

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

The canonesse 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 canonesse 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 canonesse: "No one shall either enter or leave this room without my permission."

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 CHAPTER XLIX.

THE terrified canonesse 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 canonesse 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.

until the invalid could be removed to one where her proximity should annoy no one.

Amelia, irritated and displeased, followed the advice. To witness the delicate care which Albert displayed towards her rival was more painful than all. "O, aunt!" she exclaimed, throwing herself into the arms of the canoness, when the latter had brought her to sleep in her own bedroom, where she had a bed prepared for her beside her own, "we did not know Albert. He now shows how he can love."

For many days Consuelo hovered between life and death; but Albert combated her malady with such perseverance and skill as finally to conquer it. He bore her through this rude trial in safety; and as soon as she was out of danger, he caused her to be removed to an apartment in the turret of the castle, where the sun shone for the longest time, and where the view was more extensive and varied than from any of the other windows. This chamber, furnished after an antique fashion, was more in unison with the serious tastes of Consuelo than the one they had first prepared for her, and she had long evinced a desire to occupy it. Here she was free from the importunities of her companion, and in spite of the continual presence of a nurse, who was engaged each morning and evening, she could enjoy the hours of convalescence agreeably with her preserver. They always conversed in Spanish, and the tender and delicate manifestation of Albert's love was so much the sweeter to Consuelo in that language which recalled her country, her childhood, and her mother. Imbued with the liveliest gratitude, weakened by sufferings in which Albert alone had effectively aided and consoled her, she submitted to that gentle lassitude which is the result of severe indisposition. Her recollections of the past returned by degrees, but not with equal distinctness. For example, if she recalled with undisguised satisfaction the support and devotion of Albert, during the principal events of their acquaintance, she saw his mental estrangement, and his somewhat gloomy passion, as through a thick cloud. There were even hours, during the half-consciousness of sleep, or after composing draughts, when she imagined that she had dreamed many of the things that could give cause for distrust or fear of her generous friend. She was so much accustomed to his presence and his attentions, that if he absented himself at prayers or at meals, she felt nervous and agitated until his return. She fancied that her medicines, when prepared and administered by any other hand than his, had an effect the contrary of that which was intended. She would then observe with a tranquil smile, so affecting on a lovely countenance half veiled by the shadow of death: "I now believe, Albert, that you are an enchanter; for if you order but a single drop of water, it produces in me the same salutary calmness and strength which exists in yourself."

Albert was happy for the first time in his life; and as if his soul was strong in joy as it had been in grief, he deemed himself, at this period of intoxicating delight, the most fortunate man on earth. This chamber where he constantly saw his beloved one had become his world. At night, after he was supposed to have retired, and every one was thought asleep in the house, he returned with stealthy steps; and while the nurse in charge slept soundly, he glided behind the bed of his dear Consuelo, and watched her sleeping, pale and drooping like a flower after the storm. He settled himself in an arm-chair, which he took care to leave there when he went away, and thus passed the

night, sleeping so lightly that at the least movement of Consuelo, he awoke and bent towards her to catch her faint words; or his ready hand received hers when a prey to some unhappy dream, she was restless and disquieted. If the nurse chanced to awake, Albert declared he had just come in, and she rested satisfied that he merely visited his patient once or twice during the night, while in reality he did not waste half an hour in his own chamber. Consuelo shared this feeling, and although discovering the presence of her guardian much more frequently than that of the nurse, she was still so weak as to be easily deceived both as to the number and duration of his visits. Often when, after midnight, she found him watching over her, and besought him to retire and take a few hours repose, he would evade her desire by saying that it was now near daybreak, and that he had just risen. These innocent deceptions excited no suspicion in the mind of Consuelo of the fatigue to which her lover was subjecting himself; and to them it was owing that she seldom suffered from the absence of Albert. This fatigue, strange as it may appear, was unperceived by the young count himself: so true is it that love imparts strength to the weakest. He possessed, however, a powerful organization: and he was animated besides by a love as ardent and devoted as ever fired a human breast.

When, during the first warm rays of the sun, Consuelo was able to bear removal to the half-open window, Albert seated himself behind her, and sought in the course of the clouds and in the purple tints of the sunbeams, to divine the thoughts with which the aspect of the skies inspired his silent friend. Sometimes he silently took a corner of the veil with which she covered her head, and which a warm wind floated over the back of the sofa, and bending forward his forehead as if to rest, pressed it to his lips. One day Consuelo, drawing it forward to cover her chest, was surprised to find it warm and moist and turning more quickly than she had done since her illness, perceived some extraordinary emotion on the countenance of her friend. His cheeks were flushed, a feverish fire shone in his eyes, while his breast heaved with violent palpitations. Albert quickly recovered himself, but not before he had perceived terror depicted on the countenance of Consuelo. This deeply afflicted him. He would rather have witnessed there an emotion of contempt, or even of severity, than a lingering feeling of fear and distrust. He resolved to keep so careful a watch over himself, that no trace of his aberration of mind should be visible to her who had cured him of it, almost at the price of her own life.

