

Well, Fanny, you do not interrupt me? Your sharp tongue, that was able to condemn all the others, has no such sentence for the Prince von Lichtenstein. You suffer me to praise him. Then you assent to my words?"

"I can neither contradict you nor assent to your words," said Fanny, with a forced smile; "I do not know the prince sufficiently to judge him. He has been at Vienna but a very few months—"

"But he has been a daily visitor in our house during that period," said her husband, interrupting her, "and he is constantly seen at your side. All Vienna knows that the prince is deeply enamoured of you, and he does not conceal it by any means, not even from myself. A few days ago, when he was so unfortunate as not to find you at home, because you were presiding over a meeting of your benevolent society, he met me all alone in the reception-room. Suddenly, in the midst of a desultory conversation, he paused, embraced me passionately, and exclaimed: 'Be not so kind, so courteous, and gentle toward me, for I hate you, I detest you—because I hate every thing keeping me back from her; I detest every thing that prevents me from joining *her*! Forgive my love for her and my hatred toward you; I feel both in spite of myself. If you were not her husband, I should love you like a friend, but that accursed word renders you a mortal enemy of mine. And still I bow to you in humility—still I implore you to be generous; do not banish me from your house, from *her*, for I should die if I were not allowed to see her every day!'"

Fanny had listened to him with blushing cheeks and in breathless suspense. Her whole soul was speaking from the looks which she fixed on her husband, and with which she seemed to drink every word, like sweet nectar, from his lips.

"And what did you reply to him?" she asked, in a dry and husky voice, when the baron was silent.

"I replied to him that you alone had to decide who should appear at our parties, and that every one whom you had invited would be welcome to me. I further told him that his admiration for you did not astonish me at all, and that I would readily forgive his hatred, for—"

The baron paused all at once and looked at his wife with a surprised and inquiring glance. She had started in sudden terror; a deep blush was burning on her cheeks, and her eyes, which had assumed a rapturous and enthusiastic expression, turned toward the door.

The baron's eyes followed her glance, and he heard now a slight noise at the door.

"I believe somebody has knocked at the door," he said, fixing his piercing eyes on his wife.

She raised her head and whispered, "Yes, I believe so."

"And it is the second time already," said the baron, calmly. "Will you not permit the stranger to walk in?"

"I do not know," she said, in great embarrassment, "I—"

Suddenly the door opened, and a young man appeared on the threshold.

"Ah, the Prince von Lichtenstein," said the baron, and he went with perfect calmness and politeness to meet the prince who, evidently in great surprise, remained standing in the door, and was staring gloomily at the strange and unexpected group.

"Come in, my dear sir," said the baron, quietly; "the baroness will be very grateful to you for coming here just at this moment and interrupting our conversation, for it referred to dry business matters. I laid a few old accounts, that had been running for five years, before the baroness, and she gave me a receipt for them, that was all. Our interview, moreover, was at an end, and you need not fear to have disturbed us. Permit me, therefore, to withdraw, for you know very well that, in the forenoon, I am nothing but a banker, a business man, and have to attend to the affairs of our firm."

He bowed simultaneously to the prince and to his wife, and left the room, as smiling, calm, and unconcerned as ever. Only when the door had closed behind him, when he had satisfied himself by a rapid glance through the reception-room that nobody was there, the smile disappeared from his lips, and his features assumed an air of profound melancholy.

"She loves him," he muttered; "yes, she loves him! Her hand trembled in mine when I pronounced his name, and oh! how radiant she looked when she heard him come! Yes, she loves him, and I?—I will go to my counting-house!" he said, with a smile that was to veil the tears in his eyes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RIVALS.

THE baron had no sooner closed the door of the boudoir when the young Prince von Lichtenstein hastened to Fanny, and, impetuously seizing her hand, looked at her with a passionate and angry air.

"You did that for the purpose of giving me pain, I suppose?" he asked, with quivering lips. "You wished to prove to me that you did not confer any special favor upon me. Yesterday you were kind enough to assure me that no man ever had set foot into this

room, and that I should be the first to whom it would be opened to-day; and I was such a conceited fool as to believe your beatifying words, and I rush hither as early as is permitted by decency and respect, and yet I do not find you alone."

"It was my husband who was here," said Fanny, almost deprecatingly.

