

I have said to you; I know not how many hours have elapsed since you have been here; I know not how you can be here at all without Zdenko, who would not bring you hither; I know not where my thoughts were wandering when you entered! Alas! I know not how many centuries I have been shut up here, struggling with unheard of sufferings, against the plague which devours me. Of these sufferings themselves, I have no consciousness when they are once overpast; I only feel the fatigue which remains after them; a stupor and a sort of terror, which I strive in vain to banish. Consuelo, suffer me to forget, if it be but for a few minutes. My ideas will become more luminous, my tongue will be relaxed. I promise you, I swear it to you. Give me only by degrees this light of reality, which has been so long closed against me by hideous darkness, and which my eyes cannot, as yet, endure. You have commanded me to concentrate my whole life in my heart. I remember that you told me that, for from that instant date my memory and my reason. Well! that one word has poured an angelic calmness into my bosom. My heart now lies entire and unwounded, although my reason slumbers yet. I could still bewilder myself, and terrify you by my reveries. I will henceforth live only in my feelings, which to me will be a life unknown; but it will be a life of delight, if I could but abandon myself to it without displeasing you. Ah! Consuelo, wherefore did you command me to concentrate my whole life within my heart: explain yourself. Suffer me to have no object in life save yourself only. To occupy myself with you alone—to see, to comprehend you only—in one word, to love you. Oh, Heaven! I love—I love a being similar to myself; I love with all the power of my existence; I lavish on her all the ardor, all the sincerity, all the sanctity of my affection. It is surely happiness enough for me to be allowed this, and I will ask no more."

"Be it so, dear Albert. Repose your diseased spirit in that sweet sentiment of peaceable fraternal tenderness. God is my witness that you may do so without fear or danger, for I feel toward you a fervent friendship, and a sort of veneration which no frivolous conversations or vain reasonings have power to shake. You have understood by some mysterious and strange instinct, that my life also is broken by sorrow. You said so, and it is truth from on high, that must have inspired you with the knowledge. I could not love you otherwise than as a brother; yet, say not that it is charity or pity only which is my guide. If humanity and compassion gave me the courage to come hither, a sympathy, nay a particular esteem for your virtues, give me also the courage and the right to speak to you as I do. Abjure, then, now and forever, the illusion under which you labor concerning the nature of the sentiment you feel toward me. Speak to me of love no more, nor of marriage. My past years, my memories, would render that impossible, and the difference of our conditions. If you return to such ideas, you will render my devotion to you rash, perhaps improper. Let us seal this engagement which I now make, to be your sister, your friend, your consoler, by a sacred oath. Swear to me that you will never look for aught else in me, and that you will never love me otherwise."

"Generous woman," said Albert, growing pale, "you reckon much on my courage, and much on my love, when you ask such a pledge of me. I might be base enough to speak falsely, nay, to swear falsely should you require it of me. But you will not require it, Consuelo. You will perceive that this were but to agitate me anew. Be not

crossed, therefore, as to how I love you; I scarcely know that myself; only I feel that to withdraw the name of love from the sentiment which I feel were blasphemy. I accept your pity, your care, your sisterhood, your passionless and peaceful attentions. I will not have so much as one expression of the face or a glance of the eye, that should offend you. Be at ease, therefore, my sister, and my consoler. I swear to be your brother, and your servant. But ask no more of me. I will be neither importunate, nor indiscreet. It will suffice me that you know you may command me, and govern me despotically, not as a brother is governed, but as a being who is given up to you, wholly and forever."

## CHAPTER XLV.

FOR the moment Consuelo was satisfied with this language, though it did not leave her without much apprehension for the future. The almost fanatical self-denial of Albert, evidently had its source in a deep and real passion, of the truth of which his serious countenance and solemn speech left no possible doubt. Consuelo, though deeply touched, was greatly disturbed, and asked herself secretly how she could devote herself to the care of a man so deeply and unreservedly attached to herself. She had never thought lightly of such relations, and she saw at a glance that Albert was not a man with whom any woman could incur them without the risk of perilous consequences. She did not doubt either his good faith, or his plighted word, but she saw that the calmness to which she had hoped to restore him, was not compatible with ties of this nature. She offered him her hand with a sigh, but she continued for a few moments in deep thought; at last she said, raising her eyes from the ground, "Albert, you do not know me when you ask me to undertake such a charge. No woman could undertake it, but one capable of abusing it. I am neither proud, nor a coquette, and I do not believe myself to be vain; but I have no desire for domination. Your love would flatter me, could I return it, and if it were so I would tell you forthwith. To afflict you, in your present condition by reiterated assurances to the contrary is an act of cold-blooded cruelty which you ought to spare me, and which is, nevertheless, forced upon me against my will. Pity me, then, for being forced to distress you, perhaps to offend you, and at a moment when I would give up my own life to restore you to health and to happiness."

"I know it, high-souled maiden," said Albert, with a melancholy smile. "You are so good, so great, that you would give your life for the meanest creature; but I know that your conscience will bend to no one. Do not then fear to offend me in displaying this sternness which I admire—this stoical coldness, which your virtue maintains along with the most moving pity. It is not in your power to afflict me, Consuelo. I am not the sport of illusion; I am accustomed to bitter grief; my life has been made up of painful sacrifices. Do not then treat me as a visionary, as a being without heart, and without self-respect, in repeating what I already know, that you will never love me. Consuelo, I am acquainted with the circumstances of your

life, although I know neither your name, nor family, nor any important fact concerning you. I know the history of your soul; the rest does not concern me. You loved, you still love, and you will always love, one of whom I know nothing, whom I do not wish to know, and with whom I shall never compete. But know, Consuelo, that you shall never be his, or mine, or even your own. God has reserved for you a separate existence, of which the events are hidden from me, but of which I foresee the object and end. The slave and victim of your own greatness of soul, you will never receive in this life, other recompense than the consciousness of your own power and goodness. Unhappy in the world's estimation, you will yet be the most serene and the most fortunate of human creatures, because you will ever be the best and the most upright; for the wicked and the base, dearest sister, are alone to be pitied, and the words of Christ will remain true as long as men continue blind and unjust:—'Happy are those who are persecuted; happy those who weep, and who labor in trouble.'

The power and dignity which were at this moment stamped upon the lofty and majestic forehead of Albert, exercised over Consuelo so great a fascination that she forgot the part of proud sovereign and austere friend, which she had imposed upon herself, to bow to the spell of this man's influence, so inspired by faith and enthusiasm. She supported herself with difficulty, still overwhelmed with fatigue and emotion, and trembling from excess of weariness, she sank on her knees, and clasping her hands, began to pray fervently and aloud: "If thou, my God," she exclaimed, "dost put this prophecy in the mouth of a saint, thy holy will be done! In my infancy I besought from thee an innocent and childlike happiness; but thou hast reserved for me happiness under a severe and rude form, which I am unable to comprehend. Open thou mine eyes—grant me an humble and contrite heart. I am willing, oh, my God, to submit to this destiny, which seems so adverse, and which so slowly revealed itself, and only ask from thee that which any of thy creatures is entitled to expect from thy loving justice, faith, hope, and charity."

