THE SIXTH DAY

THE JAGDSCHLOSS

She was asleep next morning when I looked into her bedroom, so I shut the door softly, and charging Gertrud not to disturb her, went out for a walk. It was not quite eight and people had not got away from their coffee yet, so I had it to myself, the walk along the shore beneath the beeches, beside the flashing morning sea. The path runs along for a little close to the water at the foot of the steep beech-grown hill that shuts the west winds out of Binz — a hill steep enough and high enough to make him pant grievously who goes up it after dinner; then on the right comes a deep narrow cutting running up into the woods, cut, it seems, entirely out of smoothest, greenest moss, so completely are its sides covered with it. Standing midway up this cutting in the soft gloom of its green walls, with the branches of the beeches meeting far away above, and down at the bottom the sheet of shining water, I found absolutely the most silent bit of the world I have ever been in. The silence was wonderful. There

seemed positively to be no sound at all. No sound came down from the beech leaves, and yet they were stirring; no sound came up from the water, not a ripple, not a splash; I heard no birds while I stood there, nor any hum of insects. It might have been the entrance to some holy place, so strange and solemn was the quiet; and looking from out of its shadows to the brightness shining at the upper end where the sun was flooding the bracken with happy morning radiance, I felt suddenly that my walk had ceased to be a common thing, and that I was going up into the temple of God to pray.

I know no surer way of shaking off the dreary crust formed about the soul by the trying to do one's duty or the patient enduring of having somebody else's duty done to one, than going out alone, either at the bright beginning of the day, when the earth is still unsoiled by the feet of the strenuous and only God is abroad; or in the evening, when the hush has come, out to the blessed stars, and looking up at them wonder at the meanness of the day just past, at the worthlessness of the things one has struggled for, at the folly of having been so angry, and so restless, and so much afraid. Nothing focusses life more exactly than a little while alone at night with the stars. What are perfunctory bedroom prayers hurried through in an atmosphere of blankets, to this deep abasement of the spirit before the majesty of heaven? And as a consecration of what should be yet one more happy day, of what

value are those hasty morning devotions, disturbed by fears lest the coffee should be getting cold and that person, present in every household, whose property is always to reprove, be more than usually provoked, compared to going out into the freshness of the new day and thanking God deliberately under His own wide sky for having been so good to us? I know that when I had done my open-air *Te Deum* up there in the sun-flooded space among the shimmering bracken I went on my way with a lightheartedness never mine after indoor religious exercises. The forest was so gay that morning, so sparkling, so full of busy, happy creatures, it would have been a sorry heart that did not feel jolly in such society. In that all-pervading wholesomeness there was no room for repentance, no place for conscience-stricken beating of the breast; and indeed I think we waste a terrible amount of time repenting. The healthy attitude, the only reasonable one towards a fault made or a sin committed is surely a vigorous shake of one's moral shoulders, vigorous enough to shake it off and out of remembrance. The sin itself was a sad waste of time and happiness, and absolutely no more should be wasted in lugubriously reflecting on it. Shall we, poor human beings at such a disadvantage from the first in the fight with Fate through the many weaknesses and ailments of our bodies, load our souls as well with an ever-growing burden of regret and penitence? Shall we let a weight of vivid memories break our hearts? How are we

to get on with our living if we are continually dropping into sloughs of bitter and often unjust self-reproach? Every morning comes the light, and a fresh chance of doing better. Is it not the sheerest folly and ingratitude to let yesterday spoil the God-given to-day?

There had been a heavy dew, and the moss along the wayside was soaked with it, and the leaves of the slender young beeches sparkled with it, and the bracken bending over the path on either side left its wetness on my dress as I passed. Nowhere was there a single bit of gloom where you could sit down and be wretched. The very jays would have laughed you out of countenance if you had sat there looking sorrowful. Sometimes the path was narrow, and the trees shut out the sky; sometimes it led me into the hot sunshine of an open, forest-fringed space; once it took me along the side of a meadow sloping up on its distant side to more forest, with only a single row of great beeches between me and the heat and light dancing over the grass; and all the way I had squirrels for company, chattering and enjoying themselves as sensible squirrels living only in the present do; and larks over my head singing in careless ecstasy just because they had no idea they were probably bad larks with pasts; and lizards, down at my feet, motionless in the hot sun, quite unaware of how wicked it becomes to lie in the sun doing nothing directly you wear clothes and have consciences. As for the scent of the forest, he who has been in it early after a dewy night knows

that, and the effect it has on the spirits of him who smells it; so I need not explain how happy I was and how invigorated as I climbed up a long hill where the wood was thick and cool, and coming out at the top found I had reached a place of turf and sunshine, with tables in the shade at the farther side, and in the middle, coffee-pot in hand, a waiter.