"It was a man," he ejaculated, impetuously, "and you had given me the solemn assurance that this door had never yet opened to any man. Oh, I had implored you on my knees, and with tearful eyes, to allow me to see you here to-day; it seemed to me as though the gates of paradise were to be at last opened to me; no sleep came into my eyes all night, the consciousness of my approaching bliss kept me awake; it was over me like a smiling cherub, and I was dreaming with open eyes. And now that the lazy, snail-like time has elapsed, now that I have arrived here, I find in my heaven, at the side of my cherub, a calculating machine, desecrating my paradise by vile accounts—"

"Pray do not go on in this manner," interrupted Fanny, sternly. "You found my husband here, and that, of course, dissolves the whole poetry of your words into plain prose, for she, whom in your enthusiastic strain you styled your cherub, is simply the wife of this noble and excellent man, whom you were free to compare with a calculating machine."

"You are angry with me!" exclaimed the young prince, disconsolately. "You make no allowance for my grief, my disappointment, yea, my confusion! You have punished me so rudely for my presumption, and will not even permit my heart to bridle up and give utterance to its wrath."

"I did not know that you were presumptuous toward me, and could not think, therefore, of inflicting punishment on you," said Fanny; "but I know that you have no right to insult the man whose name I bear."

"You want to drive me to despair, then!" retorted the prince, wildly stamping on the floor. "It is not sufficient, then, that you let me find your husband here, you must even praise him before me! I will tell you why I was presumptuous. I was presumptuous inasmuch as I believed it to be a favor granted to me exclusively to enter this room, and you have punished me for this presumption by proving to me that this door opens to others, too, although you assured me yesterday that the contrary was the case."

"Then you question my word?" asked Fanny.

"Oh," he said, impetuously, "you do not question what you see with your own eyes."

"And, inasmuch as you have satisfied yourself of my duplicity

with your own eyes, as you have seen that every one is at liberty to enter this room, and as you consequently cannot take any interest in prolonging your stay here, I would advise you to leave immediately," said Fanny, gravely.

"You show me the door? You turn me out!" exclaimed the prince, despairingly. "Oh, have mercy on me! No, do not turn away from me! Look at me, read in my face the despair filling my soul. What, you still avert your head? I beseech you just grant me one glance; only tell me by the faintest smile that you will forgive me, and I will obey your orders, I will go, even if it should be only for the purpose of dying, not here before your eyes, but outside, on the threshold of your door."

"Ah, as if it were so easy to die!" ejaculated Fanny, turning her face toward the prince.

"You look at me—you have forgiven me, then!" exclaimed the young man, and impetuously kneeling down before her, he seized her hands and pressed them to his lips.

"Rise, sir, pray rise," said the baroness; "consider that somebody might come in. You know now that everybody is permitted to enter this room."

"No, no, I know that nobody is permitted to enter here!" he exclaimed, fervently; "I know that this room is a sanctuary which no uninitiated person ever entered; I know that this is the sacred cell in which your virgin heart exhaled its prayers and complaints, and which is only known to God; I know that no man's foot ever crossed this threshold, and I remain on my knees as if before a saint, to whom I confess my sins, and whom I implore to grant me absolution. Will you forgive me?"

"I will," she said, smilingly, bending over him; "I will, if it were only to induce you to rise from your knees. And as you now perceive and regret your mistake, I will tell you the truth. It was an accident that the baron entered this room to-day, and it was the first time, too, since we were married. Nor did he come here, as he said, in delicate self-derision, for the purpose of settling accounts with me, but in order to fulfil a promise which he gave me five years ago, and which, I confess to my shame, I had forgotten, so that, instead of expecting my husband, I permitted you to come to me."

"I thank you for your kind words, which heal all the wounds of my heart like a soothing balm," replied the prince. "Oh, now I feel well again, and strong enough to conquer you in spite of the resistance of the whole world."

"And do you know, then, whether you will be able to conquer me in spite of my resistance?" asked Fanny, smiling.

"Yes!" he exclaimed, "I know it, for in true love there is a

strength that will subdue and surmount all obstacles. And I love you truly; you know it, you are satisfied of it. You know that I love you; every breath, every look, every tremulous note of my voice tells you so. But you? do you love me? Oh, I implore you, at length have mercy on me. Speak one word of pity, of sympathy! Let me read it at least in your eyes, if your lips are too austere to utter it. I have come to-day with the firm determination to receive at your hands my bliss or my doom. The torment of this uncertainty kills me. Fanny, tell me, do you love me?"