While praying thus, Consuelo was bathed in tears, which she did not seek to restrain. After such feverish agitation, this paroxysm served to calm her troubled feelings, while it weakened her yet more. Albert prayed and wept along with her, blessing the tears which he had so long shed in solitude, and which now mingled with those of a pure and generous being.

"And now," said Consuelo, rising, "we have thought long enough of what concerns ourselves; it is time to think of others, and to recollect our duties to them. I have promised to restore you to your family, who already mourn and pray for you as for one dead. Do you not desire, my dear Albert, to restore joy and peace to your afflicted relatives? Will you not follow me?"

"So soon!" exclaimed the young count in despair; "separate so soon, and leave this sacred asylum, where God alone is with us—this cell, which I cherish still more since you have appeared to me in it—this sanctuary of a happiness which I shall perhaps never again experience—to return to the false and cold world of prejudices and customs. Ah! not yet, my soul, my life! Suffer me to enjoy yet a day, yet an age of delight. Let me here forget that there exists a world full of deceit and sorrow, which pursues me like a dark and troubled dream; permit me to return by slow degrees to what men call reason. I do not yet feel strong enough to bear the light of their sun, and the

spectacle of their madness. I require to gaze upon your face and listen to your voice yet longer. Besides, I have never left my retreat from a sudden impulse, or without long reflection—my endeared, yet frightful retreat, this terrific yet salutary place of expiation, whither I am accustomed to hasten as with a wild joy, without once looking back, and which I leave with doubts but too well founded, and with lasting regret. You know not, Consuelo, what powerful ties attach me to this voluntary prison—you know not that there is here a second self, the true Albert, who will not leave it—a self which I ever find when I return, and yet which besets me like a spectre when I leave it. Here I have conscience, faith, light, strength—in a word, life. In the world there are fear, madness, despair—passions which sometimes invade my peaceful seclusion, and engage with me in a deadly struggle. But behold! behind this door there is an asylum where I can subdue them and become myself again. I enter sullied with their contact, and giddy from their presence—I issue purified, and no one knows what tortures purchase this patience and submission. Force me not hence, Consuelo, but suffer me gradually and by prayer to wean my attachment from the place."

"Let us then enter and pray together," said Consuelo; "we shall set out immediately afterwards. Time flies; the dawn is perhaps already near. They must remain ignorant of the path which leads to the castle, they must not see us enter together; for I am anxious not to betray the secret of your retreat, and hitherto no one suspects my discovery. I do not wish to be questioned, or to resort to falsehoods. I must be able to keep a respectful silence before your relatives, and suffer them to believe that my promises were but presentiments and dreams. Should I be seen to return with you, my absence would seem disobedience; and although, Albert, I would brave everything for you, I would not rashly alienate the confidence and affection of your family. Let us hasten then; I am exhausted with fatigue, and if I remain here much longer I shall lose all my remaining strength, so necessary for this new journey. We shall pray and then depart."

"Exhausted, say you? Repose here, then, beloved one. I will guard you religiously, or if my presence disturbs you, you shall shut me up in the adjacent grotto; close this iron door between us, and whilst, sunk in slumber, you forget me, I shall, until recalled by you pray for you in my church."

"But reflect that while you are praying and sunk in repose, your father suffers long hours of agony, pale and motionless as I once saw him, bowed down with age and grief, pressing with feeble knees the floor of his oratory, and apparently only awaiting the news of your death to resign his last breath. And your poor aunt's anxiety will throw her into a fever, incessantly ascending, as she does, the highest towers of the castle, vainly endeavoring to trace the paths to the mountain, by one of which it is supposed you departed. This very morning the members of your family, when they assemble together in the chateau, will sorrowfully accost each other with fruitless inquiries and conjectures, and again separate at night with despair and anguish in their hearts. Albert, you do not love your relatives, otherwise you would not thus, without pity or remorse, permit them to suffer and languish."

"Consuelo! Consuelo!" exclaimed Albert, as if awaking from a dream, "do not speak to me thus; your words torture me. What

crime have I committed?—what disasters have I caused?—Why are my friends thus afflicted? How many hours have passed since I left them?”

“You ask how many hours! Ask rather how many days—how many nights—nay, how many weeks!”

“Days!—nights! Hush! Consuelo, do not reveal to me the full extent of my misfortune. I was aware that I here lost correct ideas of time, and that the remembrance of what was passing on the earth did not descend with me into this tomb; but I did not think that the duration of this unconsciousness could be measured by days and weeks.”

“Is it not, my friend, a voluntary oblivionsness? Nothing in this place recalls the days which pass away and begin again: eternal darkness here prolongs the night. You have not even a glass to reckon the hours. Is not this precaution to exclude all means of measuring time, a wild expedient to escape the cries of nature and the voice of conscience?”

“I confess that when I come here, I feel it requisite to adjure everything merely human. But O God! I did not know that grief and meditation could so far absorb my soul as to make long hours appear like days, or days to pass away as hours. What am I, and why have they never informed me of this sad change in my mental organization?”

“This misfortune is, on the contrary, a proof of great intellectual power, but diverted from its proper use, and given up to gloomy reverie. They try to hide from you the evils of which you are the cause. They respect your sufferings whilst they conceal their own. But in my opinion it was treating you with little esteem; it was doubting the goodness of your heart. But Albert I do not doubt you, I conceal nothing from you.”

“Let us go, Consuelo, let us go,” said Albert, quickly throwing his cloak over his shoulders. “I am a wretch! I have afflicted my father whom I adore, my aunt whom I dearly love. I am unworthy to behold them again. Ah! rather than again be guilty of so much cruelty, I would impose upon myself the sacrifice of never revisiting this retreat. But, no: once more I am happy, for I have found a friend in you, Consuelo, to direct my wandering thoughts and restore me to my former self. Some one has at length told me the truth, and will always tell it to me. Is it not so, my dear sister?”

“Always, Albert; I swear to you that you shall ever hear the truth from me.”

“Power divine! and the being who comes to my aid is she to whom alone I can listen—whom alone I can believe. The ways of God are known but to himself. Ignorant of my own mental alienation, I have always blamed the madness of others. Alas, Consuelo! had my noble father himself told me of that which you have just disposed, I would not have believed him. But you are life and truth; you can bring conviction, and give to my troubled soul that heavenly peace which emanates from yourself.”

“Let us depart,” said Consuelo, assisting him to fasten his cloak, which his trembling hand could not arrange upon his shoulders.

