'When was he expected?' I heard Charlotte, within the room, ask in a depressed voice.

'To-day,' said the widow.

'To-day?' echoed Charlotte.

'That is why the beds are made. It is lucky for you ladies.'

'Very,' agreed Charlotte; and her voice was hollow.

'He died yesterday — an accident. I received the telegram only this morning. It is a great misfortune for me. Will the ladies sup? I have some provisions in the house sent on by the gentleman for his supper to-night. He, poor soul, will never sup again.'

The widow, more moved by this last reflection than she had yet been, sighed heavily. She then made the observation usual on such occasions that it is a strange world, and that one is here to-day and gone to-morrow — or rather, correcting herself, here yesterday and gone to-day — and that the one thing certain was the *schönes Essen* at that moment on the shelves of the larder. Would the ladies not seize the splendid opportunity and sup?

'No, no, we will not sup,' Charlotte cried with great decision. 'You won't eat here to-night, will you?' she asked through the yellow window-curtains, which made her look very pale. 'It is always horrid in lodgings. Shall we go to that nice red-brick hotel we passed, where the people were sitting under the big tree looking so happy?'

We went in silence to the red-brick hotel; and threading our way among the crowded tables set out under a huge beech tree a few yards from the water to the only empty one, we found ourselves sitting next to the Harvey-Brownes.

'Dear Frau Nieberlein, how delightful to have you here again!' cried the bishop's wife in tones of utmost cordiality, leaning across the little space between the tables to press Charlotte's hand. 'Brosy has been scouring the country on his bicycle trying to discover your retreat, and was quite disconsolate at not finding you.'

Scouring the country in search of Charlotte! Heavens. And I who had dropped straight on top of her in the waters of Thiessow without any effort at all! Thus does Fortune withhold blessings from those who clamour, and piles them unasked on the shrinking heads of the meek.

Brosy Harvey-Browne meanwhile, like a polite young man acquainted with German customs, had got out of his chair and was waiting for Charlotte to present him to me. 'Oh yes, my young philosopher,' I thought, not without a faint regret, 'you are now to find out that your promising and intellectual Fräulein isn't anything of the sort.'

'Pray present me,' said Brosy.

Charlotte did.

'Pray present me,' I said in my turn, bowing in the direction of the bishop's wife.

Charlotte did.

At this ceremony the bishop's wife's face took

on the look of one who thinks there is really no need to make fresh acquaintances in breathless hurries. It also wore the look of one who, while admitting a Nieberlein within the range of her cordiality on account of the prestige of that Nieberlein's famous husband, does not see why the Nieberlein's obscure female relatives should be admitted too. So I was not admitted; and I sat outside and studied the menu.

'How very strange,' observed Brosy in his beautifully correct German as he dropped into a vacant chair at our table, 'that you should be related to the Nieberleins.'

'One is always related to somebody,' I replied; and marvelled at my own intelligence.

'And how odd that we should meet again here.'

'One is always meeting again on an island if it is small enough.'

This is a sample of my conversation with Brosy, weighty on my part with solid truths, while our supper was being prepared and while Charlotte answered his mother's questions as to where she had been, where she had met me, how we were related, and who my husband was.

'Her husband is a farmer,' I heard Charlotte say in the dreary voice of hopeless boredom.

'Oh, really. How interesting,' said Mrs. Harvey-Browne; and immediately ceased to be interested.

The lights of Sassnitz twinkled on the other side of the bay. A steamer came across the calm grey water, gaily decked out in coloured lights,

the throbbing of her paddle-wheels heard almost from the time she left Sassnitz in the still evening air. Up and down the road between our tables and the sea groups of bath-guests strolled — artless family groups, papa and mamma arm in arm, and in front the daughter and the admirer; knots of girls in the *backfisch* stage, tittering and pushing each other about; quiet maiden-ladies, placid after their supper, gently praising, as they passed, the delights of a few weeks spent in the very bosom of Nature, expatiating on her peace, her restfulness, and the freshness of her vegetables. And with us, while the stars flashed through the stirring beech leaves, Mrs. Harvey-Browne rhapsodised about the great Nieberlein to the blank Charlotte, and Brosy tried to carry on a reasonable conversation about things like souls with a woman who was eating an omelette.

