

"Well, philosopher, come; defend this pious man against me! Tell me what you have learned."

But the philosopher did not say what he had learned. Half dead and wholly insensible he lay back in his chair while the moon shone upon his upturned face with its full brilliance.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO GIRLS

EIGHT years had passed.

The young man who buried himself on the plains had become a man, his face had lengthened, his beard grown round it; few of his old acquaintances would have recognized him. Even he himself had long ago become accustomed to his assumed name.

In Topány's house the old order of things continued: Czipra did the honors, presiding at the head of the table: Lorand managed the farm, living in the house, sitting at the table, speaking to the comrades who came and went "per tu";* with them he drank and amused himself.

Drank and amused himself!

What else should a young man do, who has no aim in life?

With Czipra, tête-à-tête, he spoke also "per tu;" before others he miladyed her.

Once at supper Topány said to Czipra and Lorand:

"Children, in a few days another child will come to the house. The devil has carried off a very dear relation of mine with whom I was on such excellent terms that we never spoke to one another. I should not, logically, believe there is a devil in the world, should I? But for the short period during which he had carried that fellow away, I am willing to acquiesce in his existence. To-day I have received a lamentable letter from his daughter, written in a beautiful tone of sorrow; the poor child writes that immediately after her father's death the house was swooped down upon by those Sad-

* A sign of intimacy—addressing a person as "thou."

duces who trample all piety under foot, the so-called creditors. They have seized everything and put it under seals; even her own piano; they have even put up at auction the pictures she drew with her own hand; and have actually sold the 'Gedenkbuch,'* in which so many clever and famous men had written so much absurdity: the tobacconist bought it for ten florins for the sake of its title-page. The poor girl has hitherto been educated by the nuns, to whom three quarters' payment is due, and her position is such that she has no roof except her parasol beneath which she may take shelter. She has a mother in name, but her company she cannot frequent, for certain reasons; she has tried her other relations and acquaintances in turn, but they have all well-founded reasons for not undertaking to burden their families in this manner; she cannot go into service, not having been educated to it. Well, it occurred to her that she had, somewhere in the far regions of Asia, a half-mad relation—that is your humble servant: it would be a good plan to find him out at once, and take up her abode with him as a princess. I entirely indorse my niece's argument: and have already sent her the money necessary for the journey, have paid the fees due, and have enabled her to appear among us in the style befitting her rank."

Topányi laughed loudly at his own production.

It was only himself that laughed: the others did not share in it.

"Well, there will be one more young lady in the house: a refined, graceful, sentimental woman-in-white, before whom people must take great care what they say, and who will probably correct the behavior of all of us."

Czipra pushed her chair back angrily from the table.

"Oh, don't be afraid. She will not correct you. You may be sure of that. You have absolute authority in the house, as you know already: what you command or order is accomplished, and against your will not even a cat

*An album in which one writes something "as a souvenir."

comes to our table. You remain what you were: mistress of life and death in the house. When you wish it, there is washing in the house, and everybody is obliged to render an account even of his last shirt; what you do not like in the place, you may throw out of the window, and you can buy what you wish. The new young lady will not take away from you a single one of those keys which hang on that silver chain dangling from your red girdle; and if only she does not entice away our young friend, she will be unable to set up any opposition against you. And even in that event I shall defend you."

Czipra shrugged her shoulders defiantly.

"Let her do as she pleases."

"And we two shall do as we please, shall we not?"

"You," said Czipra, looking sharply at Topányi with her black eyes. "You will soon be doing what that young lady likes. I foresee it all. As soon as she puts her foot in, everybody will do as she does. When she smiles, everybody will smile at her in return. If she speaks German, the whole house will use that language; if she walks on her tip-toes, the whole house will walk so; if her head aches, everybody in the house will speak in whispers; not as when poor Czipra had a burning fever and nine men came to her bed to sing a funeral song, and offered her brandy."

Topányi laughed still more loudly at these invectives: the poor gypsy girl fixed her two burning eyes on Lorand's face and kept them there till they turned into two orbs swimming in water. Then she sprang up, threw down her chair and fled from the room.

Topányi calmly picked up the overthrown chair and put it in its place, then he went after Czipra and a minute later brought her back on his arm into the dining-room, with an exceedingly humorous expression, and a courtesy worthy of a Spanish grandee, which the poor foolish gypsy girl did not understand in the least.

So readily did she lose her temper, and so readily did she recover it again. She sat down again in her

place, and jested and laughed,—always and continuously at the expense of the finely-educated new-comer.

Lorand was curious to know the name of the new member of the family.