“Yes, let us go,” said he, gazing tenderly upon her as she fulfilled this friendly office; “but first swear to me, Consuelo, that if I return hither you will not abandon me, swear that you will come to seek me, were it only to overwhelm me with reproaches—to call me ingrate,

parricide—and to tell me that I am unworthy of your solicitude. Oh! leave me not a prey to myself now that you see the influence you have over my actions, and that a word from your lips persuades and heals, where a century of meditation and prayer would fail.”

“And will you, on your part,” replied Consuelo, leaning on his shoulder, and smiling expressively, “swear never to return hither without me?”

“Will you indeed return with me!” he rapturously exclaimed, looking earnestly in her face, but not daring to clasp her in his arms; “only swear this to me, and I will pledge myself by a solemn oath never to leave my father’s roof without your command or permission.”

“May God hear and receive our mutual promise!” ejaculated Consuelo, transported with joy. “We will come back to pray in your church; and you, Albert, will teach me to pray, as no one has taught me hitherto; for I have an ardent desire to know God. You, my friend, will reveal heaven to me, and I when requisite will recall your thoughts to terrestrial things and the duties of human life.”

“Divine sister!” exclaimed Albert, his eyes swimming in tears of delight, “I have nothing to teach you. It is you who must be the agent in my regeneration. It is from you I shall learn all things, even prayer. I no longer require solitude to raise my soul to God. I no longer need to prostrate myself over the ashes of my fathers, to comprehend and feel my own immortality. To look on you is sufficient to raise my soul to heaven in gratitude and praise.”

Consuelo drew him away, she herself opening and closing the doors. “Here, Cynabre!” cried Albert to his faithful hound, giving him a lantern of better construction than that with which Consuelo was furnished, and better suited to the journey they were about to undertake. The intelligent animal seized the lamp with an appearance of pride and satisfaction, and preceded them at a measured pace, stopping when his master stopped, increasing or slackening his speed as he did, and sagaciously keeping the middle of the path, in order to preserve his precious charge from injury by contact with the rocks or brushwood.

Consuelo walked with great difficulty, and would have fallen twenty times but for Albert’s arm, which every moment supported and raised her up. They once more descended together the course of the stream, keeping along its fresh and verdant margin.

“Zdenko,” said Albert, “delights in tending the Naiad of these mysterious grottoes. He smooths her bed when encumbered as it often is with gravel and shells; he fosters the pale flowers which spring up beneath her footsteps, and protects them against her kisses, which are sometimes rather rude.”

Consuelo looked upwards at the sky through the clefts of the rock, and saw a star glimmer in its blue vault. “That,” said Albert, “is Aldebaran, the star of the Zingari. The day will not dawn for an hour yet.”

“That is my star,” replied Consuelo, “for I am, my dear Count, though not by race, by calling, a kind of Zingara. My mother bore no other name at Venice, though in accordance with her Spanish prejudices, she disclaimed the degrading appellation. As for myself I am still known in that country by the name of the *Zingarella*.”

“Are you indeed one of that persecuted race,” replied Albert; “if so, I should love you yet more than I do, were that possible.”

Consuelo, who had thought it right to recall Count Rudolstadt to the disparity of their birth and condition, recollected what Amelia

had said of Albert's sympathy for the wandering poor and, fearing lest she had involuntarily yielded to an instinctive feeling of coquetry, she kept silence.

But Albert thus interrupted it in a few moments:

"What you have just told me," said he, "awakens in me, I know not by what association of ideas, a recollection of my youth, childish enough it is true, but which I must relate to you: for since I have seen you, it has again and again recurred to my memory. Lean more on me, dear sister, whilst I repeat it."

"I was about fifteen, when, returning late one evening by one of the paths which border on the Schreckenstein, and which wind through the hills in the direction of the castle, I saw before me a tall thin woman, miserably clad, who carried a burthen on her shoulders, and who paused occasionally to seat herself, and to recover breath. I accosted her. She was beautiful, though embrowned by the sun and withered by misery and care. Still there was in her bearing, mean as was her attire, a sort of pride and dignity, mingled, it is true, with an air of melancholy. When she held out her hand to me, she rather commanded pity than implored it. My purse was empty. I entreated her to accompany me to the castle, where she could have help, food, and shelter for the night.

"I would prefer remaining here," replied she, with a foreign accent which I conceived to be that of the wandering Egyptians, for I was not at that time acquainted with the various languages which I afterwards learned in my travels. 'I could pay you,' she added, 'for the hospitality you offer, by singing songs of the different countries which I have traversed. I rarely ask alms unless compelled to do so by extreme distress.'

"Poor creature!" said I, 'you bear a very heavy burden; your feet are wounded and almost naked. Entrust your bundle to me; I will carry it to my abode, and you will thus be able to walk with more ease.'

"This burden daily becomes heavier," she replied, with a melancholy smile, which imparted a charm to her features, 'but I do not complain of it. I have borne it without repining for years, and over hundreds of leagues. I never trust it to any one besides myself; but you appear so good and so innocent, that I shall lend it to you until we reach your home.'

"She then unloosed the clasp of her mantle, which entirely covered her, the handle of her guitar alone being visible. This movement discovered to me a child of five or six years old, pale and weather-beaten like its mother, but with a countenance so sweet and calm that it filled my heart with tenderness. It was a little girl, quite in tatters, lean, but hale and strong, and who slept tranquilly as a slumbering cherub on the bruised and wearied back of the wandering songstress. I took her in my arms, but had some trouble in keeping her there: for, waking up and finding herself with a stranger, she struggled and wept. Her mother, to soothe her, spoke to her in her own language; my caresses and attentions comforted her, and on arriving at the castle we were the best friends in the world. When the poor woman had supped, she put her infant in a bed which I had prepared, attired herself in a strange dress, sadder still than her rags and came into the hall, where she sang Spanish, French, and German ballads, with a clearness and delicacy of voice, a firmness of intonation united to a frankness and absence of reserve in her manner

which charmed us all. My good aunt paid her every attention, which the Zingara appeared to feel; but she did not lay aside her pride, and only gave evasive answers to our questions. The child interested me even more than its mother; and I earnestly wished to see her again, to amuse her, and even to keep her altogether. I know not what tender solicitude awoke in my bosom for this little being, poor, and a wanderer on the earth. I dreamt of her all night long, and in the morning I ran to see her. But already the Zingara had departed, and I traversed the whole mountain around without being able to discover her. She had risen before the dawn, and, with her child, had taken the way towards the south, carrying with her my guitar, which I had made her a present of, her own, to her great sorrow, being broken."

