

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS
A BERLIN NOVEL

BY

THEODOR FONTANE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FOURTEENTH EDITION
BY KATHARINE ROYCE

New York
P.F. Collier and Son Company
1917

Rosings Digital Publications



[Originally published: *Irrungen, Wirungen* (1888)]

THE HARVARD CLASSICS SHELF OF FICTION
SELECTED BY CHARLES W. ELIOT, LL D

GERMAN FICTION

J W VON GOETHE	GOTTFRIED KELLER
THEODOR FONTANE	THEODOR STORM



EDITED WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTIONS
BY WILLIAM ALLEN NEILSON, PH D

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

A BERLIN NOVEL

CHAPTER I

AT the junction of the Kurfürstendamm and the Kurfürstenstrasse, diagonally across from the Zoological Garden, there still remained, about the middle of the seventies, a large market-garden, extending towards the open country. The little house belonging to this property had but three windows, and was set about a hundred paces back in a front garden; yet in spite of its small size and its secluded position, it could be plainly seen from the road that ran past. But all else that belonged to the place, and indeed formed the principal part of it, was hidden behind this little dwelling as if by the side-scenes of a theatre, and only a little red and green painted tower with a half broken dial beneath its peak (nothing remained of the clock itself) gave one a hint, that behind this "coulisse" something more must be hidden, a hint which was confirmed from time to time by the rising and circling of a flock of pigeons around the tower, and still more by the occasional barking of a dog. Where this dog was actually kept it was indeed impossible to find out, in spite of the fact that the door of the house, which was close to the left corner, stood open early and late and afforded a glimpse of a small part of the yard. However, nothing seemed to have been purposely hidden, and yet everyone who came along the road at the time when our story begins, had to be satisfied with a glimpse of the little house with its three windows and of a few fruit trees that stood in the front garden.

It was the week after Whitsunday, when the days are so long that it seems as if the dazzling light would never come to an end. But to-day the sun was already hidden behind the church-tower of Wilmersdorf and instead of the light, with which it had filled the front garden all day, the shades of evening had already fallen, and the half mysterious silence was only surpassed by that of the little house which was occupied by old Frau Nimptsch and her adopted daughter Lena as tenants. But Frau Nimptsch was sitting as usual by the large low hearth in her front room, which took in the whole width of the house, and, bending forward, she was gazing at a blackened old tea kettle, whose lid kept up a continual rattling, although the steam was pouring out of the spout. The old woman was holding her hands

out towards the glowing embers and was so lost in her thoughts and dreams that she did not hear the hall door open and a stout woman enter somewhat noisily. Only when the latter cleared her throat and greeted her friend and neighbor, our Frau Nimptsch, quite affectionately by name, did the latter turn around and speak to her guest in friendly fashion and with a touch of playfulness : “Well, this is good in you, dear Frau Dörr, to come over again. And from the ‘castle’ too. For it is a castle and always will be. It has a tower. And now do sit down I just saw your dear husband go out. Of course he would have to. For this is his evening at the bowling alley.”

She who received this friendly greeting as Frau Dörr was not only stout, but was an especially imposing-looking woman, who produced the impression of narrow-mindedness as well as that of kindness and trustworthiness. Meanwhile Frau Nimptsch apparently took no offence and only repeated: “Yes, his evening at the bowling alley. But what I was going to say was, that Dörr’s hat really will not do any longer. It is all threadbare and really disgraceful. You ought to take it away from him and put another in its place. Perhaps he would never know the difference. . . . And now draw up your chair, dear Frau Dörr, or perhaps over there where the footstool is. . . . Lena, you know, has slipped out and left me in the lurch again.”

“Has he been here?”

“Of course he has. And they have both gone a little way towards Wilmersdorf; nobody comes along the footpath. But they may be back again any minute.”

“Well, then I had better go.”

“Oh, no indeed, clear Frau Dörr. He will not stay. And even if he should, you know, he would not mind.”

“I know, I know. And how are things then?”

“Why, how should they be? I believe she is thinking of something even if she does not want others to know it, and she is imagining something or other.”

“Oh, my goodness,” said Frau Dörr, as she drew up a somewhat higher stool instead of the footstool that had been offered her. “Oh, my goodness, then it’s bad. When-

ever one begins to imagine things, trouble begins. It is just like the Amen in church. See here, dear Frau Nimptsch, it was just the very same with me, only there was no imagining. And that is just why everything was really quite different.”

Apparently Frau Nimptsch did not really understand what Frau Dörr meant, and so the latter went on : “And because I never took any notions into my head, things always went perfectly well and smoothly and now I have Dörr. Oh well, that isn’t much, but still it is something respectable and I can show my face everywhere. And that is why I went to church with him too, and not merely to the registrar’s office. If you only go to the registrar’s office, there will always be talk.”

Frau Nimptsch nodded.

But Frau Dörr repeated : “Yes, in church, in the Matthäikirche. But this is what I was really going to say, don’t you see, my dear Frau Nimptsch, I was really taller and more pleasing than Lena, and if I was not prettier (for that is something one can never rightly know and tastes differ so), yet my figure was stouter and a great many like that. Yes, so much is certain. But even if I was, as you might say, more solid and weighed more, and there was a something about me – well yes, there was something about me – yet I was always very innocent, almost simple; and as to him, my Count, with his fifty years on his shoulders, well, he was very simple too and always very gay and would never behave properly. And before very long, I told him: “No, no, Count, this will never do; I can’t allow anything like this. . . .” And old people are always like that. I will only say, dear Frau Nimptsch, you can’t imagine anything of the sort. It was dreadful. And now when I see Lena’s Baron, it makes me ashamed to think what mine was like. And now as to Lena herself. My Lord, of course she isn’t exactly an angel, but she is neat and industrious and knows how to do everything, and loves order and practical things. And don’t you see, Frau Nimptsch, that is just the sad part of it. These fly-about, that are here to-day and there to-morrow, well, they never come to grief, they always fall on their feet like a cat, but such a good child, who takes everything seriously, and does everything for the sake of love, that is bad Or perhaps it may not be so bad; you only adopted her and she is not your own flesh and blood and perhaps she is a princess or something like that.”

At this conjecture Frau Nimptsch shook her head and looked as if she were about to answer. But Frau Dörr had already risen and said, as she looked along the garden path: "Heavens, there they come. And he is just in civilian's clothes, with coat and trousers to match. But you would notice him all the same! And now he is whispering something in her ear and she is smiling to herself. But she is blushing so. . . . And now he is going away. And now. . . . Really, I believe, he is turning back. No, no, he is only saying good-bye again and she is throwing him a kiss. . . . Yes, I think something like that would have suited me. . . . No, mine was not like that."

Frau Dörr went on talking, until Lena came in and greeted both women.

CHAPTER II

THE next forenoon the sun, which was already rather high, shone into the yard of the Dörrens' little establishment and lighted up a considerable number of buildings, among which was the "castle" of which Frau Nimptsch had spoken on the previous evening with roguish playfulness. Such a "castle"! In the twilight its general outlines might have passed for something of the sort, but to-day, as it stood in the remorselessly bright light, one could see only too plainly, that the building with its Gothic windows painted on the walls clear to the top, was nothing more than a wretched old wooden house, in the two gable ends of which had been set some timber framing, the spaces of which were filled with plaster, a comparatively solid structure which indicated two gable rooms. All the rest of the house was merely a stone-paved space from which a confused looking set of ladders led to a loft or garret and from that to the tower which served as a pigeon house. Formerly, before Dörr's time, the whole great wooden "shack" had served merely as a store-house for bean poles and watering pots, perhaps even as a potato cellar, but since, some years ago, the garden had been bought by its present owner, the real dwelling house had been rented to Frau Nimptsch, and the old building painted in the Gothic style, with the addition of the two gable rooms already mentioned, had been arranged as a dwelling for Dörr, who was then a widower; a very primitive arrangement it was, which was in no wise altered by his speedy second marriage. In the summer this cool store house with its stone pavements and almost no windows was not a bad dwelling place, but in the winter Dörr and his wife as well as a rather feeble-minded twenty-year-old son of the former marriage, would have actually frozen, had it not been for the two big hothouses which stood on the other side of the yard. In these the three Dörrens spent their time exclusively from November until March, but even in the warmer and more comfortable part of the year, the family life, when it was not actually necessary to seek refuge from the sun, was mostly carried on in front of these hot houses or in them, because everything there was more convenient. Here were the steps and shelves on which the flowers that were brought out of the hothouses every morning had their airing, here was the stall for the cow and the goat, and here the kennel for the dog that was used to pull the little wagon, and from here extended outward the double row of hotbeds, perhaps fifty paces long, and with a little path between,

until they reached the vegetable garden which lay further back. This garden did not look very neat, partly because Dörr had no sense of order, and also because he had such a passion for poultry, that he would allow his favorites to scratch and pick everywhere, without regard to the damage that they did. To be sure, the damage was not great, for there was nothing very fine in the garden except the asparagus beds. Dörr thought that the commonest things were also the most profitable, and therefore raised marjoram and other herbs for seasoning sausages, especially "borré," concerning which he held the opinion that a genuine Berliner really needs only three things: his pale ale, his "gilka" and "borré." "With borré," he always concluded, "one is never at a loss." He was decidedly an eccentric, wholly self-sufficient in his views and was decidedly indifferent as to what might be said about him. His second marriage was in keeping with this tendency, a marriage of inclination, upon which the idea of his wife's unusual beauty had had its effect as well as her former relation to the Count, which instead of injuring her chances, had tipped the balance for the better and had simply served as a complete proof that her charms were irresistible. If there was any hint of overvaluing personal charms — and there was good ground for this opinion — it could not be on the side of Dörr himself, for whom nature, so far as outward appearances were concerned, had done uncommonly little. Thin, of medium height and with five strands of grey hair drawn over his head and brow, his looks would have been completely ordinary had not a brown mole between his eye and his left temple given him a certain mark of distinction. For this reason his wife, with some reason and in her own free and easy fashion used to say: "He is withered looking, but from the left he reminds me of a "Borsdorfer."

This description was well hit off and would have served to identify him anywhere if he had not continually worn a linen cap with a big visor, which being drawn well down over his face, hid its every-day as well as its unusual aspect.

And so, with his cap and visor drawn down over his face, he stood once more, on the day after the conversation between Frau Dörr and Frau Nimptsch, before a flower stand that stood against the front greenhouse, setting to one side various wallflower and geranium pots, which were to go to the weekly market on the morrow. They were all plants that had not been raised in pots, but simply set into them, and with especial joy and satisfaction he passed them in

review, laughing beforehand at the “madams,” who would come the next day to spend their usual five pfennigs, but in the end would be fooled. He considered this one of his greatest pleasures and indeed it was the principal part of his mental life. “If I could only hear them scold about it . . . If I only could.”

He was talking to himself in this vein, when he heard from the garden the barking of a little cur together with the distressed crowing of a cock, and unless he was very much deceived, of *his* cock, his favorite with the silvery feathers. And looking toward the garden, he actually saw his flock of hens rushing this way and that, while the cock had flown up in a pear tree, from which he constantly called for help while the dog barked beneath.

“Thunder and lightning,” cried Dörr in a rage. “There is Bollmann’s dog again . . . He has got through the fence again. . . . But we shall see. . . .” And quickly setting down the geranium pot that he was examining, he ran to the dog kennel, caught up the hook of the chain and turned the big dog loose, who rushed furiously through the garden. But before he could reach the pear tree, “Bollmann’s beast” had already given leg bail and was disappearing under the fence into the open, the big yellow dog pursuing him with great leaps. But the gap that had sufficed for the pug would not let him through, and he was forced to give up the chase.

Dörr himself had no better luck, when he came up with a rake and exchanged glances with the dog. “Well, Sultan, we didn’t catch him this time.” And so Sultan trotted back to his kennel in a slow, puzzled way, as if he had been blamed for something. But Dörr himself gazed after the pug who was running over the ploughed ground and said to himself presently: “The Devil take me, if I don’t get me an air gun at Mehle’s or somewhere. And then I’ll get the beast out of the way so silently that neither cock nor hen will make a sound. Not even mine.”

The cock, however, seemed to have for the present no use for the quiet attributed to him by Dörr, but continued to use his voice just as strenuously as before. And meanwhile he puffed out his silver white throat as proudly as if he wanted to show the hens that his flying up into the pear tree was a well-considered “coup” or else a mere whim.

But Dörr said: “Oh Lord, what a cock. He thinks he is something wonderful. And yet his courage doesn’t amount to much.”

And so saying he went back to his flower stand.

CHAPTER III

THE whole incident had also been observed by Frau Dörr, who was cutting asparagus, but she paid very little attention, because such things happened nearly every other day. So she kept on with her work, and only gave up the search, when even the sharpest scrutiny of the beds failed to reveal any more white heads. Only then did she hang the basket on her arm, putting the knife in it, and driving a couple of strayed chickens before her, while she walked slowly along the middle path of the garden and then into the yard and up to the flower stand, where Dörr had resumed his work for the market.

“Well, Susy,” he greeted his better half, “here you are. Did you see? Bollmann’s dog was here again. Listen, he had better say his prayers and then I will try him out over the fire; there must be a little fat on him and Sultan can have the scraps. . . . And listen, Susy, dog’s fat. . . .” And he appeared to become absorbed in a favorite method of treating gout which he had been considering for some time. But at this moment he caught sight of the asparagus basket on his wife’s arm, and interrupted himself. “Come, show it to me,” he said. “Did you have good luck?”

“So so.” said Frau Dörr, holding out the scarcely half-filled basket, whose contents he passed through his fingers, shaking his head. For most of the stalks were thin and there were many broken ones among them.

“Now, Susy, listen. You certainly have no eye for asparagus.”

“Yes I have, too. But I can’t work magic.”

“Oh well, we will not quarrel. Susy; that will not make it any more than it is. But it looks like starvation.”

“Why, not at all. They are all under ground, and whether they come up to-day or to-morrow, it is all the same. One good shower, such as we had before Whitsunday, and then you will see. And there is going to be rain. The water barrel is already smelling again and the big spider has crept into the corner. But you want to have everything every day; and you can’t expect that.”

Dörr laughed. “Well, tie it all up nicely. And the poor

little stalks too. And then you can sell it a little cheaper.”

“Now, don’t talk like that,” interrupted his wife, who always got angry over his avarice, but still she pulled his ear, which he always regarded as a sign of affection, and then she went over to the “castle,” where she meant to make herself comfortable in the stone paved passageway and tie up her asparagus in bunches. But she had scarcely drawn up to the threshold the stool which always stood ready, than she heard, over in the little house with three windows where Frau Nimptsch lived, a back window pushed up vigorously and a moment later hooked in place. And then she saw Lena with a lilac and white jacket over her woolen skirt and a cap on her ash-blond hair, waving a friendly greeting to her.

Frau Dörr returned the greeting with equal warmth and said: “The window always open; that’s right, Lena. It is already beginning to grow hot. Some change must be coming.”

“Yes. And mother already has her headache from the heat, and so I would rather iron in the back room. It is pleasanter here too; at the front we don’t see anybody.”

“That is so,” answered Frau Dörr. “I believe I will come over to the window for a bit. I can always work better when I have some one to talk to.”

“How kind and good you are, Frau Dörr. But right here by the window the sun is so strong.”

“That will do no harm, Lena. I will bring my market umbrella along, the old thing is covered with patches. But it serves its purpose still.”

And within five minutes, good Frau Dörr had moved her stool over by the window and sat there as comfortable and self-satisfied as if she were at the regular market. Inside the room Lena had put the ironing board across two chairs close to the window and stood so near it that it would have been easy to reach her with one’s hand. Meanwhile the flatiron moved busily back and forth. And Frau Dörr also was diligently choosing and binding up her asparagus and if she paused from her work now and then and glanced into the room, she could see the glow of the little ironing stove from which the fresh coals were taken for the

flatiron.

“You might just bring me a plate, Lena, a plate or a dish.” And when Lena brought what Frau Dörr had asked, the good woman dropped into the dish the broken pieces of asparagus which she had kept in her apron while she was sorting out the stalks. “There, Lena, that will make a little taste of asparagus. And it is just as good as the rest. For it is all nonsense that you must always have the heads. And it is just the same with cauliflower; always the flower . . . pure imagination. The stump is really the best, for the strength of the plant is there. And the strength is always the most important thing.”

“Heavens, you are always so good, Frau Dörr. But what will your husband say?”

“He? What he says doesn’t matter. He will be talking. He always wants me to put in the spindling ones with the rest as if they were real stalks; but I don’t like such cheating tricks, even if the broken pieces do taste just as good as the whole stalks. What anyone pays for, he ought to get, only it makes me angry that a man who gets on so well should be such an old skinflint. But all gardeners are like that, skimp and grasp and then they can never get enough.”

“Yes,” laughed Lena, “he is greedy and a bit peculiar. But for all that he is a good man.”

“Yes, Lena, he is well enough so far, and even his stinginess would not be so bad, for at least it is better than wastefulness, if only he were not too fond. You would not believe it, but he is always right there. And just look at him. I have nothing but bother with him for all that he is fifty-six years old, and maybe a year more. For he tells lies if it suits him to. I keep telling him about strokes of apoplexy and point out people who limp or have their mouths drawn to one side, but he always laughs and will not believe me. But it will happen. Yes, Lena, I have no doubt that it will happen. And perhaps soon. Well, he has willed me everything he has and so I will not say anything more. When one has made one’s bed, one must lie in it. But why are we talking about Dörr and strokes, and his bow legs. Good Lord, Lena, there are plenty of other folks who are as straight as a fir tree. Aren’t there, Lena?”

At this Lena grew still more rosy than before, and said:

“The charcoal is cold.” And stepping back from the board, she went to the stove and shook the coal back among the embers, so as to take out a new one. All this was the work of a moment. And now with a quick turn of the hand she slipped the new hot coal from the tongs into the iron, shut the little door, and only then noticed that Frau Dörr was still waiting for an answer. But to make sure, the good woman asked the question over again and added: “Is he coming to-day?”

“Yes. At least he promised to.”

“Now tell me, Lena,” went on Frau Dörr, “How did it really begin? Mother Nimptsch never says much, and if she does say anything, it doesn’t amount to much, and I never get the ins and outs of it. For she only tells part and that all confused. Now do tell me. Is it true that you met in Stralau?”

“Yes, Frau Dörr, it was in Stralau, on Easter Monday, but it was already as warm as if it were Whitsunday, and because Lina Gansauge likes boating, we took a skiff; and Lina’s brother Rudolph, whom I think you know, took the rudder.”

“Heavens, Rudolph. Rudolph is a mere boy.”

“That is so. But he thought he knew all about it, and he kept saying: ‘You must sit still, girls; you rock the boat so,’ for he speaks with such a frightful Berlin accent. But we didn’t think of doing such a thing, because we soon saw that his steering wasn’t good for much. But by and by we forgot all about it, and let ourselves go, and joked with those we met, and splashed each other with water. And in the only boat that was going in the same direction that we were, sat a pair of very fine gentlemen, who saluted us, and we were so reckless that we returned their greetings and Lina even waved her handkerchief, and behaved as if she knew the gentlemen, which however was not the case, and she only wanted to show off, because she is so young. And while we were laughing and joking like that, and only playing with the oars, we saw all at once that the steamer from Treptow was coming towards us, and as you can imagine, dear Frau Dörr, we were frightened to death and called out to Rudolph that he must steer us out of the way. But the boy had lost his head and just steered us round and round in a circle. And then we began to scream and we should surely have been run down if the two gentlemen in

the other boat had not at that very moment taken pity on us in our trouble. With a couple of strokes they reached us and while one of them took firm hold of us with a boat hook and made us fast to their boat, the other rowed their boat and ours out of the wake of the steamboat, and only once more did it seem as if the big waves would capsize us. The captain shook his fist at us (I saw that for all my fright), but that was soon over and in another minute we had reached Stralau and the two gentlemen, to whom we owed our rescue, jumped out and gave us their hands and helped us out like regular escorts. And so there we stood on the slip at Tübbecke's, feeling very bashful and Lena was crying softly and only Rudolph, who is always obstinate and boastful, and doesn't like soldiers, looked sullenly before him, as if to say: 'Nonsense, I could have steered you out all right myself.'

"Yes, that is what he is, a boastful young rascal; I know him. But now tell me about the two gentlemen. That is the chief thing. . . ."

"Well, they did what they could for us and then took their places at another table and kept looking over at us. And when we were ready to go home, towards seven o'clock, and it was growing a little dark, one of them came to us and asked 'whether he and his friend might offer to escort us?' And I laughed rather recklessly and said, 'they had rescued us and one must not refuse anything to one's rescuer. But they had really better think about it a little, for we lived almost at the other end of the earth. And it would be really quite a journey.' Thereupon he answered politely, 'All the better.' And meanwhile the other man had come up. . . . Ah, dear Frau Dörr, perhaps it was not right, to talk so freely at first sight, but one of them took my fancy, and I never knew how to put on any prim airs. And so we walked all the long way home together, first by the Spree and then by the canal."

"And how about Rudolph!"

"He followed after, as if he had nothing to do with us, but he used his eyes and noticed everything. And that was quite right; for Lina is only eighteen and is still a good, innocent child!"

"Do you think so?"

“Certainly, Frau Dörr. You only need to look at her. You can see that at once.”

“Yes, usually. But once in a while you can’t. And so they saw you home?”

“Yes, Frau Dörr.”

“And afterwards?”

“Yes, afterwards. But you know already how it was afterwards. He came the following day to inquire. And ever since he has come often, and I am always glad when he comes. Heavens, it does make one happy to see a little of life. It is often so lonely, away out here. And you know, Frau Dörr, mother has nothing against it and always says: ‘Child, that does no harm. Before you know it, you will be old.’”

“Yes indeed,” said Frau Dörr, “I have often heard Frau Nimpf speak like that. And she is quite right too. That is to say, just as one takes it, and to live according to the catechism is really better and, so to speak, actually the best way. You may take my word for it. But I know very well, things do not always go that way, and a great many are not willing to follow those rules. And if one will not, one will not, and things must take their own course as they usually do, so long as one is honest and decent and keeps his word. And naturally, whatever happens, one must put up with it and must not be surprised. And if one knows all this and keeps it in mind, well, then it is not so bad. And really, fanciful notions are the only thing that does any harm.”

“Oh, dear Frau Dörr.” laughed Lena, “what can you be thinking of? Fanciful notions! I have no fancy notions. If I love anyone, I love him. And that is enough for me. And I want nothing more from him, nothing at all. And it makes me happy that my heart beats so and that I count the hours till he comes, and that I cannot wait until I see him again, that is my joy, and it is enough for me.”

“Yes,” said Frau Dörr smiling to herself, “that is right, that is as it should be. But Lena, is his name really Botho? No one could have such a name; it is no sort of a Christian name.”

“But it is, Frau Dörr,” and Lena seemed as if she wanted to prove the fact that there were such names. But before she could succeed, Sultan barked and one could plainly hear the sound of some one entering from the corridor. The letter carrier came in and brought two orders for Dörr and a letter for Lena.

“My Lord, Hahnke,” exclaimed Frau Dörr to the man on whose brow the great drops stood, “you are dripping with sweat. Is it so frightfully hot? And only half-past nine. I see very well that there isn’t much fun in being a letter carrier.”

And the good soul started to go and get a glass of fresh milk. But Hahnke refused with thanks. “I have no time, Frau Dörr. Some other day.” And with these words he left at once.

Meanwhile Lena had opened her letter.

“Well, what does he say?”

“He isn’t coming to-day, but to-morrow. Oh, what a long time it is till to-morrow. It is a good thing that I have work; the more work the better. And this afternoon I’ll come over to your garden and help you dig. But I don’t want Dörr to be there.”

“The Lord forbid.”

And then they separated and Lena went into the front room to give her old mother the dish of asparagus from Frau Dörr.

CHAPTER IV

AND now the next evening had come, the time for Baron Botho's promised visit. Lena was walking up and down in the front garden, but in the large front room, Frau Nimptsch sat as usual by the hearth, while to-day again the whole Dörr family had grouped themselves around her. Frau Dörr was knitting with big wooden needles on a blue woolen jacket for her husband, and the work, as yet quite shapeless, lay on her lap like a great fleece. Near her, with his legs comfortably crossed, Dörr was smoking a clay pipe, while his son sat in a big grandfather's chair close to the window, leaning his red head against the "wing" of the chair. Every morning he was up by cockcrow, so to-day he had once more fallen asleep through weariness. There was but little talk, and so nothing was to be heard but the clicking of the needles and the chattering of the squirrel, which from time to time came out of his box and gazed curiously about. The only light came from the fire on the hearth and the afterglow of the sunset.

Frau Dörr sat so that she could look along the garden path and in spite of the twilight she could see who was coming along the road, past the hedge.

