relieved her from the burden which oppressed her. They were the first she had shed since her nephew's death. She consented to the sacrifices of Consuelo, and by her confidence proved that she appreciated her noble resolution. She left her to tell the chaplain of it, and to induce Supperville and Porpora to be silent about the marriage.

CONCLUSION.

CONSUELO, finding herself at perfect liberty, passed the day in wandering about the chateau, the garden, and the environs, in order to revisit all the places that recalled to her Albert's love. She even allowed her pious fervor to carry her as far as the Schreckenstein, and seated herself upon the stone, in that frightful solitude which Albert had so long filled with his grief. But she soon retired, feeling her courage fail her, and almost imagining that she heard a hollow groan issuing from the bowels of the rock. She dare not admit even to herself that she heard it distinctly: Albert and Zdenko were no more, and the allusion, therefore, for it was plainly such, could not prove otherwise than hurtful and enervating. Consuelo hurriedly left the spot.

On returning to the chateau towards evening, she saw the Baron Frederick, who had by degrees strengthened himself on his legs, and had regained some animation in the pursuit of his favorite amusement. The huntsmen who accompanied him started the game, and the baron, whose skill had not deserted him, picked up his victims with a deep sigh.

"He, at least, will live and be consoled," thought the young widow.

The canoness supped, or affected to do so, in her brother's room. The chaplain, who had been praying by the side of the deceased in the chapel, made an attempt to join them. He had a fever, however, and at the first mouthful felt sick.—This offended Supperville, who was hungry and had to let his soup grow cold while he went with him to his room; he could not refrain from saying—"Those people have no nerve! There are but two men here—the canoness and the signora!" He soon returned, resolved not to torment himself a great deal about the poor priest, and like the baron played a good part at supper. Porpora was much affected, though he did not seem to be, and could neither eat nor speak. Consuelo thought of the last meal she had eaten at the table between Anzoleto and Albert.

After supper she proceeded along with her master to make the necessary preparations for her departure. The horses were ordered to be in readiness at four in the morning. Before separating for the night, she repaired to Count Christian's apartment. He slept tranquilly, and Supperville, who wished to quit the dreary abode, asserted that he had no longer any remains of fever.

"Is that perfectly certain, sir?" said Consuelo, who was shocked at his precipitation.

"I assure you," said he, "it is so. He is saved for the present, but I must warn you that it will not be long. At his time of life, grief is not so deeply felt at the crisis, but the enemy merely gives way to return with greater force afterwards. So be on the watch, for you are not surely serious in determining to surrender your rights."

"I am perfectly serious," said Consuelo, "and I am astonished that you do not believe in so simple a matter."

"Permit me to doubt, madam, until the death of your father-in-law. Meantime, you have made a great mistake in not taking possession of the jewels and title-deeds. No matter; you have doubtless your reasons, which I do not seek to know; for a person so calm as you are does not act without motives. I have given my word of honor not to disclose this family secret, and I shall keep my promise till you release me from it. My testimony may be of service to you when the proper time comes, and you may rely on my zeal and friendship. You will always find me at Bareith, if alive; and in this hope, countess, I kiss your hand."

Supperville took leave of the canoness, after having assured her of his patient's safety, written a prescription, and received a large fee—small, however, he trusted, in comparison with that which he was to receive from Consuelo—and quitted the castle at ten o'clock, leaving the latter indignant at his sordidness.

The baron retired to rest, better than he had been the night before; as for the canoness, she had a bed prepared for herself beside Count Christian's. Consuelo waited till all was still; then when twelve o'clock struck she lighted a lamp and repaired to the chapel. At the end of the cloister she found two of the servants, who at first were frightened at her approach, but afterwards confessed why they were there. Their duty was to watch a part of the night beside the young count's remains, but they were afraid, and preferred watching and praying outside the door.

"And why afraid?" asked Consuelo, mortified to find that so generous a master inspired only such sentiments in the breast of his attendants.

"What would you have, signora?" replied one of these men, unaware that he was addressing Count Albert's widow; "our young lord had mysterious relations and strange acquaintances among the world of spirits. He conversed with the dead, he found out hidden things, never went to the church, ate and drank with the gipsies—in short, no one could say what might happen to any one who would pass the night in this chapel. It would be as much as our lives were worth. Look at Cynabre there! They would not let him into the chapel, and he has lain all day long before the door without moving, without eating, without making the least noise. He knows very well that his master is dead, for he has never called him once, but since midnight was struck, see how restless he is, how he smells and whines, as if he was aware his master was no longer alone."