I was in an entirely different mood from the one of the afternoon at Vilm, and it was a mood in which I like to be left alone. When it is on me not all the beautiful young men in the world, looking like archangels and wearing the loveliest linen, would be able to shake me out of it. Brosy was apparently in exactly the same mood as he had been then. Was it his perennially? Did he always want to talk about the Unknowable, and the Unthinkable, and the Unspeakable? I am positive I did not look intelligent this time, not only because I did not try to, but because I was feeling profoundly stupid. And still he went on. There was only one thing I really wanted to

know, and that was why he was called Brosy. While I ate my supper, and he talked, and his mother listened during the pauses of her fitful conversation with Charlotte, I turned this over in my mind. Why Brosy? His mother kept on saying it. To Charlotte her talk, having done with Nieberlein, was all of Brosy. Was it in itself a perfect name, or was it the short of something long, or did it come under the heading Pet? Was he perhaps a twin, and his twin sister was Rosy? In which case, if his parents were lovers of the neat, his own name would be almost inevitable.

It was when our supper had been cleared away and he was remarking for the second time — the first time he remarked it I had said 'What?' — that ultimate religious ideas are merely symbols of the actual, not cognitions of it, and his mother not well knowing what he meant but afraid it must be something a bishop's son ought not to mean said with gentle reproach, 'My dear Brosy,' that I took courage to inquire of him 'Why Brosy?'

'It is short for Ambrose,' he answered.

'He was christened after Ambrose,' said his mother, — 'one of the Early Fathers, as no doubt you know.'

But I did not know, because she spoke in German, for the sake, I suppose, of making things easier for me, and she called the Early Fathers *frühzeitige Väter*, so how could I know?

'*Frühzeitige Väter?*' I repeated dully; 'Who are they?'

The bishop's wife took the kindest view of it. 'Perhaps you do not have them in the Lutheran Church,' she said; but she did not speak to me again at all, turning her back on me quite this time, and wholly concentrating her attention on the monosyllabic Charlotte.

'My mother,' Ambrose explained in subdued tones, 'meant to say *Kirchenväter*.'

'I am sorry,' said I politely, 'that I was so dull.'

And then he went on with the paragraph — for to me it seemed as though he spoke always in entire paragraphs instead of sentences — he had been engaged upon when I interrupted him; and, for my refreshment, I caught fragments of Mrs. Harvey-Browne's conversation in between.

'I have a message for you, dear Frau Nieberlein,' I heard her say, — 'a message from the bishop.'

'Yes?' said Charlotte, without warmth.

'We had letters from home to-day, and in his he mentions you.'

'Yes?' said Charlotte, ungratefully cold.

'"Tell her," he writes, — "tell her I have been reading her pamphlets."'

'Indeed?' said Charlotte, beginning to warm.

'It is not often that the bishop has time for reading, and it is quite unusual for him to look at anything written by a woman, so that it is really an honour he has paid you.'

'Of course it is,' said Charlotte, quite warmly.

'And he is an old man, dear Frau Nieberlein, of ripe experience, and admirable wisdom, as no

doubt you have heard, and I am sure you will take what he says in good part.'

This sounded ominous, so Charlotte said nothing.

'"Tell her," he writes, — "tell her that I grieve for her."'

There was a pause. Then Charlotte said loftily, 'It is very good of him.'

'And I can assure you the bishop never grieves without reason, or else in such a large diocese he would always be doing it.'

Charlotte was silent.

'He begged me to tell you that he will pray for you.'

There was another pause. Then Charlotte said, 'Thank you.'

What else was she to say? What does one say in such a case? Our governesses teach us how pleasant and amiable an adornment is politeness, but not one of mine ever told me what I was to say when confronted by an announcement that I was to be included in somebody's prayers. If Charlotte, anxious to be polite, had said, 'Oh, please don't let him trouble,' the bishop's wife would have been shocked. If she had said what she felt, and wholly declined to be prayed for at all by strange bishops, Mrs. Harvey-Browne would have been horrified. It is a nice question; and it preoccupied me for the rest of the time we sat there, and we sat there a very long time; for although Charlotte was manifestly sorely tried by Mrs. Harvey-Browne I had great difficulty in

getting her away. Each time I suggested going back to our lodgings to bed she made some excuse for staying where she was. Everybody else seemed to have gone to bed, and even Ambrose, who had been bicycling all day, had begun visibly to droop before I could persuade her to come home. Slowly she walked along the silent sands, slowly she went into the house, still more slowly into her bedroom; and then, just as Gertrud had blessed me and blown out my candle in one breath, in she came with a light, and remarking that she did not feel sleepy sat down on the foot of my bed and began to talk.