"Ah, there he comes," said she. "Now, Dörr, just let your pipe go out. You are just like a chimney to-day, puffing and smoking all day long. And such a stinking old pipe as yours is not fit for everyone."

Dörr did not let such speeches trouble him much and before his wife could say any more or repeat her verdict, the Baron came in. He was visibly mellow, as he had just come from a punch bowl, which had been the subject of a wager at the club, and said, as he took Frau Nimptsch's hand: "Good evening, mother. I hope all is well with you. Ah, and Frau Dörr; and Herr Dörr, my favorite old friend. See here, Dörr, what do you say to the weather? Specially ordered for you and for me too. My meadows at home, that are under water four years out of five and bear nothing but crow's foot, such weather will do them good. And it will do Lena good too; she can stay out of doors more; she is growing too pale to suit me."

Meanwhile Lena had drawn up a wooden chair near her old mother, because she knew that this was Baron Botho's favorite place; but Frau Dörr, who was fully impressed

with the idea that a Baron must occupy the seat of honor, had meanwhile risen, and with the blue fleecy mass trailing after her, she called out to her stepson: "Will you get up! I say, now. If there is nothing in him, it's no use to expect anything from him." The poor boy stood up, all stupid and sleepy and was going to give up his seat, but the Baron would not allow it. "For heaven's sake, dear Frau Dörr, leave the poor boy alone. I would far rather sit on a bench, like my friend Dörr here."

And therewith he pushed the chair, which Lena still had ready for him, beside the old mother and said as he sat down:

"Here beside Frau Nimptsch is the best place. I know of no other fireplace that I am as fond of; there is always fire, always warmth. Yes, Mutterchen, that is true, this is the best place."

"Oh my soul," said the old woman. "This is the best place! In an old washerwoman's house."

"Certainly. And why not? Every class and calling is worthy of respect. And a washerwoman too. Do you know, Mutterchen, that here in Berlin there was a famous poet who wrote a poem about his old washerwoman?"

"Is it possible?"

"Of course it is possible. Moreover it is true. And do you know what he said at the end? He said that he wished he could live and die like his old washerwoman. Yes, that is what he said."

"Is it possible?" said the old woman to herself once more, simpering a little.

"And do you know, Mutterchen, now don't you forget it, he was quite right, and I say the very same? Oh yes, you laugh to yourself. But just look about you here. How do you live? Like the good Lord in France. In the first place, you have your house and hearth, and then the garden and Frau Dörr. And then you have Lena. Haven't you? But what has become of her?"

He would have gone on talking, but just then Lena came in with a tray, on which was a carafe of water and some

cider, for which the Baron had a preference not easily to be understood, but for his belief in its wonderful curative properties.

“Why Lena, how you spoil me. But you should not offer it to me so formally. It seems just as if I were at the club. You must bring it to me in your hand, it tastes best that way. And now give me your little hand, and let me stroke it. No, no, the left one; that is nearest the heart. And now sit right there, between Herr and Frau Dörr, so that you will be opposite me and I can see you all the time. I have been happy all day, looking forward to this time.”

Lena laughed.

“Perhaps you don’t believe it? But I can prove it to you, Lena, for I have brought you something from the fine party that we had yesterday. And when one has a little present to bring, he always feels happy about the girl who is to receive it. Isn’t that so, my dear Dörr?”

Dörr grinned, but Frau Dörr said: “Lord, he? He bring presents? Dörr is all for scraping and saving. That is the way with gardeners. But I am curious to see what the Herr Baron has brought.”

“Well, then I will not keep you waiting any longer, or else dear Frau Dörr might think I have brought a golden slipper or some such thing out of a fairy story. But this is all it is.”

And therewith he gave Lena a paper bag, from which, unless all signs failed, the fringed ends of some snapping bonbons peeped out.

They proved to be snapping bonbons and the bag was passed around.

“But now we must pull one, Lena. Hold on tight and shut your eyes.”

Frau Dörr was delighted when the cracker snapped, and still more so when Lena’s forefinger began to bleed. “That doesn’t hurt, Lena, I know it doesn’t. It is just like a bride who pricks her finger. I used to know one who was so crazy about it, that she kept pricking herself and sucked and sucked, as if it were something wonderful.”

Lena blushed. But Frau Dörr did not notice and went on: "And now read the verse, Herr Baron."

And this is what he read:

When two forget themselves for love,
God and the angels rejoice above.

"Heavens," said Frau Dörr, folding her hands. "That is just like something out of a song book. Is the verse always so pious?"

"I hope not," said Botho. "Not always. Come, dear Frau Dörr, let us pull one and see what we shall get out of it."

And then he pulled again and read:

Where Love's dart has struck well,
Wide open stand both heaven and hell.

"Now, Frau Dörr, what do you say to that? It sounds different, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said Frau Dörr, "it sounds different. But I don't quite like it If I pull a bonbon. . . ."

"Well?"

"Then I don't want anything about hell to come out, I don't want to hear that there is any such thing."

"Nor I either," laughed Lena. "Frau Dörr is quite right: for that matter, she is always right. But really, when one reads such a verse, one has always something to start with, I mean to begin a conversation with, for the beginning is always the hardest, just as it is with writing letters. And I simply cannot imagine how you can begin a conversation at once with no more ado, with so many strange ladies, for you are not all acquainted with each other."

"Oh, my dear Lena," said Botho, "it isn't so hard as you think. It is really quite easy. If you like, I will give you a dinner-table conversation now."

Frau Dörr and Frau Nimptsch said that they would like to hear it and Lena too nodded her assent.

“Now,” went on Baron Botho, “you must imagine that you are a little Countess. And I have just escorted you to the table and sat down and we are taking the first spoonful of soup.”

“Very well. But what now?”

“And now I say to you: ‘If I am not mistaken. I saw you yesterday at the flower show, you and your mother together. It is not surprising. The weather entices us out every day now and we might almost say that it is fit for travelling. Have you made any plans for the summer, Countess?’ And now you answer, that unfortunately nothing is settled yet, because your papa is determined to go to Bavaria, while your dearest wish is to see Saxon Switzerland with the Königstein and the Bastei.”

“It really is,” laughed Lena.

“You see, that goes very well. And then I go on: ‘Yes, gracious Countess, in that we share the same tastes. I prefer Saxon Switzerland to any other part of the world, even to the actual Switzerland itself. One cannot always revel in the grander aspects of nature, and clamber and get out of breath all the time. But Saxon Switzerland! Heavenly, ideal. There is Dresden; in a quarter or a half hour I can be there, and I can see pictures, the theatre, the great gardens, the Zwinger, and the green vault. Do not neglect to see the tankard with the foolish virgins, and above all things that cherry stone, on which the whole of the Lord’s prayer is carved. It can only be seen through the magnifying glass.’”

“So that is the way you talk!”

“Exactly, my darling. And when I have paid sufficient attention to my left-hand neighbor, that is, the Countess Lena, I turn to my right-hand neighbor, that is, to Madame the Baroness Dörr. . . .”

Frau Dörr was so delighted that she slapped her knee with a loud noise. . . .

“So I am to converse with Madame the Baroness Dörr? And what shall we talk about? Well, say we talk about mushrooms.”

“But, great heavens, mushrooms. About mushrooms, Herr Baron, that would never do.”

“Oh why not, why shouldn’t it do, dear Frau Dörr? That is a very serious and instructive subject and is more important than you think. I once visited a friend in Poland, a comrade in my regiment and also during the war, who lived in a great castle; it was red and had two huge towers, and was so fearfully old, that you never see anything like it nowadays. And the last room was his living room; for he was unmarried, because he was a woman hater. . . .”

“Is it possible?”

“And everywhere the old rotten boards were trodden through and wherever there were a couple of boards lacking, there was a mushroom bed, and I passed by all the mushroom beds, until at last I came to his room.”

“Is it possible?” repeated Frau Dörr and added: “Mushrooms! But one cannot always be talking about mushrooms.”

“No, not always. But really quite often, and anyway it makes no difference what you talk about. If it isn’t mushrooms it is ‘champignons,’ and if it is not the red castle in Poland it is Schloss Tegel or Saatwinkel, or Valentinswerder. Or Italy or Paris, or the city railway, or whether the Panke should be filled in. It is all the same. One can always talk a little about anything, whether it is especially pleasing or not. And ‘yes’ is just as good as ‘no.’”

“But,” said Lena, “if all the talk is so empty, I am surprised that you should go into such company.”

“Oh you see beautiful women and handsome gowns and sometimes you catch glances that will betray a whole romance, if you look sharp. And anyway, it does not last long, so that you still have a chance to make up for lost time at the club. And at the club it is really charming, for there the artificial talk ceases and reality begins. Yesterday I took Pitt’s black mare from him.”

“Who is Pitt?”

“Oh, those are just names that we have among ourselves, and we use them when we are together. The Crown Prince himself says Vicky, in speaking of Victoria. It really is

pleasant that there are such affectionate pet names. But listen, the concert is beginning over there. Can't we open the windows, so as to hear it better? You are already tapping with your foot. How would it do for us to take our places and try a Quadrille or a Française? We have three couples: Father Dörr and good Frau Nimptsch, and Frau Dörr and I (I beg the honor) and then comes Lena with Hans."

Frau Dörr agreed at once, but Dörr and Frau Nimptsch declined, the latter because she was too old, the former because he was not used to such fine doings.

"Very well. Father Dörr. But then you must beat time; Lena, give him the tray and a spoon. And now come, ladies. Frau Dörr, your arm. And now Hans, wake up, be lively."

And both pairs actually took their places and Frau Dörr's stateliness visibly increased, as her partner began in a formal, dancing-master's French: "*En avant deux, Pas de Basque.*" The poor sleepy freckle-faced boy looked about mechanically and allowed himself to be shoved here and there, but the three others danced as if they knew how, and old Dörr was so delighted that he jumped up and beat time on his tray with his knuckles instead of with his spoon. The spirit of other days seemed to return to Frau Nimptsch also, and since she found nothing better to do, she poked the fire until the flames leaped up.

This went on until the music stopped; Botho led Frau Dörr back to her place, but Lena still stood there, because the poor awkward boy did not know what he ought to do with her. But that suited Botho exactly, for when the music at the garden began again, he began to waltz with her, and to whisper to her, how charming she was, more charming than ever.

They had all grown warm, especially Frau Dörr, who now stood close to the open window. "Lord, how I am shivering," said she suddenly, whereupon Botho courteously sprang forward to close the window. But Frau Dörr would not hear of such a thing and said, the fine people were all wild about fresh air, and many of them so much so that the bed coverings froze to their mouths in winter. Their breath was just like the steam from the spout of the kettle. So the window must stay open, she would not give up that

point. But if dear Lena had something comforting to give them, something to warm the cockles of the heart

“Certainly, Frau Dörr, whatever you want. I can make tea, or punch, or better still, I have the cherry brandy, that you gave Mother Nimptsch and me last Christmas for my big Christmas cake.”

And before Frau Dörr could decide between punch and tea, the flask of cherry brandy was already there, with small and large glasses which each could fill according to their own desire. And now Lena went around, the black kettle in her hand, and poured the boiling water into the glasses. “Not too much, Lena, not too much. Let us get the good of it. Water takes away the strength.” And in a moment the room was full of the rising aroma of cherry brandy.

“How nicely you did that,” said Botho, as he sipped from his glass. “Lord knows, I had nothing yesterday, nor to-day at the club that tasted like this. Hurrah for Lena! But the chief credit of it all belongs to our friend, Frau Dörr, because she had that shivering fit, and so I am going to drink a second health. Frau Dörr; Hurrah for Frau Dörr.”

“Long may she live,” shouted all the group together, and old Dörr began to thump his tray with his knuckles again.

They all pronounced it a delicate drink, far finer than punch extract, which in summer always tastes of sour lemon, because you mostly get old bottles, which have been standing in the hot sun, in shop windows, ever since Shrove Tuesday. But cherry brandy was something wholesome and never spoiled, and rather than poison one’s self with that bitter almond poison one ought to take some proper good stuff, at least a bottle.

It was Frau Dörr who made this remark, and her husband, who did not want things to go too far, perhaps because he knew his wife’s pet weakness, urged their departure: “There will be another day to-morrow.”

Botho and Lena asked them to stay a while longer. But good Frau Dörr, who well knew “that one must yield at the proper time, in order to keep the upper hand,” merely said: “Never mind, Lena. I know him; he wants to go to bed with the birds.” “Well,” said Botho, “what is settled is settled. But at least we will escort the Dörrs home.”

And therewith everybody went out, excepting old Frau Nimptsch, who looked after her departing friends amiably, nodding her head, and then got up and seated herself in the big grandfather chair.

CHAPTER V

LENA and Botho paused before the “castle” with the green and red painted tower and asked Dörr with considerable formality for permission to go into the garden and walk there for half an hour. The evening was so fine. Father Dörr muttered that he could not leave his property in better hands, whereupon the young couple took leave, bowing courteously, and went into the garden. Everything was already quiet, and only Sultan, whom they had to pass, got up, and whimpered until Lena had stroked him. After that he crawled back into his kennel.

In the garden all was perfume and freshness, for all the way along the principal path, between the currant and gooseberry bushes, grew gilly flowers and mignonette, whose delicate perfume mingled with the more powerful odour of the thyme beds. Nothing stirred in the trees, and only the fireflies darted through the air.

Lena was hanging on Botho’s arm and they walked together to the end of the garden, where a bench stood between two silver poplars.

“Shall we sit down?”

“No,” said Lena, “not now,” and she turned into a side path bordered with tall raspberry bushes which nearly overtopped the garden fence. “I love to walk leaning on your arm. Tell me about something – something really pretty. Or ask me about something.”

“Very well. Are you willing that I should have more of a friendship with the Dörrs?”

“As far as I am concerned.”

“A curious couple. And moreover, I think, they are happy. He has to do as she wishes, and yet he is far cleverer than she.”

“Yes,” said Lena, “he is cleverer, but then he is miserly and hard-hearted and that makes him docile, because he always has a bad conscience. She looks after him sharply and will not allow it, if he tries to overreach anyone. And that is what he is afraid of, and that makes him yielding.”

“Is that all?”

“Perhaps love, too, if it does sound strange. I mean love on his side. For in spite of his fifty-six years or more he is perfectly wild over his wife, simply because she is stout. Both of them have made me the most wonderful confessions about that. But I confess frankly, she is not to my taste.”

“But you are wrong there, Lena; she makes quite a figure.”

“Yes,” laughed Lena, “she makes a figure, but she has none. Can’t you see, that her hips are a hand’s breath too high? But you never see anything like that, and ‘figure’ and ‘imposing’ are every other word with you, without any concern as to the origin of that ‘imposing figure.’”

Chatting and teasing each other thus they paused and stooped down to see if they could find an early strawberry in the bed that lay in front of the hedge and fence. Finally Lena found what she wanted, took the stem of a perfect beauty between her lips and came close up to Botho and looked at him.

He was nothing loth, plucked the berry from her lips and embraced and kissed her.

“My sweet Lena, you did that just right. But just hear how Sultan is barking; he wants to get to you; shall I let him loose?”

“No, if he is here, you are only half mine. And if you keep on talking about ‘stately Frau Dörr,’ then I have as good as nothing left of you at all.”

“Good,” laughed Botho, “Sultan may stay where he is. I am contented. But I want to talk more about Frau Dörr. Is she really so good?”

“Yes, she really is, for all that she says strange things — things that sound as if they have a double meaning and perhaps really have. But she knows nothing about that, and in her doings and behavior there is not the least thing that could recall her past.”

“Has she a past then?”

“Yes. At least she had some sort of a relation for years and ‘went with him’ as she calls it. And there is no sort of doubt that there was plenty of talk about that affair, and of course about good Frau Dörr herself. And she herself must have given occasion for it again and again. Only she is so simple that she never gave it a thought, still less reproached anyone. She speaks of it as an unpleasant service, that she faithfully and honorably fulfilled, simply from a sense of duty. You may laugh, and it does sound queer. But I don’t know any other way to tell it. And now let us leave Frau Dörr alone and sit down and look at the crescent moon.”

And in fact, the moon stood just above the elephant house, which, in the flood of silver light, looked even more fantastic than usual. Lena pointed to it, drew her hood closer and hid her face on Botho’s breast.

So the minutes passed by, silent and happy, and only when Lena aroused, as if from a dream that escaped her, and sat up again, did she say: “What were you thinking of? But you must tell me the truth.”

“What was I thinking of, Lena? Why, I am almost ashamed to tell you. I had some sentimental thoughts and was thinking of our kitchen garden at Castle Zehden, which is laid out so much like this of the Dörr’s, the same lettuce beds with cherry trees between and I would almost wager, just as many bird houses. And even the asparagus beds run the same way. And I would walk amongst them with my mother and if she was in a good humor, she would give me the knife and let me help her. But woe be unto me if I were careless and cut the asparagus stalk too long or too short. My mother’s hand was hasty.”

“I well believe it. And I always feel as if I ought to be afraid of her.”

“Afraid? How so? Why, Lena?”

Lena laughed merrily and yet her laughter was a trifle forced. “You must not take it into your head that I have any intention of presenting myself before the gracious lady; you must just feel as if I had said that I am afraid of the Empress. That would not make you think that I meant to go to court? No, don’t be afraid; I shall never

complain of you.”

“No. you wouldn’t do that. You are much too proud for that, and then you are a regular little democrat, and every friendly word has to be almost choked out of you. Isn’t that so? But however that may be, describe my mother, as you imagine her. How does she look?”

“Very much like you: tall and slender and blond and blue-eyed.”

“Poor Lena (and now the laugh was on his side), you have missed it this time. My mother is a little woman with bright black eyes and a long nose.”

“I don’t believe it. It isn’t possible.”

“And yet it is true. You must remember that I have a father too. But that never occurs to you. You always think that you women are the principal thing. And now tell me something about my mother’s character. But make a better guess.”

“I think of her as very much concerned for the welfare of her children.”

“Correct.”

“. . . And that all her children must make wealthy, yes very wealthy marriages. And I know too, whom she has ready for you.”

“An unfortunate woman, whom you”

“How you do mistake me. Believe me, that I have you now, for this very hour, is my joy. What follows does not trouble me. One of these days you will have flown away. . . .”

He shook his head.

“Don’t shake your head: what I say is true. You love me and are true to me; at least in my love I am childish and vain enough to believe so. But you will fly away, I see that clearly enough. You will have to. The saying is that love makes us blind, but it also makes us see far and clear.”

“Ah, Lena, you do not know how dearly I love you.”

“Oh yes, I do. And I know too that you think of your Lena as something set apart, and every day you think, ‘if only she were a Countess.’ But it is too late for that now, I can never bring it about. You love me, and you are weak. That cannot be altered. All handsome men are weak and the stronger spirit rules over them. . . . And the stronger spirit . . . now, who is that? Either it is your mother, or people’s talk, or your connections. Or perhaps all three . . . But just look.”

And she pointed towards the Zoological Garden, where through the darkness of the trees and foliage a rocket rushed hissing into the air and with a puff burst into a countless shower of sparks. A second followed the first and so it went on, as if they were chasing and trying to catch up with one another, until of a sudden the rockets ceased and the shrubbery began to glow in a green and red light. A couple of birds cried out harshly in their cages and then after a long pause the music began again.

“Do you know, Botho, what I would give, if I could lean on your arm and walk with you over there up and down that school for scandal, as safely as here among the box borders, and if I could say to everyone: ‘Yes, you may wonder at us, he is he and I am I, and he loves me and I love him;’ – do you know what I would give? But don’t guess, for you never could. You only know yourself and your club and your life. Oh, the poor little life.”

“Don’t speak so, Lena.”

“Why not? One must look everything squarely in the face and not whiten anything over, and above all one must not whiten one’s self. But it is growing cold and they are through over there. That is the last piece that they are playing now. Come, we will go in and sit by the fire-side, the fire will not be out yet and my mother has long since gone to bed.”

So they walked back along the garden path, she leaning lightly on his shoulder. The lights were all out in the “castle” and only Sultan gazed after them, thrusting his head out of his kennel. But he did not move and only some dim, sullen thoughts passed through his brain.

CHAPTER VI

IT was the next week after the events narrated, and the chestnut trees were already in bloom. They were blossoming also in Bellevue Street. Baron Botho lived here in a ground floor apartment that extended through from a front balcony to one that opened on a garden: there was a living-room, a dining-room, and a bedroom, which were distinguished by a tasteful furnishing decidedly beyond the means of their owner. In the dining-room there were two pictures of still life by Hertel and between these a bear hunt, an admirable copy from Rubens, while in the living-room the "show piece" was a storm at sea by Andreas Achenbach, surrounded by several smaller pictures by the same artist. The storm picture had come into Baron Botho's possession by chance at a lottery, and by means of this beautiful and valuable work he had gained the reputation of a connoisseur and especially of an admirer of Achenbach. He joked freely about this and used to declare "that his luck at the lottery cost him quite dear, because it continually led him to make new purchases, adding that it was perhaps the same with all good fortune."

Before the sofa, the plush of which was covered with a Persian rug, the coffee apparatus stood on a malachite table, while on the sofa itself all kinds of political journals were lying about, and amongst these some whose presence in this place seemed rather peculiar, and could only be explained by Baron Botho's favorite phrase "fiddlesticks before politics." Stories which bore the stamp of imagination, so-called "pearls," amused him the most. A canary bird, whose cage always stood open at breakfast time, was flying as usual to light on the hand or shoulder of his too-indulgent master, who, instead of being impatient, put his paper aside every time to stroke his little favorite. But if he omitted the caress, the little creature would cling to the reader's neck and beard and chirp long and persistently until he had his way. "All favorites are alike," said Baron Rienäcker, "they expect humility and obedience."

Just now the door bell rang and the servant came in to bring the letters. One, a gray, square envelope, was open and bore a three pfennig stamp. "Hamburg lottery tickets or new cigars," said Rienäcker, and threw envelope and contents aside without further consideration. "But this one . . . Ah, from Lena. I will save this for the last, unless this third sealed one contends for the honor. The Osten

crest. Then it is from Uncle Kurt Anton: the Berlin post-mark means that he is already here. What can he want now? Ten to one, he wants me to breakfast with him or to buy a saddle or to escort him to Renz, or perhaps to Kroll also; most likely I am to do the one and not omit the other.”

And he took a knife from the window-sill and cut open the envelope, on which he had recognized also Uncle Osten’s handwriting, and took out the letter. The letter read:

Hotel Brandenburg, Number 15

My dear Botho:

An hour ago I arrived safely at the eastern depot, warned by your old Berlin notice ‘Beware of Pickpockets,’ and have engaged rooms in the Hotel Brandenburg, which is to say, in the same old place; a real conservative is conservative even in small things. I shall only stay two days, for your air is too heavy for me. This is a smothering hole. But I will tell you everything by word of mouth. I shall expect you at one o’clock at Hiller’s. After that we will go and buy a saddle. And then in the evening we will go to Renz. Be punctual.

Your old Uncle,
Kurt Anton.

Rienäcker laughed. “I thought as much! And yet there is an innovation. Formerly it was Borchardt, and now it is Hiller. Oh, oh, Uncle dear, a true conservative is conservative even in small things. . . . And now for my dear Lena. . . . What would Uncle Kurt Anton say if he knew in what company his letter and his commands arrived.”

And while he was speaking, he opened Lena’s note and read:

It is now five whole days since I last saw you. Is it going to be a whole week? And I was so happy that evening that I thought you simply must come again the next day. And you were so dear and good. Mother is already teasing me, and she says: “He will not come again.” Oh, what a pain in my heart that gives me, because I know that it must happen some time and because I feel that it might happen any day. I was reminded of that again yesterday. For when I just wrote you that I had not seen you for five whole days, I did not tell the truth; I did see you yesterday, but secretly, by stealth, on the Corso. Just fancy, I too was there, naturally far back in a side path and I watched you riding back and forth for an hour. Oh I was extremely happy, for you were the most imposing rider (almost as imposing as Frau Dörr, who sends her regards to you), and I was so proud just to see you that I didn’t even grow jealous. I mean I was jealous only once. Who was the pretty blonde, with the two white horses? They were simply garlanded with flowers, and the flowers were so thick that there were no leaves nor stems. I never saw anything so beautiful in my life. When I was a child I would have thought that she was a Princess,

but now I know that Princesses are not always the most beautiful. Yes, she was pretty and you liked her, I could see that, and she liked you too. But her mother, who set beside the pretty blonde, you liked still better. And that angered me. I grant you a really young woman, if it must be so. But an old woman! and even a mamma? No, no, she has had her share. In any case, my own Botho, you see that you will have to quiet me and make me happy again. I shall expect you to-morrow or the next day. And if you cannot come in the evening, come in the daytime, even if only for a minute. I am so troubled about you, that is to say, about myself. But you understand me already.

Your

Lena.

