

longer. Every thing forsakes me. The unfortunate is ever alone!"

Once more a knocking, repeated at his door, awakened him from his reverie. Peter his servant entered, and announced Herr Ephraim.

A ray of joyful astonishment flashed across him, and, as he stepped hastily toward the rich Jew of the mint, he said to himself: "Is it possible that this man comes to have pity on me in my distress? Will he be more magnanimous than Itzig? Will he assist me?"

CHAPTER XIII.

EPHRAIM THE TEMPTER.

"You seek me?" asked Gotzkowsky, as Ephraim entered and saluted him in silence.

Gotzkowsky's sharp glance had detected in his insolent bearing and contracted features that it was not pity or sympathy which had brought the Jew to him, but only a desire to gloat over the sufferings of his victim. "He shall not enjoy his triumph. He shall find me collected and determined, and shall not suspect my grief." Thus thinking, he forced his features into a cheerful expression, and handing a chair to the still silent Ephraim, said laughingly: "Indeed, I must be in a dangerous plight, if the birds of prey are already settling around me. Do you already scent my death, Herr Ephraim? By Heaven! that would be a dainty morsel for you!"

"You are angry with me," said Ephraim, shaking his head slowly; "but you shall know how much injustice

you do me. I bring you an important and fearful piece of news."

"It must be fearful, indeed," interrupted Gotzkowsky, "as you do yourself the pleasure of bringing it to me in person."

Ephraim shrugged his shoulders and abruptly replied, "De Neufville has failed!"

A cry of horror escaped Gotzkowsky's lips; he staggered, and was obliged to support himself by a chair to keep himself from falling. This was the last, decisive blow, and it had wounded him mortally. "De Neufville has failed!" he muttered low to himself.

"Yes, he is bankrupt!" said Ephraim with scarcely suppressed malice. "The proud Christian merchant, whose greatest pleasure it was to look down with contempt upon the Jew Ephraim, he is bankrupt. The Jew stands firm, but the Christian merchant is broken." And as he spoke, he broke into a scornful laugh, which brought back to Gotzkowsky his composure and self-possession.

"You triumph!" he said, "and on your brow is marked your rejoicing over our fall. Yes! you have conquered, for De Neufville's failure is your deed. It was you who persecuted him so long, and by cunning suspicions and calumny undermined his credit until it was destroyed, and the whole edifice of his honorable industry fell together."

"It is my work," cried Ephraim exultingly, "for he stood in my way, and I have pushed him out of it—what more? Life is but a combat; whoever is the strongest—that is, has the most money—is conqueror."

"De Neufville has fallen—that is a hard blow," muttered Gotzkowsky; and as his wandering eye met Ephraim's, he added with an expression of complete pros-

tration: "Enjoy my suffering; you have succeeded—I am hurt unto death!"

"Listen to me, Gotzkowsky," said Ephraim, approaching nearer to him; "I mean well by you."

"Oh, yes!" said Gotzkowsky, bitterly; "after you have hastened my downfall, you condescend to love me. Yes, indeed! I believe in your friendship; for none but a friend would have had the heart to bring such a Job's message."

Ephraim shook his head. "Listen to me," said he; "I will be quite candid with you. Formerly I hated you, it is true, for you were more powerful and richer than I was; you were renowned for being honest and punctual, and that hurt me. If a large bargain was to be made, they were not satisfied unless Gotzkowsky was concerned in it, and if your name stood at the bottom of a contract, every one was pleased. Your name was as good as gold, and that vexed me."

"And for that reason you wished to overthrow me, and worked unceasingly for my downfall; because you knew that I expected this remittance of light money from Hamburg!"

"I procured the decision that the light money should be declared uncurrent, that is true. I succeeded. From this hour I am more powerful and richer than you. You shall see that I only hated your house, not yourself; I have come to help you. You must indeed fail; that I am aware of, and that if you were to put forth all your power, you could not stand this blow. You must and will fail, and that this very day."

Gotzkowsky muttered some unintelligible words, and covered his face with his hands. "Yes," he cried, piteously, "I and all my hopes have suffered shipwreck."