"The daughter of one Bálnokházy, P. C." said Topándy, "Melanie, if I remember well."

Lorand was perplexed. A face from the past! How strange that he should meet her there?

Still it was so long since they had seen each other, that she would probably not recognize him.

Melanie was to arrive to-morrow evening. Early in the morning Czipra visited Lorand in his own room.

She found the young man before his looking-glass.

"Oho!" she said laughing, "you are holding counsel with your glass to see whether you are handsome enough? Handsome indeed you are: how often must I say so? Believe me for once."

But Lorand was not taking counsel with his glass on that point: he was trying to see if he had changed enough.

"Come now," said Czipra with a certain indifference. "I will make you pretty myself: you must be even more handsome, so that young lady's eyes may not be riveted upon me. Sit down, I will arrange your hair."

Lorand had glorious chestnut-brown curls, smooth as silk. Madame Bálnokházy had once fallen madly in love with those locks and Czipra was wont to arrange them every morning with her own hands: it was one of her privileges, and she understood it so well.

Lorand was philosopher enough to allow others to do him a service, and permitted Czipra's fine fingers the privilege of playing among his locks.

"Don't be afraid: you will be handsome to-day!" said Czipra, in naive reproach to the young fellow.

Lorand jestingly put his arm round her waist.

"It will be all of no avail, my dear Czipra, because we have to thrash corn to-day, and my hair will all be full of dust. Rather, if you wish to do me a favor, cut off my hair."

Czipra was ready for that, too. She was Lorand's "friseur" and Topándy's "coiffeur." She found it quite natural.

"Well, and how do you wish your hair? Short? Shall I leave the curls in front?"

"Give me the scissors: I will soon show you," said Lorand, and, taking them from Czipra's hand, he gathered together the locks upon his forehead with one hand and with the other cropped them quite short, throwing what he had cut to the ground.—"So with the rest."

Czipra drew back in horror at this ruthless deed, feeling as pained as if those scissors had been thrust into her own body. Those beautiful silken curls on the ground! And now the rest must of course be cut just as short.

Lorand sat down before her in a chair, from which he could look into the glass, and motioned to her to commence. Czipra could scarcely force herself to do so. So to destroy the beauty of that fair head, over which she had so often stealthily posed in a reverie! To crop close that thick growth of hair, which, when her fingers had played among its electric curls, had made her always feel as if her own soul were wrapt together with it. And she was to close-crop it like the head of some convict!

Yet there was a kind of satisfaction in the thought that another would not so readily take notice of him. She would make him so ugly that he would not quickly win the heart of the new-comer. Away with that Samsonian strength, down to the last solitary hair! This thought lent a merciless power to her scissors.

And when Lorand's head was closely shaven, he was indeed curious to see. It looked so very funny that he laughed at himself when he turned to the glass.

The girl too laughed with him. She could not prevent herself from laughing to his face; then she turned away from him, leaned out of the window, and burst into another fit of laughter.

Really it would have been difficult to distinguish whether she was laughing or crying.

"Thank you, Czipra, my dear," said Lorand, putting his arm round the girl's waist. "Don't wait with dinner for me to-day, for I shall be outside on the threshing-floor."

Thereupon he left the room.

Czipra, left to herself, before anyone could have entered, kneeled down on the floor, and swept up from the floor with her hands the curls she had cut off. Every one: not a single hair must remain for another. Then she hid the whole lovely cluster in her bosom. Perhaps she would never take them out again.

With that instinct, which nature has given to women only, Czipra felt that the new-comer would be her antagonist, her rival in everything, that the outcome would be a struggle for life and death between them.

The whole day long she worried herself with ideas about the new adversary's appearance. Perhaps she was some doll used to proud and noble attitudinising: let her come! It would be fine to take her pride down. An easy task, to crush an oppressed mind. She would steal away from the house, or fall into sickness by dint of much annoyance, and grow old before her time.

Or perhaps she was some spoiled, sensitive, fragile chit, who came here to weep over her past, who would find some hidden reproach in every word, and would feel her position more and more unendurable day by day. Such a creature, too, would droop her head in shame—so that every morning her pillow would be bedewed with tears. For she need not reckon on pity! Or perhaps she would be just the opposite: a light-hearted, gay, sprightly bird, who would find herself at home in every position. If only to-day were cheerful, she would not weep for yesterday, or be anxious for the morrow. Care would be taken to clip the wings of her good humor: a far greater triumph would it be to make a weeping face of a smiling one.