Fanny did not answer at once; she stood before him, her head lowered, a prey to conflicting emotions, but she felt the ardent looks which were resting on her, and her heart trembled with secret delight. She made an effort, however, to overcome her feelings, and, raising her head, she fixed her eyes with a gentle yet mournful expression upon the young man, who, breathless and pale with anxiety, was waiting for her reply.

"You ask me if I love you," she said, in a low but firm voice; "you put that question to me, and yet you are standing now on the same spot on which my husband stood fifteen minutes ago and also asked me a question. I must not answer your question, for I am a married woman, and I have taken an oath at the altar to keep my faith to my husband, and I have to keep it, inasmuch as my heart has no love to give him. But I will, nevertheless, give you a proof of the great confidence I am reposing in you. I will tell you why my husband came to see me to-day, and what was the question which he addressed to me. Hush, do not interrupt me; do not tell me that my conversations with the baron have no interest for you. Listen to me. The baron came to me because the five years, which we had ourselves fixed for that purpose, had elapsed to-day, and because he wanted to ask me whether I wished to remain his wife, or whether I wanted to be divorced from him."

"And what did you reply?" asked the prince, breathlessly.

"I replied to him as I replied to you a little while ago: 'I have taken an oath at the altar to keep my faith to my husband, and I have to keep it, inasmuch as my heart has no love to give to him.'"

"Ah, you told him that you did not love him?" asked the prince, drawing a deep breath. "And after this confession he felt that he ought no longer to oppose your divorce, for his heart is generous and delicate, and consequently he cannot desire to chain a wife to himself who tells him that during the five years of her married life she has not learned to love him. Oh, Fanny, how indescribably happy you render me by this disclosure. Then you will be free, your hands will not be manacled any longer."

"I did not tell you the reply I made to my husband when he left

it to me again to say whether I would be divorced from him or not," said Fanny, with a mournful smile. "I replied to him that every thing should remain as heretofore; that I did not want to inflict the disgrace of a divorce upon him and upon myself, and that we would and ought to bear these shackles which, without mutual love, we had imposed upon each other in a dignified, faithful, and honest manner until our death."

"That is impossible!" exclaimed the prince. "You could not, you ought not to have been so cruel against yourself, against the baron, and also against me. And even though you may have uttered these words of doom on the spur of that exciting moment, you will take them back again after sober and mature reflection. Oh, say that you will do so, say that you will be free; free, so that I may kneel down before you and implore you to give to me this hand, no longer burdened by any fetters; to become my wife, and to permit me to try if my boundless, adoring love will succeed in conferring upon you that happiness of which none are worthier than you. Oh, speak, Fanny, say that you will be free, and consent to become my wife!"

"Your wife!" said Fanny, lugubriously. "You forget that what separates me from you is not only my husband, but also my religion. The Jewess can never become the wife of the Prince von Lichtenstein."

"You will cast off the semblance of a religion which in reality is yours no longer," said the prince. "You have ceased to be a Jewess, owing to your education, to your habits, and to your views of life. Leave, then, the halls of the temple in which your God is no longer dwelling, and enter the great church which has redeemed mankind, and which is now to redeem you. Become a convert to the Christian religion, which is the religion of love."

"Never!" exclaimed the baroness, firmly and decidedly—"never will I abandon my religion and prove recreant to my faith, to which my family and my tribe have faithfully adhered for thousands of years. The curse of my parents and ancestors would pursue the renegade daughter of our tribe and cling like a sinister night-bird to the roof of the house into which the faithless daughter of Judah, the baptized Jewess, would move in order to obtain that happiness she is yearning for. Never— But what is that?" interrupting herself all at once; "what is the matter in the adjoining room?"

Two voices, one of them angrily quarrelling with the other, which replied in a deprecating manner, were heard in the adjoining room.

"I tell you the baroness is at home, and receives visitors!" exclaimed the violent and threatening voice.

"And I assure you that the baroness is not at home, and cannot, therefore, receive any visitors," replied the deprecating voice.

"It is Baron Weichs, the proud prebendary, who wants to play the master here as he does everywhere else," said the prince, disdainfully.

"And my steward refuses to admit him, because I have given orders that no more visitors shall be received to-day," whispered Fanny.

The face of the young prince became radiant with delight. He seized Fanny's hands and pressed them impetuously to his lips, whispering, "I thank you, Fanny, I thank you!"