Ephraim laid his hand suddenly upon his shoulder.

"Seek, then, to save some plank from the wreck, on which you may swim. You can no longer save your creditors; save yourself."

Gotzkowsky removed his hands slowly from his face, and looked at him with astonishment and wonder.

Ephraim met his look with a smiling and mysterious expression, and bending down to Gotzkowsky's ear, whispered: "I think you will not be such a fool as to give up all you have to your creditors, and to go out of your house a poor man. Intrust me with your important papers, and all that you possess of money and valuables, and I will preserve them for you. You do not answer. Come, be reasonable; do not allow the world the pleasure of pitying you; it does not deserve it. Believe me, mankind is bad; and he is a fool who strives to be better than his fellows." He stopped, and directed an inquiring look toward Gotzkowsky.

The latter regarded him proudly and with contempt. "This, then, is your friendship for me? You wish to make me a cheat!"

"Every man cheats his neighbor," cried Ephraim, shrugging his shoulders; "why should you alone be honest?"

"Because I do not wish to be ashamed of myself. It is the fault of others that I fall to-day. It shall not be said that Gotzkowsky is guilty of any crime of his own."

"It will be said, nevertheless," interrupted Ephraim; "for whoever is unfortunate, is in the wrong, in the eyes of men. And if he can help himself at the expense of others, and does not do it, do you think men will admire him for it? No! believe me, they will only laugh at him. I have often been sorry for you, Gotzkowsky; for, with all your good sense, your whole life through has been a miscalculation—"

"Or rather say," said Gotzkowsky, sadly, "I have not calculated enough, and from all the experiences of my life I have not drawn the sum total."

"You miscalculated," said Ephraim, "for you calculated on gratitude. That is a bad investment which does not bear interest. Mankind cannot be grateful, and when any one tries to be so he must sink, for others are not so. Whoever wishes to succeed in this world, must think only of himself, and keep his own interest in sight."

"You wise men of the world are right!" cried Gotzkowsky, with a hoarse laugh.

Unhindered by Gotzkowsky's vehement and scornful bearing, Ephraim continued: "If I had thought as you did, I would not have been able to operate against you, nor could I have brought the mint ordinance to bear on you. Then, to be sure, I would have been grateful, but it would not have been business-like. Therefore I thought first of my own welfare, and after that I came here to serve you, and show you my gratitude."

"I do not desire any gratitude. Let me go my way—you go yours."

Ephraim looked at him almost pityingly. "Be reasonable, Gotzkowsky; take good advice. The world does not thank you for being honorable. Mankind has not deserved the pleasure of laughing at you. And they will laugh!"

"Leave me, I tell you!" cried Gotzkowsky; "you shall not deprive me of my last possession, my conscience!"

"Conscience!" sneered Ephraim. "You will starve on that capital."

Gotzkowsky sighed deeply and dropped his head on his breast. At this moment there were heard from with-

out loud hurrahs and jubilant sounds, mingled with the tones of martial music.

King Frederick II. was returning this day to Berlin, after a long absence, and the happy and delighted Berliners had prepared for him a pompous and brilliant entry. They had built triumphal arches, and the guilds had gone forth to accompany him into the city, now adorned for festivity. The procession had to pass by Gotzkowsky's house, and already were heard the sounds of the approaching music, while the shouts and cries of the people became louder and shriller.

Ephraim stepped to the window, opened it, and pointing down into the street, he said, with a mocking laugh: "Just look, Gotzkowsky! There is the true test of your beautiful, high-toned principles. How often has Berlin not called you her benefactor, and yet she is overjoyed on the very day you are going to ruin! The whole town of Berlin knows that Gotzkowsky fails to-day, and yet they pass by your house with merry music, and no one thinks of you."

"He is right," murmured Gotzkowsky, as the huzzas sounded under his window. "He is right! I was a fool to love mankind."