Or perhaps a languid, idle, good-for-nothing domes-

tic delicacy, who liked only to make toilettes, to sit for hours together before the mirror, and in the evening read novels by lamp-light. What a jest it would be to mock her, to make her stare at country work, to spoil her precious hands in the skin-roughening house-keeping work, and to laugh at her clumsiness.

Be she what she might, she might be quite sure of finding an adversary who would accept no cry for mercy.

Oh, it was wise to beware of Czipra! Czipra had two hearts, one good, the other bad: with the one she loved, with the other she hated, and the stronger she loved with the one, the stronger she hated with the other. She could be a very good, quiet, blessed creature, whose faults must be discovered and seen through a magnifying-glass: but if that other heart were once awakened, the old one would never be found again.

Every drop of Czipra's blood wished that every drop of "that other's" blood should change to tears.

This is how they awaited Melanie at Lankadomb.

Evening had not yet drawn in, when the carriage, which had been sent for Melanie to Tiszafüred station, arrived.

The traveler did not wait till some one came to receive her; she stepped out of the carriage unaided and found the verandah alone. Topándy met her in the doorway. They embraced, and he led her into the lobby.

Czipra was waiting for her there.

The gypsy girl was wearing a pure white dress, white apron, and no jewels at all. She had done her best to be simple, that she might surprise that town girl. Of course, she might have been robed in silk and lace, for she had enough and to spare.

Yet she ought to have known that the new-comer could not be stylishly dressed, for she was in mourning.

Melanie had on the most simple black dress, without any decoration, only round her neck and wrists were crochet lace trimmings.

She was just as simple as Czipra. Her beautiful pale

face, with its still childish features, her calm quiet look,—all beamed sympathy around her.

"My daughter, Czipra," said Topándy, introducing them.

Melanie, with that graciousness which is the mark of all ladies, offered her hand to the girl, and greeted her gently.

"Good evening, Czipra."

Czipra bitterly inquired:

"A foolish name, is it not?"

"On the contrary, the name of a goddess, Czipra."

"What goddess? Pagan?"—the idea did not please

Czipra: she knit her eyebrows and nodded in disapproval.

"A holy woman of the Bible was called by this name, Zipporah, * the wife of Moses."

"Of the Bible?" The gypsy girl caught at the word, and looked with flashing eyes at Topándy, as who would say "Do you hear that?"—Only then did she take Melanie's hand, but after that she did not release her hold of it any more.

"We must know much more of that holy woman of the Bible! Come with me. I will show you your room."

Czipra remarked that they had kissed each other. Topándy shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and let them go alone.

The newly arrived girl did not display the least embarrassment in her dealing with Czipra: on the contrary, she behaved as if they had been friends from childhood.

She at once addressed Czipra in the greatest confidence, when the latter had taken her to the room set apart for her use.

"You will have much trouble with me, my dear Czipra, at first, for I am very clumsy. I know now that I have learned nothing, with which I can do good

* This play upon names is really only feasible in Magyar, where Zipporah-Czippora.

to myself or others. I am so helpless. But you will be all the cleverer, I know: I shall soon learn from you. Oh, you will often find fault with me, when I make mistakes; but when one girl reproaches another it does not matter. You will teach me housekeeping, will you not?"

"You would like to learn?"

"Of course. One cannot remain for ever a burden to one's relations; only in case I learn can I be of use, if some poor man takes me as his wife; if not I must take service with some stranger, and must know these things anyhow."

There was much bitterness in these words; but the orphan of the ruined gentleman said them with such calm, such peace of mind, that every string of Czipra's heart was relaxed as when a damp mist affects the strings of a harp.

Meanwhile they had brought Melanie's travelling-trunk: there was only one, and no bonnet-boxes—almost incredible!

"Very well,—so begin at once to put your own things in order. Here are the wardrobes for your robes and linen. Keep them all neat. The young lady, whose stockings the chamber-maid has to look for, some in one room, some in another, will never make a good housekeeper."

Melanie drew her only trunk beside her and opened it: she took out her upper-dresses.

There were only four, one of calico, one of batiste, then one ordinary, and one for special occasions.

"They have become a little crumpled in packing. Please have them bring me an iron; I must iron them before I hang them up."

"Do you wish to iron them yourself?"

"Naturally. There are not many of them: those I must make respectable—the servant can heat the iron. Oh, they must last a long time."

"Why haven't you brought more with you?"

Melanie's face for a moment flushed a full rose—then she answered this indiscreet inquiry calmly:

"Simply, my dear Czipra, because the rest were seized by our creditors, who claimed them as a debt."

