

On a sudden our hound began to whine in the distance—such a whine as I had never yet heard.

Some minutes later he came reeling back to us; whimpering and whining, he leaped up at us, licked our hands, and then raced off again.

"Now let us go," said Lorand, shouldering his gun. Hurriedly we followed the hound's track, and soon came out upon the high-road.

In the gloom a hay-cart drawn by four oxen, was quietly making its way to its destination.

"God be praised!" said the old farm-laborer, as he recognized my brother.

"For ever and ever."

After a slight pause my brother asked him if there was anything wrong?

"You needn't fear, it will be all right."

Thereupon we quietly sauntered along behind the hay-wagon.

My brother uncovered his head, and so proceeded on his way bareheaded; he said he was very warm. We walked silently for a distance until the old laborer came back to us.

"Not tired, Master Desi?" he asked; "you might take a seat on the cart."

"What are you thinking of, John?" said Lorand; "on this cart?"

"True; true, indeed," said the aged servant. Then he quietly crossed himself, and went forward to the oxen.

When we came near the village, old John again came toward us.

"It will be better now if the young gentlemen go home through the gardens; it will be much easier for me to get through the village alone."

"Do you think they are still on guard?" asked Lorand.

"Of course they know already. One cannot take it amiss; the poor fellows have twice in ten years had their hedges broken down by the hail."

"Stupidity!" answered my brother.

"May be," sighed the old serving-man. "Still the poor man thinks so."

Lorand nudged the old retainer so that he would not speak before me.

My brain became only more confused thereat.

Lorand told him that we would soon pass through the gardens; however, after John had advanced a good distance with the cart we followed in his tracks again, keeping steadily on until we came to the first row of houses beginning the village. Here my brother began to thread his way more cautiously, and in the dark I heard distinctly the click of the trigger as he cocked his gun.

The cart proceeded quietly before us to the end of the long village street.

Above the workhouse about six men armed with pitchforks met us.

My brother said we must make our way behind a hedge, and bade me hold our dog's mouth lest he should bark when the others passed.

The pitchforked guards passed near the cart, and advanced before us too. I heard how the one said to the other:

"Faith, *that* is the reason this cursed wind is blowing so furiously!"

"*That*" was the reason! What was the reason?

As they passed, my brother took my hand and said: "Now let us hasten, that we may be home before the wagon."

Therewith he ran with me across a long cottage-court, lifted me over a hedge, climbing after me himself; then through two or three more strange gardens, everywhere stepping over the hedges; and at last we reached our own garden.

But, in Heaven's name, had we committed some sin, that we ran thus, skulking from hiding-place to hiding-place?

As we reached the courtyard, the wagon was just entering. Three retainers waited for it in the yard, and immediately closed the gate after it.

Grandmother stood outside on the terrace and kissed us when we arrived.

Again there followed a short whispering between my brother and the domestics; whereupon the latter seized pitchforks and began to toss down the hay from the wain.

Could they not do so by daylight?

Grandmother sat down on a bench on the terrace, and drew my head to her bosom. Lorand leaned his elbows upon the rail of the terrace and watched the work.

The hay was tossed into a heap and the high wind drove the chaff on to the terrace, but no one told the servants to be more careful.

This midnight work was, for me, so mysterious.

Only once I saw that Lorand turned round as he stood, and began to weep; thereupon grandmother rose, and they fell each upon the other's breast.

I clutched their garments and gazed up at them trembling. Not a single lamp burned upon the terrace.

"Sh!" whispered grandmother, "don't weep so loudly;" she was herself choking with sobs. "Come, let us go."

With that she took my hand, and, leaning upon my brother's arm, came down with us into the courtyard, down to the wagon, which stood before the garden gate. Two or more heaps of straw hid *it* from the eye; it was visible only when we reached the bottom of the wagon.

On that wagon lay the coffin of my father.

So this it was that in the dead of night we had stealthily brought into the village, that we had in so skulking a manner escorted, and had so concealed; and of which we had spoken in whispers. This it was that we had wept over in secret—my father's coffin. The four retainers lifted it from the wagon, then carried it on their shoulders toward the garden. We went after it, with bared heads and silent tongues.

A tiny rivulet flowed through our garden; near this

rivulet was a little round building, whose gaudy door I had never seen open.

From my earliest days, when I was unable to rise from the ground if once I sat down, the little round building had always been in my mind.

I had always loved it, always feared to be near it; I had so longed to know what might be within it. As a little knickerbockered child I would pick the colored gravel-stones from the mortar, and play with them in the dust; and if perchance one stone struck the iron door, I would run away from the echo the blow produced.