Ephraim pointed down into the street again. "See," said he, "there comes Count Salm, whom you saved from death when the Russians were here. He does not look up here. Ah, there goes the banker, Splittyerber, whose factories in Neustadt Eberswald you saved at the same time. He, too, does not look up. Oh! yes, he does, and laughs. Look there! There goes the king with his staff. You have caused his majesty much pleasure. You accomplished his favorite wish—you founded the porcelain factory. You travelled at your own expense into Italy, and bought pictures for him. You preserved his

capital from pillage by the Austrians and Russians. The Dutch ambassador, who at that time interfered in favor of Berlin with the Austrians, him has the king in his gratitude created a count. What has he done for you? What Verelse did was but a trifle in comparison with your services, yet he, forsooth, is made a count. What has the king done for you? See, the king and his staff has passed by, and not one of them has looked up here. Yesterday they would have done so, for yesterday you were rich; but to-day they have forgotten you already: for to-day you are poor, and the memory of the people is very short for the poor. Ah! look down again, Gotzkowsky—so many gentlemen, so many high-born people are passing! Not one looks up!”

Against his will Gotzkowsky had been drawn to the window, and, enticed by Ephraim's words, he had looked down anxiously and mournfully at the brilliant procession which was passing by. How much would he not have given if only one of the many who had formerly called themselves his friends had looked up at him, had greeted him cordially? But Ephraim was right. No one did so. No one thought of him who, with a broken heart, was leaning beside the window, asking of mankind no longer assistance or help, but a little love and sympathy. But, as he looked down into the street again, his countenance suddenly brightened up. He laid his hand hastily on Ephraim's shoulder, and pointed to the procession.

“You are right,” said he; “the respectable people do not look up here, but here comes the end of the procession, the common people, the poor and lowly, the workmen. Look at them! See how they are gazing at me. Ah, they see me, they greet me, they wave their hats! There, one of them is putting his hand to his

face. He is a day-laborer who formerly worked in my factory. This man is weeping, and because he knows that I have been unfortunate. See! here come others—poor people in ragged clothes—women with nurslings in their arms—tottering old men—they all bend dewy eyes on me. Do you see? they smile at me. Even the children stretch up their arms. Ah, they love me, although I am no longer rich.”

And turning with a beaming face and eyes moistened with tears toward Ephraim, he exclaimed: “You tell me that I have miscalculated. No! you are mistaken. I calculated on the kernel of humanity, not on the degenerate shell. And this noble kernel of humanity resides in the people, the workmen, and the poor. I trusted in these, and they have not betrayed my confidence.”

Ephraim shrugged his shoulders. “The people are weathercocks; they will stone to-morrow the same men whom they bless to-day. Only wait until public opinion has condemned you, and the people, too, will forsake you. Protect yourself, then, against men. When you were rich, every one partook of your liberality; now that you are poor, no one will be willing to share your misfortune. Therefore save yourself, I tell you. Collect whatever papers and valuables you may have. Give them to me. By the God of my fathers I will preserve them faithfully and honestly for you!”

Gotzkowsky repulsed him with scorn, and indignant anger flashed from his countenance. “Back from me, tempter!” cried he, proudly. “It is true you possess the wisdom of the world, but one thing is wanting in your wisdom—the spirit of honor. I know that this does not trouble you much, but to me it is every thing. You are right: I will be a beggar, and men will point at me with their finger, and laugh me to scorn. But I will

pass them by proudly, nor will I bend my head before them, for my dignity and honor as a man are unconnected with gold or property. These are my own, and when I die, on my tomb will be written—'He died in poverty, but he was an honorable man.'

"Fool that you are!" exclaimed Ephraim, laughing in contempt. "You are speculating on your epitaph, while the fortune of your life slips away from you. Take my advice: there is yet time to secure your future."

"Never, if it is to be accomplished by frauds!"

"Think of your daughter."

A painful quivering flitted across Gotzkowsky's face. "Who gives you a right to remind me of her?" asked he angrily. "Do not soil her name by pronouncing it. I have nothing in common with you."

"Yes, you have, though," said Ephraim with a wicked smile. "You have done me a good deed, and I am thankful. That is something in common."