“Your Lena,” said he, repeating the signature, once more to himself and a sort of restlessness took possession of him, because all kinds of conflicting emotions passed through his heart: love, anxiety, fear. Then he read the letter through again. At two or three passages he could not forbear to make a little mark with his silver pencil, not through pedantry, but through pure delight. “How well she writes! The handwriting certainly, and the spelling almost . . . *Stiehl* instead of *Stiel*. . . Well, why not? Stiehl was a much dreaded school inspector, but the Lord be praised, I am not. And “*emphehlen*.” Shall I be put out with her over f and h? Good Lord, how many people can spell “empfehlen” properly? The young Countesses cannot always, and the old ones never. So where is the harm! Really, the letter is like Lena herself, good, true and trustworthy, and the mistakes make it only the more charming.”

He leaned back in his chair and covered his eyes and brow with his hand: “Poor Lena, what is to come of all this? It would have been better for us both, if there had been no Easter Monday this time. Why indeed should there be two holidays? Why Treptow and Stralau and boating excursions? And now my Uncle! Either he is coming as a messenger from my mother, or else he has plans for me himself, of his own initiative. Well, we shall see. He has never been through any training in diplomatic disguises, and even if he has sworn ten oaths to keep silence, he comes out with everything. I shall soon find out, for all that I am even less experienced than he in the art of intrigue.”

Thereupon he pulled out a drawer of his writing table, in which there were already other letters of Lena’s, tied up with a red ribbon. And now he rang for the servant to help him to dress. “So, John, that is all I need. . . . And now don’t forget to draw the blinds down. And if anyone should come and ask for me, I shall be at the barracks till

twelve, at Hiller's after one and at Renz's in the evening. And be sure to raise the blinds again at the right time, so that I shall not find a bake-oven again. And leave the lamp lighted in the front room, but not in my bedroom; it seems as if the flies are possessed this year. Do you understand?"

"Very good, Herr Baron."

And during this dialogue, which was half carried on in the corridor, Rienäcker passed through the vestibule, and out in the garden he playfully pulled the braids of the porter's little girl, who was stooping over her little brother's wagon, and got in return a furious glance, which changed to one of delight as soon as she recognized him.

And now at last he stepped through the gate to the street. Here he saw beneath the green bower of the chestnut trees the men and vehicles passing silently to and fro between the great gate and the Zoological Garden, as if through the glass of a camera. "How beautiful! This is surely one of the best of worlds."

CHAPTER VII

TOWARDS twelve his service at the barracks being over, Botho von Rienäcker was walking along under the Lindens toward the Gate, simply with the intention of filling up the time as well as he could until his interview at Hiller's. Two or three picture shops were very welcome to him in this interim. At Lepke's there were a couple of Oswald Achenbachs in the show window, among them a street in Palermo, dirty and sunny, and strikingly truthful as to life and color. "There are things, then, about which one is never quite clear. So it is with these Achenbach's. Until recently I always swore by Andreas; but when I see something like this, I do not know that Oswald is not his equal or his superior. In any case he is more brilliant and varied. But such things as this I can only think to myself, for to say them before people would be to lower the value of my 'Storm at Sea' by half, and quite unnecessarily."

Thinking of these matters he stood for a time before Lepke's show window and then walked across the Parisian Square to the Gate and the path turning sharply to the left toward the Zoological Garden, until he paused before Wolf's group of lions. Here he looked at the clock. "Half past twelve. Then it is time." And so he turned and went back over the same path towards the Lindens.

In front of the Redern Palace he saw Lieutenant von Wedell of the Dragoon Guards coming towards him.

"Where are you going, Wedell?"

"To the club. And you?"

"To Hiller's."

"Aren't you rather early?"

"Yes, but what of it? I am to breakfast with an old uncle of mine, an old Neumarker who lives in an odd corner with 'Aldermann, Petermann and Zimmermann' — all names that rhyme with man, but without connection or obligation. By the way, he was once in your regiment, my Uncle, I mean. To be sure it was long ago, about forty years. Baron Osten."

"From Wietzendorf?"

“The same.”

“Oh, I know him, at least by name. There is some relationship. My grandmother was an Osten. Is he the same who has the quarrel with Bismarck?”

“The same. I tell you what, Wedell, you had better come too. The club can wait and Pitt and Serge too; you can find them at three just as well as at one. The old gentleman is still wild over the blue and gold of the dragoons, and is enough of a Neumarker to consider every Wedell an acquisition.”

“Very well, Rienäcker, but it is on your responsibility.”

“With pleasure.”

During this talk they had reached Hiller’s, where the old Baron was already standing by the glass door looking out, for it was a minute after one. He made no comments, however, and was evidently overjoyed when Botho presented “Lieutenant von Wedell.”

“Your nephew”

“No excuses, Herr von Wedell, everyone who bears the name of Wedell is welcome to me, and doubly and trebly so when wearing this coat. Come, gentlemen, we will extricate ourselves from this melee of tables and chairs, and concentrate in the rear as well as we can. It is not Prussian to retreat, but here it does not matter.” And therewith he preceded his guests to choose a good place, and after looking into several little private rooms, he decided on a rather large room, with walls of some leather colored material, which was not very light, in spite of the fact that it had a broad window in three parts, because this looked out on a narrow and dark court. The table was already laid for four, but in the twinkling of an eye the fourth cover was removed, and while the two officers placed their side arms in the corner of the window, the old Baron turned to the head waiter, who had followed at some distance, and ordered a lobster and some white Burgundy. “But what kind, Botho?”

“How would Chablis do?”

“Very well, Chablis, and fresh water. But not from the tap. I want it cold in a carafe. And now, gentlemen, be seated: my dear Wedell, sit here, and Botho there. If only we hadn’t this heat, this dog-day weather coming so early. Air, gentlemen, air. Your beautiful Berlin, (which, so they tell me, grows more beautiful all the time, at least those who know no better say so), your beautiful Berlin has everything but air.” And with these words he threw open the big window sash, and sat so that he had the large middle opening directly opposite him.

The lobster had not yet come, but the Chablis was already on the table. Old Baron Osten restlessly began to cut one of the rolls from the basket quickly and skilfully into diagonal strips, merely for the sake of having something to do. Then he laid down the knife again and offered his hand to Wedell. “I am endlessly grateful to you, Herr von Wedell, and it was a brilliant idea of Botho’s to alienate your affections from the club for a couple of hours. I take it as a good omen, to have the privilege of meeting a Wedell immediately after my arrival in Berlin.”

And now he began to fill the glasses, because he could not control his uneasiness any longer. He ordered a bottle of Clicquot to be set to cool and then went on: “Really, dear Wedell, we are related; there are no Wedells to whom we are not related, were it only through a bushel of peas; we all have Neumark blood. And when I see the blue of my old dragoons once more, my heart jumps right up in my mouth. Yes, Herr von Wedell, old affection does not rust. But here comes the lobster. . . . Please bring me the big shears. The shears are always the best. . . . But, as I was saying, old love does not grow rusty, nor the edge of the blade either. And I wish to add, the Lord be praised. In those days we still had old Dobeneck. Heavens, what a man he was! A man like a child. But if things did not go well and would not work out properly, I should have liked to see the man who could keep his face under old Dobeneck’s eye. He was a regular old East Prussian dating from the year ’13 and ’14. We were afraid of him, but we loved him too. For he was like a father. And, do you know, Herr von Wedell, who my riding master was . . . ?”

At this point the champagne was brought in.

“My riding master was Manteuffel, the same to whom we owe everything that the army, and victory with the army,

has made of us.”

Herr von Wedell bowed, while Botho said softly: “Surely, one may well say so.”

But that was not wise nor clever of Botho, as was soon manifest, for the old Baron, who was already subject to congestion, turned red all over his bald head and what little curly hair still remained on his temples seemed to curl still tighter. “I don’t understand you, Botho; what do you mean by ‘one may well say so,’ that is the same as to say ‘one might also not say so.’ And I know, too, what all this points to. It signifies that a certain officer of Cuirassiers from the reserves, who, for the rest, held nothing in reserve, least of all revolutionary measures, it signifies, I say, that a certain man from Helberstadt with a sulphur-yellow collar, himself personally stormed St. Privat and closed the great circle around Sedan. Botho, you ought not to come to me with any such tale as that. He was a young barrister and worked for the government at Potsdam, and what is more, under old Meding, who never spoke well of him, as I know, and for that matter, he never learned anything but how to write despatches. I am willing to grant him that much, he does understand that, or in other words, he is a quill driver. But it is not quill drivers who have made Prussia great. Was the hero of Fehrbellin a quill driver? Was the hero of Leuthen a quill driver? Was Blücher a quill driver, or York? The power of the Prussian pen is *here!* I cannot suffer this cult.”

“But my dear Uncle”

“But, but, I will tolerate no buts. Believe me, Botho. it takes years to settle such questions; I understand such things better. How is it then? He tips over the ladder by which he has climbed, and even suppresses the ‘Kreuzzeitung,’ and, to speak plainly, he ruins us; he despises us, he tells us foolish things, and if he takes a notion to, he denounces us for robbery or interception of documents and sends us to the fortress. But why do I say fortress? The fortress is for decent people; no, he sends us to the poor-house to pluck wool. . . . But air, gentlemen, air. There is no air here. Damnable hole.”

And he jumped up, and in addition to the middle window which was already open, he flung wide the two side windows also, so that the draught that passed through blew the cur-

tains and the tablecloth about. Then, sitting down again, he took a piece of ice from the champagne cooler and passed it over his forehead.

“Ah,” he went on, “this piece of ice is the best thing in the whole breakfast. . . . And now tell me, Herr von Wedell, am I right or not? Botho, with your hand on your heart, am I right? Is it not true that one, as a member of the Märkisch nobility, may talk oneself into a charge of high treason simply through the pure indignation of a nobleman? Such a man . . . from one of our very finest families . . . finer than Bismarck’s, and so many have fallen for the throne and for the Hohenzollerns, that you could form a whole regimental company of them, a company with helmets, and the Boitzenburger to command them. Yes, my friends. And such an affront to such a family. And what for? Interception of documents, indiscretion, betrayal of official secrets. I should like to know if there is anything else left except child murder and offences against morality, and it is actually strange that they have not loaded those on also. But you gentlemen are not saying anything. Speak out, I beg you. Believe me, I can listen to other opinions patiently; I am not like him; speak, Herr von Wedell, speak.”

Wedell, whose embarrassment was increasing, sought for some soothing and reconciling words: “Certainly, Herr Baron, it is as you say. But, pardon me, at the time that the affair was decided, I heard many express the opinion, and the words have remained in my memory, that the weaker must give up all idea of crossing the path of the stronger, for that is impossible in life just as in politics. Once for all it is so: might is more than right.”

“And there is no gainsaying that, no appeal?”

“Oh yes, Herr Baron. Under some circumstances an appeal is possible. And, to be perfectly frank, I have known of cases where opposition was justified. What weakness dare not venture, sincerity might, the sincerity of belief, the courage of conviction. In such cases resistance is not only a right but a duty. But who has this sincerity? Had he But I will be silent, for I do not want to offend either you, Herr Baron, or the family to whom we have reference. But you know, even without my telling you, that he who had that audacity, had not such sincerity of belief. He who is merely the weaker should dare nothing,

only the pure in heart should dare everything.”

“Only the pure in heart should dare everything,” repeated the old Baron, with such a roguish expression, that it seemed doubtful whether he was more impressed by the truth or by the untenability of the thesis. “The pure in heart should dare everything. A capital saying which I shall carry away with me. It will please my pastor, who undertook a controversy with me last autumn and demanded a strip of my land. Not for his own sake, the Lord forbid! but for the sake of principle, and of posterity, for which reasons he ought not to yield. The sly old fox. But the pure in heart should dare everything.”

“Of course you would have to yield in the land quarrel with the pastor,” said Botho. “I knew Schönemann long ago at Sellenthin’s.”

“Yes, he was a tutor there and knew no better than to shorten the lesson hours and lengthen the recreation hours. And he could play grace-hoops like a young marquis; really, it was a pleasure to watch him. But now he has been seven years in orders and you would never know the Schönemann who used to pay court to the charming mistress of the house. But I must admit this, he educated both the young ladies well, especially your Katherine. . . .”

Botho glanced timidly at his uncle, almost as if to beg him to be discreet. But the old Baron, delighted to have seized upon so favorable an opportunity to enter on his favorite theme, went on in exuberant and ever-increasing good humor: “There, there, Botho. Discretion. Nonsense! Wedell is from our region and must know the story just as well as anyone else. Why should we keep silence about such things? You are already as good as bound. And God knows, young man, when I pass the young girls in review, you cannot find a better — teeth like pearls, and she is always laughing so that you can see the whole row. A flaxen blonde to tempt your kisses, and if I were only thirty years younger, I declare”

Wedell, who noticed Botho’s confusion, tried to come to his aid and said: “The Sellenthin ladies are all very pleasing, the mother as well as the daughters; last summer I met them in Norderney, and they were charming, but I would prefer the second. . . .”

“So much the better, Wedell. You will not come into any conflict and we can celebrate a double wedding. And Schönemann may be sure that if Kluckhuhn, who is touchy like all old people, agrees, I will not only put a spoke in his wheel, but I will give up the strip of parsonage land to him without further ado if I can see such a wedding within the year. You are rich, dear Wedell, and there is really no haste about you. But look at our friend Botho. That he looks so well nourished is no thanks to his sandy wastes, which, excepting a couple of meadows, are really nothing but a nursery of young pines, and still less to his eel pond. ‘Eel pond,’ sounds wonderful, you might almost say poetic. But that is all. One cannot live on eels. I know you do not like to hear about this, but so long as we are on the subject, I may as well come out with it. How do matters stand, then? Your grandfather had the timber cut down and your late father — a capital fellow, but I never saw anyone play the man of affairs so poorly and so expensively too — your late father, I say, divided up the five hundred acres of eastern farming-land among the Jeseritz peasants, and there is not much good land left, and the thirty thousand thalers are long since gone. If you were alone, it might do, but you must share with your brother, and at present the mamma, my sister Liebden, has the whole still in her hands, an admirable woman, clever and skilful, but she does not err on the saving side. Botho, what is the use of belonging to the Imperial Cuirassiers and what is the use of having a rich cousin, who is only waiting for you to come and seal and ratify by a formal proposal what your parents had already agreed upon when you were still children? Why consider longer? Listen, if I could go to your mother to-morrow on my return and bring her the news: ‘Dear Josephine, Botho consents; everything is arranged,’ listen, boy, that would be something for an old uncle who means well by you to rejoice over. Speak to him, Wedell. It is time that he should quit this bachelor life. Otherwise he will squander his bit of property or get caught by some little bourgeoisie. Am I right? Naturally. Done! And we must drink to the happy event. But not with these dregs. . . .” And he rang the bell. “A bottle of Heidsieck. The best brand.”

CHAPTER VIII

AT about this same time there were at the club two young cavaliers, one of them, who was tall, slender and smooth-faced, belonged to the Gardes du Corps; the other, who was somewhat shorter, and had a full beard with only the regulation smooth chin, had been dismissed from the Pasewalkern. The white damask table cloth, which remained from their breakfast, had been turned back and the two were playing piquet on the bare half of the table.

“Six cards and four of a kind.”

“Very well.”

“And you?”

“Fourteen aces, three kings, three queens. . . . And you don’t make a trick.” And he laid his hand on the table and then pushed all the cards together while his companion shuffled.

“Did you know that Ella is about to be married?”

“What a pity!”

“Why a pity?”

“She can’t jump through the hoop any more.”

“Nonsense. The more they are married the slenderer they grow.”

“Yet there are exceptions. Many names belonging to the aristocracy of the circus already appear in the third and fourth generation, which seems to point to some alternation of a slender and a stouter form, or if you like, to the new moon, the first quarter, &c.”

“You are mistaken. *Error in calculo*. You forget that there may be adoptions. All these circus people are secretly ‘Gichtelianer’ and pass on their property, their rank and their names according to agreement. They seem the same and yet they are different. There is always fresh blood. Cut. . . . Besides that I have another bit of news. Afzelius is to join the General Staff.”

“Which do you mean?”

“The one who belongs to the Uhlans.”

“Impossible.”

“Moltke values him highly and he must have done some excellent work.”

“He does not impress me. It was all an affair of hunting libraries and plagiarizing. Any one who is a trifle ingenious can turn out books like Humboldt or Ranke.”

“Four of a kind. Fourteen aces.”

“Five sequence to king.”

And while the trick was being played, one could hear from the billiard room near by the sound of the balls and the falling of the little pins.

In the two back rooms of the club, the narrow side of which looked out on a sunny but tiresome garden, there were in all only six or eight men, all silent, all more or less absorbed in their whist or dominoes, and not the least absorbed were the two men who had just been talking about Ella and Afzelius. The game ran high, and so the two did not look up until they saw, through an open curved niche, a new-comer approaching from the next room. It was Wedell.

“But Wedell, if you don’t bring us a lot of news, we will excommunicate you.”

“Pardon, Serge, there was no definite agreement.”

“But almost. For the rest, you will find me personally in the most accommodating mood. How you can settle things with Pitt, who has just lost 150 points, is your affair.”

Thereupon the two men pushed the cards aside and the young man whom Wedell had greeted as Serge took out his watch and said: “Quarter past three. Time for coffee. Some philosopher, and he must have been one of the greatest, once said that the best thing about coffee was that it was always suitable under all circumstances and at all times of day. Truly that was a wise saying. But where shall

we take it? I think we had better sit outside on the terrace, right in the sun. The more one braves the weather the better one fares. Here, Pehlecke, three cups. I cannot listen to the falling of the pins any longer. It makes me nervous; outside, indeed, there is noise too, but it is different, and instead of the sharp strokes, we shall hear the rumbling and thundering of the underground railway, and we can imagine that we are on Vesuvius or Ætna. And why not? All pleasures are in the last analysis imaginary, and whoever has the best imagination enjoys the most pleasure. Only unreality gives value and is actually the only reality.”

“Serge,” said the man who had been addressed as Pitt at the piquet table, “if you go on with your famous wise sayings, you will punish Wedell more severely than he deserves. Besides, you must have some mercy on me because I have been losing. So, we will stay here, with the lawn behind us, this ivy near us, and a view of a bare wall. A heavenly location for his Majesty’s guards! What would old Prince Pückler have said to this club garden? Pehlecke, here, bring the table here, that will do. And, to finish with, you may bring us some of your very best lager. And now, Wedell, if you want to win forgiveness, give your cloak a shake, and see if you cannot shake a new war or some other big piece of news out of it. You are related to God in heaven through the Puttkamers. With which branch I need not say. What more is he brewing?”

“Pitt,” said Wedell, “I beg you, don’t ask me any questions about Bismarck. For in the first place, you know that I know nothing about such matters, because cousins in the seventeenth degree are not precisely the intimates and confidants of princes, and in the second place, I come, instead of from the Prince, direct from a shooting match where with a few hits and many, many misses, no other than his Highness was the target.”

“And who was this bold shot?”

“The old Baron Osten, Rienäcker’s uncle. A charming old gentleman and a good fellow. But of course a sly dog also.”

“Like all Markers.”

“I am one myself.”

“*Tant mieux*. Then you know all about it yourself. But

out with it. What did the old fellow say?"

"A good many things. His political talk was hardly worth reporting, but another bit of news was all the more important: Rienäcker has a sharp corner to turn."

"And what corner?"

"He is about to marry."

"And you call that a sharp corner to turn? I beg to disagree with you, Wedell; Rienäcker stands in a much more difficult position: he has 9000 marks a year and spends 12000, and that is the sharpest of all corners, at least sharper than the marriage corner. Marriage is no danger for Rienäcker, but a rescue. For that matter, I have seen it coming. And who is it then?"

"A cousin!"

"Naturally. A rescuer and a cousin are almost identical terms at present. And I will wager that her name is Paula. All cousins are named Paula these days."

"But this one is not."

"And her name?"

"Katherine."

"Katherine? Ah, now I know. Katherine Sellenthin. Hm! Not so bad, in fact a brilliant match. Old Sellenthin, he is the old man with the plaster over his eye, has six estates, and with the farms there are really thirteen. If divided in equal parts, Katherine will get the thirteenth thrown in. My congratulations."

"Do you know her?"

"Certainly. A wonderful flaxen-haired blonde with eyes as blue as forget-me-nots, but for all that she is not sentimental, and is less like the moon than like the sun. She was here at Frau Zulow's Pension, and at fourteen she was already surrounded and courted."

"At the Pension?"

“Not really at the Pension and not every day, but on Sundays when she went to lunch with old Osten, the one whom you have just seen. Katherine, Katherine Sellenthin! . . . she was like a rail then, and that is what we used to call her, and she was the most charming little hoyden that you can imagine. I can still see her braid of hair, which we always called the distaff. And Rienäcker will now have a chance to spin it off. Well, why not? It will not be so difficult for him.”

“After all, it may be more difficult than many think.” answered Wedell. “And while he certainly needs his finances improved, yet I am not sure that he would decide at once in favor of the blond beauty from his own province. For you must know that Rienäcker has for some time past enjoyed another tint, indeed ash-blond, and if what Balafré lately told me is true, he has been seriously considering whether he should not raise his blanchisseuse to the rank of la dame blanche. He sees no distinction between Castle Avenal and Castle Zehden. A castle is a castle and, you know, Rienäcker, who for that matter, goes his own way in many things, was always in favor of naturalness.”

“Yes,” laughed Pitt. “That he was. But Balafré draws the long bow and invents interesting tales. You are sober, Wedell, and will not be ready to believe such made up nonsense.”

“No, it is not imaginary.” said Wedell. “But I believe what I know. Rienäcker, in spite of his six feet, or perhaps because of them, is weak and easily guided and is peculiarly gentle and tenderhearted.”

“He certainly is. But circumstances will compel him and he will break away and free himself, at the worst like a fox out of a trap. It is painful and a bit of one’s life is left behind. But the main thing is to get out again — out, out and free. Long live Katherine! And Rienäcker! What does the proverb say? ‘God helps those who help themselves.’”

CHAPTER IX

THAT evening Botho wrote to Lena that he would come on the following day, perhaps even earlier than usual. And he kept his word and arrived an hour before sunset. Naturally he found Frau Dörr there. The air was very fine and not too warm, and after they had talked a while, Botho said:

“Perhaps we could go into the garden.”

“Yes, either into the garden or somewhere else?”

“What do you mean?”

Lena laughed. “Don’t be worried again, Botho. There is no one hiding in ambush and the lady with the pair of white horses and the wreaths of flowers will not cross your path.”

“Then where shall we go, Lena?”

“Just out in the green meadows where you will have nothing but daisies and me. And perhaps Frau Dörr, too, if she will be so good as to go with us.”

“Will she?” said Frau Dörr. “Surely she will. I feel much honored. But I must put myself to rights a little. I will be with you again directly.”

“There is no need, Frau Dörr; we will call for you.”

And so the plan was carried out, and as the young couple walked across the garden a quarter of an hour later, Frau Dörr was already standing at the door, a wrap on her arm and a marvellous hat on her head, a present from Dörr, who, like all misers, would buy something absurdly expensive once in a while.

Botho said something complimentary to the rather overdressed lady, and all three walked down the path and went out by a hidden side door and reached a little path, which before it led further and curved out into the open green fields ran along by the outer side of the garden fence where the nettles grew high.

“We will follow this path,” said Lena. “It is the prettiest and the most solitary. No one comes here.”

And certainly it was the loneliest path, far more silent and solitary than three or four other roads that ran parallel with it over the meadows towards Wilmersdorf and showed something of their own sort of suburban life. On one of these roads there were a good many sheds, between which there were horizontal bars somewhat like those used by gymnasts. These aroused Botho’s curiosity, but before he could ask about them, the work going on answered his question: rugs and carpets were spread out on the frames and immediately began such a beating and banging with big sticks that a cloud of dust rose and nearly concealed the road.

Botho pointed out this dust and was beginning a discussion with Frau Dörr about the value or harmfulness of carpets, which, viewed in this light, are mere dirt catchers, “and if one has not a very strong chest one might get consumption and never know how.” But he stopped short in the middle of a sentence, because the road he had taken led past a place where the rubbish of a stone-cutter’s workshop had been thrown out, and all sorts of fragments of ornaments lay about, in great numbers especially angels’ heads.

“There is an angel’s head,” said Botho. “Look, Frau Dörr. And here is even one with wings.”

“Yes,” said Frau Dörr. “And a chubby face too. But is it really an angel? I think it must be a cupid, because it is so small and has wings.”

“Cupid or angel,” said Botho, “they are just the same. You ask Lena, and she will tell you so. Isn’t that so, Lena?”

Lena seemed offended, but he took her hand and they were good friends again.

Immediately behind the rubbish heap the path turned to the left and opened immediately afterwards into a somewhat larger country road where the willows were in bloom and were scattering their fleecy catkins over the fields, where they lay strewn about like cotton wool.