She had on a white dressing-gown, and her hair fell loose about her face, and she was very pale.

'I can't talk; I am much too sleepy,' I said, 'and you look dreadfully tired.'

'My soul is tired — tired out utterly by that woman. I wanted to ask you if you won't come away with me to-morrow.'

'I can't go away till I have explored these heavenly forests.'

'I can't stay here if I am to spend my time with that woman.'

'That woman? Oh Charlotte, don't call her such awful names. Try and imagine her sensations if she heard you.'

'Why, I shouldn't care.'

'Oh hush,' I whispered, 'the windows are open — she might be just outside on the beach. It gives me shivers only to think of it. Don't say it again. Don't be such an audacious German.

Think of Oxford — think of venerable things like cathedral closes and bishops' palaces. Think of the dignity and deference that surround Mrs. Harvey-Browne at home. And won't you go to bed? You can't think how sleepy I am.'

'Will you come away with me to-morrow?'

'We'll talk it over in the morning. I'm not nearly awake enough now.'

Charlotte got up reluctantly and went to the door leading into her bedroom. Then she came back and crossed over to the windows and peeped out between the yellow curtains. 'It's bright moonlight,' she said, 'and so quiet. The sea is like a pond. How clear the Sassnitz lights are.'

'Are they?' I murmured drowsily.

'Are you really going to leave your windows open? Any one can get in. We are almost on a level with the beach.'

To this I made no answer; and my little travelling-clock on the table gave point to my silence by chiming twelve.

Charlotte went away slowly, candle in hand. At her door she stopped and looked back. 'It seems,' she said, 'that I have got that unfortunate man's bed.'

So it was the Berlin gentleman who was making her restless.

'And you,' she went on, 'have got the one his daughter was to have had.'

'Is she alive?' I asked sleepily.

'Oh yes, she's alive.'

'Well, that was nice, anyway.'

'I believe you are frightened,' I murmured, as she still lingered.

'Frightened? What of?'

'The Berlin gentleman.'

'Absurd,' said Charlotte, and went away.

I was having a most cheerful dream in which I tried hard to remember the exact words Herbert Spencer uses about effete beliefs that, in the stole, still cling about the necks of priests, and, in gaiters, linger round the legs of bishops, and was repeating the words about the bishops in a rapture of enjoyment — and indeed it is a lovely sentence — when a sudden pause of fear came into my dream, and I felt that some one beside myself was in the room.

The dark to me has always been full of terrors. I can look back through my memories and find past years studded with horrible black nights on which I woke up and was afraid. Till I have lit a candle, how can I remember that I do not believe in ghosts, and in nameless hideousnesses infinitely more frightful than ghosts? But what courage is needed to sit up in all the solid, pressing blackness, and stretch out one defenceless hand into it to feel about for the matches, appalled by the echoing noises the search produces, cold with fear that the hand may touch something unknown and terrible. And so at Binz, dragged out of my pleasant dream to night and loneliness, I could not move for a moment for sheer extremity of fright. When I did, when I did put out a shaking hand to feel for the matches, the dread of

years became a reality — I touched another hand. Now I think it was very wonderful of me not to scream. I suppose I did not dare. I don't know how I managed it, petrified as I was with terror, but the next thing that happened was that I found myself under the bedclothes thinking things over. Whose hand had I touched? And what was it doing on my table? It was a nasty, cold hand, and it had clutched at mine as I tore it away. Oh — there it was, coming after me — it was feeling its way along the bedclothes — surely it was not real — it must be a nightmare — and that was why no sound came when I tried to shriek for Charlotte — but what a horrible nightmare — so very, very real — I could hear the hand sliding along the sheet to the corner where I was huddling — oh, why had I come to this frightful island? A gasp of helpless horror did get out, and instantly Charlotte's voice whispered, 'Be quiet. Don't make a sound. There's a man outside your window.'