Meantime the voice in the reception-room became more violent and threatening, "I know that the baroness is at home," it shouted, "and I ask you once more to announce my visit to her!"

"But you know, sir," said the gentle voice of the steward, "that the baroness, when she is at home, is always at this hour in the reception-room, and receives her visitors here without any previous announcement."

"That only proves that the baroness receives her visitors in another room to-day," shouted the voice of Baron Weichs. "I know positively that there is a visitor with the baroness at this very moment. Go, then, and announce my visit. It remains for the baroness to turn me away, and I shall know then that the baroness prefers to remain alone with the gentleman who is with her at the present time."

"Ah, this prebendary, it seems, is growing impudent," exclaimed the prince, with flashing eyes, walking toward the door.

The baroness seized his hand and kept him back. "Pay no attention to him," she said, imploringly; "let my steward settle this quarrel with that insolent man. Just listen! he is even now begging him quite politely, yet decidedly, to leave the room."

"And that fellow is shameless enough to decline doing so," said the prince. "Oh, hear his scornful laughter! This laughter is an insult, for which he ought to be chastised."

And as if the words of the prince were to be followed immediately by the deed, a third voice was heard now in the reception-room. It asked in a proud and angry tone, "What is the matter here? And who permits himself to shout so indecently in the reception-room of the baroness?"

"Ah, it is my husband," whispered Fanny, with an air of great relief. "He will show that overbearing Baron Weichs the door, and I shall get rid of him forever."

"He has already dared, then, to importune you?" asked the prince, turning his threatening eyes toward the door. "Oh, I will

release you from further molestation by this madman, for I tell you the gentle words of your husband will not be able to do so. Baron Weichs is not the man to lend a willing ear to sensible remonstrances or to the requirements of propriety and decency. He has graduated at the high-school of libertinism, and any resistance whatever provokes him to a passionate struggle in which he shrinks from no manifestation of his utter recklessness. Well, am I not right? Does he not even dare to defy your husband? Just listen!"

"I regret not to be able to comply with your request to leave this room," shouted now the voice of the prebendary, Baron Weichs. "You said yourself just now, baron, that we were in the reception-room of the baroness; accordingly, you are not the master here, but merely a visitor like the rest of us. Consequently, you have no right to show anybody the door, particularly as you do not even know whether you belong to the privileged visitors of the lady, or whether the baroness will admit you."

"I shall take no notice of the unbecoming and insulting portion of your remarks, baron," said the calm voice of Baron Arnstein; "I only intend at this moment to protect my wife against insult and molestation. Now it is insulting assuredly that a cavalier, after being told that the lady to whom he wishes to pay his respects is either not at home or will not receive any visitors, should refuse to withdraw, and insist upon being admitted. I hope the prebendary, Baron Weichs, after listening to this explanation, will be kind enough to leave the reception-room."

"I regret that I cannot fulfil this hope," said the sneering voice of the prebendary. "I am now here with the full conviction that I shall never be able to reënter this reception-room; hence I am determined not to shrink back from any thing and not to be turned away in so disgraceful a manner. I know that the baroness is at home, and I came hither in order to satisfy myself whether the common report is really true that the baroness, who has always treated me with so much virtuous rigor and discouraging coldness, is more indulgent and less inexorable toward another, and whether I have really a more fortunate rival!"

"I hope that I am this more fortunate rival," said Baron Arnstein, gently.

"Oh, no, sir," exclaimed the prebendary, laughing scornfully. "A husband never is the rival of his wife's admirers. If you were with your wife and turned me away, I should not object to it at all, and I should wait for a better chance. But what keeps me here is the fact that another admirer of hers is with her, that she has given orders to admit nobody else, and that you, more-kind-hearted than myself, seem to believe that the baroness is not at home."

"This impudence surpasses belief," exclaimed the prince, in great exasperation.

"Yes," said Fanny, gloomily, "the Christian prebendary gives full vent to his disdain for the Jewish banker. It always affords a great satisfaction to Christian love to humble the Jew and to trample him in the dust. And the Jew is accustomed to being trampled upon in this manner. My husband, too, gives proof of this enviable quality of our tribe. Just listen how calm and humble his voice remains, all the while every tone of the other is highly insulting to him!"

"He shall not insult him any longer," said the prince, ardently; "I will—but what is that? Did he not mention my name?"

And he went closer to the door, in order to listen in breathless suspense.