He succeeded, thanks to a superhuman power, and one which no ordinary man could have exercised. Accustomed to repress his emotions, and to enjoy the full scope of his desires, when not incapacitated by his mysterious disease, he restrained himself to an extent that he did not get credit for. His friends were ignorant of the frequency and force of the attack which he had every day to overcome, until overwhelmed by despair, he fled to his secret cavern—a conqueror even in defeat, since he still maintained sufficient circumspection to hide from all eyes the spectacle of his fall. Albert's madness was of the most unhappy yet elevated stamp. He knew his madness and felt its approach until it had completely laid hold of and overpowered him. Yet he preserved in the midst of his attacks the vague and confused remembrance of an external world, in which he did not wish to reappear, whilst he felt his relations with it not per-

fectly established. This memory of an actual and real life we all retain, when, in the dreams of a painful sleep, we are transported into another life—a life of fiction and indefinable visions. We occasionally struggle against those fantasies and terrors of the night, assuring ourselves that they are merely the effects of nightmare, and making efforts to awake; but on such occasions a hostile power appears to seize upon us at every effort, and to plunge us again into a horrible lethargy, where terrible spectacles, ever growing more gloomy, close around us, and where griefs the most poignant assail and torture us.

It was in a strange series of alternations that the powerful yet miserable existence of this singular man, whom nothing but an active, delicate and intelligent tenderness could rescue from his own sufferings, was spent. Consuelo had in reality the candid and innocent soul which seemed particularly adapted for the management of his dark spirit, which had hitherto been closed against any possible approach of sympathy. There was something especially soft and touching in the romantic enthusiasm of her first solicitude for Albert, as well as in the respectful friendship with which subsequent gratitude inspired her, that really appeared intended by a special Providence for the care of Albert. It is very probable that, if forgetful of the past, Consuelo could have returned the ardor of his passion; transports so new to his experience, and a joy so sudden, would have excited him fatally. But her calm and discreet friendship had a far surer and more beneficial effect on him. It was a restraint, while it was a blessing; and if he enjoyed the pleasure of being loved as he never had been loved before, he was yet grieved at not being loved as he desired to be loved; and he had a secret fear of losing even that which he now possessed, should he appear to be dissatisfied with it. The effect of this triple love was to leave no room in his mind any longer for the indulgence of those fatal reveries to which his lonely and inactive life had naturally led him. He was delivered from these as if by the force of enchantment, for he forgot them altogether, and the image of her whom he loved, kept them aloof like a heavenly buckler outstretched between them and him. Like the fabulous hero of antiquity, Consuelo had descended into Tartarus to rescue her friend, and had brought back thence bewilderment and terror. In his turn, it became his duty to deliver her from the hateful guests who had followed her, and he had succeeded in doing so by delicate attentions and respectful cares. They thus were recommencing as it were a new life altogether, resting for support, one on the other, scarcely daring to look backward, and lacking the courage to revisit, even in thought, the abyss which they had traversed. The future was a new abyss, not less mysterious and terrible, which they did not venture to fathom. But they calmly enjoyed the present, like a season of grace which was granted them by Heaven.

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#### CHAPTER L.

It can by no means be asserted that the other inhabitants of the family were as well at ease as they. Amelia was furious, and deigned not to pay the shortest visit to the invalid. She affected even to avoid speaking to Albert, never looked at him, and would not even

reply to his morning and evening greeting. And what annoyed her the most was, that Albert did not appear so much as to notice her spite.

The canoness, now that she saw the very evident passion of the nephew for the *adventuress*, had no longer a moment's peace of mind. She was even mentally laboring how she might avert the scandal; and, to this end, held long and frequent conferences with the chaplain.

But that holy man was by no means inclined to bring these proceedings to a close. He had been for a long time a very unimportant person, quite overlooked among the cares of the family; and he was now recovering a sort of importance among these new agitations. He had the pleasure of playing the spy, of revealing, informing, predicting, advising, of stirring in a word at his own pleasure, all the interests of the house, while affecting to meddle with none of them, and covering himself from the indignation of the young count behind the petticoats of the aged aunt.

But, these two every day discovered new causes for alarm, new motives for precaution, but never any means of safety. Every day, the good Wenceslawa approached her nephew with a resolve to come to a full explanation, but every day a sarcastic smile, or an icy look, checked the abortive effort. Hourly, she watched an opportunity for gliding into Consuelo's room and administering a severe reproof; but at every attempt, Albert, as if informed by a familiar demon, met her on the threshold, and with a single frown, like that of Olympian Jove, lowered the courage and abashed the wrath of the powers adverse to his Iliad.