Gotzkowsky did not answer him. He crossed the room hastily, and stepped to his writing-table, out of a secret drawer of which he drew a dark-red case. He opened it and snatched out the diamond ring that was contained in it.

"I do not wish your gratitude," said he, turning to Ephraim, anger flashing from his countenance—"and if you could offer me all the treasures of the world, I would throw them to the earth, as I do this ring!" And he cast down the costly jewel at Ephraim's feet.

The latter raised it coolly from the ground and examined it carefully. He then broke out into a loud, scornful laugh. "This is the ring which the Jews presented to you when you procured our exemption from the war-tax. You give it to me?"

"I give it to you, and with it a curse on the tempter of my honor!"

"You repulse me, then? You will have none of my gratitude?"

"Yes; if your hand could save me from the abyss, I would reject it!"

"Let it be so, then," said Ephraim; and his face assumed an expression of hatred and malice—for now it could be perceived that the rich Ephraim was again overcome by Gotzkowsky, although the latter was a poor and shattered man. His sympathy and his help had only met with a proud refusal from him whom he had not succeeded in humbling and dragging down to the dust.

"Let it be so, then!" he repeated, gnashing his teeth. "You will not have it otherwise. I take the ring," and looking at Gotzkowsky maliciously, he continued: "With this ring I will buy you a place in the churchyard, that the dishonored bankrupt may, at least, find an honorable grave, and not be shovelled in like De Neufville the suicide!"

"What do you say—De Neufville is dead?" cried Gotzkowsky, hurrying after him as he neared the door, and seizing him violently by the arm. "Say it once more—De Neufville is dead?"

Ephraim enjoyed for a moment, in silence, Gotzkowsky's terrible grief. He then freed himself from his grasp and opened the door. But turning round once more, and looking in Gotzkowsky's face with a devilish grin, he slowly added, "De Neufville killed himself because he could not survive disgrace." And then, with a loud laugh, he slammed the door behind him.

Gotzkowsky stared after him, and his soul was full of inexpressible grief. He had lost in De Neufville not only a friend whom he loved, and on whose fidelity he

could count, but his own future and his last hope were buried in his grave. But his own tormenting thoughts left him no leisure to mourn over his deceased friend. It was the kind of death that De Neufville had chosen which occupied his mind.

"He came to his death by his own hand; he did not wish to survive his disgrace. He has done right—for when disgrace begins, life ends—and shall I live," asked he aloud, as almost angrily he threw his head back, "an existence without honor, an existence of ignominy and misery? I repeat it, De Neufville has done right. Well, then, I dare not do wrong; my friend has shown me the way. Shall I follow him? Let me consider it."

He cast a wild, searching look around the room, as if he feared some eye might be looking at him, and read desperate thoughts in the quivering of his face. "Yes! I will consider it," whispered he, uneasily. "But not here—there in my cabinet, where every thing is so silent and solitary, no one will disturb me. I will think of it, I say." And with a dismal smile he hurried into his study, and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIV.

ELISE.

THE bridal costume was completed, and with a bright face, smiling and weeping for sheer happiness, Elise stood looking at herself in a large Venetian mirror. Not from vanity, nor to enjoy the contemplation of her beauty, but to convince herself that all this was not a dream, only truth, delightful truth. The maiden, with blushing

cheeks, stood and looked in the glass, in her white dress, till she smiled back again; so like a bride, that she shouted aloud for joy, kissed her hand to herself, in the fulness of her mirth, as she greeted and smiled again to her image in the mirror. "I salute you, happy bride!" said she, in the exuberance of her joy. "I see in your eyes that you are happy, and so may God bless you! Go forth into the world and teach it by your example, that for a woman there is no happiness but love, no bliss but that of resting in the arms of her lover. But am I not too simply clad?" cried she, interrupting herself suddenly, and examining herself critically in the glass. "Yes, indeed, that simple, silly child is not worthy of such a handsome and splendid cavalier: a white silk dress and nothing else! How thoughtless and foolish has happiness made me! My Heaven! I forgot that he comes from the land of diamonds, and that he is a prince. Oh! I will adorn myself for my prince." And she took from her desk the costly set of diamonds, the legacy of her mother, and fastened the glittering brilliants in her ears, on her arms, and the necklace set with diamonds and emeralds around her snow-white neck.