This waiter came as a shock. My thoughts had wandered quite into the opposite channel to the one that ends in waiters. There he stood, however, solitary and suggestive, in the middle of the sunny green, a crumpled waiter in regard to shirt-front, and not a waiter, I should say, of more than bi-weekly washings; but his eye was persuasive, steam came out of the spout of his coffee-pot, and out of his mouth as I walked towards him issued appropriate words about the weather. I had meant to go back to breakfast with Charlotte, and there was no reason at all why I should cross the green and walk straight up to the waiter; but there was that in his eye which made me feel that if I did not drink his coffee not only had I no business on the top of the hill but I was unspeakably base besides. So I sat down at one of the tables beneath the beeches — there were at least twelve tables, and only one other visitor, a man in spectacles — and the waiter produced a tablecloth that made me shiver, and poured me out a cup of coffee and brought me a roll of immense resistance — one of yesterday's, I imagined, the roll cart from Binz not having had time yet to get up the hill.

He fetched this roll from a pretty house with latticed windows standing on the side of the green, and he fixed me with his hungry eye and told me the house was an inn, and that it was not only ready but anxious to take me as a lodger for any period I might choose. I excused myself on the plea of its distance from the water. He said that precisely this distance was its charm. 'The lady,' he continued, with a wave of his coffee-pot that immediately caused a thin streak of steam to rise from the grass — 'the lady can see for herself how idyllic is the situation.'

The lady murmured assent; and in order to avoid his hungry eye busied herself dividing her roll among some expectant fowls who, plainly used to the business, were crowding round her; so that the roll's staleness, perhaps intentional, ended by being entirely to the good of the inn.

By the time the fowls were ready for more the waiter, who had nothing pressing on hand, had become a nuisance too great to be borne. I would have liked to sit there and rest in the shade, watching the clouds slowly appear above the tree-tops opposite and sail over my head and out of sight, but I could not because of the waiter. So I paid him, got up, once more firmly declined either to take or look at rooms at the inn, and wished him a good morning instinct with dignity and chill.

'The lady will now of course visit the Jagdschloss,' said the waiter, whipping out a bundle of tickets of admission.

'The Jagdschloss?' I repeated; and following the direction of his eyes I saw a building through the trees just behind where I had been sitting, on the top of a sharp ascent.

So that was where my walk had led me to. The guide-book devotes several animated pages to this Jagdschloss, or shooting lodge. It belongs to Prince Putbus. Its round tower, rising out of a green sea of wood, was a landmark with which I had soon grown familiar. Whenever you climb up a hill in Rügen to see the view, you see the Jagdschloss. Whichever way you drive, it is always the central feature of the landscape. If it isn't anywhere else it is sure to be on the horizon. Only in some northern parts of the island does one get away from it, and even there probably a telescope used with skill would produce it at once. And here I was beneath its walls. Well, I had not intended going over it, and all I wanted at that moment was to get rid of the waiter and go on with my walk. But it was easier to take a ticket than to refuse and hear him exclaim and protest; so I paid fifty *pfennings*, was given a slip of paper, and started climbing the extremely steep ascent.

The site was obviously chosen without the least reference to the legs or lungs of tourists. They arrive at the top warm and speechless, and sinking down on the steps between two wolves made of copper the first thing they do is to spend several minutes gasping. Then they ring a bell, give up their tickets and umbrellas, and are taken round in batches by an

elderly person who manifestly thinks them poor things.

When I got to the top I found the other visitor, the man in spectacles, sitting on the steps getting his gasping done. Having finished mine before him, he being a man of bulk, I rang the bell. The elderly official, who had a singular talent for making one feel by a mere look what a worm one really is, appeared. 'I cannot take each of you round separately,' he said, pointing at the man still fighting for air on the bottom step, 'or does your husband not intend to see the Schloss?'

'My husband?' I echoed, astonished.

'Now, sir,' he continued impatiently, addressing the back below, 'are you coming or not?'

The man in spectacles made a great effort, caught hold of the convenient leg of one of the copper wolves, pulled himself on to his feet with its aid, and climbed slowly up the steps.

'The public is requested not to touch the objects of art,' snapped the custodian, glancing at the wolf's leg to see if it had suffered.

The man in spectacles looked properly ashamed of his conduct; I felt ashamed of myself too, but only on the more general grounds of being such a worm; and together we silently followed the guide into the house, together gave up our tickets, and together laid our stick and sunshade side by side on a table.

A number was given to the man in spectacles.

'And my number?' I inquired politely.