The canoness, however, had twice or thrice began a conversation with the invalid; and at the moment in which she could talk with her alone, she made the best of her time by addressing a great number of very trite remarks to her which she thought vastly significant. But as Consuelo had no such ambition as she was supposed to entertain, it was all thrown away upon her. Her surprise, and her air of candor and astonishment, at once disarmed the good canoness, who never in her life had been able to resist a frank accent, or a cordial caress.

She retreated, therefore, in confusion, to confess her defeat to the chaplain, and the rest of the day was passed in resolutions for the morrow.

Nevertheless, Albert, who clearly saw what was in process, and observing that Consuelo was beginning to suspect something, and to grow uneasy, determined to put an end to the annoyance. He watched Wenceslawa, therefore, in the passage, one morning, when she thought to out-general him by a very early visit to Consuelo, and showing himself suddenly, just as she was turning the key in the lock of the invalid's door.

"My good aunt," said he, taking possession of that hand, and raising it to his lips, "I have something to say to you very low, which greatly interests you. It is that the life and health of the person who is sleeping here, are dearer to me than my own happiness. I know that your confessor holds it a point of conscience to prevent my devotion to her, and to destroy the effects of my cares. Had it not been for that, your noble heart would never have let you dream of jeopardizing the recovery of an invalid, scarce yet out of danger, by harsh words or reproaches. But, since the fanaticism and petty mind of

priest can work such a prodigy as to change the sincerest piety and purest charity into horrid cruelty, I shall oppose to the extent of my power the crime of which my poor aunt allows herself to be made the instrument, I will guard the invalid night and day, I will not quit her for a moment; and, if in spite of my vigilance, she be torn from me, I swear by all that is most solemn in heaven, I will leave the house of my fathers, never to return. I think, when you tell my resolve to the chaplain, he will cease annoying you, and endeavoring to prevent the kindly instinct of your maternal heart."

The amazed canoness could only reply to this discourse by melting into tears.

Albert had led her to the end of the gallery, so that the explanation could not be heard by Consuelo. She complained of the threatening tone which Albert employed, and endeavored to profit by the occasion, to show him the folly of his attachment towards a person of such low birth as Nina.

"Aunt," replied Albert, smiling, "you forgot that if we are of the royal blood of the Podiebrads, our ancestors were kings only through favor of the peasants and revolted soldiery. A Podiebrad, therefore, should not pride himself on his noble origin, but rather regard it as an additional motive to attach him to the weak and the poor, since it is among them that his strength and power have planted their roots, and not so long ago that he can have forgotten it."

The canoness closed the conference by retiring to consult the chaplain.

When Wenceslawa related this conference to the chaplain, he gave it as his opinion that it would not be prudent to exasperate the young count by remonstrances, nor drive him to extremity by annoying his protégé.

"For," said he, "it may occasion a return of his malady." After a pause, he resumed.

"It is to Count Christian himself that you must address your representations," said he. "Your excessive delicacy has too much emboldened the son. Let your wise remonstrances at length awaken the disquietude of his father, that he may take decisive measures with respect to this dangerous person."

"Do you suppose," replied the canoness, "that I have not already done so? But alas! my brother has grown fifteen years older during the fifteen days of Albert's last disappearance. His mind is so enfeebled that it is no longer possible to make him understand any suggestion. He appears to indulge in a sort of passive resistance to the idea of a new calamity of this description, and rejoices like a child at having found his son, and at hearing him reason and conduct himself as an intelligent man. He believes him cured of his malady and does not perceive that poor Albert is a prey to a new kind of madness, more fatal than the first. My brother's security in this respect is so great, and he enjoys it so unaffectedly, that I have not yet found courage to open his eyes completely as to what is passing around him. It seems to me that this disclosure coming from you, and accompanied with your religious exhortations, would be listened to with more resignation, have a better effect, and be less painful to all parties."

"It is too delicate an affair," replied the chaplain, "to be undertaken by a poor priest like me. It will come much better from a sister, and your highness can soften the bitterness of the event, by expressions of tenderness which I could not venture upon towards the august head of the Rudolstadt family."

These two grave personages lost many days in deciding upon which should baffle the cat. During this period of irresolution and apathy, in which habit also had its share, love made rapid progress in the heart of Albert. Consuelo's health was visibly restored, and nothing occurred to disturb the progress of an intimacy which the watchfulness of Argus could not have rendered more chaste and reserved, than it was simply through true modesty and sincere love.