"Now that looks splendid," said she, as she surveyed herself again. "Now perhaps I may please him. But the last ornament is still wanting—my myrtle-wreath—but that my father shall put on." Looking at the wreath, she continued, in a more serious and sad tone: "Crown of love and of death! it is woven in the maiden's hair when she dies as a maiden, whether it be to arise again as a wife or as a purified spirit." And raising her tearful eyes to heaven, she exclaimed: "I thank Thee, O God, for granting me all this happiness. My whole life, my whole future, shall evince but gratitude toward Thee, who art the God of love."

Soon, however, it became too close and solitary in this silent chamber. She wished to go to her father, to throw herself on his breast, to pour out to him all her happiness, her affection, her joy, in words of thankfulness, of tender child-like love. How the white satin dress rustled and shone! how the diamonds sparkled and glittered, as, meteor-like, they flitted down the dark corridor! With a bright, happy smile, holding the wreath in her hand, she stepped into her father's room. But the apartment was empty. She crossed it in haste to seek him in his study. The doors were locked and no one answered her loud calls. She supposed he had gone out, and would doubtless soon return. She sat down to await him, and soon sank into deep thought and reverie. What sweet and precious dreams played around her, and greeted her with happy bodings of the future!

The door opened, and she started up to meet her father. But it was not her father—it was Bertram. And how altered—how pale and troubled he looked! He hardly noticed her, and his eye gleamed on her without seeing her. What was it that had so changed him? Perhaps he already knew that she was to be married to-day, and that her lover, so long mourned, had returned to her. She asked confusedly and anxiously for her father.

“My God! is he not here, then?” asked Bertram in reply. “I must speak to him, for I have things of the greatest importance to tell him.”

Elise looked at him with inquiring astonishment. She had never seen him so intensely excited in his whole being, and unwillingly she asked the cause of his trouble and anxiety.

Bertram denied feeling any anxiety, and yet his eye wandered around searchingly and uneasily, and his whole

frame was restless and anxious. This only made Elise the more eager to find out the cause of his trouble. She became more pressing, and Bertram again assured her that nothing had happened.

Elise shook her head distrustfully. “And yet I do not deceive myself! Misfortune stands written on your brow.” Then, turning pale with terror, she asked, “Do you bring my father bad news?”

Bertram did not answer, but cast his eyes on the ground to escape her searching gaze. There awoke in her breast all the anxiety and care of a loving daughter, and she trembled violently as she implored him to inform her of the danger that threatened her father. He could withstand her no longer. “She must learn it some time; it is better she should hear it from me,” muttered he to himself. He took her hand, led her to the sofa, and, sitting down by her side, imparted to her slowly and carefully, always endeavoring to spare her feelings, the terrible troubles and misfortunes of her father. But Elise was little acquainted with the material cares of life. She, who had never known any extreme distress, any real want, could not understand how happiness and honor could depend on money. When Bertram had finished, she drew a long breath, as if relieved from some oppressive anxiety. “How you have frightened me!” said she, smiling. “Is that all the trouble—we are to be poor? Well, my father does not care much about money.”

“But he does about his honor,” said Bertram.

“Oh, the honor of my father cannot stand in any danger,” cried Elise, with noble pride.

Bertram shook his head. “But it is in danger, and though *we* are convinced of his innocence, the world will not believe it. It will forget all his noble deeds,

all his high-mindedness and liberality, it will obliterate all his past, and only remember that this day, for the first time in his life, he has it not in his power to fulfil his word. It will condemn him as if he were a common cheat, and brand him with the disgraceful name of bankrupt." With increasing dismay Elise had watched his countenance as he spoke. Now, for the first time, the whole extent of the misfortune which was about to befall her father seemed to enter her mind, and she felt trembling and crushed. She could feel or think of nothing now but the evil which was rushing in upon her parent, and with clasped hands and tears in her eyes she asked Bertram if there was no more hope; if there was no one who could avert this evil from her father.