"And I repeat to you, baron," said the voice of the prebendary, sneeringly, "your wife is at home, and the young Prince von Lichtenstein is with her. I saw him leave his palace and followed him; half an hour ago, I saw him enter your house, and I went into the coffee-house opposite for the purpose of making my observations. I know, therefore, positively, that the prince has not yet left your house. As he is not with you, he is with your wife, and this being the usual hour for the baroness to receive morning calls, I have just as good a right as anybody else to expect that she will admit me."

"And suppose I tell you that she will not admit you to-day?"

"Then I shall conclude that the baroness is in her boudoir with the Prince von Lichtenstein, and that she does not want to be disturbed," shouted the voice of the prebendary. "Yes, sir; in that case I shall equally lament my fate and yours, for both of us are deceived and deprived of sweet hopes. Both of us will have a more fortunate rival in this petty prince—in this conceited young dandy, who even now believes he is a perfect Adonis, and carries his ludicrous presumption so far as to believe that he can outstrip men of ability and merit by his miserable little title and by his boyish face—"

"Why is it necessary for you to shout all this so loudly?" asked the anxious voice of the baron.

"Ah, then you believe that he can hear me?" asked the voice of the prebendary, triumphantly. "Then he is quite close to us? Well, I will shout it louder than before: this little Prince Charles von Lichtenstein is a conceited boy, who deserves to be chastised!"

The prince rushed toward the door, pale, with quivering lips and sparkling eyes. But the baroness encircled his arm with her hands and kept him back.

"You will not go," she whispered. "You will not disgrace me

so as to prove to him by your appearance that he was right, and that you were with me while I refused to admit him."

"But do you not hear that he insults me?" asked the young prince, trying to disengage himself from her hands.

"Why do you listen to other voices when you are with me?" she said, reproachfully. "What do you care for the opinion of that man, whom I abhor from the bottom of my heart, and whom people only tolerate in their saloons because they are afraid of his anger and his slanderous tongue? Oh, do not listen to what he says, my friend! You are here with me, and I have yet to tell you many things. But you do not heed my words! Your eyes are constantly fixed on the door. Oh, sir, look at me, listen to what I have to say to you. I believe I still owe you a reply, do I not? Well, I will now reply to the question which you have so often put to me, and to which I have heretofore only answered by silence!"

"Oh, not now, not now!" muttered the prince.

"Yes, I will tell you now what has been so long burning in my soul as a sweet secret," whispered Fanny, constantly endeavoring to draw him away from the door. "You have often asked me if I loved you, and my heart made the reply which my lips were afraid to pronounce. But now I will confess it to you: yes, I love you; my whole soul belongs to you! I have secretly longed for the hour when I might at last confess this to you, when my heart would exult in pronouncing the sweet words, 'I love you!' Good Heaven! you hear it, and yet you remain silent—you avert your face? Do you despise me now because I, the married woman, confess to you that I love you? Is your silence to tell me that you do not love me any longer?"

He knelt down before her and kissed her dress and her hands. "I love you boundlessly," he said with panting breath; "you are to me the quintessence of all happiness, virtue, and beauty. I shall love you to the last hour of my life!"

"If Prince Charles von Lichtenstein should be near," shouted the voice of the prebendary, close to the door, "if he should be able to hear my words, I want him to hear that I pronounce him a coward, a fool, and impostor—a coward, because he silently suffers himself to be insulted—"

The prince, unable to restrain his feelings any longer, rushed forward and impetuously pushing back the baroness, who still endeavored to detain him, he violently opened the door.

"No," he shouted, in a threatening and angry voice. "No, Prince Charles von Lichtenstein does not allow himself to be insulted with impunity, and he asks satisfaction for every insult offered to him!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the prebendary, turning with a wild, triumphant laugh to Baron Arnstein, "did I not tell you that the prince was concealed in your house?"

"Concealed!" ejaculated the prince, approaching his adversary with eyes sparkling with rage. "Repeat that word if you dare!"

"I shall do so," said the prebendary, with defiant coolness. "You were concealed in this house, for nobody knew of your presence, neither the steward nor the baron. You had crept into the house like a thief intending to steal valuables, and this, indeed, was your intention, too; however, you did not want to purloin the diamonds of the fair baroness, but—"

"I forbid you to mention the name of the baroness!" exclaimed the prince, proudly.