“Look, Lena,” said Frau Dörr, “do you know that they stuff beds with that now instead of feathers? And they call it tree wool.”

“Yes, I know, Frau Dörr. And I am always glad when people think of anything like that and make use of it. But it would never do for you.”

“No, Lena, it would not do for me. You are right. I am more in favor of something firm, horse hair and a spring bed, and if it gives a jump”

“Oh, yes,” said Lena, who was growing a trifle nervous over this description. “But I am afraid that we shall have rain. Just hear the frogs, Frau Dörr.”

“Yes, the frogs.” repeated the latter. “At night they keep up such a croaking that one cannot sleep. And why? Because this is all swamp and only looks like meadow land. Look at the pool where the stork is standing and looking right over this way. Well, he isn’t looking at me. He might have to look a long time. And a mighty good thing too.”

“But we ought really to be turning back,” said Lena, who was much embarrassed, and simply wanted to say something.

“Oh, no indeed,” laughed Frau Dörr. “Surely not now. Lena; you mustn’t get frightened at a little thing like that. Good stork, you must bring me Or shall I sing: Dearest stork?”

And so it went on for a while yet. for it took time to get Frau Dörr away from such a favorite topic.

But finally there was a pause, during which they walked slowly onward, until at last they came to a plateau-like ridge that led over from the Spree towards the Havel. Just at this point the pasture land ended and fields of rye and rape seed began and continued as far as the first rows of houses of Wilmersdorf.

“Now let us go up there,” said Frau Dörr, “and then we will sit down and pick buttercups and make a wreath out of the stems. It is always so much fun to poke one stem into another until the wreath or the chain is done.”

“Yes, yes,” said Lena, whose fate it was not to be free from small embarrassments. “Yes, yes. But now come, Frau Dörr, the path leads this way.”

And talking thus they climbed the little slope and seated themselves at the top on a heap of weeds and rubbish that had been lying there since the previous autumn. This heap was an excellent resting place, and also afforded a good point of view from which one could overlook a ditch bordered with willows and grass, and could not only see the northern row of houses of Wilmersdorf, but could also plainly hear, from a neighboring smoking-room and bowling-alley, the fall of the ninepins and more plainly still the rolling back of the heavy ball along the two noisy wooden rods of its track. Lena enjoyed this, and took Botho’s hand and said: “See, Botho, I understand that so well (for when I was a child we lived near such a bowling-alley) that when I just hear the ball hit, I know at once how much it will make.”

“Well,” said Botho, “then we can bet.”

“And what shall we bet?”

“We shall think of something.”

“Very well. But I only have to guess right three times, and if I say nothing it doesn’t count.”

“I am satisfied.”

And so they all three listened, and Frau Dörr, who grew more excited every minute, swore by all that was holy that her heart was throbbing and that she felt just as if she were sitting before the curtain at the theatre. “Lena, Lena, you have undertaken too much, child; it really is not possible.”

And so she would have continued, if they had not just then heard a ball hit and after one dull blow come to rest against the side guard. “Missed,” cried Lena. And this was actually the case.

“That was easy, too easy,” said Botho. “I could have guessed that myself. Let us see what happens next.”

And then, two more strokes followed, without Lena speaking or moving. But Frau Dörr's eyes seemed to pop out of her head more and more. But now. Lena rose at once from her place, there came a small, hard ball and one could hear it dance, vibrating over the board with a tone in which elasticity and hardness were curiously mingled. "All nine," said Lena. And in a moment the falling of the ninepins was heard and the attendant only confirmed what scarcely needed confirmation.

"You have won, Lena. We must eat a philopena to-day and then we'll call it square. Isn't that right, Frau Dörr?"

"Why certainly," said Frau Dörr winking. "It is all square." And so saying, she took her hat off and began to swing it about as if it had been her market hat.

Meanwhile the sun had gone down behind the Wilmersdorf church tower and Lena proposed to start for home, "it was growing so chilly; but on the way they would play tag: she was sure that Botho could not catch her."

"We shall soon see."

And now they began chasing and running, and Lena actually could not be caught until at last she was so weak with laughter and excitement that she took refuge behind the substantial form of Frau Dörr.

"Now I have a tree to dodge around," she laughed, "and so you'll never catch me." And thereupon she took hold of Frau Dörr's rather loose jacket and pushed the good woman so cleverly to the left and right, that she protected herself for quite a while. But suddenly Botho was beside her and caught her and gave her a kiss.

"That is against the rules; we had not agreed on anything." But despite this protest she hung on his arm and commanded, imitating the harsh voice of the guard, "Forward march . . . double quick," and enjoying Frau Dörr's endless exclamations of admiration wherewith the good woman accompanied the game.

"Is it believable?" said she. "No, one can hardly believe it. And always just like this. And when I think of mine! It is unbelievable, I say. And yet he was a man too. And he always behaved so!"

“What in the world is she talking about?” asked Botho softly.

“Oh she is just thinking. . . . But you know all about it I told you about it before.”

“Oh, so that is it. Well, he can’t have been so very bad.”

“Who knows? For that matter, one is about the same as another.”

“Do you think so?”

“No.” And she shook her head while her eyes shone with a soft and tender expression. But she would not let this mood get the upper hand of her and so she said quickly: “Let us sing, Frau Dörr. Let us sing. But what shall we sing?”

“ ‘Rosy dawn’”

“No, not that ‘To-morrow in the cold grave’ is too sad for me. No, let us sing ‘A year from now, a year from now’ or rather ‘Do you remember?’”

“Yes, that is right, that is a pretty one: that is my favorite song.”

And with well-practised voices all three sang Frau Dörr’s favorite song, and when they had nearly reached the garden the words still rung out over the field: “*Ich denke d’ran. . . . Ich danke dir mein leben.*” And then from the other side of the road, where the long row of sheds and carriage-houses were, the echoes repeated the song.

Frau Dörr was very, very happy. But Lena and Botho had grown quiet and serious.

CHAPTER X

IT was already growing dark when they stood once more in front of Frau Nimptsch's house, and Botho, who had quickly recovered his high spirits, wanted to come in for just a moment and then bid good-bye at once. But when Lena had reminded him of all sorts of promises, and Frau Dörr with much emphasis and much use of her eyes had reminded him of the still outstanding philopena, he yielded and decided to spend the evening.

"That is right," said Frau Dörr. "And I will stay too. That is, if I may and if I shall not be in the way of the philopena. For one can never know. And I will just take my hat and cloak home and then come right back."

"Surely you must come back," said Botho, as he shook hands with her. "We shall never be so young when we meet again."

"No, no," laughed Frau Dörr, "We shall never be so young when we meet again. And it is quite impossible, of course even if we should meet again to-morrow. For a day is always a day and must amount to something. And therefore it is perfectly true that we shall never be so young when we meet again. And every one must agree to that."

In this fashion she went on for a while longer, and the wholly undisputed fact of growing older every day pleased her so much that she repeated it several times yet. And then she went out. Lena escorted her out through the hall, while Botho sat down by Frau Nimptsch and asked, as he put her shawl around her shoulders, "whether she was still angry with him for taking Lena away again for a couple of hours? But it had been so beautiful there on the mound where they had sat to rest and talk that they had quite forgotten the time."

"Yes, happy people forget the time," said the old woman. "And youth is happy, and that is right and good. But when one grows old, dear Herr Baron, the hours grow long and one wishes the day was done and life too."

"Ah, you are only saying that, Mutterchen. Old or young, everyone loves life. Isn't that so, Lena, that we all love life?"

Lena had just come back into the room and ran to him as if struck by what he had said and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him and was far more passionate than was usual with her.

“Lena, what is the matter with you?”

But she had already regained her self-control and with a quick gesture she refused his sympathy, as if to say: “Do not ask.” And while Botho was talking with Frau Nimptsch, she went to the kitchen cupboard, rummaged about there a little and came back immediately with a perfectly cheerful face, bringing a little blue book sewed up in paper, which looked like the books in which housewives write down their daily tasks. In fact the book served this purpose and also contained questions which Lena had noted down either out of curiosity or because of some deeper interest. She now opened it and pointed to the last page, on which Botho’s eyes immediately fell upon the heavily underscored words: *“Things I need to know.”*

“For heaven’s sake. Lena, that sounds like a tract or the title of a comedy.”

“It is something of the sort. Read on.”

And he read: “Who were the two ladies at the Corso? Is it the elder or is it the younger? Who is Pitt? Who is Serge? Who is Gaston?”

Botho laughed. “If I should answer all those questions, Lena, I should have to stay till early to-morrow morning.”

It was fortunate that Frau Dörr was not present to hear this answer or else there would have been a fresh embarrassment. But the good lady who was usually so brisk, at least where the Baron was concerned, had not yet returned, and so Lena said: “Very well, then, have it your own way. And for all I care, the two ladies may wait until another time! But what do the foreign names mean? I asked you before, the time you brought the bonbons. But you gave me no real answer, only half an answer. Is it a secret?”

“No.”

“Then tell me about it.”

“Gladly, Lena, these names are only nicknames.”

“I know that. You said so before.”

“So they are names that we have given each other for convenience, with or without reason, just by chance.”

“And what does Pitt mean?”

“Pitt was an English statesman.”

“And is your friend a statesman too?”

“For heaven’s sake”

“And Serge?”

“That is a Russian given name, belonging to a Russian saint and many Russian crown princes.”

“Who, however, do not find it necessary to be saints if I am right? . . . And Gaston?”

“Is a French name.”

“Yes, I remember that. Once when I was a little young thing, before I was confirmed, I saw a piece: ‘The Man with the Iron Mask.’ And the man with the mask was called Gaston. And I cried dreadfully.”

“And now you will laugh if I tell you that I am Gaston.”

“No, I will not laugh. You have a mask too.”

Botho was about to contradict this, both in earnest and in jest, but Frau Dörr, who just then came in, broke off the conversation, by excusing herself for having kept them waiting so long. But an order had come in and she had been obliged to make a burial wreath in a hurry.

“A big one or a little one?” asked Frau Nimptsch, who loved to talk about funerals and had a passion for hearing all the details about them.

“Well,” said Frau Dörr, “it was a middle-sized one; plain people. Ivy and azaleas.”

“Oh, Lord!” went on Frau Nimptsch, “every one is wild about ivy and azaleas, but I am not. Ivy is well enough when it grows on the grave and covers it all so green and thick that the grave seems as peaceful as he who lies below. But ivy in a wreath, that is not right. In my day we used immortelles, yellow or half yellow, and if we wanted something very fine we took red ones or white ones and made a wreath out of those, or even just one color and hung it on the cross, and there it hung all winter, and when spring came there it hung still. And some lasted longer than that. But this ivy and azalea is no good at all. And why not? because it does not last long. And I always think that the longer the wreath hangs on the grave, the longer people remember him who lies below. And a widow too, if she is not too young. And that is why I favor immortelles, yellow or red or even white, and any one can hang up another wreath also if he wants to. That is just for the looks of it. But the immortelle is the real thing.”

“Mother,” said Lena, “you talk so much about graves and wreaths lately.”

“Yes, child, everyone speaks as he thinks. And if one is thinking of a wedding, he talks about weddings, and if he is thinking of a funeral, then he talks about graves. And, anyway, I didn’t begin talking about graves and wreaths; Frau Dörr began it, which was quite right. And I only keep on talking about it because I am always anxious and I keep thinking. Who will bring you one?”

“Now, mother”

“Yes, Lena, you are good, you are a dear child. But man proposes and God disposes, and to-day red, to-morrow dead. And you might die any day as well as I; for all that, I do not believe you will. And Frau Dörr may die, or when I die she may live somewhere else, or I may be living somewhere else and may have just moved in. Ah, my dear Lena, one can never be sure of anything, not even of a wreath for one’s grave.”

“Oh, but you can, Mother Nimptsch,” said Botho, “you shall certainly have one.”

“Oh, Herr Baron, if that is only true.”

“And if I am in Petersburg or Paris, and I hear that my old friend Frau Nimptsch is dead, I will send a wreath, and if I am in Berlin or anywhere near, I will bring it myself.”

The aged woman’s face brightened for joy. “There, now you have said something, Herr Baron. And now I shall have a wreath for my grave and it is dear to me that I shall have it. For I cannot endure bare graves, that look like a burial ground for orphans or prisoners or worse. But now make the tea, Lena, the water is boiling already, and we have strawberries and milk. And sour too. Heavens, the Herr Baron must be quite starved. Looking and looking makes folks hungry, I can remember so much yet. Yes. Frau Dörr, we had our youth, even if it was long ago. But men were the same then as they are to-day.”

Frau Nimptsch, who happened to be talkative this evening, philosophised for a while longer, while Lena was bringing in the supper and Botho continued to amuse himself by teasing Frau Dörr. It was a good thing that she had put away her handsome hat, which was suitable for Kroll or for the theatre, but not for the mound near Wilmersdorf. Where did she get the hat? No princess had such a hat. And he had never seen anything so becoming; he would not speak for himself alone, but a prince might have fallen in love with it.

The good woman did indeed realize that he was joking. But still she said: “Yes, indeed, when Dörr once gets started, he is so eager and so fastidious that I can hardly tell what has come over him. Day by day he is quite dull, but all of a sudden he is as if he had changed into another man and then I always say to myself: there must be something the matter with him and this is the only way he knows how to show it.”

And so the talk went on over the tea, until ten o’clock. Then Botho rose to go and Lena and Frau Dörr accompanied him through the front garden to the gate. While they were standing there Frau Dörr reminded them that after all they had forgotten the philopena. Both seemed desirous to disregard this reminder and repeated once more how delightful the afternoon had been. “We must make such

little excursions oftener, Lena, and when I come again, we will think where to go. I shall be sure to think of something, some place where it is quiet and beautiful, and further away, and not just across the fields.”

“And we will take Frau Dörr with us again,” said Lena. “You ask her, will you not, Botho?”

“Certainly, Lena. Frau Dörr must always go with us. Without her the trip would be a failure.”

“Ah, Herr Baron, I could never accept that, I could never expect such a thing.”

“Oh, yes indeed, dear Frau Dörr,” laughed Botho. “You may expect everything, such a woman as you.”

And therewith they parted.

CHAPTER XI

THE country excursion, which had been promised or at least discussed after the walk to Wilmersdorf, was now the favorite topic for several weeks, and whenever Botho came the question was, where to go? All possible places were mentioned: Erkner and Kranichberg, Schwilow and Baumgartenbrück, but all were too much frequented, and so it happened that at last Botho spoke of Hankel's Ablage, the beauty and solitude of which he had heard enthusiastically described. Lena agreed, for all she wanted was to get out into God's green world, as far as possible from the city and its doings, and to be with her lover. It really did not matter where.

The next Friday was decided upon for the excursion. "Agreed." And so they started by the Görlitz afternoon train for Hankel's Ablage, where they had engaged quarters for the night and meant to pass the next day very quietly.

There were very few coaches on the train, but even these were not very full, and so it happened that Botho and Lena found themselves alone. In the next coupé there was a good deal of talk, from which it was plainly to be heard that these were through passengers and not people meaning to stop over at Hankel's Ablage.

Lena was happy, and gave her hand to Botho and gazed silently at the landscape with its woods and meadows. At last she said: "But what will Frau Dörr say about our leaving her at home?"

"She needn't find it out."

"Mother will be sure to tell her."

"Why, that is rather bad and yet we could not do any differently. Look here! It was well enough out in the fields the other day, because we were quite alone. But if we do find ourselves practically alone at Hankel's Ablage, yet we shall have a host and a hostess and perhaps a waiter from Berlin. And a waiter laughing quietly to himself or at least laughing inwardly, I cannot endure: he would spoil all my pleasure. Frau Dörr, when she is sitting by your mother or teaching the proprieties to old Dörr, is great fun, but not in public. Amongst people she is simply a comical figure and an embarrassment to us."

Towards five the train stopped at the edge of a wood. . . . Actually no one but Botho and Lena got out, and the two walked leisurely and with frequent pauses to a tavern, which stood close to the Spree and about ten minutes' walk from the little station. This "Establishment," as it was described on a slanting signboard, had been originally a mere fisherman's cottage, which had very gradually, and more by addition than by rebuilding, been changed into a tavern. The view across the stream made up for all other deficiencies, so that the brilliant reputation which the place enjoyed among the initiated never for a moment seemed exaggerated. Lena, too, felt quite at home immediately, and went and sat in a sort of veranda-like room that had been built on, and that was half covered over by the branches of an old elm that stood between the house and the bank.

"Let us stay here," said she. "Just see the boats, two, three . . . and further out a whole fleet is coming. Yes, it was indeed a lucky thought that brought us here. Only see how they run back and forth on the boats and put their weight on the rudder. And yet it is all so silent. Oh, my own dear Botho, how beautiful it is and how I love you!"

Botho rejoiced to see Lena so happy. Something determined and almost severe that had always formed a part of her character seemed to have disappeared and to have been replaced by a new gentleness, and this change seemed to make her perfectly happy. Presently mine host who had inherited the "Establishment" from his father and grandfather, came to take the orders of the "gentle folk," and especially to ascertain whether they intended to stay overnight, and when this question was answered in the affirmative, he begged them to decide upon their room. There were several at their disposal, but the gable room would probably suit them the best. It was, indeed, low studded, but was large and roomy and had the view across the Spree as far as the Müggelberg.

When his proposal had been accepted, the host went to attend to the necessary preparations, and Botho and Lena were left once more to enjoy to the full the happiness of being quietly alone together. A finch whose nest was in a low bush near by was swinging on a drooping twig of the elm, the swallows were darting here and there, and finally

came a black hen followed by a whole brood of ducklings, passed the veranda, and strutted pompously out on a little wooden pier that was built far out over the water. But half way along this pier the hen stopped, while the ducklings plunged into the water and swam away.

Lena watched all this eagerly. "Just look, Botho, how the stream rushes through among the posts." But actually it was neither the pier nor the water flowing through, that attracted her attention, but the two boats that were moored there. She coquetted with the idea and indulged in various trifling questions and references, and only when Botho remained deaf to all this did she express herself more plainly and declare that she wanted to go boating.

"Women are incorrigible. Incorrigible in their light-mindedness. Think of that Easter Monday! Just a hair's breadth . . ."

"And I should have been drowned. Certainly. But that is only one side of the matter. There followed the acquaintance with a handsome man, you may be able to guess whom I mean. His name is Botho. I am sure you will not think of Easter Monday as an unlucky day? I am more amiable and more gallant than you."

"There, there. . . . But can you row, Lena?"

"Of course I can. And I can steer and raise a sail too. Because I was near being drowned, you think I don't know anything? But it was the boy's fault, and for that matter, any one might be drowned."

And then they walked down the pier to the two boats, whose sails were reefed, while their pennants with their names embroidered on them fluttered from the masthead.

"Which shall we take," said Botho, "the *Trout* or the *Hope*?"

"Naturally, the *Trout*. What have we to do with *Hope*?" Botho understood well enough that Lena said that on purpose to tease him, for in spite of her delicacy of feeling, still as a true child of Berlin she took pleasure in witty little speeches. He excused this little fling, however, and helped her into the boat. Then he sprang in too. Just as he was about to cast off the host came down the pier bringing a

jacket and a plaid, because it would grow cold as the sun went down. They thanked him and soon were in the middle of the stream, which was here scarcely three hundred paces wide, as it flowed among the islands and tongues of land. Lena used her oars only now and then, but even these few strokes sufficed to bring them very soon to a field overgrown with tall grass which served as a boatbuilder's yard, where at some little distance from them a new boat was being built and various old leaky ones were being caulked and repaired.

"We must go and see the boats," said Lena gaily, taking Botho's hand and urging him along, but before they could reach the boat builder's yard the sound of hammer and axe ceased and the bells began to ring, announcing the close of the day's work. So they turned aside, perhaps a hundred paces from the dockyard into a path which led diagonally across a field, to a pine wood. The reddish trunks of the trees glowed wonderfully in the light of the sinking sun, while their tops seemed floating in a bluish mist.

"I wish I could pick you a pretty bunch of flowers." said Botho, taking Lena's hand. "But look, there is just the grassy field, all grass and no flowers. Not one."

"But there are plenty. Only you do not see them, because you are too exacting."

"And even if I were, it is only for your sake."

"Now, no excuses. You shall see that I can find some."

And stooping down, she searched right and left saying: "Only look, here . . . and there . . . and here again. There are more here than in Dörr's garden; only you must have an eye for them." And she plucked the flowers diligently, stooping for them and picking weeds and grass with them, until in a very short time she had a quantity both of attractive blossoms and of useless weeds in her hands.

Meanwhile they had come to an old empty fisherman's hut, in front of which lay an upturned boat on a strip of sand strewn with pine cones from the neighboring wood.

"This is just right for us," said Botho: "we will sit down here. You must be tired. And now let me see what you have gathered. I don't believe you know yourself, and I

shall have to play the botanist. Give them here. This is ranunculus, or buttercup, and this is mouse's ear. Some call it false forget-me-not. False, do you hear? And this one with the notched leaf is taraxacum, our good old dandelion, which the French use for salad. Well, I don't mind. But there is a distinction between a salad and a bouquet."

"Just give them back," laughed Lena. "You have no eye for such things, because you do not love them, and the eyes and love always belong together. First you said there were no flowers in the field, and now, when we find them, you will not admit that they are really flowers. But they are flowers, and pretty ones too. What will you bet that I can make you something pretty out of them."

"I am really curious to see what you will choose."

"Only those that you agree to. And now let us begin. Here is a forget-me-not, but no mouse's ear — forget-me-not, but a real one. Do you agree?"

"Yes."

"And this is speedwell, the prize of honor, a dainty little blossom. That is surely good enough for you. I do not even need to ask. And this big reddish brown one is the devil's paintbrush, and must have grown on purpose for you. Oh yes, laugh at it. And these," and she stooped to pick a couple of yellow blossoms, that were growing in the sand at her feet, "these are immortelles."

"Immortelles," said Botho. "They are old Frau Nimptsch's passion. Of course we must take those, we need them. And now we must tie up our little bouquet."

"Very well. But what shall we tie it with? We will wait till we find a strong grass blade."

"No, I will not wait so long. And a grass blade is not good enough for me, it is too thick and coarse. I want something fine. I know what, Lena, you have such beautiful long hair; pull out one and tie the bouquet with that."

"No," said she decidedly.

"No? And why not? Why not?"

“Because the proverb says ‘hair binds.’ And if I bind the flowers with it you too will be bound.”

“But that is superstition. Frau Dörr says so.”

“No, the good old soul told me herself. And whatever she has told me from my youth up, even if it seemed like superstition, I have always found it correct.”

“Well, have it so. I will not contradict you. But I will not have the flowers tied with anything else but a strand of your hair. And you will not be so obstinate as to refuse me.”

She looked at him, pulled a long hair from her head and wound it around the bunch of flowers. Then she said: “You chose it. Here, take it. Now you are bound.”

He tried to laugh, but the seriousness with which Lena had been speaking, and especially the earnestness with which she had pronounced the last words, did not fail to leave an impression on his mind.

“It is growing cool,” said he after a while. The host was right to bring you a jacket and a plaid. Come, let us start.”

And so they went back to the boat, and made haste to cross the stream.

Only now, as they were returning, and coming nearer and nearer, did they see how picturesquely the tavern was situated. The thatched roof sat like a grotesque high cap above the timbered building, whose four little front windows were just being lit for the evening. And at the same time a couple of lanterns were carried out to the veranda, and their weird-looking bands of light shone out across the water through the branches of the old elm, which in the darkness resembled some fantastically wrought grating.

Neither spoke. But the happiness of each seemed to depend upon the question how long their happiness was to last.

CHAPTER XII

IT was already growing dark as they landed.

“Let us take this table,” said Botho, as they stepped on to the veranda again: “You will feel no draught here and I will order you some grog or a hot claret cup, shall I not? I see you are chilly.”

He offered several other things, but Lena begged to be allowed to go up to her room, and said that by and by when he came up she would be perfectly well again. She only felt a trifle poorly and did not need anything and if she could only rest a little, it would pass off.

Therewith she excused herself and went up to the gable room which had been prepared in the meantime. The hostess, who was indulging in all sorts of mistaken conjectures, accompanied her, and immediately asked with much curiosity, “What really was the matter,” and without waiting for an answer, she went right on: yes, it was always so with young women, she remembered that herself, and before her eldest was born (she now had four and would have had five, but the middle one had come too soon and did not live), she had had just such a time. It just rushed over one so, and one felt ready to die. But a cup of balm tea, that is to say, the genuine monastery balm, would give a quick relief and one would feel like a fish in the water and quite set up and merry and affectionate too. “Yes, yes, gracious lady, when one has four, without counting the little angel”

Lena had some difficulty in concealing her embarrassment and asked, for the sake of saying something, for a cup of the monastery balm tea, of which she had already heard.