In my older days it was again only around this building that I would mostly play, and would remark that upon its façade were written great letters, on which the ivy, that so actively clambered up the walls, scarcely grew. At that time how I longed to know what those letters could mean!

When the first holiday after I had made the acquaintance of those letters came, and they took me again to our country-seat, one after another I spelled out the ancient letters of the inscription on that mysterious little house, and pieced them together in my mind. But I could not arrive at their meaning; for they were written in some foreign tongue.

Many, many times I wrote those words in the dust even before I understood them:

"NE NOS INDUCAS IN TENTATIONEM."

I strove to reach one year earlier than my school-fellows the so-called "student class," where Latin was taught.

My most elementary acquaintance with the Latin tongue had always for its one aim the discovery of the meaning of that saying. Finally I solved the mystery—

"Lead us not into temptation." It is a sentence of the Lord's Prayer, which I myself had repeated a

thousand times; and now I knew its meaning still less than before.

And still more began to come to me a kind of mysterious abhorrence of that building, above whose door was to be found the prayer that God might guard us against temptations.

Perhaps this was the very dwelling of temptations?

We know what children understand by "temptations."

To-day I saw this door open, and knew that this building was our family vault.

This door, which hitherto I had only seen covered with ivy, was now swung open, and through the open porch glittered the light of a lamp. The two great Virginia creepers which were planted before the crypt hid the glass so that it was not visible from the garden. The brightness was only for us.

The four men set the coffin down on the steps; we followed after it.

So this was that house where temptations dwell; and all our prayers were in vain; "lead us not into temptation." Yet to temptation we were forced to come. Down a few steps we descended, under a low, plastered arch, which glittered green from the moisture of the earth. In the wall were built deep niches, four on either side, and six of them were already filled. Before them stood slabs of marble, with inscriptions telling of those who had fallen asleep. The four servants placed the coffin they had brought on their shoulders in the seventh niche; then the aged retainer clasped his hands, and with simple devotion repeated the Lord's Prayer; the other three men softly murmured after him: "Amen. Amen."

Then they left us to ourselves.

Grandmother all this while had without a word, without a movement, stood in the depth of the crypt, holding our hands within her own; but when we were alone, in a frenzy she darted to the confined niche and flung herself to the ground before it.

Oh! I cannot tell what she said as she raved there.

She wept and sobbed, flinging reproaches—at the dead! She scolded, as one reproves a child that has cut itself with a knife. She asked why he did *this*. And again she heaped grave calumny upon him, called him coward, wretch, threatened him with God, with God's wrath, and with eternal damnation;—then asked pardon of him, babbled out words of conciliation, called him back, called him dear, sweet, and good; related to him what a faithful, dear, loving wife waited at home, with his two sweet children,—how could he forget them? Then with gracious, reverent words begged him to turn Christian, to come to God, to learn to believe, to hope, to love; to trust to the boundless mercy; to take his rest in the paths of Heaven. And then she uttered a scream, tore the tresses of her dove-white hair, and cursed God. Methought it was the night of the Last Judgment.

Every fire-breathing monster of the Revelation, the very disgorging of the dead from the rent earth, were as naught to me compared with the terror which that hour heaped upon my head.

'Twas hither we had brought father, who died suddenly, in the prime of life. Hither we had brought him, in stealth, and slinking; here we had concealed him without any Christian ceremony, without psalm or toll of bell; no priest's blessing followed him to his grave, as it follows even the poorest beggar; and now here, in the house of the dead, grandmother had cursed the departed, and anathematized the other world, on whose threshold we stand, and in her mad despair was knocking at the door of the mysterious country as she beat upon the coffin-lid with her fist.

Now, in my mature age, when my head, too, is almost covered with winter's snow, I see that our presence there was essential; drop by drop we were to drain to the dregs this most bitter cup, which I would had never fallen to our lot!

Grandmother fell down before the niche and laid her forehead upon the coffin's edge; her long white hair fell trailing over her.

Long, very long, she lay, and then she rose; her face was no more distorted, her eyes no longer filled with tears. She turned toward us and said we should remain a little longer here.

She herself sat down upon the lowest step of the stone staircase, and placed the lamp in front of her, while we two remained standing before her.

She looked not at us, only peered intensely and continuously with her large black eyes into the light of the lamp, as if she would conjure therefrom something that had long since passed away.

All at once she seized our hands, and drew us toward her to the staircase.

"You are the scions of a most unhappy house, every member of which dies by his own hand."

So this was that secret that hung, like a veil of mourning before the face of every adult member of our family! We continuously saw our elders so, as if some mist of melancholy moved between us; and this was that mist.