"Albert! Albert!" exclaimed Consuelo, with extraordinary emotion; "that guitar is at Venice with Master Porpora, who keeps it for me, and from whom I shall reclaim it, never to part with it again. It is of ebony, with a cipher chased on silver—a cipher which I well remember, 'A. R.' My mother, whose memory was defective, from having seen so many things, neither remembered your name nor that of your castle, nor even the country where this adventure had happened; but she often spoke of the hospitality she had received from the owner of the guitar, of the touching charity of the young and handsome signor, who had carried me in his arms for half a league, chatting with her the while as with an equal. Oh, my dear Albert, all that is fresh in my memory also. At each word of your recital, these long-slumbering images were awakened one by one; and this is the reason why your mountains did not appear absolutely unknown to me, and why I endeavored in vain to discover the cause of these confused recollections which forced themselves upon me during my journey, and especially why, when I first saw you, my heart palpitated and my head bowed down respectfully, as if I had just found a friend and protector, long lost and regretted."

"Do you think, then, Consuelo," said Albert, pressing her to his heart, "that I did not recognise you at the first glance? In vain have years changed and improved the lineaments of childhood. I have a memory wonderfully retentive, though often confused and dreamy, which needs not the aid of sight or speech to traverse the space of days and of ages. I did not know that you were my cherished Zingarella, but I felt assured I had already known you, loved you, and pressed you to my heart—a heart which, although unwittingly, was from that instant bound to yours for ever."

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#### CHAPTER XLVI.

THUS conversing, they arrived at the point where the two paths divided, and where Consuelo had met Zdenko. They perceived at a distance the light of his lantern which was placed on the ground beside him. Consuelo having learned by experience the dangerous whims, and almost incredible strength of the idiot, involuntarily pressed close to Albert, on perceiving the indication of his approach.

"Why do you fear this mild and affectionate creature?" said the young count, surprised, yet secretly gratified at her terror. "Poor

Zdenko loves you, although since yesternight a frightful dream has made him refractory and rather hostile to your generous project of coming to seek me. But he is, when I desire it, as submissive as a child, and you shall see him at your feet if I but say the word."

"Do not humiliate him before me," replied Consuelo; "do not increase the aversion which he already entertains for me. I shall by-and-by inform you of the serious reasons I have to fear and avoid him for the future."

"Zdenko," replied Albert, "is surely an ethereal being, and it is difficult to conceive how he could inspire any one whatever with fear. His state of perpetual ecstasy confers on him the purity and charity of angels."

"But this state of ecstasy when it is prolonged becomes a disease. Do not deceive yourself on this point. God does not wish that man should thus abjure the feeling and consciousness of his real life, to elevate himself—often by vague conceptions—to an ideal world. Madness, the general result of these hallucinations, is a punishment for his pride and indolence."

Cynabre stopped when he saw Zdenko, and looked at him with an affectionate eye, expecting the customary caress, which his friend now withheld from him. His head was buried in his hands as it had been when Consuelo left him. Albert spoke to him in Bohemian, but he scarcely made any reply. His cheeks were bathed in tears, and he would not so much as look at Consuelo. But Albert raised his voice, and spoke to him firmly; but there was still more of exhortation than of anger in his tones. He rose and offered her his hand, which she took, though not without trembling.

"Now," he said to her in German, looking at her mildly, although sadly, "you ought to fear me no longer; but you have done me great injury, and I feel that your hand is full of misfortune to me."

He walked on before, now and then exchanging a word with Albert. They followed the solidly-built and spacious gallery, which hitherto Consuelo had not yet traversed, which led them to a round, vaulted hall, in which they again encountered the water of the spring, flowing into a large basin, made by the hand of man, and walled up with hewn stone. Two streams flowed from it, one losing itself in the ramifications of the cavern, the other rushing towards the castle cistern. The latter of these Zdenko closed, placing in its channel three huge blocks of stone, when desired to lower the cistern to the level of the sluiceway, and of the stairway by which to gain Albert's terrace.

"Let us sit down here awhile," said Albert, to his companion, "to give the water of the well time to run off by the waste-way—"

"Which I know but too well," said Consuelo, shuddering from head to foot.

"What do you mean?" asked Albert, in astonishment.

"I will tell you some other time," said Consuelo. "At this moment I do not wish to alarm and sadden you by the idea of the perils I have gone through."

"What does she mean?" asked Albert of Zdenko, in astonishment.

Zdenko replied in Bohemian, while he was kneading some clay wherewith to fill up the interstices of the blocks of stone.

"Explain yourself, Consuelo," said Albert, earnestly. "I cannot make out what he means. He says that he did not guide you hither, that you came through subterraneous passages, which I know to be impenetrable, and through which no delicate woman would or could

attempt to pass. He says that destiny led you, and that the Archangel Michael, whom he calls the haughty and imperious, guided you through the waters, and across the abysses."

"I dare say it was the Archangel Michael," said Consuelo, with a smile, "for it is very certain that I came by the waste-way of the fountain, and outstripped the torrent in its course. That I lost my way two or three times, passed caverns and quarries in which I expected to be smothered or drowned at every step I took; and yet all these things were less terrible to me than the rage of Zdenko, when chance or Providence brought me back to the true road."

And here Consuelo, who was still speaking Spanish to Albert, told him in a few words of the reception the pacific Zdenko had given her, and of his attempt to bury her alive, which he would unquestionably have accomplished had she not fortunately remembered the singularly heretical phrase by which to appease him. Cold sweat rolled down the face of Albert, and his eyes shot fiery glances of wrath against Zdenko, who returned them with defiance and disdain. Consuelo trembled at the idea of a conflict between these two madmen, and tried to reconcile them by gentle words, but Albert rose, and giving the keys of his hermitage to Zdenko, addressed him very coldly, when Zdenko instantly submitted, and went away, singing some of his wild and antique airs.

"Consuelo," said Albert, as soon as he was gone, "if this faithful animal now crouching at your feet, if poor Cynabre were by involuntary rage to put your life in peril, he should die for it, and my hand, which has never shed the blood even of the lower animals, would not hesitate to slay him. Fear not, then; no further peril shall assail you."

"Of what are you speaking, Albert?" she cried, alarmed at this sudden illusion. "I fear nothing; Zdenko is still a man, if he have lost his reason—in part by his own fault, and in part it may be by yours. Speak not of blood or punishment; it is for you to lead him back to truth and reason. But come, let us go. I fear that the day may dawn, and that we may be seen as we re-enter the castle."

"You are right, Consuelo," said Albert, proceeding on his way. "Wisdom speaks by thy mouth. My madness has been contagious to the poor wretch, and myself, cured by you, it is for me to cure him. But if I fail, although Zdenko be a man in the eyes of God, and an angel for his tenderness to me, although he be the only true friend on earth, be sure that I will tear him from my heart, and that you shall never see him more."

"Hold! Albert, hold!" cried Consuelo. "Dwell not on such ideas. I would rather a hundred fold myself die, than force on you a necessity so terrible."