"Couldn't you have anticipated them?"

Melanie clasped her hands on her breast, and said with the astonishment of moral aversion:

"How? By doing so I should have swindled them."

Czipra recollected herself.

"True; you are right."

Czipra helped Melanie to put her things in the cupboards. With a woman's critical eye, she examined everything. She found the linen not fine enough, though the work on it pleased her well. That was Melanie's own handiwork. As regards books, there was only one in the trunk, a prayer-book. Czipra opened it and looked into it. There were steel plates in it. The portrait of a beautiful woman, seven stars round her head, raising her tear-stained eyes to Heaven: and the picture of a kneeling youth, round the fair bowed head of whom the light of Heaven was pouring. Long did she gaze at the pictures. Who could those figures be?

There were no jewels at all among the new-comer's treasures.

Czipra remarked that Melanie's ear-rings were missing.

"You have left your earrings behind too?" she asked, hiding any want of tenderness in the question by delivering it in a whisper.

"Our solicitor told me," said Melanie, with downcast eyes, "that those earrings also were paid for by creditors' money:—and he was right. I gave them to him."

"But the holes in your ears will grow together; I shall give you some of mine."

Therewith she ran to her room, and in a few moments returned with a pair of earrings.

Melanie did not attempt to hide her delight at the gift.

"Why, my own had just such sapphires, only the stones were not so large."

And she kissed Czipra, and allowed her to place the earrings in her ears.

With the earrings came a brooch. Czipra pinned it in Melanie's collar, and her eyes rested on the pretty collar itself: she tried it, looked at it closely and could not discover "how it was made."

"Don't you know that work? it is crochet, quite a new kind of fancy-work, but very easy. Come, I will show you right away."

Thereupon she took out two crochet needles and a reel of cotton from her work-case, and began to explain the work to Czipra: then she gave it to her to try. Her first attempt was very successful. Czipra had learned something from the new-comer, and remarked that she would learn much more from her.

Czipra spent an hour with Melanie and an hour later came to the conclusion that she was only now beginning—to be a girl.

At supper they appeared with their arms round each other's necks.

The first evening was one of unbounded delight to Czipra.

This girl did not represent any one of those hateful pictures she had conjured up in the witches' kettle of her imagination. She was no rival; she was not a great lady, she was a companion, a child of seventeen years, with whom she could prattle away the time, and before whom she must not choose her words so nicely, seeing that she was not so sensitive to insult. And it seemed that Melanie liked the idea of there being a girl in the house, whose presence threw a gleam of pleasure on the solitude.

Czipra might also be content with Melanie's conduct towards Lorand. Her eyes never rested on the young man's face, although they did not avoid his gaze. She treated him indifferently, and the whole day only exchanged words with him when she thanked him for filling her glass with water.

And indeed Lorand had reduced his external advantages to such a severe simplicity by wearing his hair

closely cropped, and his every movement was marked by that languid, lazy stooping attitude which is usually the special peculiarity of those who busy themselves with agricultural work, that Melanie's eyes had no reason to be fixed specially upon him.

Oh, the eyes of a young girl of seventeen summers cannot discover manly beauty under such a dust-stained, neglected exterior.

Lorand felt relieved that Melanie did not recognize him. Not a single trace of surprise showed itself on her face, not a single searching glance betrayed the fact that she thought of the original of a well-known countenance when she saw this man who had met her by chance far away from home. Lorand's face, his gait, his voice, all were strange to her. The face had grown older, the gait was that of a farmer, the old beautiful voice had deepened into a perfect baritone.

Nor did they meet often, except at dinner, supper and breakfast. Melanie passed the rest of the day without a break, by Czipra's side.

Czipra was six years her senior, and she made a good protectress; that continuous woman's chattering, of which Topandy had said, that, if one hour passed without its being heard, he should think he had come to the land of the dead:—a man grew to like that after a while. And side by side with the quick-handed, quick-tongued maiden, whose every limb was full of electric springiness, was that charming clumsiness of the neophyte,—such a contrast! How they laughed together when Melanie came to announce that she had forgotten to put yeast in the cake, both her hands covered with sticky leaven, for all the world as if she were wearing winter gloves; or when, at Czipra's command, she tried to take a little yellow downy chicken from the cold courtyard to a warm room, keeping up the while a lively duel with the jealous brood-hen, till finally Melanie was obliged to run.

How much two girls can laugh together over a thousand such humorous nothings!

And how they could chatter over a thousand still more

humorous nothings, when of an evening, by moonlight, they opened the window looking out on the garden, and lying on the worked window-cushions, talked till midnight, of all the things in which no one else was interested?