"This was the doom of God, a curse of man upon us!" continued grandmother, now no longer with terrifying voice. Besides, she spoke as calmly as if she were merely reciting to us the history of some strange family. "Your great-grandfather, Job Áronffy, he who lies in the first niche, bequeathed this terrible inheritance to his heirs; and it was a brother's hand that hurled this curse at his head. Oh, this is an unhappy earth on which we dwell! In other happy lands there are murderous quarrels between man and man; brothers part in wrath from one another; the 'mine and thine,'* jealousy, pride, envy, sow tares among them. But this accursed earth of ours ever creates bloodshed; this damned soil, which we are wont to call our 'dear homeland,' whose pure harvest we call love of home, whose tares we call treason, while every one thinks his own harvest the pure one, his brother's

*That is, the disputes as to the superiority of each other's possessions, or as to each other's right to possession.

the tares, and, for that, brother slays brother! Oh! you cannot understand it yet.

"Your great-grandfather lived in those days when great men thought that what is falling in decay must be built afresh. Great contention arose therefrom, much knavery, much disillusion; finally the whole had to be wiped out.

"Job's parents educated him at academies in Germany; there his soul became filled with foreign freedom of thought; he became an enthusiastic partisan of common human liberty. When he returned, this selfsame idea was in strife with an equally great one, national feeling. He joined his fortunes with the former idea, as he considered it the just one. In what patriots called relics of antiquity he saw only the vices of the departed. His elder brother stood face to face with him; they met on the common field of strife, and then began between them the unending feud. They had been such good brothers, never had they deserted each other in time of trouble; and on this thorn-covered field they must swear eternal enmity. Your great-grandfather belonged to the victorious, his brother to the conquered army. But the victory was not sweet.

"Job gained a powerful, high position, he basked in the sunshine of power, but he lost that which was—nothing; merely the smiles of his old acquaintances. He was a seigneur, from afar they greeted him, but did not hurry to take his hand; and those who of yore at times of meeting would kiss his face from right and left, now after his change of dignity would stand before him, and bow their greetings askance with cold obeisance. Then there was one man who did not even bow, but sought a meeting only that he might provoke him with his obstinate sullenness, and gaze upon him with his piercing eyes—his own brother. Yet they were both honorable, good men, true Christians, benefactors of the poor, the darlings of their family, and once so fond of each other! Oh, this sorrowful earth here below us!

"Then this new order of things that had been built up for ten years, fell into ruins, and Joseph II. on his death-bed drew a red line through his whole life-work; what had happened till then faded into mere remembrance.

"The earth re-echoed with the shouts of rejoicing—this earth, this bitter earth. Job for his part wended his way to the Turkish bath in Buda, and, that he might meet with his brother no more, opened his arteries and bled to death.

"Yet they were both good Christians; true men in life, faithful to honor, no evil-doers, no godless men; in heart and deed they worshipped God; but still the one brother took his own life, that he might meet no more with the other; and the other said of him: 'He deserved his fate.'

"Oh, this earth that is drenched with the flow of our tears!"

Here grandmother paused, as if she would collect in her mind the memories of a greater and heavier affliction.

Not a sound reached us down there—even the crypt door was closed; the moaning of the wind did not reach so far; no sound, only the beating of the hearts of three living beings.

Grandmother sought with her eyes the date written upon the arch, which the moisture that had sweated out from the lime had rendered illegible.

"In this year they built this house of sorrow. Job was the first inhabitant thereof. Just as now, without priest, without toll of bell, hidden in a wooden chest of other form, they brought him here; and with him began that melancholy line of victims, whose legacy was that one should draw the other after him. The shedding of blood by one's own hand is a terrible legacy. That blood besprinkles children and brothers. That malicious tempter who directed the father's hand to strike the sharp knife home into his own heart stands there in ambush forever behind his successors' backs; he is ever whispering to them;

'Thy father was a suicide, thy brother himself sought out death; over thy head, too, stands the sentence; wherever thou runnest from before it, thou canst not save thyself; thou carriest with thyself thy own murderer in thine own right hand.' He tempts and lures the undecided ones with blades whetted to brilliancy, with guns at full cock, with poison-drinks of awful hue, with deep-flowing streams. Oh, it is indeed horrible!

"And nothing keeps them back! they never think of the love, the everlasting sorrow of those whom they leave behind here to sorrow over their melancholy death. They never think of Him whom they will meet there beyond the grave, and who will ask them: 'Why did you come before I summoned you?'

"In vain was written upon the front of this house of sorrow, 'Lead us not into temptation.' You can see. Seven have already taken up their abode here. All the seven have cast at the feet of Providence that treasure, an account of which will be asked for in Heaven.