"And I implore you not to compromise the baroness by connecting her with your quarrel," whispered Baron Arnstein in the prince's ear; then turning to the prebendary, whose eyes were fixed on the prince with a threatening and defiant expression, he said:

"You are mistaken, sir; Prince Charles von Lichtenstein did not come here in a stealthy manner. He wished to pay a visit to the baroness, and the latter, as you know, being absent from home, the prince did me the honor to converse with me in that room, when we were interrupted all at once by the noise which you were pleased to make in the reception-room here."

"And being in that room, you were pleased to enter the reception-room through *this* door," said the prebendary, sneeringly, pointing to the two opposite doors. "But why did not the prince accompany you? It would have been so natural for one friend of the baroness to greet the other!"

"I did not come because I heard that *you* were there," said the prince, disdainfully, "and because I am in the habit of avoiding any contact with your person."

"Ah, you are jealous of me, then?" asked the prebendary. "Why is my person so distasteful to you that you should always escape from me?"

"I escape from no one, not even from venomous serpents, nor from an individual like you," said the prince, haughtily. "I avoided you, however, because I dislike your nose. Do you hear, my impertinent little prebendary? I dislike your nose, and I demand that you never let me see it again!"

"Ah, I understand," replied the prebendary, laughing. "In order to spare the feelings of the fair baroness, and not to injure her reputation. Pardon me, for, in spite of your prohibition, I am constantly compelled to defer to this amiable lady. You wish to give another direction to our quarrel, and my innocent nose is to be

the *bête de souffrance*. But you shall not entrap me in this manner, prince; and you, my dear Baron Arnstein, can you allow us to continue the quarrel which we commenced about your lady, now about my nose, and to conceal, as it were, the fair Baroness Arnstein behind it?"

"Baroness Arnstein has no reason whatever to conceal herself," said the baron, coldly and proudly. "As she was not the cause of this quarrel, I do not know why you are constantly dragging her name into it. You behaved here in so unbecoming a manner, that I had to come to the assistance of my steward. You were then pleased to utter insults against the Prince von Lichtenstein in his absence, and being in the adjoining room and overhearing your offensive remarks, he came to call you to account for them."

"And to tell you that I dislike your nose, and that I must take the liberty to amputate its impertinent tip with my sword," exclaimed the prince, pulling the prebendary's nose.

It was now the prebendary's turn to grow pale, while his eyes flashed with anger. "You dare to insult me?" he asked menacingly.

"Yes, I confess that is exactly my intention!" replied the prince, laughing.

"Ah, you will have to give me satisfaction for this insult!" shouted the prebendary.

"With the greatest pleasure," said the prince. "This is not the place, however, to continue this conversation. Come, sir, let us leave this house together in order to make the necessary arrangements—"

At this moment the folding-doors of the anteroom were opened, and the voice of the steward shouted: "The baroness!"

An exclamation of surprise escaped from the lips of the three gentlemen, and their eyes turned toward the door, the threshold of which Fanny Arnstein was crossing at that moment. She seemed just to have returned home; her tall form was still wrapped in a long Turkish shawl, embroidered with gold; a charming little bonnet, adorned with flowers and plumes, covered her head, and in her hand she held one of those large costly fans, adorned with precious stones, which were in use at that time in the place of parasols. She greeted the gentlemen with a winning smile; not the slightest tinge of care or uneasiness was visible in her merry face; not the faintest glimmer of a tear darkened the lustre of her large black eyes.

"Gentlemen will please accept my apology for making them wait, although this is the hour when I am in the habit of receiving visitors," said the baroness, in a perfectly careless manner. "But I hope my husband has taken my place in the mean time and told you that I had to preside over a meeting of our Hebrew Benevolent So-

ciety, and you will acknowledge that that was a duty which I ought not to have failed to fulfil. Ah, you smile, Baron Weichs; you must explain to me what is the meaning of this smile, if you wish to intimate thereby, perhaps, that there are no important duties at all for us ladies to perform. Come, gentlemen, let us sit down and hear in what manner Baron Weichs will be able to defend his smile. Sit down here on my right side, prince, and you, Baron Weichs, on my left, and my husband may take a seat *opposite* us and play the *rôle* of an arbiter."

"I regret that I cannot comply any longer with your amiable invitation," said the prebendary, gloomily. "You have made me wait too long, baroness; my time has now expired, and I must withdraw. I suppose you will accompany me, Prince Lichtenstein?"

"Yes, I shall accompany you," said the prince, "for unfortunately my time has also expired, and I must go."