Melanie could tell many new things to Czipra which the latter delighted to hear.

There was one thing which they had touched on once or twice jestingly, and which Czipra would have particularly loved to extract from her.

Melanie, now and again forgetting herself, would sigh deeply.

"Did that sigh speak to someone afar off?"

Or when at dinner she left the daintiest titbit on her plate.

"Did some one think just now of some one far away, who is perhaps famishing?"

"Oh, that 'some one' is not famishing"—whispered Melanie in answer.

So there was "somebody" after all.

That made Czipra glad.

That evening during the conversation she introduced the subject.

"Who is that 'some one'?"

"He is a very excellent youth: and is on close terms with many foreign princes. In a short time he won himself great fame. Everyone exalts him. He came often to our house during papa's life-time, and they intended me to be his bride even in my early days."

"Handsome?" inquired Czipra. That was the chief thing to know.

Melanie answered this question merely with her eyes. But Czipra might have been content with the answer. He was at any rate as handsome a man in Melanie's eyes as Lorand was in hers.

"Shall you be his wife?"

At this question Melanie held up her fine left hand before Czipra, raising the fourth finger higher than the rest. On it was a ring.

Czipra drew the ring off her finger and looked closely at it. She saw letters inside it. If she only knew those!

"Is this his name?"

"His initials."

"He is called?"

"Joseph Gyáli."

Czipra put the ring on again. She was very contented with this discovery. The ring of an old love, who was a handsome man, excellent, and celebrated, was there on her finger. Peace was hallowed. Now she believed thoroughly in Melanie, she believed that the indifference Melanie showed towards Lorand was no mere pretence. The field was already occupied by another.

But if she was quite at rest as regards Melanie, she could be less assured as to the peaceful intentions of Lorand's eyes.

How those eyes feasted themselves every day on Melanie's countenance!

Of course, who could be indignant if men's eyes were attracted by the "beautiful?" It has ever been their privilege.

But it is the marvellous gift of woman's eyes to be able to tell the distinction between look and look. Through the prism of jealousy the eye-beam is refracted to its primary colors; and this wonderful optical analysis says: this is the twinkle of curiosity, that the coquettish ogle, this the fire of love, that the dark-blue of abstraction.

Czipra had not studied optics, but this optical analysis she understood very well.

She did not seem to be paying attention; it seemed as if she did not notice, as if her eyes were not at work; yet she saw and knew everything.

Lorand's eyes feasted upon the beautiful maiden's figure.

Every time he saw her, they dwelt upon her: as the bee feasts upon the invisible honey of the flower, and slowly a suspicion dawned upon Czipra. Every glance

was a home-returning bee who brings home the honey of love to a humming heart.

Besides, Czipra might have known it from the fact that Lorand, ever since Melanie came to the house, had been more reserved towards her. He had found his presence everywhere more needful, that he might be so much less at home.

Czipra could not bear the agony long.

Once finding Lorand alone, she turned to him in wanton sarcasm.

"It is certain, my friend Bálint," (that was Lorand's alias) "that we are casting glances at that young girl in vain, for she has a fiancé already."

"Indeed?" said Lorand, caressing the girl's round chin, for all the world as if he was touching some delicate flower-bud.

"Why all this tenderness at once? If I were to look so much at a girl, I would long ago have taken care to see if she had a ring on her finger:—it is generally an engagement ring."

"Well, and do I look very much at that girl?" enquired Lorand in a jesting tone.

"As often as I look at you."

That was reproach and confession all in one. Czipra tried to dispose of the possible effect of this gentle speech at once, by laughing immediately.

"My friend Bálint! That young lady's fiancé is a very great man. The favorite of foreign princes, rides in a carriage, and is called 'My Lord.' He is a very handsome man, too: though not so handsome as you. A fine, pretty cavalier."

"I congratulate her!" said Lorand smiling.

"Of course it is true; Melanie herself told me.—She told me his name, too—Joseph Gyáli."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lorand, smilingly and good-humoredly pinching Czipra's cheek, went on his way. He smiled, but with the poisonous arrow sticking in his heart!

Oh, Czipra did herself a bad turn when she mentioned that name before Lorand!

CHAPTER XV

IF HE LOVES, THEN LET HIM LOVE!

LORAND'S whole being revolted at what Czipra had told him. That girl was the bride of that fatal adversary! of that man for whose sake he was to die! And that man would laugh when they stealthily transferred him, the victim too sensible of honor, to the crypt, when he would dance with his newly won bride till morning dawned, and delight in the smile of that face, which could not even weep for the lost one.