But Albert heard her not. He was again bewildered. And as he was no longer compelled to support her, he seemed to forget her very existence, and walked rapidly forward, making the cavern re-echo with his broken exclamations, and leaving her to drag herself as best she might, behind him.

In this alarming situation Consuelo could think of nothing but Zdenko, who was behind, and might follow her, and of the torrent, which he might unchain at any moment, in which case she would perish miserably, deprived of Albert's aid. For he was now the victim of a new phantasy, and appeared to see her before him, and to be in pursuit of a fleeting phantom, while she was really behind him in

the darkness. Cynabre, who carried the light, ran as swiftly as his master walked; the light vanished behind the angles of the sinuous road, and at length, overcome with fatigue and terror, Consuelo stumbled over a fragment of rock, fell, and could not rise again.

"It is all over!" she thought within herself, after a vain effort to raise herself on her knees. "I am a victim to a pitiless destiny, and never more shall look upon the light of heaven." A thicker darkness than that of the cavern overspread her eyes. Her hands grew chill, an apathy like that of the last sleep overpowered her, when suddenly she was raised in a pair of strong arms, and pressed closely to a loving breast, while a friendly voice addressed her with kind words. Cynabre bounded before her, shaking his lantern joyously, for it was Albert, who had recovered his senses, and returned, just in time to rescue her from certain death. In three minutes they reached the cistern, into which the water was already beginning to flow. Cynabre, accustomed to the way, rushed fleetly up the steps, as if he feared to be in the way of his master, while Albert, clinging to the chain with one hand while he upheld her with the other, ascended with wonderful speed. At any time his muscular strength was ten-fold that of Zdenko, and now he was animated by an almost supernatural power. When he deposited his precious burthen on the margin of the well, the day was dawning.

"My friend," said she tenderly, "I was about to die when you saved me. You have returned all that I have done for you, but now I feel your fatigue more than you do yourself and I feel as if I should give way under it."

"Oh, my little Zingarella," cried Albert, enthusiastically, "I feel your weight as little as on that day when I bore you, yet a child, down the steep descent of the Shreckenstein into the castle."

"Whence you are never to issue more, without my permission, Albert. Remember your promise."

"I will. Do you, likewise."

He then helped her to wrap herself in her veil, and led her through his room, whence she escaped to her own apartment unseen of any one, although the people were beginning to rise in the castle, and the dry morning cough of the canoness was heard from the lower story.

Hastily she took off and concealed her garments, soiled and torn by her wild nocturnal adventures, for she had recovered strength enough to be aware of the necessity of secrecy. But no sooner had her head touched the pillow than a heavy and unrefreshing sleep fell on her, and she remained as it were nailed to her pillow by the oppression of fierce and fiery fever.

#### CHAPTER XLVII.

THE Canoness Wenceslawa, after praying that morning about half an hour, went up-stairs, and waked straight to the door of her nephew's chamber. She was charmed to hear some slight sounds from within, which served to announce his return. She entered softly, and what was her rapture to see Albert sleeping peacefully in his own bed, and Cynabre curled up in an arm chair. At once she ran down to

the oratory, where the old Count Christian was praying, as was his wont, that heaven would restore his son to him, either on earth or in heaven.

"Brother," she cried kneeling by his side, "suspend your prayers and raise your highest benedictions toward heaven. Your prayers are granted."

She had no need to utter another word. The old man understood her, raised his withered hand toward heaven, and cried in a faint voice, "My God, you have restored my son to me!"

And then both, as if by a sudden inspiration, began to recite alternately the verses of the beautiful canticle of Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

Albert they determined not to awaken; but the baron, the chaplain, and all the servants were summoned, and listened devoutly to a mass of thanksgiving in the Castle chapel. Amelia alone greatly disapproved of being awakened at five o'clock in the morning, to yawn through a sleepy mass, though she was rejoiced at her cousin's return.

"Why did not your good friend, Porporina, join us in returning thanks to Providence," said Count Christian to his niece, when mass was over.

"I tried to waken her," answered Amelia, "but in vain. I called her, shook her, did all I could to arouse her, but in vain. I should have thought her dead, but she was as hot as fire, and her face was crimson. She must have slept ill, and is feverish."

"The excellent young lady must be sick, then," said Count Christian, "and, my dear sister, you ought to go and give her that care which her situation requires. I trust the happy day of our son's return will not be saddened by the illness of that noble girl."

"I will go, brother," replied the canoness, who never took a step or said a word in relation to Consuelo, without consulting the chaplain's eye. "But do not be alarmed, Christian. The signora Nina is very nervous, and will soon be well. Is it not, however, a very singular thing," said she, aside to the chaplain, when she could do so unobserved, "that this girl should have foretold Albert's return so confidently and so surely. Perhaps we may have deceived ourselves about her, and she may be a sort of saint."

"A saint would have come to mass, instead of having a fever at such a time," said the chaplain, gravely.

This judicious remark drew a sigh from the canoness; but she went to see Consuelo, and found her in a burning fever and heavy lethargic sleep. The chaplain was summoned, and declared that, should this condition last, she would be very ill. The young baroness was next questioned as to whether her neighbor had passed a restless night.

"Far from it," said Amelia, "I never heard her move. I expected, after the predictions and strange tales with which she has been regaling us of late, to have heard the sabbat danced in her room; but whether the devil carried her far hence, or whether she deals with very clever imps I know not; she never stirred to my knowledge, for my sleep was not once broken."

The chaplain thought these jests very wicked, and the canoness whose good heart ever counteracted the errors of her judgment, thought them very much misplaced by the bedside of a sick companion. She said nothing, however, attributing her niece's spite to well-founded jealousy, and only asked the chaplain what medicine ought to be given to Porporina.

He ordered a sedative, but, as her teeth were hard clenched it could not be administered, and this he pronounced a bad sign. But in that house apathy was contagious, and he put off his judgment until after a future examination, saying "If this state continues, we must think of sending for a physician; for I should not feel justified in undertaking a case where the ailment is not moral. In the meantime I will pray for her, and it may be, to judge from her recent state of mind, that the aid of God will be most effective in her case."

A servant maid was left with Consuelo. The canoness went to prepare a dainty breakfast for Albert; Amelia put on a brilliant costume to captivate him. Every one prepared some gratification for the young count, while no one thought of poor Consuelo, to whom his return was due.

Albert soon awoke, and, instead of making useless efforts to remember what had passed, as he usually did after his fits of delirium and visits to the cavern, he speedily remembered his love and the happiness which he had derived from Consuelo. He hastened to arise, dressed and perfumed himself, and hastened to throw himself into the arms of his father and his aunt, whose joy was at its height when they observed that Albert was perfectly sensible, conscious of his long absence, and penitent for the uneasiness he had caused them. He begged their pardon earnestly, and promised to give them no cause for further annoyance. He saw their delight at his return to a perception of reality, but, at the same time, he remarked that they persisted in flattering him as to his true position, and he felt humiliated at being treated as a child, when he knew himself again a man.