Meantime the Baroness Amelia, unable to support her humiliation, earnestly entreated her father to take her back to Prague. Baron Frederick, who preferred a life in the forest to an abode in the city, promised everything that she wished, but put off from day to day the announcement and preparations for departure.—The baroness saw that it was necessary to urge matters on to suit her purpose, and devised one of those ingenious expedients in which her sex are never wanting. She had an understanding with her waiting-maid—a sharp-witted and active young Frenchwoman—and one morning, just as her father was about to set out for the chase, she begged him to accompany her in a carriage to the house of a lady of their acquaintance, to whom she had for a long time owed a visit. The baron had some difficulty in giving up his gun and his powder-horn to change his dress and the employment of the day, but he flattered himself that this condescension would render Amelia less exacting, and that the amusement of the drive would dissipate her ill-humor, and enable her to pass a few more days at the Castle of the Giants without murmuring. When the good man had gained a respite of a week, he fancied he had secured the independence of his life; his forethought extended no further. He therefore resigned himself to the necessity of sending Sapphire and Panther to the kennel, Attila, the hawk, turned upon its perch with a discontented and mutinous air, which forced a heavy sigh from its master.

The baron at last seated himself in the carriage with his daughter, and in three revolutions of the wheel was fast asleep. The coachman then received orders from Amelia to drive to the nearest post-house. They arrived there after two hours of a rapid journey; and when the baron opened his eyes, he found post-horses in his carriage, and everything ready to set out on the road to Prague.

"What means this?" exclaimed the baron; "where are we, and whither are we going? Amelia, my dear child, what folly is this? what is the meaning of this caprice, or rather this pleasantry with which you amuse yourself?"

To all her father's questions the young baroness only replied with repeated bursts of laughter, and by childish caresses. At length, when she saw the postilion mounted, and the carriage roll lightly along the highway, she assumed a serious air, and in a very decided tone spoke as follows: "My dear papa, do not be uneasy; all our luggage is carefully packed. The carriage trunks are filled with all that is necessary for our journey. There is nothing left at the Castle of the Giants except your dogs and guns, which will be of no use at Prague; and besides, you can have them whenever you wish to send for them. A letter will be handed to uncle Christian at breakfast, which is so expressed as to make him see the necessity of our departure, without unnecessarily grieving him, or making him angry either with you or me. I must now humbly beg your pardon for having deceived you, but it is nearly a month since you consented to what I at this moment execute. I do not oppose your wishes therefore in returning to

Prague; I merely chose a time when you did not contemplate it, and I would wager that, after all, you are delighted to be freed from the annoyance which the quickest preparations for departure entail. My position became intolerable, and you did not perceive it. Kiss me, dear papa, and do not frighten me with those angry looks of yours."

In thus speaking, Amelia, as well as her attendant, stifled a great inclination to laugh; for the baron never had an angry look for any one, much less for his cherished daughter. He only rolled his great bewildered eyes, a little stupefied, it must be confessed, by surprise. If he experienced any annoyance at seeing himself fooled in such wise, and any real vexation at leaving his brother and sister without bidding them adieu, he was so astonished at the turn things had taken, that his uneasiness changed to admiration of his daughter's tact, and he could only exclaim—

"But how could you arrange everything so that I had not the least suspicion? Faith, I little thought when I took off my boots, and sent my horse back to the stable, that I was off for Prague, and that I should not dine to-day with my brother. It is a strange adventure, and nobody will believe me when I tell it. But where have you put my travelling-cap, Amelia? Who could sleep in a carriage with this hat glued to one's ears?"

"Here it is, dear papa," said the merry girl, presenting him with his fur cap, which he instantly placed on his head with the utmost satisfaction.

"But my bottle? you have certainly forgotten it, you little w<sup>ked</sup> one."

"Oh! certainly not," she exclaimed, handing him a large crystal flask, covered with Russia leather and mounted with silver. "I filled it myself with the best Hungary wine from my aunt's cellar. But you had better taste it yourself; I know it is the description you prefer."

"And my pipe and pouch of Turkish tobacco?"

"Nothing is forgotten," said Amelia's maid; "his excellency the baron will find everything packed in the carriage. Nothing has been omitted to enable him to pass the journey agreeably."

"Well done!" said the baron, filling his pipe, "but that does not clear you of all culpability in this matter, my dear Amelia. You will render your father ridiculous, and make him the laughing stock of every one."

"Dear papa, it is I who seem ridiculous in the eyes of the world, when I apparently refuse to marry an amiable cousin, who does not even deign to look at me, and who, under my very eyes pays assiduous court to my music mistress. I have suffered this humiliation long enough, and I do not think there are many girls of my rank, my age, and my appearance, who would not have resented it more seriously. Of one thing I am certain, that there are girls who would not have endured what I have done for the last eighteen months; but, on the contrary, would have put an end to the farce by running off with themselves, if they had failed in procuring a partner in their flight. For my part, I am satisfied to run off with my father; it is a more novel as well as a more proper step. What think you, dear papa?"