"Job left three children: Ákos, Gero, and Kalman. Ákos was the eldest, and he married earliest. He was a good man, but thoughtless and passionate. One summer he lost his whole fortune at cards and was ruined. But even poverty did not drive him to despair. He said to his wife and children: 'Till now we were our own masters; now we shall be the servants of others. Labor is not a disgrace. I shall go and act as steward to some landowner.' The other two brothers, when they heard of their elder's misfortune, conferred together, went to him, and said: 'Brother, still two-thirds of our father's wealth is left; come, let us divide it anew.'

"And each of them gave him a third of his property, that they might be on equal terms again.

"That night Ákos shot himself in the head.

"The stroke of misfortune he could bear, but the kindness of his brothers set him so against

himself that when he was freed from the cares of life he did not wish to know further the enjoyments thereof.

"Akos left behind two children, a girl and a boy.

"The girl had lived some sixteen summers—very beautiful, very good. Look! there is her tomb: 'Struck down in her sixteenth year!' She loved; became unhappy; and died.

"You cannot understand it yet!

"So already three lay in the solitary vault.

"Gerö was your grandfather—my good, never-to-be-forgotten husband. No tear wells in my eyes as I think of him; every thought that leads me back to him is sweet to me; and I know that he was a man of high principles; that every deed of his—his last deed, too—was proper and right, it is as it should be. It happened before my very eyes; and I did not seize his hand to stay his action."

How my old grandmother's eyes flashed in this moment! A glowing warmth, hitherto unknown to me, seemed to pervade my whole being; some glimmering ray of enthusiasm—I knew not what! How the dead can inspire one with enthusiasm!

"Your grandfather was the very opposite of his own father; as it is likely to happen in hundreds, nay, in thousands of cases that the sons restore to the East the fame and glory that their fathers gathered in the West.

"But you don't understand that, either!

"Gerö was in union with those who, under the leadership of a priest of high rank, wished at the end of the last century, to prepare the country for another century. No success crowned their efforts; they fell with him—and fell without a head. One afternoon your grandfather was sitting in the family circle—it was toward the end of dinner—when a strange officer entered in the midst of us, and, with a face utterly incapable of an expression of remorse, informed Gerö that he had orders to put him under guard. Gerö displayed a calm face, merely begged the stranger to allow him to drink his black coffee. His request was granted without demur.

My husband calmly stirred his coffee, and entered into conversation with the stranger, who did not seem to be of an angry disposition. Indeed, he assured my husband that no harm would come of this incident. My husband peacefully sipped his coffee.

"Then having finished it, he put down his cup, wiped his beautiful long beard, turned to me, drew me to his breast, and kissed me on both cheeks, not touching my mouth. 'Educate our boy well,' he stammered. Then, turning to the stranger: 'Sir, pray do not trouble yourself further on my account. I am a dead man; you will be welcome at my funeral.'

"Two minutes later he breathed his last. And I had clearly seen, for I sat beside him, how with his thumb he opened the seal of the ring he wore on his little finger, how he shook a white powder therefrom into the cup standing before him, how he stirred it slowly till it dissolved, and then sipped it up little by little; but I could not stay his hand, could not call to him, 'Don't do it! Cling to life!'"

Grandmother was staring before her, with the ecstatic smile of madness. Oh! I was so frightened that even now my mind wanders at the remembrance.

This smile of madness is so contagious! Slowly nodding with her gray head, she again fell all in a heap. It was apparent that some time must elapse before this recollection, once risen in her mind, could settle to rest again. After what seemed to us hours she slowly raised herself again and continued her tragic narrative.

"He was already the fourth dweller in this house of temptations.

"After his death his brother Kálmán came to join our circle. To the end he remained single; very early in life he was deceived, and from that moment became a hater of mankind.

"His gloom grew year by year more incurable; he avoided every distraction, every gathering; his favorite haunt was this garden—this place here. He planted

the beautiful juniper-trees before the door; such trees were in those days great rarities.

"He made no attempt to conceal from us—in fact, he often declared openly to us that his end could be none other than his brothers' had been.

"The pistol, with which Akos had shot himself, he kept by him as a souvenir, and in sad jest declared it was his inheritance.

"Here he would wander for hours together in reverie, in melancholy, until the falling snow confined him to his room. He detested the winter greatly. When the first snowflake fell, his ill-humor turned to the agony of despair; he loathed the atmosphere of his rooms and everything to be found within the four walls. We so strongly advised him to winter in Italy, that he finally gave in to the proposal. We carefully packed his trunks; ordered his post-chaise. One morning, as everything stood ready for departure, he said that, before going for this long journey, he would once again take leave of his brothers. In his traveling-suit he came down here to the vault, and closed the iron door after him, enjoining that no one should disturb him. So we waited behind; and, as hour after hour passed by and still he did not appear, we went after him. We forced open the closed door, and there found him lying in the middle of the tomb—he had gone to the country where there is no more winter.