When they sat down to table, in the midst of the caresses of his family and their tears of joy, he looked anxiously around for her who was become necessary to his happiness and peace, so that his aunt, seeing him start at the opening of every door, thought it best to relieve his anxiety by stating that their young guest had slept badly, and wished to remain in bed part of the day.

Albert well understood that his deliverer must naturally be much fatigued; nevertheless, fear was manifest in all his features at this news.

"But, aunt," said he, at length, unable to control his emotion, "I think if Porpora's adopted daughter be seriously ill, we might be better employed than sitting here round the table, eating and drinking and chatting at our ease."

"Don't be alarmed, Albert," said Amelia, blushing with spite, "Nina is busy dreaming about you, and auguring your return, which she awaits in tranquil sleep, while we are joyously celebrating it here."

Albert turned pale with indignation, and replied with an angry glance—

"If any one here has slept while awaiting me, it is not the person whom you have named that deserves thanks for it. The rosiness of your cheeks, fair cousin, shows that you have not lost a moment's sleep in my absence, and therefore now require no rest. I thank you for it with all my heart, for it would have been very painful to me to beg your pardon with shame and penitence, as I have done of all the rest of the family."

"Thanks for the exception," answered Amelia, crimson with rage, "I will try always to deserve it, by keeping my watchings and anxieties for some one who will care for them—not turn them into jest."

This little altercation, which was no new affair between Albert and his betrothed, though it was unusually bitter, in despite of all Albert's efforts to the contrary, threw some constraint and sadness over the rest of the morning. The canoness went several times to see her patient, whom she found still more feverish and more lethargic. Amelia, who regarded Albert's anxiety as a personal insult, went to cry in her own room. The chaplain told the canoness that if the fever lasted until evening, they must send for a physician. Count Christian, who could not comprehend his son's anxiety, and who thought him still in ill health, kept his son close to his side all the morning. But in spite of his efforts to soothe him by affectionate words, the old man could not hit upon a single topic by which he could awaken Albert's sympathies, fearing to sound the depths of his mind, through a vague apprehension of being overcome in argument, which had always befallen him, whenever, wanting as he was both in eloquence and that logical art of special pleading which supplies the want of it, he had attempted to attack what he called the heresies of Albert, and to combat the vivid gleams which pierced through the gloom of his insane fits, with the feeble and modest arguments of a weak and narrow-minded, though sincere Catholic. And he even dreaded, lest by giving him the victory, he should but add to his pride and attachment in the wrong, and so do him injury rather than good. Their conversation was, therefore, broken, at least twenty times, by a sort of mutual alarm, and twenty times resumed with constraint on both sides, and, at last, sunk of itself into silence. The old count fell asleep in his own arm-chair, and Albert went to inquire after Consuelo's health, concerning whom he was the more alarmed, the more they endeavored to conceal from him her ailment.

He passed two hours and upwards roaming about the corridors of the castle, lying in wait for the canoness or the chaplain, in hopes of gaining tidings from them. The chaplain persisted in answering him concisely and reservedly; the canoness put on a forced smile when she saw him, and affected to talk of other things, as if to lull him into a false security. But it was not long before Albert perceived that she was really uneasy, that her visits to Consuelo's chamber became much more frequent, and that she did not hesitate about opening and shutting the doors constantly, as if the sleep, which they pretended to be so peaceful and necessary, was one which could not be interrupted by any noise or uproar. He took courage, therefore, to approach the room, to enter which he would almost have given his life. It had an antechamber, separated from the passage by two massive doors, in which there was no chink or cranny penetrable to the eye. So soon as she observed this attempt, the canoness bolted both these securely, and thereafter, visited her patient only through Amelia's room, which was adjoining, and which she well knew Albert would not visit in order to seek tidings, save with the last reluctance. At length, seeing that he was growing angry, she resolved to deceive him; and, while asking pardon of the Lord in her heart, announced that the invalid was much better, and would come down to dinner with the family.

Albert, in the meantime, returned to his father, anxiously awaiting the hour which should give him back happiness and Consuelo.

But the bell rang in vain; no Consuelo made her appearance, and the canoness, who seemed to become rapidly an adept in the art of falsehood, said that she had risen, but feeling herself still weak, had preferred to take her dinner in her own room; and she even carried the

deceit so far as to send delicate dishes to her from the table. These stratagems at last convinced Albert, though he still felt an invincible presentiment of evil, and only preserved the appearance of calmness by the exertion of a powerful effort.

In the evening, Wenceslawa again announced, with an air of satisfaction, that the Porporina was much better, that the feverish redness of her complexion had subsided, that her pulse was rather feeble than full, and that she would undoubtedly pass an excellent night.

"And, wherefore," muttered Albert to himself, "am I frozen with terror, in spite of this favorable news?"

In truth, the good canoness, who, despite her leanness and deformity, had never been sick an hour in her life, understood nothing of the sickness of others. When she saw Consuelo's flushed cheek alter to a pale bluish hue, her agitated blood become stagnant in her veins, and her oppressed bosom cease to labor; she really believed that she was convalescent, and gave notice of the occurrence with childish gladness. But the chaplain, who knew a little more, saw at once that this apparent ease was but the precursor of a violent crisis. So soon as Albert had retired, he told the canoness that the moment had arrived when the physician must be summoned. Unfortunately the town was distant, the night dark, the roads execrably bad, and Hans, the messenger, though zealous enough, as slow as the horse that carried him. The storm arose, the rain fell in torrents. The old horse, which carried the old servant, tripped a hundred times, and, at length, lost his way with his master, who took every hill for the Schreckenstein, and every flash of lightning for the fiery flight of an evil spirit. It was broad day before he recovered his way, and it was late before the physician could be aroused, induced to dress himself, and proceed on his way. More than four-and-twenty hours had been lost in determining and performing this.

Meanwhile, Albert vainly endeavored to sleep. His evil auguries and the wild sounds of the distant storm, kept him awake all night long. He dared not go down stairs, fearing the offended dignity of his aunt, and her remarks on the impropriety of his visit to the chamber of two young ladies. He left his door open, however, and listened to the footsteps as they passed to and fro, on the lower floor. Hearing nothing of moment, he was compelled to be calm, and in obedience to Consuelo's orders, he watched over his reason and his moral health, with firmness and patience. But, on a sudden, above the peals of thunder and the crashing of the timbers of the old castle under the fury of the hurricane, a long and piercing cry reached his ear, like the thrust of a keen weapon. Albert, who had lain down on the bed in his clothes, with a full resolution of sleeping, sprang to his feet, rushed down stairs, and knocked at Consuelo's door. All was again silence. No one replied or came to open the door. Albert almost fancied he had been dreaming, when another cry followed, yet wilder than the first. He hesitated no longer, ran round a gloomy corridor, arrived at Amelia's door, and announced his name. He heard her bolt it from within, and her voice imperiously commanded him to begone. Nevertheless, the cries and groans redoubled. It was the voice of Consuelo in the extremity of suffering. He even heard his own name uttered in tones of anguish by that adored mouth. He drove the door in furiously, making both lock and bolt fly, and casting Amelia, who, in a damask dressing-gown and lace cap, played the part of injured modesty violently back

on the sofa, rushed into Consuelo's apartment, pale as a spectre, and with his hair bristling erect on his head.