"Oh, no," exclaimed the baroness, smiling, "you must stay here, prince. I dare not prevent the prebendary from attending to his important affairs, but you, prince, have no such pretext for leaving me; I therefore order you to remain and to tell me all about yesterday's concert at the imperial palace."

"I regret exceedingly that I am unable to obey your orders," said the prince, mournfully. "But I must go. You just said, dear lady, that an important duty had kept you away from home; well, it is an important duty that calls me away from here; hence I cannot stay. Farewell, and permit me to kiss your hand before leaving you."

She gave him her hand, which was as cold as ice and trembled violently when he took it. He pressed his glowing lips upon this hand and looked up to her. Their eyes met in a last, tender glance; the prince then rose and turned toward the prebendary, who was conversing with Baron Arnstein in a low and excited tone.

"Come, sir, let us go," he said, impetuously, and walked toward the door.

"Yes, let us go," repeated the prebendary, and bowing profoundly to the baroness, he turned around and followed the prince.

Fanny, who was evidently a prey to the most excruciating anguish, followed them with her distended, terrified eyes. When the door closed behind them, she hastily laid her hand on her husband's shoulder, and looked at him with an air of unutterable terror.

"They will fight a duel?" she asked.

"I am afraid so," said the baron, gloomily.

The baroness uttered a shriek, and after tottering back a few steps, she fell senseless to the floor.

Early on the following morning, four men with grave faces and gloomy eyes stood in the thicket of a forest not far from Vienna.

Two of them were just about divesting themselves of their heavy coats, embroidered with gold, in order to meet in mortal combat, their bare breasts only protected by their fine cambric shirts. These two men were Prince Charles von Lichtenstein and the prebendary, Baron Weichs.

The other two gentlemen were engaged in loading the pistols and counting off the steps; they were Baron Arnstein and Count Palfy, the seconds of the two duellists. When they had performed this mournful task, they approached the two adversaries in order to make a last effort to bring about a reconciliation.

"I implore you in my own name," whispered Baron Arnstein in the ear of the Prince von Lichtenstein—"I implore you in the name of my wife, if a reconciliation should be possible, accept it, and avoid by all means so deplorable an event. Remember that the honor of a lady is compromised so easily and irretrievably, and that my wife would never forgive herself if she should become, perhaps, the innocent cause of your death."

"Nobody will find out that we fight a duel for her sake," said the prince. "My honor requires me to give that impertinent fellow a well-deserved lesson, and he shall have it!"

Count Palfy, the prebendary's second, approached them. "If your highness should be willing to ask Baron Weichs to excuse your conduct on yesterday, the baron would be ready to accept your apology and to withdraw his challenge."

"I have no apology to offer," exclaimed the prince, loudly, "and I am unwilling to prevent the duel from taking its course. I told the prebendary that I disliked his nose, and that I wished to amputate its impertinent tip. Well, I am now here to perform this operation, and if you please, let us at once proceed to business."

"Yes, let us do so," shouted the prebendary. "Give us the pistols, gentlemen, and then the signal. When you clap for the third time, we shall shoot simultaneously. Pray for your poor soul, Prince von Lichtenstein, for I am a dead shot at one hundred yards, and our distance will only be twenty paces."

The prince made no reply, but took the pistol which his second handed to him. "If I should fall," he whispered to him, "take my last greetings to your wife, and tell her that I died with her name on my lips!"

"If I should fall," said the prebendary to his second, in an undertone, but loud enough for his opponent to hear every word he said, "tell the dear city of Vienna and my friends that I have fought a duel with Prince Lichtenstein because he was my rival with the

beautiful Baroness Arnstein, and that I have died with the conviction that he was the lover of the fair lady."

A pause ensued. The seconds conducted the two gentlemen to their designated places and then stood back, in order to give the fatal signals.

When they clapped for the first time, the two duellists raised the hand with the pistol, fixing their angry and threatening eyes on each other.

Then followed the second, the third signal.

Two shots were fired at the same time.