While this conversation was going on up in the gable room, Botho had taken a seat, not in the sheltered veranda, but at a primitive wooden table that was nailed on four posts in front of the veranda and afforded a fine view. He planned to take his evening meal here. He ordered fish, and as the “tench and dill” for which the tavern was famous was brought, the host came to ask what kind of wine the Herr Baron desired? (He gave him this title by mere chance.)

“I think,” said Botho, “Brauneberger, or let us say rather Rudesheimer would suit the delicate fish best, and to show that the wine is good you must sit down with me as my guest and drink some of your own wine.”

The host bowed smilingly and soon came back with a dusty bottle, while the maid, a pretty Wendin in a woolen gown and a black head-kerchief, brought the glasses on a tray.

“Now let us see,” said Botho. “The bottle promises all sorts of good qualities. Too much dust and cobweb is always suspicious, but this . . . Ah, superb! This is the vintage of '70, is it not? And now we must drink, but to what? To the prosperity of Hankel Ablage.”

The host was evidently delighted, and Botho, who saw what a good impression he was making, went on speaking in his own gentle and friendly way: “I find it charming here, and there is only one thing to be said against Hankel’s Ablage: its name.”

“Yes,” agreed the host, “the name might be better and it is really unfortunate for us. And yet there is a reason for the name. Hankel’s Ablage really was an Ablage, and so it is still called.”

“Very good. But this brings us no further forward than before. Why is it called an Ablage? And what is an Ablage?”

“Well, it is as much as to say a place for loading and unloading. The whole stretch of land hereabouts (and he pointed backward) was, in fact, always one great domain, and was called under Old Fritz and even earlier under the warrior kings the domain Wusterhausen. And the thirty villages as well as the forest and moorland all belonged to it. Now you see the thirty villages naturally had to obtain and use many things, or what amounts to the same thing, they had to have egress and ingress, and for both they needed from the beginning a harbor or a place to buy and sell, and the only doubt would have been what place they should choose for the purpose. They actually chose this place; this bay became a harbor, a mart, an “Ablage” for all that came and went, and since the fisher who lived here at that time was my grandfather Hankel, the place became “Hankel’s Ablage.”

“It is a pity,” said Botho, “that this cannot be so well and clearly explained to everyone,” and the host who felt encouraged by the interest shown was about to continue. But before he could begin, the cry of a bird was heard high in the air, and as Botho looked up curiously, he saw that two large, powerful birds, scarcely recognizable in the twilight, were flying above the water.

“Were those wild geese?”

“No, herons. The whole forest hereabouts is full of them. For that matter, it is a regular hunting ground. There are huge numbers of wild boar and deer and woodcock, and among the reeds and rushes here ducks, and snipe.”

“Delightful,” said Botho, in whom the hunter was waking up. “Do you know I envy you. After all, what is in a name? Ducks, snipe, woodcocks! One could almost wish to be in such pleasant circumstances also. Only it must be lonely here, too lonely.”

The host smiled to himself and Botho, who noticed this, became curious and said: “You laugh. But is it not so? For half an hour I have heard nothing but the water gurgling under the pier, and just now the call of the herons. I call that lonely, however beautiful it may be. And now and then a couple of big sailboats glide by, but they are all alike, or at least they look very similar. And really each one seems to be a phantom ship. It is as still as death.”

“Certainly,” said the host. “But that is only as long as it lasts.”

“How so?”

“Yes,” repeated the host, “as long as it lasts. You speak of solitude, Herr Baron, and for days together it is truly lonely here. And it might be so for weeks. But scarcely has the ice broken up and the spring come when we have guests and the Berliner has arrived.”

“When does he come?”

“Incredibly early. All in a moment there they are. See here, Herr Baron, while I, who am hardened to the weather, am still staying indoors because the east wind blows and

the March sun scorches, the Berliner already sits out of doors, lays his summer overcoat on the chair and orders pale ale. For if only the sun shines the Berliner speaks of beautiful weather. It is all the same to him if there is inflammation of the lungs or diphtheria in every wind that blows. It is then that he best likes to play grace-hoops, and some are also fond of Boccia, and when they leave, quite blistered from the reflected sunlight, my heart really aches for them, for there is not one among them whose skin will not peel off at least by the following day.”

Botho laughed. “Yes, indeed, the Berliners! And that reminds me, your Spree hereabouts must be the place where the oarsmen and yachtsmen meet to hold their regattas.”

“Certainly,” said the host. “But that is not saying very much. If there are a good many, there may be fifty or perhaps a hundred. And then all is still again, and the water sports are over for weeks and months. No, club members are comfortable to deal with; by comparison they are enduring. But in June when the steamers come, it is bad. And then it will continue all summer, or at any rate a long, long time”

“I believe you,” said Botho.

“Then a telegram comes every evening. ‘Early to-morrow morning at nine o’clock we shall arrive by the steamer *Aise*. Party to spend the day. 240 persons.’ And then follow the names of those who have gotten up the affair. It does well enough for once. But the trouble is, it lasts so long. For how do such parties spend their time? They are out in the woods and fields until it is growing dark, and then comes their dinner, and then they dance till eleven. Now you will say, ‘That is nothing much,’ and it would not be anything much if the following day were a holiday. But the second day is like the first, and the third is like the second. Every evening at about eleven a steamer leaves with two hundred and forty persons and every morning at at nine a steamer arrives with just as many on board. And between whiles everything must be cleared away and tidied up. And so the night passes in airing, polishing and scrubbing, and when the last corner is clean the next boat load is already arriving. Naturally, everything has its good side, and when one counts up his receipts towards midnight one knows what he has been toiling for. ‘From nothing you

get nothing,' says the proverb and it is quite true, and if I were to fill all the punch bowls that have been drunk here I should have to get a Heidelberg tun. It brings something in, certainly, and is quite right and proper. But according as one moves forward he also moves backward and pays with the best that he has, with his life and health. For what is life without sleep?"

"True, I already see," said Botho, "no happiness is complete. But then comes winter, and then you can sleep like the seven sleepers."

"Yes, if it does not happen to be New Year's or Twelfth Night or Carnival. And these holidays come oftener than the calendar shows. You ought to see the life here when they arrive in sleighs or on skates from all the ten villages, and gather in the great hall that I have built on. Then we don't see one citified face among them, and the Berliners leave us in peace, but the farm hands and chambermaids have their day. Then we see otter skin caps and corduroy jackets with silver buttons, and all kinds of soldiers who are on leave are there also: Schwedter Dragoons and Fürstenwald Uhlans, or perhaps Potsdam Hussars. And everyone is jealous and quarrelsome, and one cannot tell which they like best, dancing or fighting, and on the slightest pretext the villages are arrayed against each other in battle. And so with noise and turbulent sports they pass the whole long night and whole mountains of pancakes disappear, and only at dawn do they leave for home over the frozen river or over the snow."

"Now I see plainly," said Botho, "that you have not very much solitude or deathly stillness. But it is fortunate that I knew nothing about all this, or else I should not have wished to come and should have missed a real pleasure. And I should have been really sorry not to have seen such a beautiful spot. . . . But as you said before; what is life without sleep? and I feel that you are right. I am tired, although it is still early; I think it must be the effect of the air and the water. And then I must go and see Your good wife has taken so much trouble Good night, I have talked quite enough."

And thereupon he rose and went into the house, which had now grown very quiet.

Lena had lain down on the bed with her feet on a chair at the bedside and had drunk a cup of the tea that the hostess had brought her. The rest and the warmth did her good, the little attack passed off, and some little time ago she could have gone down to the veranda to join in the conversation of Botho and the landlord. But she was not in a talkative mood, and so she only got up to look around the room, in which she had thus far taken no interest.

And the room was well worth her attention. The timbers and the plastered walls had been allowed to remain since former times, and the whitewashed ceiling was so low that one could reach it with one's hand. But whatever could be improved had been improved. Instead of the small panes which one still saw on the ground floor, a large window reaching nearly down to the floor had been set in, which afforded, as the host had said, a beautiful view of the scenery, both woods and water. But the large window was not all that had been accomplished here in the way of modern comfort. A few good pictures, very likely bought at some auction, hung on the old irregular plastered walls, and where the projecting window gable joined the sloping roof of the room itself stood a pair of handsome toilet tables facing each other. Everything showed that the character of the fisherman's and boatman's tavern had been carefully kept, while at the same time the place had been turned into a pleasing hotel for the rich sportsmen of the yacht club.

Lena was much pleased with all that she saw, and began to examine the pictures that hung in broad frames to the right and left of the bed. They were engravings, the subjects of which interested her keenly, and so she wanted to read the inscriptions under each. One was inscribed "Washington Crossing the Delaware" and the other "The Last Hour at Trafalgar." But she could get no further than merely to decipher the syllables, and although it was a very small matter, it gave her a pang, because it emphasised the chasm that divided her from Botho. He was, indeed, in the habit of making fun of learning and education, but she was clever enough to know what to think of such jesting.

Close to the entrance door, above a rococo table, on which stood some red glasses and a water carafe, hung a gay colored lithograph with an inscription in three languages: "*Si jeunesse savait*" — a picture which Lena remembered having seen at the Dörrs'. Dörr loved such things. When she saw it here again, she shivered and felt distressed. Her

fine sensibility was hurt by the sensual quality of the picture as if it were a distortion of her own feeling, and so, in order to shake off the impression, she went to the window and opened both sashes to let in the night air. Oh, how refreshing it was! She seated herself on the windowsill, which was only a couple of hands' breadth from the floor, threw her left arm around the middle bar and listened to hear what was happening on the veranda. But she heard nothing. Deep stillness reigned, except that in the old elm there was a stirring and rustling, and any discomfort that might have lingered in her mind disappeared at once, as she gazed with ever-growing delight on the picture spread out before her. The water flowed gently, wood and meadow lay in the dim evening light, and the thin crescent of the new moon cast its light on the stream and showed the tremulous motion of the rippling waves.

"How beautiful," said Lena, drawing a deep breath. "And I am so happy," she added.

She could hardly bear to leave the view. But at last she rose, placed a chair before the glass and began to let down her beautiful hair and braid it. While she was thus occupied Botho came in.

"Lena, still up! I thought that I should have to wake you with a kiss."

"You are too early for that, however late you come."

And she rose and went to him. "My dearest Botho, How long you stayed away . . ."

"And your fever? And your little attack?"

"It has passed off and I have felt well again for the last half hour. And I have been waiting for you all that time." And she led him over to the open window: "Only look. Would not the beauty of that view fill any poor human heart with longing?"

And she clung to him and just as she was closing her eyes, she looked up at him with an expression of rapture.

CHAPTER XIII

BOTH were up early and the sun was still struggling with the morning mist as they came down stairs to take breakfast. A light early breeze was blowing, which the boatmen did not want to lose, and so, as our young couple were stepping out of doors, a whole flotilla of sailboats glided past on the Spree.

Lena was still in her morning dress. She took Botho's arm and wandered along the bank with him to a place where the reeds and rushes grew tall. He looked at her tenderly. "Lena, I have never seen you look as you do to-day. I hardly know how to express it. I cannot find any other word; you look so happy."

And that was true. Yes, she was happy, perfectly happy and saw the world in a rosy light. She was leaning on her lover's arm and the hour was very precious to her. Was not that enough? And if this hour was the last, then let it be the last. Was it not a privilege to pass such a day, even if it were only once?

Thus all thoughts of care and sorrow vanished, which in spite of herself had oppressed her spirit, and she felt nothing but pride and joy and thankfulness. But she said nothing, for she was superstitious and did not dare to talk about her happiness, and it was only through a slight tremor of her arm that Botho knew that his words "I believe you are happy, Lena" had found their way to her innermost heart.

The host came and inquired courteously, though with some slight embarrassment, whether they had slept well.

"Admirably," said Botho. "The herb tea, which your good wife recommended, did wonders and the crescent moon shone right in at our window, and the nightingales sang softly, so softly that we could barely hear them. Who would not sleep as if in paradise? I hope that no steamer with two hundred and forty guests has been announced for this afternoon. That indeed would drive us forth from paradise. You smile and are probably thinking, 'Who can tell?' and perhaps my own words have conjured up the devil, but he is not here yet. I see neither smokestack nor smoke, the Spree is still undisturbed, and even if all Berlin is on the way our breakfast at least we can enjoy in peace. Can

we not? But where?"

"Wherever you order it."

"Very well, then I think under the elm. The fine dining-room is only necessary when the sun is too hot out of doors. And it is not too hot yet and has not wholly burned away the mist above the woods."

The host went to order the breakfast, but the young couple walked as far as a little promontory on their side of the stream, from which they could see the red roofs of a neighboring village and close to the village the sharp church steeple of Königs-Wusterhausen. By the water's edge lay the trunk of a willow that had drifted down stream and lodged there. They sat down on this log and watched a fisherman and his wife who were cutting the tall reeds and throwing great bundles of them into their skiff. They enjoyed the pretty sight, and when they arrived at the tavern again, their breakfast was just being served. The breakfast was in the English style rather than the German: coffee and tea, with eggs and meat and even slices of toast in a silver rack.

"Just look, Lena. We must take breakfast here often. What do you think? It is heavenly. And look over towards the dockyard; they are already at work caulking the boats and the work follows a regular rhythm. Really, the rhythm of any such work is the best kind of music."

Lena nodded, but she was only half listening, for again to-day her attention was attracted toward the pier. It was not, indeed, the boats that were moored there, and which had so aroused her interest yesterday, but a pretty maid, who was kneeling half way down the pier amongst her kettles and copperware. With a hearty pleasure in her work, which was expressed in every motion of her arms, she polished the cans, kettles, and saucepans, and whenever she had finished one, she let the water run over the highly polished vessel. Then she would hold it up, let it glisten a moment in the sun and then put it in a basket.

Lena was quite carried away by the picture, and pointed to the pretty girl, who seemed to love her work as if she could never do enough.

"Do you know, Botho, it is no mere chance that she is

kneeling there. She is kneeling there for me and I feel plainly, that it is a sign and a token.”

“But what is the matter with you, Lena? You look so different, you have grown quite pale all of a sudden.”

“Oh nothing.”

“Nothing? And yet your eyes are glistening as if you were nearer to tears than to laughter. You certainly must have seen copper kettles before and a cook polishing them. It seems almost as if you envied the girl kneeling there and working hard enough for three women.”

The appearance of the host interrupted the conversation at this point and Lena recovered her quiet bearing and soon her cheerfulness also. Then she went upstairs to change her dress.

When she returned she found that a programme proposed by the host had been unconditionally accepted by Botho: the young people were to take a sailboat as far as the next village, Nieder Löhme, which was charmingly situated on the Wendisch Spree. From this village they were to walk as far as Königs-Wusterhausen, visit the park and the castle, and then return in the same way. This excursion would take half a day. The manner of passing the afternoon could be arranged later.

Lena was pleased with the plan and a couple of wraps were just being put in the boat, which had been hastily gotten ready, when voices and hearty laughter were heard from the garden — a sound which seemed to indicate visitors and the probability that their solitude would be disturbed.

“Ah, members of the yacht and rowing club,” said Botho. “The Lord be praised, we shall escape them, Lena. Let us hurry.”

And they both started off to reach the boat as quickly as possible. But before they could reach the pier they saw that they were already surrounded and caught. The guests were not only Botho’s comrades, but his most intimate friends, Pitt, Serge, and Balafre. All three had ladies with them.

“Ah, les beaux esprits se rencontrent,” said Balafre in a rather wild mood, which quickly changed to a more conventional manner, as he observed that he was being watched by the host and hostess from the threshold. “How fortunate we are to meet here. Allow me, Gaston, to present our ladies to you: Queen Isabeau, Fraulein Johanna, Fraulein Margot.”

Botho saw what sort of names were the order of the day, and adapting himself quickly, he replied, indicating Lena with a little gesture and introducing her: “Mademoiselle Agnes Sorel.”

All the three men bowed civilly, even to all appearances respectfully, while the two daughters of Thibaut d’Arc made a very slight curtsy, and Queen Isabeau, who was at least fifteen years older, offered a more friendly greeting to Agnes Sorel, who was not only a stranger to her, but apparently embarrassed.

The whole affair was a disturbance, perhaps even an intentional disturbance, but the more successfully the plan worked out, the more needful did it seem to keep a bold front at a losing game. And in this Botho was entirely successful. He asked one question after another, and thus found out that the little group had taken one of the small steamers very early and had left the boat at Schmöckwitz, and from there had come to Zeuthen on a sailboat. From Zeuthen they had walked, since it took scarcely twenty minutes; it had been charming: old trees, green fields and red roofs.

While the entire group of new-comers, but especially Queen Isabeau, who was almost more distinguished for her talkativeness than for her stout figure, were narrating these things, they had by chance strolled up to the veranda, where they sat down at one of the long tables.

“Charming,” said Serge. “Large, free and open and yet so secluded. And the meadow over there seems just made for a moonlight promenade.”

“Yes,” added Balafre, “a moonlight promenade. That is all very fine. But it is now barely ten o’clock, and before we can have a moonlight promenade we have about twelve hours to dispose of. I propose a boating trip.”

“No,” said Isabeau, “a boating trip will not do; we have already had more than enough of that to-day. First the steamer and then the sailboat and now another boat, would be too much. I am against it. Besides I never can see the good of all this paddling: we might just as well fish or catch some little creatures with our hands and amuse ourselves with the poor little beasts. No, there will be no more paddling to-day. I must earnestly beg you.”

The men, to whom these words were addressed, were evidently amused at the desires of the Queen Mother, and immediately made other proposals, which, however, met with the same fate. Isabeau rejected everything; and at last, when the others, half in jest and half in earnest, began to disapprove of her conduct, she merely begged to be left in peace. “Gentlemen,” said she, “Patience. I beg you to give me a chance to speak for at least a moment.” This request was followed by ironical applause, for she had done all the talking thus far. But she went on quite unconcernedly: “Gentlemen, I beg you, teach me to understand men. What is an excursion into the country? It is taking breakfast and playing cards. Isn’t that so?”

“Isabeau is always right,” laughed Balafré giving her a slap on the shoulder. “We will play cards. This is a capital place for it; I almost think that everyone must win here. And the ladies can go to walk in the meantime or perhaps take a forenoon nap. That will do them the most good, and an hour and a half will be time enough. And at twelve o’clock we will meet again. And the menu shall be according to the judgment of our Queen. Yes, Queen, life is still sweet. To be sure that is from ‘Don Carlos.’ But must everything be quoted from the ‘Maid of Orleans’?”

That shot struck home and the two younger girls giggled, although they had scarcely understood the innuendo. But Isabeau who had grown up amongst conversations that were always interspersed with such slightly hinted sarcasms, remained perfectly calm and said, turning to the three other women: “Ladies, if I may beg you, we are now abandoned and have two hours to ourselves. For that matter, things might be worse.”

Thereupon they rose and went into the house, where the Queen went to the kitchen, and after greeting those present in a friendly but superior manner, she asked for the host. The latter was not in the house, so the young woman

offered to go and call him in from the garden, but Isabeau would not hear of it. She would go herself, and she actually went, still followed by her cortege of three (Balafre called them the hen and chickens). She went into the garden, where she found the host arranging the new asparagus beds. Close by there was an old-fashioned greenhouse, very low in front, with big, sloping windows, and a somewhat broken-down wall on which Lena and the daughters of Thibaut d'Arc sat, while Isabeau was arranging her business.

"We have come," said she, "to speak with you about the luncheon. What can we have?"

"Everything you are pleased to order."

"Everything? That is a great deal, almost too much. Now I should like eels. Only not like this, but like this." And as she spoke she pointed first to a ring on her finger and then to her broad thick bracelet.

"I am very sorry, ladies," answered the host. "We have no eels. Nor any kind of fish; I cannot serve you with fish, it is an exception. Yesterday we had tench and dill, but it came from Berlin. If I want a fish, I have to go to the Cologne fish market for it."

"What a pity! We could have brought one with us. But what have you then?"

"A saddle of venison."

"H'm, that sounds rather well. And before that some vegetables for a salad. It is too late or almost too late for asparagus. But I see you still have some young beans there. And here in the hot bed there is surely something to be found, a couple of small cucumbers or some lettuce. And then a sweet dish. Something with whipped cream. I do not care so much for it myself, but men, who always behave as if they did not like such things, are always wanting sweets. This will make three or four courses, I think. And then bread and butter and cheese."

"And at what time do you wish the luncheon?"

"Well, I think quite soon, or at least as soon as possible. Is that right? We are hungry and half an hour is long

enough to roast the saddle of venison. So let us say at about twelve. And if I may ask, we will have punch, a bottle of Rhine wine, three of Moselle and three of Champagne. But good brands. You must not think that it will be wasted. I am familiar with wines, and can tell by the taste whether it is Moet or Mumm. But you will come out all right; you inspire me with confidence. By the way, can we not go from your garden directly into the wood? I hate every unnecessary step. And perhaps we may find some mushrooms. That would be heavenly. They would go well with the saddle of venison; mushrooms never spoil anything." The host not only answered the question in the affirmative, but escorted the ladies as far as the garden gate, from which it was only a couple of steps to the edge of the wood. Only a public road ran between. As soon as one had crossed the road, one was in the shady woods, and Isabeau, who suffered greatly from the increasing heat, thought herself fortunate in having avoided the rather long detour over a strip of treeless grass land. She played the fine lady, but her parasol, which she hung to her girdle, was decorated with a big grease spot. She took Lena's arm, while the two ladies followed. Isabeau appeared to be in the best humor and said, glancing back, to Margot and Johanna: "We must have a goal. It is quite dreadful to see only woods and then more woods. What do you think, Johanna?"

Johanna was the taller of the two d'Arcs, and was very pretty, but somewhat pale and dressed with studied simplicity. Serge liked that. Her gloves fitted wonderfully, and one might have taken her for a lady if she had not used her teeth to button one of her glove buttons which had sprung out.

"What do you think, Johanna?" the Queen repeated her question.

"Well, then, I propose that we should go back to the village from which we came. It was called Zeuthen, and looked so romantic and so melancholy, and the road between there and here was so beautiful. And it must be just as beautiful or more so going back in the other direction. And on the right hand, that is to say, on the left going from here, was a churchyard with crosses. And there was a very large marble one."

"Yes, dear Johanna, that is all very well, but what good

would it do us? We have seen the whole road. Or do you want to see the churchyard. . . .”

“Of course I do. I have my own feelings, especially on a day like this. And it is always good to be reminded that one must die. And when the elder bushes are in bloom”

“But, Johanna, the elders are no longer in bloom; the acacia is about all, and that already has pods. My goodness, if you are so wild about churchyards, you can see the one in the Oranienstrasse every day. Zeuthen and the churchyard, what nonsense! We had rather stay right here and see nothing at all. Come, little one, give me your arm again.”

The little one, who by the way was not little, was Lena. She obeyed. But as they walked on again, the Queen continued in a confidential tone: “Oh that Johanna, one really cannot go about with her; she has not a good reputation, and she is a goose. Ah, child, you would not believe what kind of folks there are going about now; Oh well, she has a fine figure and is particular about her gloves. But she might better be particular about some other things. And if you will notice, it is always such as she who talk continually about the churchyard and dying. And now you ought to see her by and by. So long as things are all right, they are all right. But when the punch bowl comes and is emptied and comes in again, then she screeches and screams. No idea of propriety. But where should it come from? She was always amongst the commonest people, out on the Chaussée towards Tegel, where no one ever goes and only the artillery passes by. And artillery . . . Oh well. . . . You would hardly believe how different all that is. And now Serge has taken her up and is trying to make something out of her. My goodness, it can't be done, or at least not all of a sudden; good work takes time. But here are some strawberries still. How nice! Come, little one, let us pick some (if it were not for this accursed stooping), and if we find a real big one we will take it back with us. I will put it in his mouth and he will be pleased. For I want to tell you that he is just like a child and he is just the very best man.”

Lena, who saw that Balafre was referred to, asked a question or two, and also asked once more why the men had those peculiar names? She had already asked about it, but had never learned anything worth speaking of.

“Good Lord,” said the Queen, “there would have to be something like that and no one should take any notice; and any way it is all put on. For in the first place no one concerns himself about it, and even if anyone did, why, it is so all the same. And why not? What harm does it do? They have nothing to cast up at one another, and each one is just like the rest.”

Lena looked straight before her and kept silence.

“And really, child, you will find it out for yourself, really all this is simply tiresome. For a while it goes well enough, and I have nothing to say against it, and I will not deny it myself. But time brings weariness. Ever since you are fifteen and not even confirmed. Truly, the sooner one gets out of all this the better. Then I shall buy me a distillery (for I get plenty of money), and I already know where; and then I shall marry a widower and I already know whom. And he is willing too. For I must tell you I like order, and propriety and bringing up children decently, and whether they are his or mine, it is all the same to me. . . . And how is it really with you?”