"You are weak fools!" replied the indignant Consuelo. "If your hearts were warmer your minds would not be so feeble;" and she entered the chapel, to the surprise and consternation of the timid domestics.

Albert lay on a couch covered with brocade with the family escutcheons embroidered at the corners. His head reposed on a black velvet cushion, sprinkled with silver tears, while a velvet pall fell in sable folds around him. A triple row of waxen tapers lit up his pale face, which was so calm, so pure, so manly, that a spectator would have said he slept peacefully. The last of the Rudolstadts was clothed, according to family custom, in the ancient costume of his fathers. The cornet of a count was on his head, a sword was by his side, a buckler at his feet, and a crucifix on his breast. With his long black hair and beard, he seemed one of the ancient warriors whose effigies lay thick-

ly scattered around. The pavement was strewn with flowers, and perfumes burned slowly in silver censers, placed at each corner of his last sad resting-place.

For three hours Consuelo prayed for her husband, and watched his final repose. Death had made his features more sad, but so slightly altered them, that often while she admired his beauty, she forgot that he was dead. She fancied even that she had heard the noise of his breath, and when for a moment she left to breathe the perfume of the censers and watch the flames of the torches, she fancied that she saw a vague tremor and heard the light undulation of the drapery. She at once drew near him, and examining his mute mouth and pulseless heart, abandoned all fugitive and desperate hopes.

When the clock struck three, Consuelo arose and imprinted on the lips of her husband the first last kiss of love.

"Adieu, Albert!" exclaimed she, completely carried away by a kind of religious excitement; "now you look directly into my heart. There are no clouds between us, and you know how I love you. You know that I abandon your body to a family who will look on it without emotion, yet I do not on that account extinguish an immortal memory and deathless love of you. You know that no careless widow, but a kind wife, leaves your abode, and that you live forever in her heart. Adieu, Albert! As you said, death has intervened and apparently separated us, only to again unite us in eternity. Confiding in the faith you taught me, certain that you have deserved the blessing and the benediction of God, I shed no tears for you; and cannot think of you under the false and impious image of death. Albert, you were right in saying that 'Death is not'—I feel the truth in my heart."

As Consuelo spoke, the curtains, which were at the back of the catafaco, became visibly agitated, and opening, at once exhibited Zdenko's pale face. She was frightened at first, having always looked upon him as her mortal enemy. There was, however, in his face such an expression of gentleness, that when he reached out his rough hand, she could not but clasp it.

"Let us swear peace over his coffin, my poor child," said he with a smile; "you are a real daughter of God, and Albert is satisfied with you. Go! now he is happy and sleeps kindly. I have forgiven him, you see, and come back as soon as I saw he was asleep—now I will not leave him. To-morrow I will take him again to the cavern, and we will talk of Consuelo. *Consuelo de mi alma*, go to sleep, my child—Albert is not alone. Zdenko is, and always will be with him. He is happy with his friend—misfortune is borne away, evil is destroyed, and death is overcome. The thrice-blessed day is come. 'Let the one who has been injured, salute you.'"

Consuelo could bear no longer the infrantic joy of the poor madman. She bade him an affectionate farewell, and when she opened the door of the room let Cynabre rush to his old friend, who had called and whistled for him.

"Come, Cynabre—I will conceal you under your master's bed," said Zdenko caressingly, as if it had been his child. "Come, Cynabre, here all three of us are, and we will never part again."

Consuelo went to awaken Porpora. She then went on tiptoe into the room of Count Christian, and passed between his bed and Wenceslawa.

"Is it you, my daughter?" said the old man, without any exhibition of surprise; "I am glad to see you. Do not awaken my sister, for she is sound asleep, thank God! Go, sleep yourself. I am calm. My son is saved, and will soon be well."

Consuelo kissed his white hair, his wrinkled hands, and hid the tears, which might perhaps have destroyed his illusion. She dared not kiss Wenceslawa, who, for the first time in three weeks, slept soundly.

"God has terminated grief," said she, "by its very excess; may they long be weighed down by the heathful burden of fatigue!"

A half hour afterwards Consuelo, the heart of whom was crushed at the idea of leaving the noble-hearted old man—passed, with Porpora, through the portcullis of the Giants' Castle, without even remembering that the vast mansion, the grates and bars of which had enclosed so much suffering and so much wealth—had become the property of the Countess of Rudolstadt.

THOSE of our readers who are too wearied from having followed Consuelo through all her dangers and perils, now may rest. Those who yet have courage to venture farther—in another romance just issued, in uniform style to this volume, entitled "THE COUNTESS OF RUDOLSTADT,"—will read the story of the sequel of her wanderings, and of what became of Count Albert after his death.

THE END.