That thought led to eternal damnation. No, no: not to damnation: further than that, there and back again, back to that unspeakable circle, where feelings of honor remain in the background, and moral insensibility rules the day. That thought was able to drive out of Lorand's heart the conviction, that when an honorable man has given his life or his honor into the hands of an adversary, of the two only the latter can be chosen.

From that hour he pursued quite a different path of life.

Now the work in the fields might go on without his supervision: there was no longer such need of his presence. He had far more time for staying at home.

Nor did he keep himself any farther away from the girls: he went after them and sought them; he was spirited in conversation, choice in his dress, and that he might display his shrewdness, he courted both girls at the same time, the one out of courtesy, the other for love.

Topándy watched them smilingly. He did not mind whatever turn the affair took. He was as fond of Czipra as he was of Melanie, and fonder of the boy

than either. Of the three there would be only one pair; he would give his blessing to whichever two should come together. It was a lottery! Heaven forbid that a strange hand should draw lots for one.

But Czipra was already quite clear about everything, It was not for her sake that Lorand stayed at home.

She herself was forced to acknowledge the important part which Melanie played in the house, with her thoughtful, refined, modest behavior; she was so sensible, so clever in everything. In the most delicate situation she could so well maintain a woman's dignity, while side by side she displayed a maiden's innocence. When his comrades were at the table, Topándy strove always by ambiguous jokes, delivered in his cynical, good humor, to bring a blush to the cheeks of the girls, who were obliged to do the honors at table; on such occasions Czipra noisily called him to order, while Melanie cleverly and spiritedly avoided the arrow-point of the jest, without opposing to it any foolish prudery, or cold insensibility;—and how this action made her queen of every heart!

Without doubt she was the monarch of the house: the dearest, most beautiful, and cleverest;—hers was every triumph.

And on such occasions Czipra was desperate.

"Yet all in vain! For, however clever, and beautiful, and enchanting that other, I am still the real one. I feel and know it:—but I cannot prove it! If we could only tear out our hearts and compare them;—but that is impossible."

Czipra was forced to see that everybody sported with her, while they behaved seriously with that other.

And that completely poisoned her soul.

Without any mental refinement, supplied with only so much of the treasure of moral reserve, as nature and instinct had grafted into her heart, with only a dreamy suspicion about the lofty ideas of religion and virtue, this girl was capable of murdering her whom they loved better than herself.

Murder, but not as the fabled queen murdered the

fairy Hófehérke,* because the gnomes whispered untiringly in her ear "Thou art beautiful, fair queen: but Hófehérke is still more beautiful." Czipra wished to murder her but not so that she might die and then live again.

She was a gypsy girl, a heathen, and in love. Inherited tendencies, savage breeding, and passion had brought her to a state where she could have such ideas.

It was a hellish idea, the counsel of a restless devil who had stolen into a defenceless woman's heart.

Once it occurred to her to turn the rooms in the castle upside down; she found fault with the servants, drove them from their ordinary lodgings, dispersed them in other directions, chased the gentlemen from their rooms, under the pretext that the wall-papers were already very much torn: then had the papers torn off and the walls re-plastered. She turned everything so upside down that Topándy ran away to town, until the rooms should be again reduced to order.

The castle had four fronts, and therefore there were two corridors crossing through at right angles: the chief door of the one opened on the courtyard, that of the other led into the garden. The rooms opened right and left from the latter corridor.

During this great disorder Czipra moved Lorand into one of the vis-à-vis rooms. The opposite room she arranged as Melanie's temporary chamber. Of course it would not last long; the next day but one, order would be restored, and everyone could go back to his usual place.

And then it was that wicked thoughts arose in her heart: "if he loves, then let him love!"

At supper only three were sitting at table. Lorand

*Little Snow-white, the step-daughter of the queen, who commanded her huntsman to bring her the eyes and liver of Hófehérke, thinking she would thus become the most beautiful of all, but he brought her those of a wild beast. The queen thought her rival was dead, but her magic mirror told her she was living still beyond hill and sea.

was more abstracted than usual, and scarcely spoke a word to them: if Czipra addressed him, there was such embarrassment in his reply, that it was impossible not to remark it.

But Czipra was in a particularly jesting mood to-day.

"My friend Bálint, you are sleepy. Yet you had better take care of us at night, lest someone steal us."

"Lock your door well, my dear Czipra, if you are afraid."

"How can I lock my door," said Czipra smiling lightly, "when those cursed servants have so ruined the lock of every door at this side of the house that they would fly open at one push."