"He had shot himself in the heart, with the same pistol as his brother, as he had foretold.

"Only two male members of the family remained: my son and the son of Akos. Lörincz—that was the name of Akos' son—was reared too kindly by his poor, good mother; she loved him excessively, and thereby spoiled him. The boy became very fastidious and sensitive. He was eleven years old when his mother noticed that she could not command his obedience. Once the child played some prank, a mere trifle; how can a child of eleven years commit any great offence? His mother thought she must rebuke him. The boy laughed at the rebuke; he could not believe his mother

was angry; then, in consequence, his mother boxed his ears. The boy left the room; behind the garden there was a fishpond; in that he drowned himself.

"Well, is it necessary to take one's life for such a thing? For one blow, given by the soft hand of a mother to a little child, to take such a terrible revenge! to cut the thread of life, which as yet he knew not; How many children are struck by a mother, and the next day received into her bosom, with mutual forgiveness and a renewal of reciprocal love? Why, a blow from a mother is merely one proof of a mother's love. But it brought him to take his life."

The cold perspiration stood out in beads all over me.

That bitterness I, too, feel in myself. I also am a child, just as old as that other was; I have never yet been beaten. Once my parents were compelled to rebuke me for wanton petulance; and from head to foot I was pervaded through and through by one raving idea: "If they beat me I should take my own life." So I am also infected with the hereditary disease—the awful spirit is holding out his hand over me; captured, accursed, he is taking me with him. I am betrayed to him! Only instead of thrashing me, they had punished me with fasting fare; otherwise, I also should already be in this house.

Grandmother clasped her hands across her knees and continued her story.

"Your father was older at the time of this event—seventeen years of age. Ever since his birth the world has been rife with discord and revolutions; all the nations of the world pursued a bitter warfare one against another. I scarce expected my only son would live to be old enough to join the army. Thither, thither, where death with a scythe in both hands was cutting down the ranks of the armed warriors; thither, where the children of weeping mothers were being trampled on by horses' hoofs; thither, thither, where they were casting into a common grave the mangled remains of darling first-borns; only not hither, not into this awful house, into these horrible

ranks of tempting spectres! Yes, I rejoiced when I knew that he was standing before the foe's cannons; and when the news of one great conflict after another spread like a dark cloud over the country, with sorrowful tranquillity, I lay in wait for the lightning-stroke which, bursting from the cloud, should dart into my heart with the news: 'Thy son is dead! They have slain him, as a hero is slain!' But it was not so. The wars ceased. My son returned.

"No, it is not true; don't believe what I said,—' If only the news of his death had come instead!'

"No; surely I rejoiced, surely I wept in my joy and happiness, when I could clasp him anew in my arms, and I blessed God for not having taken him away. Yet, why did I rejoice? Why did I triumph before the world, saying, 'See, what a fine, handsome son I have! a dauntless warrior, fame and honor he has brought home with him. My pride—my gladness? Now they lie here! What did I gain with him—he, too, followed the rest! He, too! he, whom I loved best of all—he whose every Paradise was here on earth!'

My brother wept; I shivered with cold.

Then suddenly, like a lunatic, grandmother seized our hands, and leaped up from her sitting-place.

"Look yonder! there is still *one* empty niche—room for *one* coffin. Look well at that place; then go forth into the world and think upon what the mouth of this dark hollow said.

"I had thought of making you swear here never to forsake God, never to continue the misfortunes of this family; but why this oath? That some one should take with him to the other world one sin more, in that in the hour of his death he forswore himself? What oath would bind him who says: 'The mercy of God I desire not'?

"But instead, I brought you here and related you the history of your family. Later you shall know still more therefrom, that is yet secret and obscure before you. Now look once more around you, and then—let us go out.

"Now you know what is the meaning of this melancholy house, whose door the ivy enters with the close of a man's life from time to time. You know that the family brings its suicides hither to burial, because elsewhere they have no place. But you know also that in this awful sleeping-room there is space for only *one* person more, and the second will find no other resting-place than the grave-ditch!"

With these words grandmother passionately thrust us both from her. In terror we fell into each other's arms before her frenzied gaze.

Then, with a shrill cry, she rushed toward us and embraced us both with all the might of a lunatic; wept and gasped, till finally she fainted utterly away.