At this my senses came back to me with a rush. 'You've nearly killed me,' I whispered, filling the whisper with as much hot indignation as it would hold. 'If my heart had had anything the matter with it I would have died. Let me go — I want to light the candle. What does a man, a real living man, matter?'

Charlotte held me tighter. 'Be quiet,' she whispered, in an agony, it seemed, of fear. 'Be quiet — he isn't — he doesn't look — I don't think he *is* alive.'

'*What?*' I whispered.

'Sh — sh — your window's open — he only need put his leg over the sill to get in.'

'But if he isn't alive he can't put his leg over sills,' I whispered back incredulously. 'He's some poor drowned sailor washed ashore.'

'Oh be *quiet!*' implored Charlotte, burying her face on my shoulder; and having got over my own fright I marvelled at the abjectness of hers.

'Let me go. I want to look at him,' I said, trying to get away.

'Sh — sh — don't move — he'd hear — he is just outside ——' And she clung to me in terror.

'But how can he hear if he isn't alive? Let me go ——'

'No — no — he's sitting there — just outside — he's been sitting there for hours — and never moves — oh, it's that man! — I know it is — I knew he'd come ——'

'What man?'

'Oh the dreadful, dreadful Berlin man who died ——'

'My dear Charlotte,' I expostulated, feeling now perfectly calm in the presence of such a collapse. 'Let me go. I'll look through the curtains so that he shall not see me, and I'll soon tell you if he's alive or not. Do you suppose I don't know a live man when I see one?'

I wriggled out of her arms and crept with bare, silent feet to the window, and cautiously moving the curtains a slit apart peeped through. There certainly was a man outside, sitting on a rock exactly in front of my window, with his face to

the sea. Clouds were passing slowly across the moon, and I waited for them to pass to see him more clearly. He never moved. And when the light did fall on him it fell on a well-clothed back with two shining buttons on it, — not the back of a burglar, and surely not the back of a ghost. In all my varied imaginings I had never yet imagined a ghost in buttons, and I refused to believe that I saw one then.

Back I crept to the cowering Charlotte. 'It isn't anybody who's dead,' I whispered cheerfully, 'and I think he wants to paddle.'

'Paddle?' echoed Charlotte sitting up, the word seeming to restore her to her senses. 'Why should he want to paddle in the middle of the night?'

'Well, why not? It's the only thing I can think of that makes you sit on rocks.'

Charlotte was so much recovered and so much relieved at finding herself recovered, that she gave a hysterical giggle. Instantly there was a slight noise outside, and the shadow of a man appeared on the curtains. We clung to each other in consternation.

'Hedwig,' whispered the man, pushing the curtains a little aside, and peering into the darkness of the room; '*kleiner Schatz — endlich da? Lässt mich so lange warten* ——'

He waited, uncertain, trying to see in. Charlotte grasped the situation quickest. 'Hedwig is not here,' she said with immense dignity, 'and you should be ashamed of yourself, disturbing

ladies in this manner. I must request you to go away at once, and to give me your name and address so that I may report you to the proper authorities. I shall not fail in my duty, which will be to make an example of you.'

'That was admirably put,' I remarked, going across to the window and shutting it, 'only he didn't stay to listen. Now we'll light the candle.'

And looking out as I drew the curtains I saw the moonlight flash on flying buttons.

'Who would have thought,' I observed to Charlotte, who was standing in the middle of the room shaking with indignation, — 'who would have thought that that very demure little Hedwig would be the cause of a night of terror for us?'

'Who could have imagined her so depraved?' said Charlotte wrathfully.

'Well, we don't know that she is.'

'Doesn't it look like it?'

'Poor little thing.'

'Poor little thing! What drivel is this?'

'Oh I don't know — we all want forgiving very badly, it seems to me — Hedwig not more than you and I. And we want it so much more badly than we want punishing, yet we are always getting punished and hardly ever getting forgiven.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said Charlotte.

'It isn't very clear,' I admitted.