Bertram shook his head sadly. "His credit is gone—no one comes to his assistance."

"No one?" asked Elise, putting her hand with an indescribable expression on his shoulder. "And you, my brother?"

"Ah, I have tried every thing," said he; and even in this moment her very touch darted through him like a flash of delight. "I have implored him with tears in my eyes to accept the little I possess, to allow me the sacred right of a son. But he refused me. He will not, he says, allow a stranger to sacrifice himself for his sake. He calls me a stranger! I know that my fortune cannot save him, but it may delay his fall, or at least cancel a portion of his debt, and he refuses me. He says that if I were his son, he would consent to what he now denies me. Elise," he continued, putting aside, in the pressure of the moment, all consideration and all hesitation, "I have asked him for your hand, my sister, that I may in reality become his son. I know that you do not love,

but you might esteem me; for the love I bear your father, you might, as a sacrifice to your duty as a daughter, accept my hand and become my bride."

He ceased, and looked anxiously and timidly at the young girl, who sat blushing and trembling by his side. She felt that she owed him an answer; and as she raised her eyes to him, and looked into his noble, faithful face, which had never changed, never altered—as she thought that Bertram had always loved her with the same fidelity, the same self-sacrifice—with a love which desired nothing, wished for nothing but her happiness and contentment, she was deeply moved; and, for the first time, she felt real and painful remorse. Freely and gracefully she offered him her hand.

"Bertram," she said, "of all the men whom I know, you are the most noble! As my soul honors you, so would my heart love you, if it were mine."

Bertram bent over her hand and kissed it; but as he looked at her, his eye accidentally caught sight of the sparkling jewels which adorned her arms and neck, and aware for the first time of her unusually brilliant toilet, he asked in surprise the occasion for it.

"Oh, do not look at it," cried Elise; "tell me about my father. What did he answer you when you asked him for my hand?"

"That he would never accept such a sacrifice from his daughter, even to save himself from death."

"And is his fall unavoidable?" asked Elise thoughtfully.

"I almost fear it is. This morning already reports to that effect were current in the town, and your father himself told me that if Russia insisted on payment, he was lost irretrievably. Judge, then, of my horror, when I have just received from a friend in St. Petersburg the

certain intelligence that the empress has already sent a special envoy to settle this business with the most stringent measures. This half a million must be of great importance to the empress, when, for the purpose of collecting it, she sends her well-known favorite, Prince Stratimojeff!"

Elise started from her seat in horror, and stared at Bertram. "Whom did she send?"

"Her favorite, Stratimojeff," repeated Bertram, calmly.

Elise shuddered; her eyes flashed fire, and her cheeks burned. "Who has given you the right to insult the Prince Stratimojeff, that you call him the favorite of the adulterous empress?"

Bertram looked at her in astonishment. "What is Prince Stratimojeff to you?" said he. "The whole world knows that he is the favorite of Catharine. Read, then, what my correspondent writes me on the subject." He drew forth a letter, and let Elise read those passages which alluded especially to the mission of the imperial favorite.

Elise uttered a scream, and fell back fainting on the sofa; every thing swam before her; her blood rushed to her heart; and she muttered faintly, "I am dying—oh, I am dying!" But this momentary swoon soon passed over, and Elise awoke to full consciousness and a perception of her situation. She understood every thing—she knew every thing. With a feeling of bitter contempt she surveyed all the circumstances—her entire, pitiable, sorrowful misfortune. "Therefore, then," said she to herself, almost laughing in scorn, "therefore this hasty wedding, this written consent of the empress—I was to be the cloak of this criminal intercourse. Coming from her arms, he was anxious to present me to the world.

'Look! you calumniate me! this is my wife, and the empress is as pure as an angel!'" She sprang up, and paced the room with hasty steps and rapid breathing. Her whole being was in a state of excitement and agitation. She shuddered at the depth of pitiable meanness she had discovered in this man, who not only wished to cheat and delude her, but was about, as if in mockery of all human feeling, to make herself the scapegoat of her imperial rival.