"Why, I think the devil's in you," replied the baron, kissing his daughter; and he passed the rest of his journey gaily, drinking, eating, and smoking by turns, without making any further complaint, or expressing any farther astonishment.

This event did not produce the sensation in that family at the Castle

of the Giants which the little baroness had flattered herself it would do. To begin with Count Albert, he might have passed a week without noticing the absence of the young baroness, and when the canonesse informed him of it, he merely remarked:—"This is the only clever thing which the clever Amelia has done since she set foot here. As to my good uncle, I hope he will soon return to us."

"For my part," said old Count Christian, "I regret the departure of my brother, because at my age one reckons by weeks and days. What is not long for you, Albert, is an eternity for me, and I am not so certain as you are of seeing my peaceful and easy-tempered Frederick again. Well, it's all Amelia's doings," added he, smiling as he threw aside the saucy, yet cajoling letter of the young baroness. "Women's spite pardons not. You were not formed for each other, my children, and my pleasant dreams have vanished."

While thus speaking, the old count fixed his eyes upon the countenance of his son with a sort of melancholy satisfaction, as if anticipating some indication of regret; but he found none, and Albert, tenderly pressing his arm, made him understand that he thanked him for relinquishing a project so contrary to his inclination.

"God's will be done!" ejaculated the old man, "and may your heart, my son, be free. You are now well, happy, and contented amongst us. I can now die in peace, and a father's love will comfort you after our final separation."

"Do not speak of separation, dear father," exclaimed the young count, his eyes suddenly filling with tears; "I cannot bear the idea."

The canonesse, who began to be affected, received at this moment a significant glance from the chaplain, who immediately rose, and with feigned discretion left the room. This was the signal and the order. She thought, not without regret and apprehension, that the moment was at length come when she must speak, and closing her eyes like a person about to leap from the window of a house on fire, she thus began, stammering and becoming paler than usual:—

"Certainly Albert loves his father tenderly, and would not willingly inflict on him a mortal blow."

Albert raised his head, and gazed at his aunt with such a keen and penetrating look that she could not utter another word. The old count appeared not to have heard this strange observation, and in the silence which followed, poor Wenceslawa remained trembling beneath her nephew's glance, like a partridge fascinated before the pointer.

But Count Christian, rousing from his reverie after a few minutes, replied to his sister as if she had continued to speak, or as if he had read in her mind the revelations she was about to make.

"Dear sister," said he, "if I may give you an advice, it is not to torment yourself with things which you do not understand. You have never known what it is to love, and the austere rules of a canonesse are not those which befit a young man."

"Good God!" murmured the astonished canonesse. "Either my brother does not understand me, or his reason and piety are about to desert him. Is it possible that in his weakness he would encourage or treat lightly—"

"How? aunt!" interrupted Albert in a firm tone, and with a strange countenance. "Speak out, since you are forced to it. Explain yourself clearly; there must be an end to this constraint—we must understand each other."

"No, sister; you need not speak," replied the count; "you have

nothing new to tell me. I understand perfectly well, without having seemed to do so, what has been going on for some time past. The period is not yet come to explain ourselves on that subject; when it does, I shall know how to act."

He began immediately to speak on other subjects, and left the canoness astonished, and Albert hesitating and troubled. When the chaplain was informed of the manner in which the head of the family received the counsel which he had indirectly given him he was seized with terror. Count Christian, although seemingly irresolute and indolent, had never been a weak man, and sometimes surprised those who knew him, by suddenly arousing himself from a kind of somnolency, and acting with energy and wisdom. The priest was afraid of having gone too far, and of being reprimanded. He commenced therefore to undo his work very quickly, and persuaded the canoness not to interfere further. A fortnight glided away in this manner without anything suggesting to Consuelo that she was a subject of anxiety to the family. Albert continued his attentions, and announced the departure of Amelia as a short absence, but did not suffer her to suspect the cause. She began to leave her apartment; and the first time she walked in the garden, the old Christian supported the tottering steps of the invalid on his weak and trembling arm.

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## CHAPTER LI.

It was indeed a happy day for Albert when he saw her whom he had restored to life, leaning on the arm of his father, and offer him her hand in the presence of his family, saying, with an ineffable smile, "This is he who saved me, and tended me as if I had been his sister."

But this day, which was the climax of his happiness, changed suddenly, and more than he could have anticipated, his relations with Consuelo. Henceforth, the formalities of the family circle precluded her being often alone with him. The old count, who appeared to have even a greater regard for her than before her illness, bestowed the utmost care upon her, with a kind of paternal gallantry which she felt deeply. The canoness observed a prudent silence, but nevertheless made it a point to watch over all her movements, and to form a third party in all her interviews with Albert. At length, as the latter gave no indication of returning mental alienation, they determined to have the pleasure of receiving, and even inviting, relations and neighbors long neglected. They exhibited a kind of simple and tender ostentation in showing how polite and sociable the young Count Rudolstadt had become, and Consuelo, seemed to exact from him, by her looks and example, the fulfilment of the wishes of his relations, in exercising the duties of a hospitable host, and displaying the manners of a man of the world.