Lena did not say a word.

“Heavens, child, you are changing color; perhaps something in here (she pointed to her heart) is involved and you are doing everything for the sake of love? Ah, child, that is bad, then there is sure to be some sudden smash.”

Johanna followed with Margot. They purposely kept at some little distance and plucked twigs of birch, as if they meant to make a wreath of them. “How do you like her?” said Margot. “I mean Gaston’s”

“Like her? Not at all. The very idea that such girls should take a hand in the game and come to be the fashion! Just see how her gloves fit. And her hat doesn’t amount to much. He ought not to let her go like that. And she must be stupid too, for she has not a word to say.”

“No,” said Margot “she isn’t stupid; it is only that she has not struck her gait yet. And it is rather clever in her to make up to our stout friend so promptly.”

“Oh, our stout friend. Get out with her. She thinks she is the whole show. But she is nothing at all. I don’t believe in backbiting, but she is false, false as the wood of the gallows.”

“No, Johanna, she is not really false. And she has pulled you out of a hole more than once. You know what I mean.”

“Good gracious, why did she do it? Because she was stuck in the same hole herself, and because she always gives herself airs and thinks she is so important. Anyone as stout as that is never good.”

“Lord, Johanna, how you do talk. It is just the other way around, stout people are always good.”

“Well, have it your own way. But you cannot deny that she is a comical figure to look at. Just see how she waddles; like a fat duck. And always buttoned up to her chin because otherwise she would not look fit to be seen among decent people. And, Margot, I will not give way on that point, a slender figure is really the principal thing. We are not Turks, you know. And why wouldn’t she go with us to the churchyard? Because she is afraid. Heaven forbid, she isn’t thinking of any such thing, it’s because she’s buttoned up so tight and she can’t stand the heat. And yet it isn’t really so terribly hot to-day.”

So the conversations went, until the two couples came together again and seated themselves on a moss-grown bank.

Isabeau kept looking at her watch; it seemed as if the hands would never move.

But when it was half past eleven, she said: “Now, my friends, it is time; I think we have had enough of nature and may quite properly pass on to something else. We have never had a bite to eat since early this morning at about seven. For those ham sandwiches at Grunauer do not count. . . . But the Lord be praised, self-denial brings its own reward, as Balafre says, and hunger is the best cook. Come, ladies, the saddle of venison is beginning to be more important than anything else. Don’t you think so, Johanna?”

The latter shrugged her shoulders, and sought to turn aside the suspicion that any such things as venison and punch could ever matter to her.

But Isabeau laughed. "Well, we shall see, Johanna. Of course the Zeuthner churchyard would have been more enjoyable. But one must take what one can get."

And hereupon they all started to return from the woods through the garden, where a pair of yellow butterflies were fluttering together, and from the garden to the front of the house where they were to take luncheon.

As they were passing the dining-room Isabeau saw the host busily repairing the damage where a bottle of Moselle had been spilt.

"What a pity," said she, "that I had to see just that. Fate really might have afforded me a more pleasing sight. And why must it be Moselle?"

CHAPTER XIV

IN spite of all Isabeau's efforts no genuine cheerfulness would return to the group since the walk. But the worst of it was, at least for Botho and Lena, that they could not regain any real cheerfulness even after they had bidden good-bye to Botho's comrades and their ladies, and were beginning their homeward journey quite alone in a coupé that they had engaged. An hour later they had arrived, somewhat depressed, at the dimly lighted depot at Görlitz, and here, as they were getting out, Lena had at once asked quite urgently to be allowed to go the rest of the way through the city alone. "She was tired and out of sorts," she said, "and that was not good." But Botho would not be turned aside from what he considered to be his duty as an escort, and so the two together had traversed in a rickety old cab the long, long road by the canal, constantly trying to keep up a conversation about the excursion and "how lovely it had been" — a terribly forced conversation, which had made Botho feel only too plainly how right Lena's feeling had been, when in an almost imploring tone she had begged him not to escort her further. Yes, the excursion to "Hankel's Ablage" from which they had expected so much, and which had actually begun so charmingly and happily, had ended only in a mingling of ill humor, weariness and discontent; and only at the last moment, when Botho, with a certain feeling of being to blame, had bidden Lena a friendly and affectionate "good night," did she run to him, take his hand and kiss him with almost passionate impetuosity: "Ah, Botho, things were not as they should have been to-day, and yet no one was to blame . . . not even the others."

"Never mind, Lena."

"No, no. It was nobody's fault, that is the truth, and it cannot be altered. But the worst of it is, that it is true. If anyone is to blame, he can ask pardon and so make all good again. But that is no help to us. And then too, there is nothing to forgive."

"Lena"

"You must listen for a moment. Oh, my dearest Botho, you are trying to hide it from me, but the end is coming. And quickly too, I know it."

“How can you say so!”

“To be sure, I only dreamed it,” Lena went on. “But why did I dream it? Because all day long it had been in my mind. My dream was only what my heart told me. And what I wanted to tell you, Botho, and the reason why I ran after you a few steps was, that what I said last night holds good. That I could pass this summer with you was a joy to me, and always will be, even if I must be unhappy from this day forth.”

“Lena, Lena, do not say that”

“You feel yourself that I am right; only your kind heart struggles against it and will not admit the truth. But I know it: yesterday, as we were walking across the meadow, chattering together, and I picked you the bunch of flowers, it was our last joy and our last beautiful hour.”

With this interview the day had ended, and now it was the following morning, and the summer sunshine was streaming brightly into Botho’s room. Both windows stood open and the sparrows were quarreling in the chestnut tree outside. Botho himself was leaning back in a rocking-chair, smoking a meerschaum pipe and striking with his handkerchief now and then at a big blue-bottle fly that came in at one window as fast as he went out of the other, to buzz persistently around Botho.

“If I could only get rid of the creature. I should enjoy tormenting it. These big flies are always bearers of bad news, and then they are as spitefully persistent as if they took pleasure in the trouble that they announce.” And he struck at the fly once more. “Gone again. It is no use. Resignation then is the only help. On the whole, submission is the best. The Turks are the cleverest people.”

While Botho was thus soliloquising, the shutting of the little wicket gate led him to look into the garden, where he saw the letter carrier who had just entered and with a slight military salute and a “Good morning, Herr Baron” first handed him a paper and then a letter through the low window. Botho threw the paper aside, and looked at the letter, on which he easily recognised his mother’s small, close, but still very legible handwriting. “I thought as much . . . I know already, before I have read it. Poor

Lena.”

And he opened the letter and read:

Schloss Zehden, June 29, 1875.

My dear Botho:

The apprehension of which I told you in my last letter, has now proved well founded: Rothmüller in Arnswalde has demanded his money on October 1 and only added “Because of our old friendship” that he would wait until New Year, if it would cause me any embarrassment. “For he knew very well what he owed to the memory of the departed Baron.” The addition of this expression, however well it may have been meant, was doubly humiliating to me; it showed such a mingling of pretentious consideration, which never makes a pleasing impression, least of all from such a source. You can perhaps understand the care and discomfort that this letter gave me. Uncle Kurt Anton would help me, as he has already done on former occasions. He loves me, and you best of all, but always to claim his benevolence again, is somewhat oppressive and all the more so because he lays the blame for our continual difficulties on our whole family, but especially on us two. In spite of my honest efforts at good management, I am not thrifty and economical enough for him, in which opinion he may be right, and you are not practical and sensible enough for him, in which opinion also he may be quite correct. Well, Botho, that is how things stand. My brother is a man of very fine feeling in regard to justice and reason, and of a perfectly remarkable generosity in money matters, which cannot be said of many of our nobility. For our good Mark of Brandenburg is a province characterized by economy and even, when help is needed, by nervous anxiety. But however kind my brother is, he has his moods and his obstinacy, and finding himself continually crossed in his wishes has for some time past put him seriously out of humor. He told me, the last time I took occasion to mention the demand for the payment of our debt which was then threatening again: “I am very glad to be of service, sister, as you know, but I frankly confess that to be constantly obliged to help, when one could help oneself at any minute, if only one had a little more foresight and a little less self-will, makes great claims on the side of my character which was never the strongest: I mean on my indulgence. . . .” You know, Botho, to what these words of his referred, and I ask you to take them to heart to-day, just as your Uncle Kurt Anton wished me to take them to heart then. There is nothing which causes you more cold shivers, as I conclude from your own words and letters, than sentimentality, and yet I fear that you are yourself more deeply involved in something of the kind than you are willing to confess, perhaps than you know yourself. I will say no more.

Rienäcker laid down the letter and walked up and down the room, while he half mechanically exchanged the meerschaum for a cigarette. Then he picked up the letter again and read on:

Yes, Botho, you have the future of all of us in your hands, and

it is for you to decide whether this feeling of constant dependence shall continue or cease. You have our future in your hands, I say, but I must indeed add, only for a short time yet, in any case not very much longer. Uncle Kurt Anton spoke with me about this also, especially in connection with Katherine's Mamma, Frau Sellenthin, who, when he was last in Rothenmoor, expressed herself not only very decidedly but with some access of irritation, as to this matter which interested her so keenly. Did the Rienäcker family perhaps believe that an ever-diminishing property increased constantly in value, after the manner of the Sibylline books? (Where she got the comparison, I do not know.) Katherine would soon be twenty-two, had had enough social experience to form her manners, and with the addition of an inheritance from her Aunt Kielmannsegge would control a property whose income would not fall far behind that of the Rienäckers' forest land and the eel pond together. It was not fitting to keep such young girls waiting, especially with such coolness and placidity. If Herr von Rienäcker chose to drop all that had formerly been planned and discussed by the family and to regard agreements that had been made as mere child's play, she had nothing to say against it. Herr von Rienäcker would be free from the moment when he wished to be free. But if, on the contrary, he did not intend to make use of this unconditional freedom to withdraw, it was time to make his intentions known. She did not wish her daughter to be talked about.

You will not find it difficult to see from the tone of these words, that it is absolutely necessary to come to a decision and to act. You know what my wishes are. But my wishes ought not to bind you. Act as your own intelligence dictates, decide one way or the other, only act. A withdrawal is more honorable than further procrastination. If you delay longer, we shall lose not only the bride, but the whole Sellenthin house as well, and what is worst of all, the friendly and helpful disposition of your Uncle also. My thoughts are with you, and I wish that they might guide you. I repeat, this is the way to happiness for you and for us all. And now I remain, your loving Mother,

Josephine von R.

When he had read the letter, Botho was much excited. It was just as the letter said, and further delay was no longer possible. The Rienäcker property was not in good condition and there were embarrassments which he did not feel the power to clear away through his own energy and ability. "Who am I? An average man from the so-called upper circle of society. And what can I do? I can ride and train a horse, carve a capon and play cards. That is all and therefore I have the choice between a trick rider, and a head butler and a croupier. At the most I might add a soldier, if I am willing to join a foreign legion. And then Lena could go with me as daughter of the regiment. I can see her now with a short skirt and high-heeled shoes and a knapsack on her back."

He went on speaking in this tone, and actually enjoyed saying bitter things to himself. Finally, however, he rang and ordered his horse, because he meant to go riding. And it was not long before his beautiful chestnut, a present from his uncle and the envy of his comrades, was waiting outside. He sprang into the saddle, gave the stable boy some orders and rode to the Moabiter Bridge, after crossing which, he turned into a broad road that led over fens and fields to the Jungfern Haide. Here he let his horse change from a trot to a walk, and while he had thus far pursued all sorts of dim thoughts, he now began to cross-examine himself more sharply every moment. "What is it then that hinders me from taking the step that everyone expects of me? Do I mean to marry Lena? No. Have I promised her that I would? No. Does she expect it? No. Or would the parting be any easier if I should postpone it? No. Still no, again and again. And yet I delay and hesitate to do the one thing which positively must be done. And why do I delay? What is the cause of this vacillating and postponing? Foolish question. Because I love her."

His soliloquy was here interrupted by the sound of gun shots from the Tegler shooting range, and only when he had once more quieted his restive horse did he take up again the thread of his thoughts and repeat: "Because I love her! Yes. And why should I be ashamed of this affection? Feeling reigns over all, and the fact that one loves also gives one the right to love, no matter how much the world may shake its head or talk about riddles. For that matter it is no riddle, and even if it were I can solve it. Every man according to his own nature is dependent upon certain little things, sometimes very, very little things, which in spite of being so small, mean life for him or the best there is in life. And for me the best there is in life is simplicity, truth, naturalness. Lena has all this, that is how she won me, and there lies the magic from which it now seems so difficult to free myself."

Just now his horse shied and he saw a hare that had been driven out of a strip of meadow land, and was darting right in front of him towards the Jungfern Haide. He watched the creature curiously and only resumed his reflections when the fugitive had disappeared among the trunks of the trees. "And was what I wanted," he went on, "anything so foolish and impossible? No. It isn't in me to challenge the world and declare open war against its

judgments; besides, I do not believe in such quixotism. All that I wanted was a still, secluded happiness, a happiness which I expected would sooner or later win the approval of society, because I should have spared it the shock of defiance. Such was my dream, such were my hopes and my thoughts. And now shall I abandon this happiness and exchange it for another that is no happiness to me? I am wholly indifferent to a salon, and I feel a repulsion for all that is untrue, high-flown, dressed up or disguised. *Chic, tournure, savoir faire* — are all just as ugly to me as their foreign names.”

At this point in Botho’s reflections, the horse, whose reins had been lying loose for the past quarter of an hour, turned as if of its own accord into a side path, which led first to a bit of farm land and immediately behind this to a grass plot surrounded by undergrowth and a few oak trees. Here, in the shade of an old tree, stood a low, solid cross, and as he rode up to have a better look at the cross, he read: “Ludwig v. Hinckeldey, died March 10, 1856.” What an impression this made upon him! He had known that the cross was somewhere in this region, but had never been exactly here before, and he now regarded it as a sign, that his horse left to his own devices had brought him to this very spot.

Hinckeldey! It was now nearly twenty years since the death of this man, whose power was then almost absolute; and everything that had been said in his parents’ house when the news came, now came back vividly to Botho’s mind. And more clearly than anything else he remembered one story. One of the citizens, who was especially trusted in other ways as an adviser by his chief had warned and admonished him against duels in general, and especially against such a duel under such circumstances, as a folly and a crime. But his chief, suddenly taking his stand as a nobleman on this occasion, had answered brusquely and haughtily: “Nörner, you do not understand anything about such matters.” And an hour later he was dead. And why? For the sake of a conception of what was required of a nobleman, for a whim of a class of society, which proved more powerful than reason, even more powerful than the law to uphold and protect, which was especially his duty. “Instructive.” And what in particular have I to learn from this story? What does this monument preach to me? In any case, one thing, that our ancestry determines our deeds. He who obeys this principle may go to ruin, but he goes

to ruin in a better way than he who disobeys it.

While he was thinking thus, he turned his horse around and rode across the field towards a great factory, a rolling mill or a machine shop, from the many chimneys of which flames and smoke were rising. It was noon, and part of the workmen were sitting outside in the shade, eating their dinner. The women, who had brought them their food, stood near by chatting, several with babies in their arms, laughing amongst themselves whenever a playful or sarcastic remark was made. Rienäcker, who quite rightly believed that he appreciated naturalness, was delighted with this picture, and with a sort of envy he gazed at the group of happy people. "Work and daily bread and an orderly life. When our people from the Mark marry, they have nothing to say about love and passion, they merely say: 'I need to lead an orderly life.' And that is a fine trait in the life of our people and not at all prosaic. For order is a great thing, and sometimes it is worth everything. And now I must ask myself, has my life been 'orderly'? No. Order means marriage." In this strain he talked to himself for a while longer and then he saw Lena standing before him once more, but she did not look at him reproachfully or complainingly, but rather the reverse, as if she were in friendly agreement with him.

"Yes, my dear Lena, you too believe in work and orderly living, and you will understand and not make it hard for me . . . but it is hard all the same . . . for you and for me."

He put his horse to the trot again and kept along by the Spree for a little while more. Then, however, he turned aside into a bridle path, which led past the tents which lay in the noonday silence, then past the Wrangel Spring and soon afterwards to his own door.

CHAPTER XV

BOTHO wanted to go to Lena at once, and when he felt that he had not strength enough for that, he wanted at least to write. But even that was too much for him. "I cannot do it, not to-day." And so he let the day go by and waited until the next morning. Then he wrote very briefly.

Dear Lena:

Things are turning out, just as you told me the day before yesterday. We must part. And we must part forever. I have had letters from home which compel me; it must be, and since it must be, let it be quickly. . . . Ah, I wish these days lay behind us. I will say no more, not even how my heart aches It was a beautiful time, though so brief, and I shall never forget anything that has been. Towards nine I shall come to you, not earlier, for it must not last long. Auf Wiedersehen! only this once more, auf Wiedersehen!

Your own,

B. v. R.

And so he came. Lena was standing at the gate and received him as usual; not the slightest trace of reproach or even of painful renunciation was to be seen in her face. She took his arm and so they walked along the front garden path.

"It is right that you have come . . . I am happy because you are here. And you must be happy too."

With these words they reached the house, and Botho started to go into the large front room as usual. But Lena led him further along and said: "No. Frau Dörr is in there."

"And is she still angry with us?"

"Oh, no. I comforted her. But what do we want with her to-day? Come, it is such a beautiful evening and we want to be alone."

Botho agreed, and so they went along the passage and across the yard to the garden. Sultan did not stir and only blinked at the two, as they followed the long middle path and then went over to the bench that stood between the raspberry bushes.

They sat down on the bench. It was very still, only they could hear a chirping from the fields beyond and the moon

was high above them.

She leaned against him and said quietly and affectionately:
“And so this is the last time that I shall hold your hand
in mine?”

“Yes, Lena. Can you forgive me?”

“How can you always ask that? What have I to forgive?”

“That I make your heart ache.”

“Yes, it aches. That is true.”

And she was silent again and looked up at the dim stars
that were appearing in the sky.

“What are you thinking of, Lena?”

“How beautiful it would be if I were up there.”

“Do not speak so. You ought not to wish your life to
be over; it is only a step from such a wish”

She smiled. “No, not that. I am not like the girl who
ran and threw herself into the well, because her sweet-
heart danced with some one else. Do you remember when
you told me about that?”

“But what do you mean then? It does not seem like you
to say such a thing, just for the sake of talking.”

“No, I meant it seriously. And really” (she pointed up to
the sky), “I should be glad to be there. Then I should be
at peace. But I can wait. . . . And now come, let us walk
out in the fields. I brought no wrap and I find it cold sitting
still.”

And so they followed the same path through the fields
that had led them the other time as far as the first houses
of Wilmersdorf. The tower was plainly visible under the
bright starry sky while a thin mist was drifting over the
meadow land.

“Do you remember,” said Botho, “how we took this same
walk with Frau Dörr?”

She nodded. "That is why I proposed to come here; I was not chilly, or scarcely at all. Ah, that was such a beautiful day and I have never been so gay and happy, either before or afterwards. Even now my heart laughs, when I think how we walked along singing, 'Do you remember.' Yes, memory means so much — it means everything. And I have that and I can keep it and nothing can ever take it away from me. And I can feel plainly how it will lighten my heart."

He embraced her. "You are so good."

But Lena went on quietly: "And I will not let it pass without telling you all about it, how it is that my heart is so light. Really it is just the same thing that I told you before, the day before yesterday, when we were in the country on our half-spoiled excursion, and afterwards when we were saying good-bye. I always saw this coming, even from the beginning, and nothing has happened but what had to happen. If one has had a beautiful dream, one should thank the Lord for it, and not lament that the dream ends and reality begins again. It is hard now, but all will be forgotten or will seem pleasant again. And some day you will be happy again and perhaps I shall too."

"Do you believe so? And if not? What then?"

"Then we must live without happiness."

"Ah, Lena, you say that as if happiness were nothing. But it is something, and that is what distresses me, and it seems to me as if I had done you an injustice."

"I absolve you from that. You have done me no injustice, you did not lead me astray and you made me no promise. Everything was my own free choice. I loved you with all my heart. That was my fate, and if it was a sin, then it was my sin, and more than that, a sin in which I rejoice with all my heart, as I have told you again and again, because it was my joy. If I must pay for it, I will pay gladly. You have not injured, hurt, or damaged anything, unless perhaps what men call propriety and good morals. Shall I distress myself about that? No. Everything will come right again, and that too. And now come, let us turn back. See how the mist is rising; I think Frau Dörr must have gone home by this time and we shall find my good old mother alone. She knows everything, and

all day long she has only said the one same thing.”

“And that was?”

“That all was for the best.”

Frau Nimptsch was alone, as Botho and Lena came in. The room was still and dusky and only the firelight flickered amongst the great shadows that lay across the room. The goldfinch was already asleep in his cage, and there was not a sound but now and then the hissing of the boiling water.

“Good evening, Mutterchen,” said Botho.

The old woman returned his greeting and was going to rise from her footstool to draw up the big armchair. But Botho would not allow it and said: “No, Mutterchen, I will sit in my old place.”

And he pushed the wooden stool up to the fire.

There was a short pause: but soon he began again: “I have come to-day to bid good-bye and to thank you for all the loving-kindness that I have enjoyed here so long. Yes, I thank you from my heart. I was so happy and always loved to be here. But now I must leave you, and now I can only say that perhaps it is better so.”

The old woman did not speak but nodded as if in agreement.

“But I shall not be gone out of the world.” Botho went on, “and I shall not forget you. And now give me your hand. That is right. And now good-night.”

Hereupon he rose quickly and walked to the door, while Lena clung to his arm. And so they walked as far as the garden gate, without another word being spoken. But then Lena said: “Quick now, Botho. My strength will not hold out any longer; these two days have really been too much. Farewell, my dearest, and may you be as happy as you deserve to be, and as happy as you have made me. Then you will be happy. And we will not talk about the rest, it is not worth while. There, there.”

And she kissed him again and again and then closed the

gate. As he stood on the other side of the street, he seemed, when he saw Lena, as if he must turn back for one more word, for one more kiss. But she made an urgent gesture of refusal. And so he walked on down the street, while she, leaning on the gatepost, with her head supported on her arm, gazed after him with wide eyes.

So she stood for a long time until his footsteps had died away in the silence of the night.

CHAPTER XVI

THE wedding had taken place about the middle of September on the Sellenthins' estate, Rothenmoor. Uncle Osten, who was usually no speaker, had offered his good wishes to the bridal pair in what was undoubtedly the longest toast of his life. And on the next day the following notice appeared among other family items in the "Kreuzzeitung": "Botho Freiherr von Rienäcker, First Lieutenant in the Imperial Regiment of Cuirassiers, and Katherine Freifrau von Rienäcker, nee Sellenthin have the honor to announce their marriage which took place yesterday." Naturally the "Kreuzzeitung" was not the paper which usually found its way to the Dörrs' dwelling nor to the other house in their garden, but the very next morning there came a letter addressed to Fräulein Magdalena Nimptsch, containing nothing but a newspaper clipping containing the marriage notice. Lena was startled, but regained her self-control more quickly than the sender, apparently some envious acquaintance, might have anticipated. That the clipping came from such a source was easily seen from the addition of "Hochwohlgeboren" (well born). But this gratuitous freak of sarcasm, which was intended to double her pain, stood Lena in good stead and diminished the bitter feeling that the news would otherwise have caused her.

Botho and Katherine von Rienäcker started for Dresden the very day of the wedding, after both had happily withstood the enticement of a tour of visits among the Neumark relatives. And actually they had no reason to repent their choice, certainly Botho had not, for every day he congratulated himself not only upon his stay in Dresden, but still more upon the possession of a young wife who seemed to know nothing of caprice or ill humor. She actually laughed all day long, and her nature was as bright and clear as her complexion. She was delighted with everything and saw the cheerful side of everything. At their hotel there was a waiter with a forelock that looked like the crest of a breaking wave, and this waiter with his coiffure was a source of constant amusement to her, so much so, that although she was not usually very witty, she simply outdid herself in images and comparisons. Botho also was amused and laughed heartily, until suddenly a shade of doubt and even of discomfort began to mingle with his laughter. That is, he began to notice that whatever happened or came in

sight, she took notice only of the trivial and the comical side of it. And at the close of a pleasant fortnight spent in Dresden, as the couple were beginning their homeward journey to Berlin, a short conversation fully enlightened him as to this side of his wife's character. They had a coupé to themselves and as they looked back from the bridge over the Elbe to take farewell of old Dresden and the tower of the Frauenkirche, Botho said, as he took her hand: "And now tell me, Katherine, what was really the most beautiful thing here in Dresden?"

"Guess."

"But that is difficult, for you have your own tastes, and I know you do not care for church music and Holbein's Madonnas. . . ."

"No. You are right there. And since my lord and master is so serious I will not keep him waiting and tormenting himself any longer. There were three things that I was delighted with: first, the confectioner's shop at the Old Market and the Scheffelgassen corner, with those wonderful pasties and liqueurs. Just to sit there. . . ."