She did not notice that Bertram was looking at her in all astonishment, and in vain seeking a clew to her conduct. "This is too much!" cried she, half soliloquizing. "Love cannot stand this! Love! away with the word—I would despise myself if I could find a spark of this love in my heart!" She pressed her hands to her breast, as if she wished thereby to extinguish the flames which were consuming her. "Oh!" she cried, "it burns fearfully, but it is not love! Hate, too, has its fires. I hate him! I know it now—I hate him, and I will have vengeance on the traitor! I will show him that I scorn him!" Like an infuriated tigress she darted at the myrtle-wreath which lay on the table. "The bond of love is broken, and I will destroy it as I do this wreath!" she exclaimed, wildly; but suddenly a gentle hand was laid upon her extended arm, and Bertram's soft and sympathizing voice sounded in her ear.

What he said, what words he used—he who now understood all, and perceived the fulness of her grief—with what sincere, heart-born words he sought to comfort her, she neither knew nor understood. But she heard his voice; she knew that a sympathizing friend stood at her side, ready to offer a helping hand to save her from misery, and faithfully to draw her to his breast. She would have been lost, she would have gone

crazy, if Bertram had not stood at her side. She felt it—she knew it. Whenever she had been threatened with calamity, he was always near, to watch and shield, to afford her peace and comfort.

“Bertram! Bertram!” she cried, trembling in every limb, “protect me. Do not shut me out from your heart! have pity on me!” She leaned her head on his breast and wept aloud. Now, in her sorrow, she felt it to be a blessing that he was present, and for the first time she had a clear consciousness that God had sent him to her to be a helping friend, a guardian angel.

The illusions and errors of her whole life fell from before her eyes like a veil, and she saw in a clear light both herself and Bertram. And now, as she leaned her head upon his breast, her thoughts became prayers, and her tears thank-offerings. “I have entertained an angel unawares,” said she, remembering, unintentionally, the language of Holy Writ. When Bertram asked the meaning of her words, she answered, “They mean that an erring heart has found the right road home.”

She wiped away her tears with her long locks. She would no longer weep, nor shed a single tear for the false, intriguing traitor, the degenerate scion of a degenerate race. He was not worthy of a sigh of revenge, not even of a reproach. A mystery had slept in her breast, and she thought to have found the true solution in the word “Feodor!” but she was mistaken, and God had allowed this long-mourned, long-desired man to return to her, that she might be allowed to read anew the riddle of her heart more correctly, to find out its deceitful nature, its stubborn pride, and to conquer them. Thus thinking, she raised her head from Bertram’s breast, and looked at him. “You asked my father for my hand. Do you still love me?”

Bertram smiled. This question seemed so strange and singular! “Do I love you?” asked he. “Can he ever cease to love who has once loved?”

“Do you still love me?” she repeated.

“Faithfully and honorably,” said he, with feeling.

“Faithfully and honorably!” cried Elise, deeply moved. “Oh those are words as strong as rocks, and like the shipwrecked sailor, I will cling to them to save myself from sinking. Oh, Bertram, how good you are! You love my father, and desire to be his son, only for the sake of helping him.”

“And if need be, to work for him, to give up my life for him!”

With her bright eyes she looked deeply into his, and held out her hand to him. “Give me your hand, Bertram,” said she, softly. “You were a better son to my father than I have been a daughter. I will learn from you. Will you be my teacher?”

Bertram gazed at her astonished and inquiringly. She replied to this look with a sweet smile, and like lightning it shot through his heart, and a happy anticipation pervaded his entire soul. “My God! my God! is it possible?” murmured he, “is the day of suffering, indeed, past? Will—”

He felt Elise suddenly shudder, and pressing his hand significantly, she whispered, “Silence, Bertram, look there!”

Bertram followed the direction of her eyes, and saw Gotzkowsky, who had opened the door of his study, and was entering the room, his features pale and distorted, and his gaze fixed. “He does not see us,” whispered Elise. “He is talking to himself. Do not disturb him.”

In silence she pointed to the curtains just behind them, concealing a recess, in the middle of which stood