprised to see you, like him, leaning some fine morning on the frail and filthy arm of Zdenko."

These words struck Consuelo like a gleam of light, and she asked with a satisfaction which she sought not to conceal, "And does Count Albert live on good terms with Zdenko?"

"He is his most familiar and intimate friend," replied Amelia, scornfully. "He is the companion of his walks, the sharer of all his secrets, the messenger, as folks say, of his private correspondences with the devil. Zdenko and Albert hold conferences, for hours, on the Store of Terror, concerning all sorts of absurdities, which they choose to call religion. Albert and Zdenko alone blush not to sit down on the grass with the Zingari, who halt under the shadow of our pine trees, and to share their disgusting meals from their wooden trenchers. They call this communicating—and it may well be called communicating, in every sense. A desirable husband, truly, my cousin Albert would be, who should grasp in his hand, lately sullied by the pestilential touch of the Zingari, the fingers of his betrothed, and raise them to lips which have drank the wine of the chalice from the same cup with Zdenko."

"This may be all vastly witty," said Consuelo; "but for my part, I do not understand one word of it."

"That is because you have no taste for history, and have not listened to me, when I have been talking myself hoarse in telling you about the riddles and mysterious acts of my cousin. Have I not told you how the great quarrel between the Hussites and the Romanists arose in relation to the two elements—the council of Bale insisting that it was a profanation to give the blood of our Saviour to the laity, in the element of wine, alleging—a fine argument, indeed—that as both his body and blood are contained in both elements—who eats the one drinks the other! Do you understand?"

"No. Neither did the council, I think. Logically, they might have said it was useless; but how profanation, if to eat implies drinking also?"

Thereupon, Amelia entered into a long discussion on the tenets of the two hostile churches, speaking equally in ridicule of each; condemning the luxury of the Catholics, and the fanaticism of the Hussites, who affected to use wooden cups and platters at communion, imitating the poverty of the Apostles.

"This," she pursued, "is the reason why Albert, who has taken it into his head to be a Hussite, after all the symbols of old have lost all signification; Albert, who affects to know the true doctrine of John Huss better than John Huss did himself, invents all sorts of communions, and goes about communicating, as he calls it, on the high road, with beggars, idiots, and even heathens. For it was a mania with the Hussites to communicate in all places, at all times, and with everybody."

"All this is fantastical enough," said Consuelo, and I can only ascribe it to an exalted patriotism, carried, I must admit, to delirium in Count Albert. There may be a deep meaning in the thought, but the formulæ are childish for a man so serious and learned. The true communion should rather be charity. For what can avail the empty ceremonies of the past, which can, by no possibility comprise the persons with whom he associates?"

"As for charity, Albert in no wise lacks that. If he were left to himself, he would strip himself of everything; and, for my part, I wish they would let him scatter all he possesses into the hands of vagabonds."

"And wherefore?"

"Because, then my father would give up the idea of enriching me by marrying me to this demoniac: for you must know that they have not given up this precious idea, and during the last few days, during which my cousin showed a glimpse of reason, attacked me on that head more strenuously than ever. We had a sharp quarrel, the result of which seems to be that my father is about to endeavor to reduce me, as they do castles, by blockade. If I yield, therefore, you see I shall be married to him, in spite of myself, of him, and of yet a third person, who affects not to care a particle about it."

"Here we are again, eh?" said Consuelo, laughing, "I expected some such sarcasm as that, and I see clearly that you have only done me the honor of conversing with me this morning, in order to arrive at it. I am glad to see it, however, for in this little comedy of jealousy, I discover a remnant of affection for Count Albert, which you will not confess."

"Nina!" exclaimed the young baroness, energetically, "if you think you see that, you lack penetration. If you rejoice at it, you lack regard for me. I am violent and proud, but I knew not how to dis-

semble. I have told you that Albert's preference for you enrages me against him, not against you. It wounds my self-pride, and yet flatters my hopes and gratifies my wishes. I now only desire him to commit some notorious folly for you, which may rid me of all half measures, by justifying the aversion against which I have so long striven, but which I now feel towards him, unmixed with love or pity."

"God grant," cried Consuelo, "that this be the language, not of truth, but of passion; for it would be a very harsh truth in the hands of a very unfeeling person."

The bitterness which Amelia had shown during this conversation did not greatly affect Consuelo's generous spirit. She now thought only of her enterprise, and the dream which she cherished of restoring Albert to his family, cast a sort of pleasure over the monotony of her occupations. It was necessary, however, that she should occupy herself in order to guard against the ennui which was growing upon her, and which, as it had been the disease most unknown to her active and laborious life, was that most painful to her. She had no resource, then, but, after giving Amelia a long and fastidious lesson, but to practice her own voice, and to study the ancient masters; but even this occupation, which as yet had never failed her, was now denied; for Amelia, with her idle curiosity, persisted in coming, interrupting and annoying her every five minutes, with childish questions and unmeaning observations. The rest of the family were horribly out of spirits, for already five mortal days had passed, since the disappearance of the young count, and every fresh day added to the consternation and dejection of the last.