This sudden transformation cost him a good deal: he submitted to it, however, to please her he loved, but he would have been better satisfied with longer conversations and a less interrupted intercourse with her. He patiently endured whole days of constraint and annoyance, in order to obtain in the evening a word of encouragement or gratitude. But when the canoness came, like an unwelcome spectre,

and placed herself between them, he felt his soul troubled and his strength abandon him. He passed nights of torment, and often approached the cistern, which remained clear and pellucid since the day he had ascended from it, bearing Consuelo in his arms. Plunged in mournful reverie, he almost cursed the oath which bound him never to return to his hermitage. He was terrified to feel himself thus unhappy, and not to have the power of burying his grief in his subterranean retreat.

The change in his features after this sleeplessness, and the transitory but gradually more frequent return of his gloomy and distracted air could not fail to excite the observation of his relatives and friend; but the latter found means to disperse these clouds and regain her empire over him whenever it was threatened. She commenced to sing, and immediately the young count, charmed or subdued, was consoled by tears, or animated with new enthusiasm. This was an infallible remedy; and when he was able to address a few words to her in private, "Consuelo," he exclaimed, "you know the paths to my soul; you possess the power refused to the common herd, and possess it more than any other being in this world. You speak in language divine; you know how to express the most sublime emotions, and communicate the impulses of your own inspired soul. Sing always when you see me downcast; the words of your songs have but little sense for me, they are but the theme, the imperfect indication on which the music turns and is developed. I hardly hear them; what alone I hear, and what penetrates into my very soul, is your voice, your accent, your inspiration. Music expresses all that the mind dreams and foresees of mystery and grandeur. It is the manifestation of a higher order of ideas and sentiments than any to which human speech can give expression. It is the revelation of the infinite; and when you sing, I only belong to humanity in so far as humanity has drunk in what is divine and eternal in the bosom of the Creator. All that your lips refuse of consolation and support in the ordinary routine of life—all that social tyranny forbids your heart to reveal—your songs convey to me a hundredfold. You then respond to me with your whole soul, and my soul replies to yours in hope and fear, in transports of enthusiasm and rapture."

Sometimes Albert spoke thus, in Spanish, to Consuelo in presence of his family; but the evident annoyance which the canoness experienced, as well as a sense of propriety, prevented the young girl from replying. At length one day when they were alone in the garden, and he again spoke of the pleasures he felt in hearing her sing:

"Since music is a language more complete and more persuasive than that of words," said she, "why do you not speak thus to me, you who understand it better than I do?"

"I do not understand you, Consuelo," said the young count, surprised; "I am only a musician in listening to you."

"Do not endeavor to deceive me," she replied; "I never but once heard sounds divinely human drawn from the violin, and it was by you, Albert, in the grotto of the Schreckenstein. I heard you that day before you saw me; I discovered your secret; but you must forgive me, and allow me again to hear that delightful air, of which I recollect a few bars, and which revealed to me beauties in music, to which I was previously a stranger."

Consuelo sang in a low tone a few phrases which she recollected indistinctly, but which Albert immediately recognized.

"It is a popular hymn," said he, "on some Hussite words. The words are by my ancestor, Hyncko Podiebrad, the son of King George, and one of the poets of the country. We have an immense number of admirable poems by Streye, Simon Lomnicky, and many others, which are prohibited by the police. These religious and national songs, set to music by the unknown geniuses of Bohemia are not all preserved in the memory of her inhabitants. The people retain some of them, however, and Zdenko, who has an extraordinary memory and an excellent taste for music, knows a great many, which I have collected and arranged. They are very beautiful, and you will have pleasure in learning them. But I can only let you hear them in my hermitage; my violin, with all my music, is there. I have there precious manuscripts, collections of ancient Catholic and Protestant authors. I will wager that you do not know either Josquin, many of whose themes Luther has transmitted to us in his choruses, nor the younger Claude, nor Arcadelt, nor George Rhaw, nor Benoit Ducis, nor John de Wiess. Would not this curious research induce you, dear Consuelo, to pay another visit to my grotto, from which I have been exiled so long a time, and to visit my church, which you have not yet seen?"

This proposal, although it excited the curiosity of the young artiste, was tremblingly listened to. This frightful grotto recalled recollections which she could not think of without a shudder, and in spite of all the confidence she placed in him, the idea of returning there alone with Albert caused a painful emotion, which he quickly perceived.