'Surely one suffices?' said the guide, eyeing me with disapproval; for taking me for the wife of the man in spectacles he regarded my desire to have a number all to myself as only one more instance of the lengths to which the modern woman in her struggle for emancipation will go.

The stick and sunshade were accordingly tied together.

'Do you wish to ascend the tower?' he asked my companion, showing us the open-work iron staircase winding round and round inside the tower up to the top.

'*Gott Du Allmächtiger*, *nein*,' was the hasty reply after a glance and a shudder.

Taking for granted that without my husband I would not want to go up towers he did not ask me, but at once led the way through a very charming hall decorated with what are known as trophies of the chase, to a locked door, before which stood a row of enormous grey felt slippers.

'The public is not allowed to enter the princely apartments unless it has previously drawn these slippers over its boots,' said the guide as though he were quoting.

'All of them?' I asked, faintly facetious.

Again he eyed me, but this time in silence.

The man in spectacles thrust his feet into the nearest pair. They were generously roomy even for him, and he was a big man with boots to match. I looked down the row hoping to see something smaller, and perhaps newer, but they

were all the same size, and all had been worn repeatedly by other tourists.

'The next time I come to the Jagdschloss,' I observed thoughtfully, as I saw my feet disappear into the gaping mouths of two of these woolly monsters, 'I shall bring my own slippers. This arrangement may be useful, but no one could call it select.'

Neither of my companions took the least notice of me. The guide looked disgusted. Judging from his face, though he still thought me a worm he now suspected me of belonging to that highly objectionable class known as turned.

Having seen us safely into our slippers he was about to unlock the door when the bell rang. He left us standing mute before the shut door, and leaning over the balustrade — for, Reader, as Charlotte Brontë would say, he had come upstairs — he called down to the Fräulein who had taken our stick and sunshade to let in the visitors. She did so; and as she flung open the door I saw, through the pillars of the balustrade, Brosy on the threshold, and at the bottom of the steps, leaning against one of the copper wolves, her arm, indeed, flung over its valuable shoulder, the bishop's wife gasping.

At this sight the custodian rushed downstairs. The man in spectacles and myself, mute, meek, and motionless in our felt slippers, held our breaths.

'The public is requested not to touch the objects of art!' shouted the custodian as he rushed.

'Is he speaking to me, dear?' asked Mrs. Harvey-Browne, looking up at her son.

'I think he is, mother,' said Ambrose. 'I don't think you may lean on that wolf.'

'Wolf?' said his mother in surprise, standing upright and examining the animal through her eyeglasses with interest. 'So it is. I thought they were Prussian eagles.'

'Anyhow you mustn't touch it, mother,' said Ambrose, a slight impatience in his voice. 'He says the public are not to touch things.'

'Does he really call me the public? Do you think he is a rude person, dear?'

'Does the lady intend to see the Schloss or not?' interrupted the custodian. 'I have another party inside waiting.'

'Come on, mother — you want to, don't you?'

'Yes — but not if he's a rude man, dear,' said Mrs. Harvey-Browne, slowly ascending the steps. 'Perhaps you had better tell him who father is.'

'I don't think it would impress him much,' said Brosy, smiling. 'Parsons come here too often for that.'

'Parsons! Yes; but not bishops,' said his mother, coming into the echoing hall, through whose emptiness her last words rang like a trumpet.

'He wouldn't know what a bishop is. They don't have them.'

'No bishops?' exclaimed his mother, stopping short and staring at her son with a face of concern.

'*Bitte um die Eintrittskarten*,' interrupted the custodian, slamming the door; and he pulled the tickets out of Brosy's hand.

'No bishops?' continued Mrs. Harvey-Browne, 'and no Early Fathers, as that smashed-looking person, that cousin of Frau Nieberlein's, told us last night? My dear Brosy, what a very strange state of things.'

'I don't think she quite said that, did she? They have Early Fathers right enough. She didn't understand what you meant.'

'Stick and umbrella, please,' interrupted the custodian, snatching them out of their passive hands. 'Take the number, please. Now this way, please.'

He hurried, or tried to hurry, them under the tower, but the bishop's wife had not hurried for years, and would not have dreamed of doing so; and when he had got them under it he asked if they wished to make the ascent. They looked up, shuddered, and declined.

'Then we will at once join the other party,' said the custodian, bustling on.

'The other party?' exclaimed Mrs. Harvey-Browne in German. 'Oh, I hope no objectionable tourists? I quite thought coming so early we would avoid them.'

'Only two,' said the custodian: 'a respectable gentleman and his wife.'

The man in spectacles and I, up to then mute, meek, and motionless in our grey slippers, started simultaneously. I looked at him cautiously out of