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 CHAPTER XLVIII

CONSUELO, who was now violently delirious, was struggling furiously in the arms of the two strongest maid-servants in the house. Assailed, as is usually the case in all affections of the brain, by appalling terrors, the poor girl was endeavoring to escape from the visions which beset her. She could see only in the persons who were trying to restrain and reassure her, enemies and monsters. The chaplain, terror-stricken and expecting to see her fall at each moment, overpowered by the violence of her fit, could only pray for her, while she took him for Zdenko, building the wall against her in the cavern. The trembling canoness who was assisting the other women to hold her in bed, she took for the phantom of the two Wandas, the sisters of Ziska, and the mother of Albert, confronting her, one by one in the cavern, and accusing her of invading their demesnes. Her cries, her groans, her words, all incomprehensible to the bystanders, all related to the events of the past night. She heard the roar of the torrents, and moved her arms as if she would have swam. She shook her black hair, dishevelled from her shoulders, and thought she saw the foam-flakes fall from it. Ever she fancied Zdenko behind her, opening the sluice-gates, or before her, blocking her way with granite. She only spoke of water and of stones, and that with a pertinacity that led the chaplain to say—"This is a very long and painful dream. I cannot conceive what has so rivetted her thoughts on that cistern. It is evidently the beginning of her fever, and her delirium refers to nothing else."

At the moment when Albert entered her chamber in dismay, Consuelo, exhausted with the violence of her delirium, was uttering only inarticulate words and piercing cries. The power of her will, no longer resisted her terrors, as it had done when she encountered them, and the reaction which she now experienced was intensely horrible. She recovered her voice, however, by a sort of instinct predominant over her delirium, and began to call Albert, with shrieks so wild and piercing, that the whole house rang.

"Here—I am here!" he cried, rushing towards the bed. Consuelo heard him—recovered all her energies, and fancying that he was flying from her, darted out of bed, escaping the hands of her attendants, with that rapidity of motion and muscular power, which fever often lends even to the weakest frames. She sprang into the middle of the room with dishevelled hair and bare feet, and her body covered only by a slight, and ruffled night-dress, looking almost like a spectre, just issued from the tomb. At the very moment when they were on the point of seizing her, she sprang with a light bound to the top of the harpsichord, and thence to the sill of the window, which she evidently took for the opening of the fatal cistern; and calling again on the name of Albert through the wild and stormy night, would have cast herself out headlong, had not Albert, yet more active and far stronger than she, caught her in his arms, and carried her back to her bed.



She did not recognise him, but she made no resistance and ceased to cry. He addressed her in Spanish, lavishing on her the tenderest names and epithets. She listened, but appeared neither to hear or see him; but suddenly rising on her knees in bed, she began to sing Handel's *Te Deum*, which she had recently read and admired. Never had she looked more lovely than in that attitude of ecstasy, with her hair loosely flowing, her cheeks flushed with fever, and her eyes turned heavenward, and conscious of heaven only. The canoness was so much moved that she sank on her knees at the foot of the bed, and burst into tears; and the chaplain, unsympathetic as he was, bowed his head in religious veneration. As soon as she had ended her chant, she heaved a deep sigh, and exclaiming—"I am saved," fell backward, pale as marble, with her eyes wide open, but devoid of life or lustre, her lips ashy white, and her arms rigid.

An instant of terror and silence followed the catastrophe. Amelia who had watched this terrible scene motionless at the door of her own room, without daring to move a step, fell backward fainting. The canoness and the two women ran to succor her, while Consuelo lay cold and motionless on the arm of Albert, who had let fall his head upon her bosom, and seemed scarce more alive than she. The canoness had no sooner laid Amelia on the bed, than she returned to the door of Consuelo's room.

"Well, Monsieur Chaplain?" she asked mournfully.

"Madam, it is death!" replied the chaplain in a deep voice, letting fall Consuelo's arm, the pulse of which he had been questioning.

"No, it is not death," cried Albert impetuously. "I tell you it is not death. I have consulted her heart better than you have her pulse. It beats still; she breathes, she is alive. Oh! she will live. It is not thus, nor is it now that she is to pass away. Now is the moment to act with energy. Now, Monsieur Chaplain, give me your medicine chest; I know how to treat her, which you do not. Wretch that you are, obey me. You have done her no good. You might have prevented this fearful crisis; you have not done so. You hid her illness from me. You have all deceived me. Did you then wish to destroy her? Your cowardly prudence, your stupid apathy, have tied up both your tongue and your hands. Give me your medicine chest, I say, and let me act."

And as the chaplain still hesitated to give his medicines, which might easily, in the hands of one inexperienced, much more of one half-mad, be considered poisons, he snatched it violently out of his hands. Without paying any regard to his aunt's observations, he chose out and weighed himself, the powerful sedatives, which could alone act in such a crisis. Albert was learned in many things, of which no one believed that he knew anything. He had experimented upon himself at one period of his life, when he was himself attending to the disordered functions of his own brain, and had studied the effect of the most potent anti-spasmodics. Prompt of judgment, bold and zealous, he administered a dose which the chaplain would not have ventured to recommend. With great gentleness he succeeded in opening her clenched teeth, and got her to swallow some drops of the efficacious medicine. At the end of an hour, during which he repeated the practice several times, her breathing was free, her hands had recovered their warmth, and her features their elasticity. She neither saw nor heard anything as yet, but her lethargy had assumed the form of sleep and a pale color was returning to her lips. The physician arrived, and

seeing that the case was a serious one, declared that he had been called too late, and would answer for nothing. She ought to have been bled last night," he said, "but now the moment was not favorable. To bleed would bring back the crisis, and this would be embarrassing."

"It will bring it back," said Albert, "and yet she must be bled."

The German physician, who was a heavy person, accustomed to be regarded as an oracle in his part of the country, where he had no rival or competitor, raised his bushy eyes, and looked frowningly to see who dared question his diction.

"I tell you she must be bled," said Albert, authoritatively. "The crisis will return with or without the bleeding."

"Permit me," said the doctor; "that is less certain than you seem to think."

"If the crisis do not return all is lost," replied Albert, "and you ought to know it. This lethargic state tends to congestion of the brain, paralysis, and death. It is your duty to possess yourself of the disease, to rekindle its intensity, and then combat it, and subdue it. What can you do beside here? Prayers and funeral ceremonies are not your duty. Bleed her, or I will do so myself."