That same afternoon, while Consuelo was strolling in the garden, with Amelia, she saw Zdenko on the farther side of the moat, which divided them from the open country. He was busy talking to himself, in a tone which seemed to indicate that he was relating a story. Consuelo stopped her companion, and begged her to translate the words of this strange being.

"How can I translate rhapsodies, without connection or meaning?" returned Amelia, shrugging up her shoulders. "He is muttering thus, if you care to hear it:

"There was once a great mountain, all white, all white; and hard by it a great mountain, all black, all black; and hard by it a great mountain, all red, all red. Does this interest you much?"

"Perhaps it would, if I but knew the end. Oh! how I do wish I understood Bohemian. I will learn it."

"It is not quite so easy to learn as Italian or Spanish; still, you are so industrious, that you will soon master it, if you set to work. I will teach you, if it will give you any pleasure.

"You will be an angel to do so, provided always that you are more patient as a mistress than as a pupil. And now what is Zdenko saying?"

"Now the mountains are conversing, 'Wherefore, O red mountain, all red, hast thou crushed the mountain all black? And thou white mountain, all white, wherefore hast thou suffered the black mountain, all black, to be crushed?'

Here Zdenko began to sing with a shrill and broken voice, but so sweetly and truly, that Consuelo felt her heart thrill to the core. His song proceeded:

"Black mountains and white mountains, then, will need much water, much water, to bleach your garments—"

"Your garments black with crime, and white with illness—your garments soiled with falsehood, your garments glittering with pride.

"Now they are both bleached, well bleached. Your garments which would not change their hues—behold! they are worn, much worn, your garments which would not sweep the dust.

"Lo! all the mountains are red, all red. These will need all the waters of heaven, all the waters of heaven to bleach them clean."

"Is this improvised, or is it an old national song?" added Consuelo.

"Who can tell? Zdenko is either an inexhaustible improvisateur or a most learned rhapsodist. Our peasants delight to hear him, respect him as a saint, and regard his insanity as a gift rather than as a misfortune from the hand of heaven. They feed and cherish him, and if he would, he might be the best clad and best lodged man in the country, for every one strives for the pleasure and advantage of being his host. He is regarded as a luck-bearer, as a good omen. When a storm threatens, Zdenko says, 'It is nothing; the hail will not fall here!' If the harvest is bad, they entreat Zdenko to sing, and as he always promises years of fertility and increase, they console themselves for the present, expecting a better future. But Zdenko will abide nowhere. His vagabond nature leads him away into the depths of forests. No one knows where he sleeps of nights, or where he shelters himself from storm or tempest. Never, in ten years, has he been seen to pass beneath any roof but that of the Giant's Castle, for he pretends that his ancestors are in all the other houses of the country, and that he is forbidden to appear before them. Nevertheless, he follows Albert to his chamber, for to him he is as faithful and obedient as his dog Cynabre. Albert is the only being who controls at his pleasure the wild independence of his nature, and who can bid cease at a word his unflagging gaiety, his eternal songs, and unwearied babble. Zdenko, they say, had once a very fine voice, but he has exhausted it by singing, chattering, and laughing. He is scarcely older than Albert, though he looks like a man of fifty. They have been comrades from childhood. At that time Zdenko was but half an idiot. Descended from an ancient family—one of his ancestors having figured in the Hussite wars—he had enough memory and quickness to be destined by his parents to the cloister. For a long time, he wore the garb of a mendicant novice, but when he was sent out with the ass and wallet, accompanied by a brother, to seek gifts from the charitable, he absconded into the woods, leaving ass, friar, and wallet, and was not seen for many a day. When Albert went abroad, he fell into deep melancholy, cast his frock to the winds, and became entirely a vagabond. By degrees his melancholy passed away, but although his gaiety returned, the gleams of reason which had previously shone out through the oddities of his character, became entirely extinct. He talks no longer, except incoherently, displays all sorts of strange manias, and is really quite mad; but as he is always sober, peaceful, and inoffensive, and may be rather looked on as an idiot than as a madman, our peasantry call him the innocent, and no more."

"All that you tell me of the poor creature," said Consuelo, "only the more awakens my sympathies in his behalf. I wish I could talk to him. Does he speak German at all?"

"He understands, and can speak it better, or worse, but like all Bohemian peasants, he detests the language; and being always busied in reveries, as he is now, it is more than doubtful if he will listen to you when you address him."

"Try to speak to him in his own language, and attract his attention to us," said Consuelo.

Amelia called several times to Zdenko, asking him in Bohemian if he was well, and if he wished for anything, but she could not make him lift his head, or intermit a game which he was playing with three pebbles, one black, one white, and one red, throwing them one at the other, and laughing when any fell.