"Very well, I shall take care of you."

Therewith Lorand wished them good night, took his candle and went out.

Czipra hurried Melanie too to depart.

"Let us go to bed in good time, as we must be early afoot to-morrow."

This evening the customary conversation at the window did not take place.

The two girls shook hands and wished each other good night. Melanie departed to her room. Czipra was sleeping in the room next to hers.

When Melanie had shut the door behind her, Czipra blew out the candle in her own room, and remained in darkness. With her clothes on she threw herself on her bed, and then, resting her head on her elbow, listened.

Suddenly she thought the opposite room door gently opened.

The beating of her heart almost pierced through her bosom.

"If he loves, then let him love."

Then she rose from her bed, and, holding her breath, slipped to the door and looked through the keyhole into Melanie's room.*

*This was of course through the door that communicated between the rooms of Melanie and Czipra.

The candle was still burning there.

But from her position she could not see Melanie. From the rustling of garments she suspected that Melanie was taking off her dress. Now with quiet steps she approached the table, on which the candle was burning. She had a white dressing-gown on, her hair half let down, in her hand that little black book, in which Czipra had so often admired those "Glory" pictures without daring to ask what they were.

Melanie reached the table, and laying the little prayer-book on the shelf of her mirror, kneeled down, and, clasping her two hands together, rested against the corner of the table and prayed.

In that moment her whole figure was one halo of glory.

She was beautiful as a praying seraph, like one of those white phantoms who rise with their airy figures to Heaven, palm-branches of glory in their hands.

Czipra was annihilated.

She saw now that there was some superhuman phenomenon, before which every passion bowed the knee, every purpose froze to crystals;—the figure of a praying maiden! He who stole a look at that sight lost every sinful emotion from his heart.

Czipra beat her breast in dumb agony. "She can fly, while I can only crawl on the ground."

When the girl had finished her prayer she opened the book to find those two glory-bright pictures, which she kissed several times in happy rapture:—as the sufferer kisses his benefactor's hands, the orphan his father's and mother's portraits, the miserable defenceless man the face of God, who defends in the form of a column of cloud him who bows his head under its shadow.

Czipra tore her hair in her despair and beat her brow upon the floor, writhing like a worm.

At the noise she made Melanie darted up and hastened to the door to see what was the matter with Czipra.

As soon as she noticed Melanie's approach, Czipra slunk away from her place and before Melanie could

open the door and enter, dashed through the other door into the corridor.

Here another shock awaited her.

In the corner of the corridor she found Lorand sitting beside a table. On the table a lamp was burning; before Lorand lay a book, beside him, resting against his chair, a "tomahawk."*

"What are you doing here?" inquired Czipra, starting back.

"I am keeping guard over you," answered Lorand. "As you said your doors cannot be locked, I shall stay here till morning lest some one break in upon you."

Czipra slunk back to her room. She met Melanie, who, candle in hand, hastened towards her, and asked what was the matter.

"Nothing, nothing. I heard a noise outside. It frightened me."

No need of simulation, for she trembled in every limb.

"You afraid?" said Melanie, surprised. "See, I am not afraid. It will be good for me to come to you and sleep with you to-night."

"Yes, it will," assented Czipra. "You can sleep on my bed."

"And you?"

"I?" Czipra inquired with a determined glance. "Oh, just here!"

And therewith she threw herself on the floor before the bed.

Melanie, alarmed, drew near to her, seized her arm, and tried to raise her. She asked her: "Czipra, what is the matter with you? Tell me what has happened?"—Czipra did not answer, did not move, did not open her eyes.

Melanie seeing she could not reanimate her, rose in despair, and, clasping her hands, panted:

*The Magyar weapon is the so-called "fokos," which is much smaller than a tomahawk, but is set on a long handle like a walking stick, and only to be used with the hand in dealing blows, not for throwing purposes.

"Great Heavens! what has happened?"—Then Czipra suddenly started up and began to laugh.

"Ha ha! Now I just managed to frighten you."

Therewith rolling uncontrolledly on the floor, she laughed continuously like one who has succeeded in playing a good joke on her companion.

"How startled I was!" panted Melanie, pressing her hands to her heaving breast.

"Sleep in my bed," Czipra said. "I shall sleep here on the floor. You know I am accustomed to sleep on the ground, covered with rugs.

"My mother was a gypsy maid
She taught me to sleep on the ground,
In winter to walk with feet unbound;
In a ragged tent my home was made."