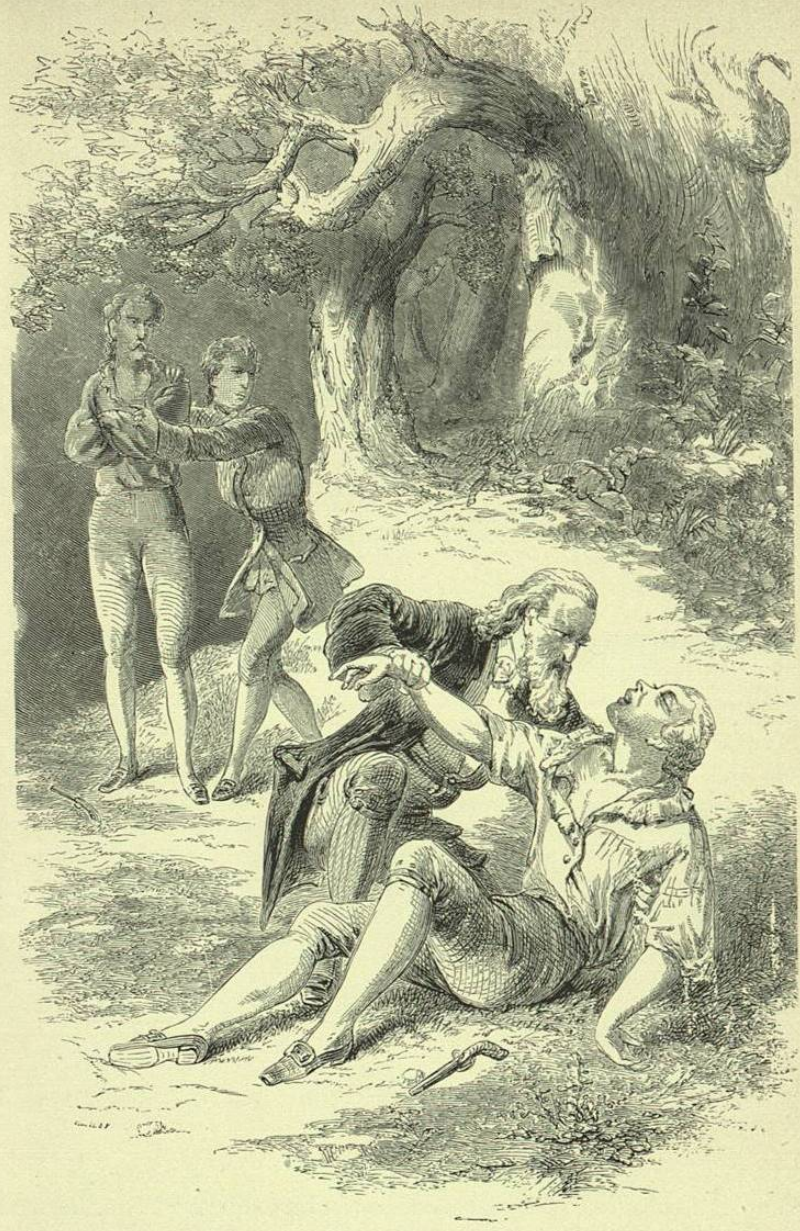
The prebendary stood firmly and calmly where he had discharged his weapon, the same defiant smile playing on his lips, and the same threatening expression beaming in his eyes.

Prince Charles von Lichtenstein lay on the ground, reddening the earth with the blood which was rushing from his breast. When Baron Arnstein bent over him, he raised his eyes with a last look toward him. "Take her my last love-greetings," he breathed, in a scarcely audible voice. "Tell her that I—"

His voice gave way, and with the last awful death-rattle a stream of blood poured from his mouth.

"Hasten to save yourself," shouted Count Palfy to the prebendary, who had been looking at the dying man from his stand-point with cold, inquisitive glances. "Flee, for you have killed the prince; he has already ceased to breathe. Flee! In the shrubbery below you will find my carriage, which will convey you rapidly to the next post-station."

"He is dead and I am alive!" said the prebendary, quietly. "It would not have been worth while to die for the sake of a woman because she has got another lover. It is much wiser in such cases to kill the rival, and thus to remove the obstacle separating us from the woman. But I shall not escape; on the contrary, I shall go to the emperor myself, and inform him of what has occurred here. We are living in times of war and carnage, and a soul more or less is, therefore, of no great importance. Inasmuch as the emperor constantly sends hundreds of thousands of his innocent and harmless subjects to fight duels with enemies of whom they do not even know why they are their enemies, he will deem it but a matter of course that two of his subjects, who know very well why they are enemies, should fight a duel, and hence I am sure that his majesty will forgive me. Brave and intrepid men are not sent to the fortress. I shall not flee!"



THE DUEL. DEATH OF PRINCE LICHTENSTEIN.