"You see it is in vain," said Amelia. "When he is not hungry he never speaks to us, unless he is in search of Albert. In either of these cases he comes to the castle gate, and if he is only hungry he stands still on the threshold. Whatever he wants is given to him; he returns thanks, and goes his way. If he wishes to see Albert he enters, and goes and knocks at his chamber door, which is never closed against him, and there he remains, silent and docile as a timid child, if Albert is studying; full of clatter and mirth, if Albert is inclined to listen to him; never troublesome, as it appears, to my charming cousin, and happier in that respect than any member of the family."

"And when Count Albert becomes invisible, as at present, does Zdenko, who loves him so dearly, and who so deplored his absence when abroad, manifest no uneasiness?"

"None. He says that Albert has gone to see the Almighty, and that he will bring him back when he pleases. That was what he said while Albert was travelling."

"And do you not suspect, dear Amelia, that Zdenko may have better reasons than any of you for his security? Has it never struck you that he may be in Albert's secret, and may watch over him while in his lethargic or delirious state?"

"We once thought so, and long watched his movements, but, like his patron Albert, he cannot endure supervision, and more cunning than a fox, he eludes all vigilance, outwits all stratagems, and has, it is said, like Albert, the power of rendering himself invisible when he pleases. He has sometimes disappeared as suddenly from eyes riveted upon him, as if he had dived into the earth, or been swallowed in a cloud. At least, so says my aunt Wenceslawa, who, for all her piety, has not the strongest head in the world as regards diabolical influences."

"But you, my dear baroness, cannot credit these absurdities?"

"No. But I agree with my uncle Christian, in thinking that if Albert, in his mysterious disappearances, has no aid but that of this vagabond, it would be very dangerous to deprive him of it, of which there is much risk, by watching Zdenko, and annoying him in his manoeuvres. But for heaven's sake, dear Nina, let us turn to some other subject. We have had enough on this chapter, for I do not feel the same interest with you in this idiot. I am wearied of his endless romances and songs, and his broken voice gives me a sore throat."

"I wonder," said Consuelo, following her companion, "that his voice has no charm for your ears, for all broken as it is, on me it has a more powerful effect than that of the finest singers."

"That is because you are *blasée* with fine singing, and love novelty."

"The language which he sings is peculiarly melodious," replied Consuelo, "and the monotony of his tones is not what you think it. The ideas are, on the contrary, very sweet and original."

"For my part, I am weary to death of them," answered Amelia. "At first I took some interest in them, thinking, with the people of

the country, that they might be old national songs, curious in an historical connection, but as he never repeats them twice alike, I am satisfied that he improvises them, and at a hearing or two I was satisfied that they were not worth listening to, although our mountaineers find in them at their will a symbolical meaning."

As soon as Consuelo could rid herself of Amelia, she ran back to the garden, where she found Zdenko still playing as before, on the outer side of the moat. Being now assured that this wretched being had relations of some kind with Albert, she had secretly provided herself with a cake of the canoness' making, which she had observed that Albert preferred, and wrapping it in a white handkerchief, which she wished to throw across the moat to Zdenko, she took the chance of calling him by name. But he took no notice of her. Then, remembering the eagerness with which he had repeated her own name, she repeated it in German, but he was in a melancholy mood, and without looking at her he only repeated, in German, "Consolation! Consolation!" as who should say, "for me there is no consolation."

Then, desirous of seeing if her name in Spanish would produce the same effect it had in the morning, she said, "Consuelo."

On the instant Zdenko left his pebbles, and began jumping and gesticulating on the edge of the moat, waving his bonnet over his head, stretching his arms toward her, with very animated Bohemian words, and a face beaming with pleasure.

"Albert!" cried Consuelo, and threw the cake to him.

Zdenko picked it up, laughing, and without unfolding the handkerchief; but he said many things which Consuelo was in despair at not being able to understand. She listened attentively, and succeeded in catching one phrase which he repeated many times, always bowing as he uttered it. Her musical ear enabled her to seize the exact pronunciation, and as soon as Zdenko was gone, for he took to his heels at full speed, she wrote it in her pocket-book, spelling it in Venetian, with the intent to learn its meaning from Amelia. But before she left Zdenko, being desirous of giving him something which should denote more delicately the interest she took in Albert, she recalled the innocent, and as he returned, obedient to her voice, she threw him a bouquet, which she had gathered an hour before in the hothouse, and which still remained fresh and perfumed at her belt. Zdenko picked it up, repeated his salutation, his exclamations, and his bounds, and then, plunging into the brushwood, through which one could have supposed that a hare only could make its way, disappeared altogether. For a few moments Consuelo watched his rapid flight with all her eyes, judging that he was going to the south-eastward by the agitation of the top of the bushes. But a slight breeze soon set her observation at naught, by shaking equally the tops of all the copse, and Consuelo returned to the castle, more set than ever to persevere in her determination.