"But, Katherine, one could not sit at all, one could scarcely stand, and it seemed as if one had to get every mouthful by force."

"That was just it. That was the very reason, my dear. Whatever one must win by force. . . ."

And she turned away roguishly pretending to pout, until he kissed her ardently.

"I see," she laughed, "that you really agree with me and as a reward I will tell you the second and third too. The second thing was the summer theater in the suburbs, where we saw 'Monsieur Hercules' and Knaak drummed the Tannhäuser March on a rickety old whist table. I never saw anything so comical in all my life, and I don't believe you ever did either. It was really too funny. . . . And the third . . . was 'Bacchus Riding on the He-goat' in the Art Museum and the 'Dog Scratching Himself' by Peter Vischer."

"I thought it was something like that; and when Uncle Osten hears about it he will think you are quite right

and he will be fonder of you than ever and will say still oftener than before, 'I tell you, Botho, Katherine'"

"And isn't he right?"

"Why surely he is."

And with these words their conversation ceased for some minutes, leaving in Botho's mind, however tenderly he gazed upon his young bride, a somewhat painful impression. The young woman herself had meanwhile no suspicion of what was taking place in her husband's mind, and only said: "I am tired, Botho. So many pictures. It comes over me afterwards. . . . But [the train was just stopping] what is the noise and excitement outside?"

"That is some Dresden pleasure resort, Kötchenbroda, I think."

"Kötchenbroda? How comical."

And as the train went on again, she stretched herself out and apparently closed her eyes. But she was not asleep and was watching her dear husband between her eyelashes.

On the Landgrafenstrasse, which still had houses on one side only, Katherine's mother had in the meantime arranged the home for the young couple, who were much pleased with the comfort that they found awaiting them when they arrived in Berlin at the beginning of October. Fire was burning in the fireplaces of the two front rooms, but the doors and windows stood open, for the autumn air was mild and the fire was only for the sake of cheerfulness and for ventilation. But the most attractive thing was the large balcony with its low-hanging awning, under which one could look straight out over the open country, first over the birch woods and the Zoological Garden and beyond that as far as the northern point of the Grönwald.

Katherine clapped her hands for joy over this beautiful wide view, embraced her mother, kissed Botho and then suddenly pointed to the left, where between scattered poplars and willows a shingled tower could be seen. "See, Botho, how comical. It looks as if it had been notched three times. And the village near by. What is it called?"

“Wilmersdorf, I believe,” stammered Botho.

“Very well, Wilmersdorf. But what do you mean by ‘I believe’? You surely must know the names of the villages hereabouts. Only look, mamma, doesn’t he look as if he had been betraying a state secret? Nothing is more comical than these men.”

And then they left the balcony, and went into the room near it to take their first luncheon *en famille*: only Katherine’s mother, the young couple and Serge, who had been invited as the only guest.

Rienäcker’s house was scarcely a thousand steps from that of Frau Nimptsch. But Lena did not know that and often passed through the Landgrafenstrasse, which she would have avoided if she had had the slightest suspicion that Botho lived so near.

Yet it could not long remain a secret to her.

The third week in October was beginning, but it was still like summer and the sun shone so warm, that one could scarcely notice the slight sharpness in the air.

“I must go into town to-day, mother,” said Lena. “I have a letter from Goldstein. He wants to speak to me about a pattern that is to be embroidered on the Princess Waldeck’s linen. And while I am in town, I shall also go to see Frau Demuth in old Jakobstrasse. Otherwise one would never see a soul. But I shall be back at about noon. I shall tell Frau Dörr, so that she will keep an eye on you.”

“Never mind, Lena, never mind. I like best to be alone. And Frau Dörr talks so much and always about her husband. And I have my fire. And when the goldfinch chirps, that is company enough for me. But if you could bring me a bag of candy, I have so much trouble with my throat tickling and malt candy is so loosening”

“Very well, mother.”

And then Lena left the quiet little house and walked first along the Kurfürsten Strasse and then the Potsdamer Strasse, to the Spittelmarkt, where the Goldstein Brothers’

place of business was. All went well and it was nearly noon. Lena was homeward bound, and this time had chosen to pass through the Lützowstrasse instead of the Kurfürsten Strasse as before. The sun did her good and the bustle and stir on the Magdeburg Square, where the weekly market was being held and everything was being made ready for departure, pleased her so much that she paused to watch the cheerful activity. She was quite absorbed in this and was only aroused when the fire apparatus rushed by her with a great noise.

Lena listened until the rumbling and ringing had vanished in the distance, but then she glanced to the left at the clock tower of the Church of the Twelve Apostles. "Just twelve," said she. "Now I shall have to hurry; she always grows uneasy if I come home later than she expects me." And so she went on down the Lützowstrasse to the square of the same name. But suddenly she paused and did not know which way to turn, for at a little distance she recognised Botho, who was coming directly towards her, with a pretty young lady leaning on his arm. The young lady was speaking with animation and apparently about droll or cheerful things, for Botho was laughing all the time, as he looked down at her. It was to this circumstance that she owed the fact that she had not been observed long before, and quickly deciding to avoid a meeting with him at any price, she turned to the right of the sidewalk and stepped up to the nearest large show window, before which there was a square iron plate, probably used as a cover for the opening to a cellar. The window itself belonged to an ordinary grocery store, with the usual assortment of stearine candles and bottles of mixed pickles, in no way uncommon, but Lena stared at them as if she had never seen the like before. And truly it was time, for at this very moment the young couple passed close to her and not a word of the conversation between them escaped her.

"Katherine, don't talk so loud," said Botho, "people will be staring at us."

"Let them"

"But they must think we are quarreling"

"While we are laughing? Quarrelling and laughing at once?" And she laughed again.

Lena felt the thin iron plate on which she stood tremble. A horizontal brass rod ran across in front of the show window to protect the large pane of glass and for a moment it seemed to Lena as if she must catch at this rod for help and support, but she managed to stand straight, and only when she could make sure that the pair were far enough away did she turn to walk homeward. She felt her way cautiously along close to the houses and got on well enough at first. But soon she felt as if she were going to faint, and when she reached the next side street that led toward the canal, she turned into it and stepped through an open gate into a garden. It was with difficulty that she dragged herself as far as a little flight of steps that led to a veranda and terrace, and sat down, nearly fainting, on one of the steps.

As she came to herself, she saw that a half-grown girl, with a little spade in her hand with which she had been digging small beds, was standing near her and looking at her sympathetically, while from the veranda railing an old nurse regarded her with scarcely less curiosity. Apparently no one but the child and the old servant was at home, and Lena rose and thanked them both and walked back to the gate. But the half-grown girl looked after her with sad and wondering eyes, and it almost seemed as if some premonition of the sorrows of life had dawned upon her childish heart.

Meanwhile Lena, having crossed the embankment, had reached the canal, and now walked along at the foot of the slope where she could be sure of meeting nobody. From the boats a Spitz dog barked now and then, and as it was noontime a thin smoke rose from the little stove-pipes of the galleys. But she saw and heard nothing of what was going on, or at least had no clear consciousness of it, and only where beyond the Zoological Garden the houses by the canal came to an end and the great lock gate with the water rushing and foaming over it came in sight, did she stand still and struggle for breath. "Ah, if I could only cry." And she pressed her hand to her heart.

At home she found her mother in her accustomed place and sat down opposite her, without a word or a glance being exchanged between them. But suddenly the old woman, who had been looking all the time in the same direction, glanced up from the fire and was startled at the

change in Lena's face.

"Lena, child, what is wrong with you? How you do look, Lena?" And although she was usually slow in her movements, she jumped up in a moment from her bench and got the jug, to sprinkle water on Lena, who still sat as if she were half dead. But the jug was empty and so she hobbled into the passageway and from there into the yard and the garden, to call good Frau Dörr, who was cutting wallflowers and honeysuckle for bouquets for the market. Her old husband stood near her and was just saying: "Don't use up too much string again."

When Frau Dörr, heard from some little distance the distressed cry of the old woman, she turned pale and called back "I am coming. Mother Nimptsch, I am coming," and throwing down whatever she had in her hands, she ran at once to the little house, saying to herself that something must be wrong there.

"Yes, just as I thought . . . Lena." And she vigorously shook the young girl, who still sat lifeless as before, while the old woman slowly shuffled in from the passageway.

"We must put her to bed," said Frau Dörr, and Frau Nimptsch started to take hold with her. But that was not what the stronger woman meant by "we". "I can manage alone, Mother Nimptsch," and taking Lena in her arms, she carried her into the next room and covered her over.

"There, Mother Nimptsch. Now a hot cover. I know what is the trouble, it comes from the blood. First a cover and then a hot brick to the soles of her feet; but put it right under the instep, that is where the life is. . . . But what brought it on? It must have been some shock."

"I don't know. She didn't say anything. But I think that perhaps she saw him."

"That is so. That's it. I know about that. . . . But now shut the window and draw down the blinds. . . . Some people believe in camphor and Hoffmann's drops, but camphor is so weakening and is really only fit for moths. No, dear Frau Nimptsch, nature must help itself, and especially when one is so young, and so I believe in sweating. But thoroughly. And what makes all the trouble? The men. And yet we need them and must have them. . . . There,

her color is coming back.”

“Hadn’t we better send for a doctor?”

“Heaven forbid! They are all out going their rounds now and before one of them would get here she might die and come to life again three times over.”

CHAPTER XVII

TWO and a half years had passed since this meeting, during which time many things had changed in our circle of friends and acquaintances, but not among those of the Landgrafenstrasse.

The same good humor continued there, the gayety of the honeymoon still remained, and Katherine continued to laugh as of old. What might perhaps have troubled other young women, that they had no children, did not disturb Katherine for a moment. She enjoyed life so much and found such complete satisfaction in dressing and small-talk, in riding and driving, that she shrank from any change in her way of life rather than desired it. The feeling for family life, to say nothing of any real longing for it, had not yet awakened in her and when her mother made some remark in a letter about such matters, Katherine answered somewhat heretically: "Don't trouble yourself, mamma. Botho's brother has just become engaged, and in six months he will be married and I shall gladly leave to my future sister-in-law the care of providing for the continuance of the house of Rienäcker."

Botho did not take exactly this view, but even his happiness was not seriously disturbed by the lack of children, and if from time to time he had a discontented mood, it was chiefly because, as he had already found out on his wedding journey to Dresden, he could perhaps talk somewhat reasonably with Katherine, but any really serious speech with her was wholly out of the question. She was talkative and sometimes even had bright ideas, but the best things she ever said were but superficial and trivial, as if she were unable to distinguish between important and unimportant things. And what was the worst of all, she considered all this as a merit, and plumed herself on it, and never thought of correcting the habit. "But, Katherine, Katherine," Botho would exclaim sometimes, and the tone of his voice would show some displeasure, but her happy nature could always disarm him again, so completely, indeed, that his own expectations seemed almost pedantic to him.

Lena with her simplicity, genuineness, and directness of speech often recurred to his mind, but vanished again as quickly; and only when chance recalled some special incident

very vividly did her image come to him with greater distinctness, and perhaps a stronger feeling with which some embarrassment was mingled.

Such an incident happened during the first summer, when the young couple, who had returned from dining with Count Alten, were sitting on the balcony taking tea. Katherine was leaning back in her chair listening to a newspaper article which was profusely interspersed with figures, and dealt with the subject of minister's salaries and surplice fees. She actually understood very little of the subject, and all the less because the many figures troubled her, but she listened rather attentively, because all the young girls of her province spend half their youth "with the minister" and so they retain a certain sympathy with the affairs of the parsonage. This was the case to-day. Finally evening came on and just as it was growing dark the concert at the Zoological Garden began and the tones of a ravishing Strauss Waltz reached them.

"Only listen, Botho," said Katherine, rising, while she added eagerly: "Come, let us dance." And without waiting for his consent, she pulled him up out of his chair and waltzed with him into the large room from which the balcony opened and then two or three times around the room. Then she kissed him, and while she clung to him caressingly she said: "Do you know, Botho, I never danced so wonderfully before, not even at my first ball, that I went to while I was still at Frau Zülow's and had not yet been confirmed, if I must confess it. Uncle Osten took me on his own responsibility and mamma knows nothing about it to this very day. But even then it was not so lovely as to-day. And yet forbidden fruit is the sweetest. Isn't it? But you are not saying anything, Botho, you seem embarrassed. See, now I have caught you again."

He attempted to say something or other, but she did not give him a chance to speak. "I really believe, Botho, my sister Ina has taken your fancy and it is of no use your trying to comfort me by saying that she is only a little half-grown girl or not much more. Those are always the most dangerous. Don't you think so? Now I am not going to take any notice and I do not grudge it to you or to her. But I am very jealous about old affairs of long ago, far, far more jealous than of things that may happen now."

“How curious,” said Botho, and tried to laugh.

“And yet after all it is not so curious as it may look,” Katherine went on. “Don’t you see, affairs that are going on now one has almost under one’s eyes; and it must be a hard case and an arch deceiver, if one should notice nothing and so be completely betrayed. But there is no control possible over old stories; there might be a thousand and three, and one might hardly know it.”

“And what one does not know”

“May make one’s anger grow. But let us drop all this and read me something more from the paper. I was reminded constantly of our Kluckhuhns. And the good wife can’t understand it, and the oldest boy is just going to the University.”

Such incidents happened more and more frequently and led Botho to recall old times as well as Lena’s image; but he never saw her, which surprised him, because he knew that they were almost neighbors.

This surprised him and yet it would have been easily explained had he promptly ascertained that Frau Nimptsch and Lena were no longer living at the old place. And yet this was the case. From the day when she had met the young couple on the Lützowstrasse, Lena had told her old mother that she could no longer stay in the Dörr’s house. And when Mother Nimptsch, who used never to contradict her, shook her head and whimpered and continually pointed to the fireplace, Lena said: “Mother, you know me. I will never rob you of your open fire; you shall have everything again that you have had; I have saved up money enough for it, and even if I had not, I would work until I had got it together. But we must get away from here. Every day I should have to pass that way, and I could never stand it, mother. I do not grudge him his happiness, and what is more, I am glad that he has it. God is my witness, for he was a dear, good man and lived only for my sake; no pride, no stinginess. And I will say it right out, for all that I cannot bear fine gentlemen, he is a real nobleman, and his heart is in the right place. Yes, my dear Botho, you must be happy, as happy as you deserve to be. But I cannot bear to see it, mother, I must get away from here, for I cannot take ten steps without imagining that he is right there before me. And that keeps me all in a

tremble. No, no, it will never do. But you shall have your fireplace. I am your Lena, and I promise you that.”

After this talk there was no more opposition on the part of old Frau Nimptsch and even Frau Dörr said: “Of course, you will have to go. And it serves that old miser, Dörr, right. He is always grumbling at me that you are getting the place too cheap and that what you pay would never cover rent and repairs. Now let him see how he likes it when he has the whole place standing empty. For that is how it will be. For who is going to move into such a doll’s house, where every cat can peek in at the window and there is no gas nor running water. Well, it is plain; you can give a quarter’s notice and at Easter you can leave, and it will do him no good to make a fuss. And I am really glad of it; yes, Lena, I am so glad. But then I have to pay for my bit of malice too, For when you are gone, child, and good Frau Nimptsch with her fire and her teakettle that is always boiling, what shall I have left, Lena? Only him and Sultan and the poor foolish boy, who keeps growing more foolish. And nobody else in the world. And when it grows cold and the snow falls, it is enough to drive one crazy, simply sitting still and all alone.”

Such were the early discussions, since Lena held fast to her plan of moving, and at Easter time, a furniture wagon drew up before the door to carry away her household possessions. Old Dörr had behaved surprisingly well at the last and after a formal farewell Frau Nimptsch was bundled into a Droschke with her squirrel and her goldfinch and carried to the Luise Bank, where Lena had hired a charming little flat, three flights up, and had not only gotten a little new furniture, but had remembered her promise, and had arranged to have a pleasant open fireplace built on to the big stove in the front room. The landlord had at first made all sorts of difficulties, “because such an addition would ruin the stove.” But Lena had persevered and had given her reasons, which made such an impression on the landlord, an old master-carpenter who was pleased with such ideas, that at last he was disposed to yield.

The two now lived in much the same way that they had formerly done in the house in the Dörr’s garden, only with this difference, that they were now three flights up and that they looked out upon the beautiful tower of Michael’s church instead of the fantastic tower of the elephants’ house.

Indeed, the view that they enjoyed was delightful, and so free and fine that it even influenced the habits of old Frau Nimptsch and induced her not to sit all the time on the bench by the fire, but when the sun was shining, to sit by the open window, where Lena had managed to have a little platform placed. All this did old Frau Nimptsch a great deal of good and even improved her health, so that since her change of abode, she suffered much less pain than in the Dörr's little house, which, however poetically it was situated, was not much better than a cellar.

For the rest, never a week passed without Frau Dörr's coming all the long distance from the Zoological Garden to the Luise Bank, simply "to see how everything was going on." During these visits she talked, after the manner of Berlin wives, exclusively about her husband, and always in a tone which implied that her marriage to him had been one of the most dreadful mésalliances and really half inexplicable. In fact, however, she was extremely comfortable and contented, and was actually glad that Dörr had his peculiarities. For she reaped only advantages from them, first, to grow richer all the time, and second (an advantage which she valued quite as highly) without any danger of change or loss of property she could continually hold herself superior to the old miser and reproach him for his niggardly ways. So Dörr was the principal theme of these conversations and Lena, unless she was at Goldstein's or somewhere else in town, always laughed heartily with the others, all the more so because she, as well as Frau Nimptsch, had visibly improved in health since they had moved. The moving in, buying and placing of house furnishings had, as one may imagine, led her away from her own thoughts from the beginning and what was still more helpful and important for her health and the recovery of her spirits was that she no longer needed to fear a meeting with Botho. Who came away out to the Luise Bank? Certainly not Botho. All this combined to make her seem comparatively fresh and cheerful again, and only one outward sign remained of the struggles she had been through: in the midst of her long hair there was one white strand. Mother Nimptsch either did not notice this or did not think much about it, but Frau Dörr, who in her own way followed the fashions and was uncommonly proud of her own braid of hair, noticed the white lock at once and said: "Good Lord, Lena. And right on the left side. But naturally . . . that is where the trouble is . . . it would have to be on the left."

It was soon after the moving that this conversation took place. Otherwise there was usually no mention either of Botho or of the old days, which was simply because whenever the gossip turned in this special direction, Lena always broke off the conversation quickly or even left the room. As this happened again and again, Frau Dörr remarked it and learned to keep silence about topics which proved unwelcome. So things went on for a year and then there appeared another reason that made it seem inadvisable to recall past incidents. A new neighbour had hired a room just on the other side of the wall from Frau Nimptsch, and while he seemed to wish to be on neighbourly terms from the beginning, he soon promised to become even more than a good neighbour. He would come in every evening and talk, so that it seemed like the old times when Dörr used to sit on his stool smoking his pipe, only that the new neighbour was very different in many ways. He was a correct and well educated man, with very proper although not exactly fine manners, and was also a good talker. When Lena was present, he would talk about all sorts of town affairs, such as schools, gas works, or canals, and sometimes also about his travels. If it happened that he found the old lady alone, he was not at all annoyed, but would play "everlasting" or checkers or would help her with a game of patience, in spite of the fact that he hated cards. For he was a Conventicler, and after he had taken some part with the Mennonites and later with the followers of Irving, he had still more recently founded a separate sect.

As may be readily imagined, all this aroused Frau Dörr's curiosity to the highest pitch, and she was never weary of asking questions, and making allusions, but only when Lena was busy at some household task or had matters to attend to in town. "Tell me, dear Frau Nimptsch, just what is he, really? I have tried to hunt him up, but he is not in the book; Dörr never has any later one than year before last. His name is Franke?"

"Yes, Franke."

"Franke. There used to be one on the Ohmgasse, a master cooper, and he had only one eye; that is, the other eye was still there, but it was all white and looked just like a fish's bladder. And what do you suppose had happened to it? When he went to put on a hoop, it had sprung loose and the end had hit him in the eye. That

is how it was. Could he have come from there?"

"No, Frau Dörr, he is not from anywhere near here. He is from Bremen."

"Well, well. Then of course it is quite natural."

Frau Nimptsch nodded in assent, without seeking to be further enlightened as to this "naturalness," and went on talking herself: "And it only takes a fortnight to go from Bremen to America. And he has been there. And he was a tinman or a locksmith or a workman in a machine shop or something like that, but when he saw that he could not make it go, he became a doctor and went around with a lot of little bottles and he began to preach too. And because he preached so well, he got a position with the . . . There now, I have forgotten it again. But they must have been very pious people and good proper people too."

"Glory be to God!" said Frau Dörr. "Surely he was not. . . . Heavens, what is the name of those people that have so many wives, always six or seven and sometimes even more . . . I don't know what they do with so many."

This theme seemed made on purpose for Frau Dörr. But Frau Nimptsch reassured her friend: "No, dear Frau Dörr, it is quite different. At first I thought it was something like that, but he laughed and said: 'The Lord forbid, Frau Nimptsch. I am a bachelor. And if I ever marry, I think one will be quite enough.'"

"Oh, that takes a load off my heart," said Frau Dörr. "And what happened afterwards? I mean over in America."

"Well, after that everything went well and it was not long till he had help enough. For religious people are always helping each other. And he found customers again and got back to his old trade. And that is what he works at now, and he is in a big factory here on the Köpnickersstrasse, where they make little tubes and burners and stop-cocks and everything that is needed for gas. And he is the chief man, something like a foreman carpenter or foreman mason, and has perhaps a hundred under him. And he is a very respectable man and he wears a tall hat and black gloves. And he has a good salary too."

“And Lena?”

“Oh, Lena, she would take him all right. And why not? But she cannot hold her tongue, and if he comes and says anything to her, she is going to tell him everything, all the old stories, first the one with Kuhlwein (and that is so long ago that it is just as if it never had happened), and then all about the Baron. And Franke, you must know, is a refined and well-behaved man, and really a gentleman.”

“We must persuade her out of that. He does not need to know everything; why should he? We never know everything.”

“Yes, yes. But Lena”

CHAPTER XVIII

IT was now June, 1878. Frau von Rienäcker and Frau von Sellenthin had spent the month of May on a visit with the young couple; and the mother and the mother-in-law had day by day convinced each other that Katherine looked paler and more bloodless and languid than she had ever been before, and needless to say they had incessantly urged that a specialist should be consulted, by whose advice, after a gynecological examination (which, by the way, proved very expensive), a four weeks' stay at the Schlangenbad health resort was pronounced indispensable and was accordingly decided upon. Schwalbach might be useful later. Katherine laughed and would not hear of any such thing, especially of Schlangenbad, "the name sounded so uncanny and she already seemed to feel a viper in her bosom," but finally she had yielded and had found in the preparations for the journey a far greater contentment than she expected from the cure itself. She went down town every day to make purchases, and was never tired of telling how she was only now beginning to understand "shopping" which was in such high favor among Englishwomen: to go from shop to shop and always to find beautiful goods and courteous people, was really a pleasure and instructive too, because one saw so much that one did not know before, perhaps not even by name. As a rule Botho took part in these little trips and excursions, and before the beginning of the last week in June, half of the Rienäckers' dwelling was turned into a little exhibition of traveller's conveniences: a brass-bound travelling trunk, which Botho, not without some show of justice, called the coffin of his property — this took the lead, then came two smaller ones of Russia leather, with satchels, rugs, and cushions, and the travelling wardrobe lay spread out over the sofa with a dust cloak over all and a pair of marvellous thick-soled laced boots, as if a trip to the glaciers were in question.

June 24th, midsummer day, was set for the beginning of the journey, but the day before Katherine wanted the intimate circle to be gathered around her once more, and so Wedell and young Osten, and naturally Pitt and Serge too, were invited for a comparatively early hour. Also Katherine's special favorite Balafre, who had as a "Halberstädter" taken part in the great cavalry attack at Mars la Tour, and who still deserved his nickname because of a great sabre cut across his brow and cheek, a souvenir of

that battle.

Katherine sat between Wedell and Balafre and did not look as if she were in need of the Schlangenbad or any other water cure in the world. She had color, laughed, asked a hundred questions and when the person of whom she had asked the question started to speak, she contented herself with a minimum in the way of reply. In fact she led the conversation, and no one was offended with her, because she was a past mistress in the art of pleasing small talk. Balafre asked how she pictured her life at the water cure. Schlangenbad was renowned not only for its wonderful cures but also for its monotony, and four weeks of monotony at a health resort would be a good deal even under the most favorable circumstances.

“Oh, dear Balafre,” said Katherine, “you ought not to frighten me, and you would not if you knew how much Botho has done for me. He has got me eight novels though, to be sure, he put them in the bottom layer of my trunk; and in order that my imagination should not be prejudiced against water cures, he put in also a book about scientific fish culture.”