She sang Melanie this bizarre song twice in her peculiar melancholy strain, and then suddenly threw around her the rug which lay on the bed, put one arm under her head, and remained quite motionless; she would not reply any longer to a single word of Melanie's.

The next day Topándy returned from town; scarce had he taken off his traveling-cloak, when Czipra burst in upon him.

She seized his hand violently, and gazing wildly into his eyes, said:

"Sir, I cannot live longer under such conditions. I shall kill myself. Teach me to pray."

Topándy looked at her in astonishment and shrugged his shoulders sarcastically.

"Whatever possessed you to break in so upon me? Do you think I come from some pilgrimage to Bodajk,* all my pockets full of saints' fiddles, of beads, and of gingerbread-saints? Or am I a Levite? Am I a 'monk' that you look to me for prayer?"

*A place visited by pilgrims, like Lourdes, etc., it is in Fehérmege (white county).

"Teach me to pray. I have long enough besought you to do so, and I can wait no longer."

"Go and don't worry me. I don't know myself where to find what you want."

"It is not true. You know how to read. You have been taught everything. You only deny knowledge of God, because you are ashamed before Him; but I long to see His face! Oh, teach me to pray!"

"I know nothing, my dear, except the soldier's prayer."*

"Very well. I shall learn that."

"I can recite it to you."

"Well, tell it to me."

Czipra acted as she had seen Melanie do: she kneeled down before the table: clasping her hands devotedly and resting against the edge of the table.

Topándy turned his head curiously: she was taking the matter seriously.

Then he stood before her, put his two hands behind him, and began to recite to her the soldier's prayer.

"Adjon Isten három 'B'-ét,
Három 'F'-ét, három 'P'-ét.
Bort, buzát, békességet,
Fát, füvet, feleséget,
Pipát, puskát, patrontást,
Es egy butykos pálinkát!
Ikétum, pikétum, holt! berdo! vivát!†"

The poor little creature muttered the first sentences with such pitiable devotion after that godless mouth:—but, when the thing began to take a definitely jesting turn, she suddenly leaped up from her knees in a rage, and before Topándy could defend himself, dealt

*i. e., Blasphemy.

†"God grant three 'B-s,' three 'F-s,' and three 'P-s.' Wine, wheat, peace, wood, grass, wife, pipe, rifle, cartridge-case, and a little cask of brandy. . . Hurrah! hurrar!" It is quite impossible to render the verse into English in any manner that would reproduce the original, so I have given the original Magyar with a literal translation.

him such a healthy box on the ears that it made them sing; then she darted out and banged the door after her.

Topándy became like a pillar of salt in his astonishment. He knew that Czipra had a quick hand, but that she would ever dare to raise that tiny hand against her master and benefactor, because of a mere trifling jest, he was quite incapable of understanding.

She must be in some great trouble.

Though he never said a word, nor did Czipra, about the blow he had received, and though when next they met they were the same towards one another as they had ever been, Topándy ventured to make a jest at table about this humorous scene, saying to Lorand:

"Bálint, ask Czipra to repeat that prayer which she has learned from me: but first seize her two hands."

"Oho!" threatened Czipra, her face burning red. "Just play some more of your jokes upon me. Your lives are in my hands: one day I shall put belladonna in the food, and poison us all together."

Topándy smilingly drew her towards him, smoothing her head; Czipra sensitively pressed her master's hand to her lips, and covered it with kisses;—then put him aside and went out into the kitchen,—to break plates, and tear the servants' hair.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT RING

THE tenth year came: it was already on the wane. And Lorand began to be indifferent to the prescribed fatal hour.

He was in love.

This one thought drove all others from his mind. Weariness of life, atheism, misanthropy,—all disappeared from his path like will-o'-the-wisps before the rays of the sun.

And Melanie liked the young fellow in return.

She had no strong passions, and was a prudent girl, yet she confessed to herself that this young man pleased her. His features were noble, his manner gentle, his position secure enough to enable him to keep a wife.

Many a time did she walk with Lorand under the shade of the beautiful sycamores, while Czipra sat alone beside her "czimbalom" and thrashed out the old souvenirs of the plain,—alone.

Lorand found it no difficult task to remark that Melanie gladly frequented the spots he chose, and listened cheerfully to the little confessions of a sympathetic heart. Yet he was himself always reserved.—And that ring was always there on her finger. If only that magic band might drop down from there! Two years had already passed since her father's death had thrown her into mourning; she had long since taken off black dresses; nor could she complain against "the bread of orphanhood." For Topándy supplied her with all that a woman holds dear, just as if she had been his own child.

One afternoon Lorand found courage enough to