The doctor knew well that Albert's reasoning was just, but it was not his rule that a man so grave and important as he, should decide promptly. Moreover, our German had a habit of pretending perplexities, in order to come out of them triumphantly, as if by a sudden flash of genius, so as to lead persons to speak of him as a very great and skilful practitioner, without his equal, even in Vienna.

When he found himself contradicted, therefore, and driven to the wall by Albert's impatience—"If you are a physician," he replied, "and if you have authority here, I do not see why I was called in, and I shall go home."

"If you don't chose to decide while there is yet time, you may do so," returned Albert.

Doctor Wetzellus, who was desperately offended at being associated with an unknown brother of the profession, rose, and went into Amelia's room, to attend to the nerves of that young person, who was urgently solicitous to see him, and to take leave of the canoness; but she insisted on his remaining.

"Alas! my dear doctor," said she, "you cannot abandon us in such a situation. See what heavy responsibility weighs on us. My nephew has offended you, but you should not resist so seriously the hastiness of a young man who is so little master of himself."

"Was that Count Albert?" asked the doctor, amazed. "I should never have recognised him, he is so much altered."

"Without doubt, the ten years which have elapsed since you saw him, have made a great change in him."

"I thought him completely cured," said the doctor, maliciously; "for I have not been sent for once since his return."

"Ah! my dear doctor, you are aware that Albert never willingly submitted to the decision of science."

"And now he appears to be a physician himself!"

"He has a slight knowledge of all sciences, but he carries into all his uncontrollable impatience. The frightful state in which he has just seen this young girl has agitated him terribly, otherwise you would have seen him more polite, more calm, and grateful to you for the care you bestowed on him in his infancy."

"I think he requires care more than ever," replied the doctor, who in spite of his respect for the Rudolstadt family, preferred afflicting the canoness by this harsh observation, to stooping from his professional position, and giving up the petty revenge of treating Albert as a madman.

The canoness suffered the more from this cruelty, that the exasperation of the doctor might lead him to reveal the condition of her nephew, which she took such pains to conceal. She therefore laid aside her dignity for the moment to disarm this resentment, and deferentially inquired what he thought of the bleeding so much insisted on by Albert.

"I think it is absurd at present," said the doctor, who wished to maintain the initiative, and allow the decision to come perfectly free from his respected lips. "I shall wait an hour or two; and if the right moment should arrive sooner than I expect, I shall act: but in the present crisis, the state of the pulse does not warrant me taking any decisive step."

"Then you will remain with us? Bless you, excellent doctor!"

"When I am now aware that my opponent is the young count," replied the doctor, smiling with a patronising and compassionate air, "I shall not be astonished at anything, and shall allow him to talk as he pleases."

And he was turning to re-enter Consuelo's apartment, the door of which the chaplain had closed to prevent Albert hearing this colloquy, when the chaplain himself, pale and bewildered, left the sick girl's couch, and came to seek the physician.

"In the name of Heaven! doctor!" he exclaimed, "come and use your authority, for mine is despised, as the voice of God himself would be, I believe, by Count Albert. He persists in bleeding the dying girl, contrary to your express prohibition. I know not by what force or stratagem we shall prevent him. He will maim her, if he do not kill her on the spot, by some untimely blunder."

"So, so," muttered the doctor in a sulky tone, as he stalked leisurely towards the door, with the conceited and insulting air of a man devoid of natural feeling, "we shall see fine doings if I fail in diverting his attention in some way."

But when they approached the bed, they found Albert with his reddened lancet between his teeth: with one hand he supported Consuelo's arm, while with the other he held the bar. The vein was open, and dark-colored blood flowed in an abundant stream.

The chaplain began to murmur, to exclaim, and to take Heaven to witness. The doctor endeavored to jest a little, to distract Albert's thoughts, conceiving he might take his own time to close the vein, were it only to open it a moment after, that his caprice and vanity might thus enjoy all the credit of success. But Albert kept them all at a distance by a mere glance; and as soon as he had drawn a sufficient quantity of blood, he applied the necessary bandages, with the dexterity of an experienced operator. He then gently replaced Consuelo's arm by her side, handing the canoness a phial to hold to her nostrils, and called the chaplain and the doctor into Amelia's chamber.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you can now be of no further use. Indecision and prejudice united, paralyze your zeal and your knowledge. I here declare that I take all the responsibility on myself, and that I will not be either opposed or molested in so serious a task. I beg there-

fore that the chaplain may recite his prayers and the doctor administer his potions to my cousin. I shall suffer no prognostics, nor sentences of death around the bed of one who will soon regain her consciousness. Let this be settled. If in this instance I offend a learned man—if I am guilty of culpable conduct towards a friend—I shall ask pardon when I can once more think of myself."

After having thus spoken in a tone, the serious and studied politeness of which was in strong contrast with the coldness and formality of his words, Albert re-entered Consuelo's apartment, closed the door, put the key in his pocket, and said to the canoness: "No one shall either enter or leave this room without my permission."

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 CHAPTER XLIX.

THE terrified canoness dared not venture a word in reply. There was something so resolute in Albert's air and demeanor that his good aunt quailed before it, and obeyed him with an alacrity quite surprising in her. The physician finding his authority despised, and not caring, as he afterwards affirmed, to encounter a madman, wisely determined to withdraw. The chaplain betook himself to his prayers, and Albert, assisted by his aunt and two of the domestics, remained the whole day with his patient, without relaxing his attentions for an instant. After some hours of quiet the paroxysm returned with an intensity almost greater than that of the preceding night. It was however of shorter duration, and then it yielded to the effect of powerful remedies. Albert desired the canoness to retire to rest, and to send him another female domestic to assist him while the two others took some repose.

"Will you not also take some rest?" asked Wenceslawa, trembling.

"No, my dear aunt," he replied, "I require none."

"Alas! my child," said she, "you will kill yourself, then;" and she added as she left the room, emboldened by the abstraction of the count, "This stranger costs us dear."

He consented however to take some food, in order to keep up his strength. He ate standing in the corridor, his eye fixed upon the door; and as soon as he had finished his hasty repast, he threw down the napkin, and re-entered the room. He had closed the communication between the chamber of Consuelo and that of Amelia, and only allowed the attendants to gain access by the gallery. Amelia only wished to be admitted to tend her suffering companion; but she went so awkwardly about it, and, dreading the return of convulsions, displayed such terror at every feverish movement, that Albert became irritated, and begged her not to trouble herself further, but retire to her own apartment.

"To my apartment!" exclaimed Amelia; "impossible!—do you imagine I could sleep with those frightful cries of agony ringing in my ears?"

Albert shrugged his shoulders, and replied that there were many other apartments in the castle, of which she might select the best.