"You dislike the idea of this pilgrimage," said he, "which nevertheless you promised to renew: let us speak of it no more. Faithful to my oath, I shall never undertake it without you."

"You remind me of mine, Albert," she replied, "and I shall fulfill it as soon as you ask it; but, my dear doctor, you forget that I have not yet the necessary strength. Would you not first permit me to see this curious music, and hear this admirable artist, who plays on the violin much better than I sing?"

"I know not if you jest, dear sister, but this I know, that you shall hear me nowhere but in my grotto. It was there I first tried to make my violin express the feelings of my heart; for, although I had for many years a brilliant and frivolous professor, largely paid by my father, I did not understand it. It was there I learned what true music is, and what a sacrilegious mockery is substituted for it by the greater portion of mankind. For my own part, I declare that I could not draw a sound from my violin, if my spirit were not bowed before the divinity. Were I even to see you unmoved beside me, attentive merely to the composition of the pieces I play and curious to scrutinize my talent, I doubt not that I would play so ill that you would soon weary of listening to me. I have never, since I knew how to use it, touched the instrument consecrated by me to the praise of God or to the expression of my ardent prayers, without feeling myself transported into an ideal world, and without obeying a sort of mysterious inspiration not always under my control."

"I am not unworthy," replied Consuelo, deeply impressed and all attention, "to comprehend your feelings with regard to music. I hope soon to be able to join your prayer with a soul so fervent and collected that my presence shall not interfere with your inspiration. Ah, my dear Albert, why cannot my master Porpora hear what you say of the heavenly art? He would throw himself at your feet

Nevertheless, this great artist himself is less severe in his views on this subject than you are. He thinks the singer and the virtuoso should draw their inspiration from the sympathy and admiration of their auditory."

"It is perhaps because Porpora confounds, in music, religious sentiment with human thought, and that he looks upon sacred music with the eyes of a Catholic. If I were in his place I would reason as he does. If I were in a communion of faith and sympathy with a people professing the same worship as myself, I would seek in contact with these souls, animated with a like religious sentiment, the inspiration which heretofore I have been forced to court in solitude, and which consequently I have hitherto imperfectly realized. If ever I have the pleasure of mingling the tones of my violin with those of your divine voice, Consuelo, doubtless I would ascend higher than I have ever done, and my prayer would be more worthy of the Deity. But do not forget, dear child, that up to this day my opinions have been an abomination in the eyes of those who surrounded me, and that those whom they failed to shock, would have turned them into ridicule. This is why I have hidden as a secret between God, poor Zdenko, and myself, the humble gift which I possess. My father likes music, and would have this instrument, which is sacred to me as the cymbals of the Elusinian mysteries, conduce to his amusement. What would become of me if they were to ask me to accompany a cavatina for Amelia? and what would be my father's feelings if I were to play one of those old Hussite airs which have sent so many Bohemians into the mines or to the scaffold? or a more modern hymn of our Lutheran ancestors, from whom he blushes to have descended? Alas! Consuelo, I know nothing more modern. There are, no doubt, admirable things of a later date. From what you tell me of Handel and the other great masters from whose works you have been instructed, their music would seem to me superior in many respects to that which I am about to teach you. But to know and learn this music, it would be necessary to put myself in relation with another musical world, and it is with you alone that I can resolve to do so—with you alone I can seek the despised or neglected treasure which you are about to bestow on me in overflowing measure."

"And I," said Consuelo, smiling, "think I shall not undertake the charge of this education. What I heard in the grotto was so beautiful, so grand, so incomparable, that I should fear in doing so, only to muddy a spring of crystal. Oh! Albert, I see plainly that you know more of music than I do. And now what will you say to the profane music of which I am forced to be a professor? I fear to discover in this case, as in the other, that I have hitherto been beneath my mission, and guilty of equal ignorance and frivolity."

"Far from thinking so, Consuelo, I look upon your profession as sacred; and as it is the loftiest which a woman can embrace, so is your soul the most worthy to fill such an office."

"Stay—stay—dear count," replied Consuelo, smiling. "From my often speaking to you of the convent where I learned music, and the church where I sung the praises of God, you conclude that I was destined to the service of the altar, or the modest teachings of the cloister. But if I should inform you that the zingarella, faithful to her origin, was from infancy the sport of circumstances, and that her education was at once a mixture of religious and profane, to which her will was equally inclined, careless whether it were in the monastery or the theatre—?"

"Certain that God has placed his seal on your forehead and devoted you to holiness from your mother's womb, I should not trouble myself about these things, but retain the conviction that you would be as pure in the theatre as in the cloister."

"What! would not your strict ideas of morality be shocked at being brought in contact with an actress?"

"In the dawn of religion," said he, "the theatre and the temple were one and the same sanctuary. In the purity of their primitive ideas, religious worship took the form of popular shows. The arts have their birth at the foot of the altar. The dance itself, that art now consecrated to ideas of impure voluptuousness, was the music of the senses in the festivals of the gods. Music and poetry were the highest expressions of faith, and woman endowed with genius and beauty was at once a sybil and priestess. To these severely grand forms of the past, absurd and culpable distinctions succeeded. Religion proscribed beauty from its festivals, and woman from its solemnities. Instead of ennobling and directing love, it banished and condemned it. Beauty, woman, love, cannot lose their empire. Men have raised for themselves other temples which they call theatres, and where no other god presides. Is it your fault, Consuelo, if they have become dens of corruption? Nature, who perfects her prodigies without troubling herself as to how men may receive them, has formed you to shine among your sex, and to shed over the world the treasures of your power and genius.—The cloister and the tomb are synonymous: you cannot, without morally committing suicide, bury the gifts of providence. You were obliged to wing your flight to a freer atmosphere. Energy is the condition of certain natures; an irresistible impulse impels them; and the decrees of the Deity in this respect are so decided, that he takes away the faculties which he has bestowed, so soon as they are neglected. The artist perishes and becomes extinct in obscurity, just as the thinker wanders and pines in solitude, and just as all human intellect is deteriorated, and weakened, and enervated, by inaction and isolation. Repair to the theatre, Consuelo, if you please, and submit with resignation to the apparent degradation, as the representative for the moment of a soul destined to suffer, of a lofty mind which vainly seeks for sympathy in the world around us, but which is forced to abjure a melancholy that is not the element of its life, and out of which the breath of the Holy Spirit imperiously expels it."

Albert continued to speak in this strain for a considerable time with great animation, hurrying Consuelo on to the recesses of his retreat. He had little difficulty in communicating to her his own enthusiasm for art, as in making her forget her first feeling of repugnance to re-enter the grotto. When she saw that he anxiously desired it, she began to entertain a wish for this interview, in order to become better acquainted with the ideas which this ardent yet timid man dared to express before her so boldly. These ideas were new to Consuelo, and perhaps they were entirely so in the mouth of a person of noble rank of that time and country. They only struck her however as the bold and frank expression of sentiments which she herself had frequently experienced in all their force. Devout, and an actress, she every day heard the canoness and the chaplain unceasingly condemn her brethren of the stage. In seeing herself restored to her proper sphere by a serious and reflecting man, she felt her heart throb and her bosom swell with exultation, as if she had been carried up into a more ele-

vated and congenial life. Her eyes were moistened with tears and her cheeks glowed with a pure and holy emotion, when at the end of an avenue she perceived the canoness, who was seeking her.

"Ah! dear priestess," said Albert, pressing her arm against his breast, "will you not come to pray in my church?"

"Yes, certainly I shall go," she replied.

"And when?"

"Whenever you wish. Do you think I am able yet to undertake this new exploit?"

"Yes; because we shall go to the Schreckenstein in broad daylight and by a less dangerous route than the well. Do you feel sufficient courage to rise before the dawn and to escape through the gates as soon as they are opened? I shall be in this underwood which you see at the side of the hill there by the stone cross, and shall serve as your guide."

"Very well, I promise," replied Consuelo, not without a slight palpitation of heart.

"It appears rather cool this evening for so long a walk—does it not?" asked the canoness, accosting them in her calm yet searching manner.

Albert made no reply. He could not dissemble. Consuelo, who did not experience equal emotion, passed her other arm within that of the canoness, and kissed her neck. Wenceslawa vainly pretended indifference, but in spite of herself she submitted to the ascendancy of this devout and affectionate spirit. She sighed, and on entering the castle proceeded to put up a prayer for her conversion.

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## CHAPTER LII.

MANY days passed away however without Albert's wish being accomplished. It was in vain that Consuelo rose before the dawn and passed the drawbridge; she always found his aunt or the chaplain wandering on the esplanade, and from thence reconnoitering all the open country which she must traverse in order to gain the copsewood on the hill. She determined to walk alone within range of their observation, and give up the project of joining Albert, who, from his green and wooded retreat, recognized the enemy on the look-out, took a long walk in the forest glades; and re-entered the castle without being perceived.

"You have had an opportunity of enjoying an early walk, Signora Porporina," said the canoness at breakfast. "Were you not afraid that the dampness of the morning might be injurious to your health?"

"It was I, aunt, who advised the signora to breathe the freshness of the morning air; and I think these walks will be very useful to her."

"I should have thought that, for a person who devotes herself to the cultivation of her voice," said the canoness, with a little affectation, "our mornings are somewhat foggy. But if it is under your directions—"

"Have confidence in Albert," interrupted Count Christian; "he has proved himself as good a physician as he is a good son and a faithful friend."