Balafre laughed.

“Yes, you laugh, my dear friend, and yet you know only the lesser half, for the larger half (Botho, you know, never does anything without weighty reason) is his motives. Of course, what I just said about the pamphlet on fish culture being meant to prevent my taking a prejudice against the water cure was only a joke. The serious side of the matter is simply this, that I must actually read the pamphlet, and that from local patriotism, for Neumark, your happy home as well as mine, has been for a long time the birth and breeding place of scientific fish culture, and if I knew nothing of this new factor of food production, so important nationally and economically, I should never dare to show myself again on the further side of the Oder in the Landsbergerkreise, much less, however in Verneuchen, at my Cousin Borne’s.”

Botho started to speak, but she cut him off and went on: “I know what you were going to say, that the eight novels were only put in ‘in case of emergency.’ But I think there are not likely to be any ‘emergencies.’ Only yesterday I had a letter from my sister Ina, who wrote

me that Anna Grävenitz has already been there for a week. You know her, Wedell; she was a Miss Rohr, a charming blonde. We were together at old Frau Zülow's Pension, and we were even in the same class. And I remember how we both adored our divine Felix Bachmann, and even wrote verses, until good old Zülow said that she forbade any such nonsense. And Elly Winterfeld, as Ina writes me, is apparently coming too. And now I say to myself, in company with two charming young women — and I myself for the third, even if I cannot be compared with the others — in such good company, I say, one must surely be able to live. Don't you think so, dear Balafre?"

The latter bowed with a grotesque air, which seemed to express his agreement with everything Katharine might say, except her assertion that any one might be her superior, but nevertheless he resumed his former list of questions: "If I might hear the details, gracious lady! The separate items, so to speak; one minute, may decide our happiness and unhappiness. And there are so many minutes in a day."

"Well. I think it will be like this. Every morning letters. Then a promenade concert and a walk with the two ladies, preferably in a secluded path. There we will sit down and read our letters aloud, for I hope we shall have received some, and we shall laugh if he writes tenderly and say 'Yes, yes.' And then comes the bath, and after the bath the toilette, naturally with care and enthusiasm, which in Schlangenbad may be no less amusing than in Berlin. Rather the contrary. And then we shall go to lunch and I shall have an old general on my right and a rich manufacturer on my left. From my youth on I have had a passion for manufacturers — a passion of which I am much ashamed. For either they have invented a new kind of armor plate or laid a submarine telegraphic cable or bored a tunnel or constructed an ascending railway. And beside all this, they are rich, which I do not at all despise. And after lunch, the reading-room and coffee, with the Venetian blinds let down, so that light and shade will be chasing each other across the newspaper. And then a walk, or a drive. And perhaps, if we are fortunate, a couple of cavaliers from Frankfort or Mainz may have wandered over and they may ride beside the carriage; and I must say, my friends, that compared with Hussars, whether red or blue, you are not in the fashion, and from my military standpoint it is and remains a decided blunder, that they have doubled the

Dragoon Guards, but have, so to speak, simply left the Hussars alone. And it is still more incomprehensible to me that they should be left over there. Anything so special belongs in the capital.”

Botho, who began to be annoyed by his wife’s great talent for conversation, tried by means of little jokes and mockeries to stem the tide of her endless prattle. But his guests were far less critical than he, indeed they grew more enthusiastic than ever over “the charming little woman,” and Balafre, who was over head and ears in his admiration for Katherine, said: “Rienacker, if you say one word more against your wife, you are a dead man. My dear lady, what in the world does your ogre of a husband want? What does he find to criticise? I can’t imagine. And in the end I am forced to believe that he feels his honor as a cavalryman insulted, and if you will pardon the pun, he rumples his feathers simply because he has feathers. Rienacker, I take my oath! If I had such a wife as you have, her lightest whim would be my law, and if she wanted to turn me into a Hussar, I would join the Hussars and make an end of it. But so much I know for certain, and I would stake my life and honor on it, if his Majesty could hear such persuasive words, the Hussars would never have another quiet hour; to-morrow morning they would be in the quarters for moving troops at Zehlendorf, and day after to-morrow they would be marching into Berlin through the Brandenburg Gate. Oh these Sellenthins, whose health I drink, taking time by the forelock, the first, second, and third time in this one toast! Why have you not another sister, my dear lady? Why is Fraulein Ina already engaged? It is too soon and in any case it is my loss.”

Katherine was delighted with these small flatteries and assured him that, in spite of the fact that Ina was now hopelessly lost to him, she would do everything for him that could possibly be done, although she knew perfectly well that he was an incorrigible bachelor and was only making pretty speeches.

Immediately afterwards, however, she dropped her badinage with Balafre and began to talk once more about her journey, and especially about how she thought her correspondence would be during her absence. She hoped, as she could not help repeating, that she should get a letter every day, for that was no more than the duty of an affectionate husband, and as for her, she would think it over,

and only on the first day, she would show some sign of life at every station. This proposal was approved even by Rienäcker, and finally was but slightly altered, it being decided that at every important station she passed through, in spite of detours, as far as Cologne, she should write a card, but that she should put all the cards, whether they were few or many, in one envelope. This plan would have the advantage, that she could express herself freely about her travelling companions without any fear of post-office clerks and letter carriers.

After dinner they took their coffee on the balcony, where Katherine, after making some objections, appeared in her travelling costume: a Rembrandt hat and a dust cloak with a travelling satchel slung over her shoulder. She looked charming. Balafré was more enchanted than ever and begged her not to be too much surprised if the next morning she should find him anxiously squeezed into the corner of the coupé as an escort for the journey.

“Provided that he gets his furlough,” laughed Pitt.

“Or that he deserts,” added Serge, “which would really be the first thing that would make his devotion complete.”

And so they chatted for a while longer. Then they bade their hospitable host and hostess good-bye and agreed to go together as far as the bridge at Lützow Square. Here, however, they divided into two groups, and while Balafré, Wedell and Osten sauntered further along the canal, Pitt and Serge, who were going to Kroll's, went toward the Thiergarten.

“What a charming creature that Katherine is,” said Serge. “Rienäcker seems rather prosaic beside her, and then he looks at her so discontentedly and so reprovngly, as if he needed to make excuses to every one for the little woman, who to a discerning eye is really cleverer than he.”

Pitt kept silence.

“And what in the world does she want at Schwalbach or Schlangenbad?” Serge went on. “That does not help matters at all. And if it does, it is usually a rather peculiar sort of help.”

Pitt glanced at him sidewise. "I think. Serge, that you are growing more and more Russian, or what amounts to the same thing, you are living up to your name more and more."

"But still not enough. But joking aside, my friend, I am in earnest about one thing: Rienäcker makes me angry. What has he against the charming little woman? Do you know?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"She is rather a little silly. Or if you prefer it in German, she babbles a bit. At all events too much for him."

CHAPTER XIX

BETWEEN Berlin and Potsdam Katherine was already drawing down the yellow curtains of the car windows to protect herself from the dazzling light which grew stronger and stronger. But on this same day no curtains were drawn in the little home on the Luise Bank and the forenoon sun shone brightly in at Frau Nimptsch's window and filled the whole room with light. Only the background was in shadow and here stood an old-fashioned bed with a high pile of red and white checked pillows, against which Frau Nimptsch was leaning. She was sitting up rather than lying down, because she had water on the lungs and was suffering severely from asthma. She kept turning her head toward the one open window, but still oftener toward the fireplace where no fire was burning to-day.

Lena was sitting by her, holding her hand, and when she saw that her mother kept looking in the same direction, she said: "Shall I make a fire, mother? I thought that you were lying warm in bed and it is such a hot day"

The old woman did not speak, but it seemed to Lena as if she would like it. So she went and knelt down and lit a fire.

When she came back to the bed, the old woman smiled contentedly and said: "Yes, Lena, it is hot. But you know, I always want to see it. And when I do not see it. I think everything is gone and there is not a spark of life left. And there is so much trouble here. . . ."

And she pointed to her breast and heart.

"Ah, mother, you are always thinking about dying. And yet it has passed away so many times already."

"Yes, child, it has passed away often, but it must come sometime and at seventy it may come any day. I wish you would open the other window too, so that there will be more air and the fire will burn better. Just look, it isn't burning well, it smokes so"

"The sun does that, it is shining right on it. . . ."

"And then give me the green drops that Frau Dörr brought

me. They always help me a little.”

Lena did as she was asked and when the sick woman had taken the drops, she really seemed to be a little better and easier around her heart. She propped herself up with her hands and raised herself higher, and when Lena had put another cushion behind her back, she said:

“Has Franke been here lately?”

“Yes, he was here early to-day. He always stops to inquire before he goes to the factory.”

“He is a very good man.”

“Yes, he is that.”

“And about the Conventiclers. . . .”

“It may not be so bad. And I almost believe that he gets his good principles from them. Do you believe so?”

The old woman smiled. “No, Lena, they come from the good God. And one has them and another has not. I don’t believe very much in learning and training. . . . And has not he said anything yet?”

“Yes, yesterday evening.”

“And how did you answer him?”

“I told him that I would accept him, because I thought he was an honorable and trustworthy man, who would not only take care of me, but of you too. . . .”

The old woman nodded her approval.

“And,” Lena went on, “when I had told him that, he took my hand and exclaimed cheerfully: ‘So then, Lena, it is all settled!’ But I shook my head and said, not quite so fast, because I still had something to confess to him. And when he asked what it was, I told him that I had had two love affairs: First . . . there, mother, you know all about it . . . and the first I liked very much and the other I loved dearly and still cared for him. But he was now happily married and I had never seen him again but just

once, and I did not want to see him again. But, since he was so good and kind to us, I felt obliged to tell him everything, because I would not deceive anyone, and certainly not him. . . .”

“My Lord, my Lord,” whimpered the old woman, while Lena was speaking.

“And directly afterwards he got up and went back to his own rooms. But I could see plainly that he was not angry. Only he would not let me go to the door with him as usual.”

Frau Nimptsch was evidently anxious and uneasy, although indeed one could not tell whether the cause was what Lena had told her or the struggle for breath. But it almost seemed as if it were her breathing, for suddenly she said: “Lena, child, I am not high enough. You will have to put the song book under me too.”

Lena did not contradict her, but went and got the song book. But when she brought it, her mother said: “No, not that one, that is the new one. I want the old one, the thick one with the two clasps.” And when Lena came back with the thick song book, she went on: “I used to have to bring that same book to my mother too when I was not much more than a child and my mother was not yet fifty; and she suffered here too, and her great frightened eyes kept looking at me so. But when I put the Porst song book, that she had got when she was confirmed, under her, she grew perfectly quiet and fell peacefully asleep. And I want to do that too. Ah, Lena. It isn’t death . . . but dying. . . . There, now. Ah, that helps me.”

Lena wept softly to herself and since she now saw plainly that the good old woman’s last hour was very near, she sent word to Frau Dörr, that “her mother was in a bad way and would not Frau Dörr come.” She sent word back, “Yes, she would come.” Toward six o’clock she arrived, bustling noisily in for she knew nothing about being quiet, even with sick people. She tramped about the room so that everything on or near the hearth shook and rattled, and at the same time she scolded about Dörr, who was always in town when he ought to be at home, and always at home when she wished he was in Jericho. Meanwhile she took the sick woman’s hand and asked Lena, “whether she had given her plenty of the drops?”

“Yes.”

“How many have you given her?”

“Five . . . five every two hours.”

That was not enough, Frau Dörr assured her, and after bringing to light all her medical knowledge she added: “She had let the medicine draw in the sun for a fortnight, and if one took it properly the water would go away as if it were pumped out. Old Selke at the Zoological had been just like a cask, and for more than four months he could never go to bed, but had to be propped up straight in a chair with all the windows wide open, but when he had taken the medicine for four days, it was just as if you squeezed a pig’s bladder: haven’t you seen how everything goes out of it and it is all soft and limp again!”

While she was telling all this, the vigorous Frau Dörr forced the sick woman to take a double dose from her thimble.

Lena, whose anxiety was only too justly redoubled by these heroic measures, took her shawl and made ready to go for a doctor. And Frau Dörr, who was not usually in favor of doctors, had nothing to say against it this time.

“Go,” said she, “she can’t hold out much longer. Just look here (and she pointed to the nostrils), that means death.”

Lena started; but she could scarcely have reached the square in front of Michael’s church, when the old woman, who had been lying in a half doze sat upright and called: “Lena”

“Lena is not here.”

“Who is here then?”

“I, Mother Nimptsch. I, Frau Dörr.”

“Ah, Frau Dörr, that is right. Come here; sit on the footstool.”

Frau Dörr, who was not accustomed to receiving orders,

hung back a little, but was too good-natured not to do as she was asked. And so she sat down on the stool.

And immediately the old woman began: "I want a yellow coffin and blue trimmings. But not too much. . . ."

"Yes, Frau Nimptsch."

"And I want to be buried in the new Jacob's churchyard, behind the Rollkrug and quite far over on the road to Britz."

"Yes, Frau Nimptsch."

"And I saved up enough for all that is needed, long ago, when I was still able to save up. And it is in the top drawer. And the chemise and short gown are there and a pair of white stockings marked with N. And it is lying among the other things."

"Yes, Frau Nimptsch. Everything shall be done just as you say. And is there anything more?"

But the old woman did not seem to have heard Frau Dörr's question, and without answering, she merely folded her hands, looked up toward the ceiling with a pious and peaceful expression and prayed: "Dear Father in heaven, protect her and reward her for all that she has done for a poor old woman."

"Ah, Lena," said Frau Dörr to herself and then she added: "The good Lord will do that too, Frau Nimptsch, I know him, and I have never seen any one come to grief that was like Lena and that had such a heart and such hands as she has."

The old woman nodded and one could see that some pleasant picture was in her mind.

So the minutes passed away and when Lena came back and knocked on the door of the corridor, Frau Dörr was still sitting on the footstool and holding her old friend's hand. And only when she heard Lena knock did she lay down Frau Nimptsch's hand and go to open the door.

Lena was still out of breath. "He will be here right away. . . . He is coming at once."

But Frau Dörr only said: “Oh Lord, the doctors!”
and pointed to the dead woman.

CHAPTER XX

KATHERINE'S first letter was posted in Cologne and reached Berlin the following morning, according to expectations. The accompanying address had been given by Botho himself, who, smiling and good-humored, held in his hand a rather thick-feeling letter. Three cards faintly written on both sides with a pencil had been put in the envelope, and all of them barely legible, so that Rienäcker went out on the balcony, in order better to decipher the indistinct scrawl.

“Now let us see, Katherine.”

And he read:

Brandenburg a. H., 8 o'clock in the morning.
The train, my dear Botho, stops here only three minutes, but I will make the best use I can of the time, and in case of need I will write, well or ill as it happens, when the train is in motion. I am travelling with a very charming young banker's wife, Madame Salinger, nee Saling, from Vienna. When I wondered at the similarity of the names, she said: “Yes, it looks as if I had married my own comparative.” She talks like that right straight along, and in spite of having a ten-year-old daughter (blonde; the mother is brunette) she too is going to Schlangenbad. And she is going by way of Cologne too, like me, because of a visit that she is to make there. The child has naturally a good disposition, but is not well brought up and has already broken my parasol by her constant climbing about in the railway carriage, a mishap which embarrassed her mother very much. The railroad station, where we are just now stopping (that is to say, the train is starting again this very moment), is swarming with soldiers, among them Brandenburg Cuirassiers with a name in yellow letters on their shoulder straps; apparently it was Nicholas. It looked very well. There were fusiliers there too, from the thirty-fifth, little people, who seemed to me far too small, although Uncle Osten always used to say the best fusilier was one who could not be seen with the naked eye. But I will close. The little girl, alas, is running from one window to the other as before and makes it hard for me to write. And besides she is constantly munching cakes, little pastry tarts with cherries and pistachio nuts on top. She began that long ago, between Potsdam and Werder. The mother is too weak. I would be more severe.

Botho laid the card aside and ran through the second one as well as he could. It ran:

Hannover, 12-30.

Goltz was at the Magdeburg station and told me you had written him that I was coming. How very good and kind you were once

more. You are always the best and most attentive of men. Goltz has charge of the survey in the Harz Mountains now, that is, he begins July first. The train stops a quarter of an hour in Hannover, and I have made use of the time to see the place immediately around the station: regular hotels and beer-drinking places that have grown up under our government, one of which is built completely in the Gothic style. The Hannoverians call it the "Prussian beer church," as a fellow traveller told me, simply because of Guelphish hostility. How painful such things are! But time will mitigate this feeling also. Heaven send that it may. The child still keeps on nibbling, which begins to make me nervous. What will be the upshot of it? But the mother is really charming and has already told me *everything*. She has also been in Würzburg, with Scanzoni, about whom she is enthusiastic. Her way of confiding in me is embarrassing and almost painful. For the rest, she is, as I can only repeat, perfectly *comme il faut*. To mention just one thing, what a dressing case! In Vienna they far surpass us in such things; one can notice the older culture.

"Wonderful," laughed Botho. "When Katherine indulges in reflections on the history of civilisation, she surpasses herself. But all good things go by threes. Let us see."

And he picked up the third card.

Cologne, 8 o'clock in the evening.

Headquarters.

I prefer to mail my cards here rather than to wait until I reach Schlangenbad, where Frau Salinger and I expect to arrive to-morrow noon. All goes well with me. The Schroffensteins are very friendly and pleasant; especially Herr Schroffenstein. By the way, not to omit anything of interest, Frau Salinger was fetched from the station by the Oppenheim's carriage. Our journey, which began so charmingly, grew somewhat burdensome and unattractive from Hamm on. The little girl had a hard time, and moreover it was her mother's fault. "What more do you want?" as soon as the train had left the Hamm station, whereupon the child answers: "Drops." And it was from that very moment that things got so bad. . . . Ah, dear Botho, young or old, our wishes ought to be constantly kept under strict and conscientious control. This thought has been constantly in my mind ever since and the meeting with this charming woman was perhaps no chance occurrence in my life. How often have I heard Kluckhuhn speak in this vein. And he was right. More to-morrow.

Your

Katherine.

Botho put the three cards back in the envelope and said: "Exactly like Katherine. What gift she has for small talk! And I ought to be glad that she writes as she does. But there is something lacking. It is all so trivial and comes so easily, like a mere echo of society talk. But she will change when she has duties of her own. Or perhaps she

will. In any case, I will not give up the hope.”

The next day there came a short letter from Schlangenberg, in which there was far, far less than in the three cards, and from this time on she wrote only twice a week and gossiped about Anna Grävenitz and Elly Winterfeld, who had actually put in an appearance, but most of all about Madame Salinger and her charming little Sarah. There were always the same asseverations and only at the close of the third week did some lessening of enthusiasm appear:

I now think the little girl more charming than her mother. Frau Salinger indulges in such luxurious toilettes as I find scarcely appropriate, especially as there are practically no men here. And then too, I see now that her complexion is artificial; her eyebrows are certainly painted and perhaps her lips too, for they are cherry-red. But the child is perfectly natural. Whenever she sees me, she rushes up to me and kisses my hand and makes her excuses for the hundredth time about the drops, “but it was Mamma’s fault,” in which I fully agree with the child. And yet, on the other hand, there must be a mysterious streak of greediness in Sarah’s nature, I might almost say something like a besetting sin (do you believe in besetting sins? I do, my dear Botho), for she cannot let sweet things alone and constantly buys wafers, not the Berlin kind that taste like buns with meringue on top, but the Karlsbad kind with sugar sprinkled over. But I will not write any more about all this. When I see you, which may be very soon — for I should like to travel with Anna Grävenitz, we should be so much more by ourselves — we will talk about it and about a great many other things too. Ah, how glad I shall be to see you and to sit on the balcony with you. After all, Berlin is the most beautiful place, and when the sun goes down behind Charlottenburg and the Grönewald, and one grows so tired and dreamy, how lovely it is! Don’t you think so? And do you know what Frau Salinger told me yesterday? She said that I had grown still blonder. Well, you will see for yourself.

As always, your
Katherine.

Rienäcker nodded and smiled. “Charming little woman. She writes nothing at all about her health or the effects of the cure; I will wager that she goes out to drive and has hardly taken ten baths yet.” And after saying this to himself, he gave some orders to his man servant who had just come in and then walked through the Zoological Garden and the Brandenburg gate, then under the Lindens and then to the barracks, where he was on duty until noon.

Soon after twelve o’clock, when he was at home again, and had had something to eat. and was about to make himself

comfortable for a little, the servant announced “that a gentleman . . . a man (he hesitated over the word) was outside, and wished to speak with the Herr Baron.”

“Who is it?”

“Gideon Franke . . . so he said.”

“Franke? Strange. I never heard of him. Bring him in.”

The servant went out again, while Botho repeated: “Franke . . . Gideon Franke Never heard of him. I don’t know him.”

In a moment the visitor entered the room and bowed somewhat stiffly at the door. He wore a dark-brown coat closely buttoned up, highly polished boots and shiny black hair, which lay very thick on both temples. He wore black gloves and a spotlessly white high collar.

Botho met him with his usual courteous amiability and said: “Herr Franke?”

The latter nodded.

“How can I serve you? Let me beg you to be seated. . . . Here . . . or perhaps here. Stuffed chairs are always uncomfortable.”

Franke smiled in assent and took a cane-seated chair, which Rienäcker had indicated.

“How can I serve you?” repeated Rienäcker.

“I have come to ask you a question, Herr Baron.”

“It will give me pleasure to answer it, provided that I am able.”

“No one could answer me better than you, Herr von Rienäcker . . . I have come, in fact, about Lena Nimptsch”

Botho started back a little.

“And I want to add at once,” Franke went on, “that it

is nothing troublesome that has brought me here. What I wish to say, or if you will permit me, Herr Baron, to ask, will cause no inconvenience to you or to your family. I already know that your gracious lady, the Frau Baroness is away, and I carefully waited until you should be alone, or, if I may say so, until you should be a grass widower.”

Botho’s discriminating ear perceived that, in spite of his rather ordinary middle-class clothes, the man was frank and high-minded. This soon helped him to get over his embarrassment and he had recovered his usual calmness of manner, as he asked, across the table: “Are you a relative of Lena’s? Pardon me, Herr Franke, for calling my old friend by the old name of which I am so fond.”

Franke bowed and replied: “No, Herr Baron, no relative; I have not that right to speak. But my right is perhaps quite as good: I have known Lena for a year and more and I intend to marry her. She has given her consent, but on that occasion she told me of her previous life and spoke of you so affectionately, that I at once determined to ask you yourself, Herr Baron, freely and openly, what you can tell me about Lena. When I told Lena of my intention, she at first encouraged me gladly, but immediately afterwards she added, that I might as well not ask you, as you would be sure to speak too well of her.”

Botho looked straight before him and found it difficult to control the beating of his heart. Finally, however, he mastered himself and said: “You are an excellent man, Herr Franke, and you want to make Lena happy. So much I can see at once, and that gives you a perfect right to an answer. I have no doubt at all as to what I ought to tell you, and I only hesitate as to how I shall tell it. The best way will be to tell you how it all began and continued and then how it came to an end.”

Franke bowed once more, to show that he too agreed to this plan.

“Very well then,” began Rienäcker, “it is about three years or perhaps a couple of months more, since on a boating excursion around the Liebesinsel near Treptow I had the opportunity of doing two young girls a service by preventing their boat from capsizing. One of these two young girls was Lena, and from her manner of thanking me, I saw at once that she was different from others. She

was wholly free from affectation, both then and later, a fact which I specially wish to emphasise. For no matter how merry and at times almost boisterous she may be, yet she is naturally thoughtful, serious and simple.”

Botho mechanically pushed aside the tray, which was still standing on the table, smoothed the cloth and then went on: “I asked leave to escort her home, and she consented without more ado, which at that time surprised me for a moment. For I did not yet know her. But I soon saw what it meant; from her youth on she had been accustomed to act according to her own judgment, without much regard for others, and in any case without fearing their opinion.”

Franke nodded.

“So we went all the long distance together and I escorted her home and was delighted with all that I saw there, with the old mother, with the fireplace by which she sat, with the garden in which the house stood, and with the modest seclusion and stillness of the place. A quarter of an hour later I took my leave, and as I was saying good-bye to Lena at the garden gate, I asked whether I might come again, and she answered the question with a simple ‘Yes.’ She showed no false modesty, and yet was not unwomanly. On the contrary, there was something touching in her voice and manner.”

As all this came so vividly before his mind once more, Rienäcker rose, in manifest excitement and opened both halves of the balcony door, as if the room were growing too hot. Then, as he walked back and forth, he went on more rapidly: “I have scarcely anything more to add. That was about Easter and we had a whole long happy summer. Ought I to tell you about it? No. And then came life with all its serious claims. And that was what separated us.”

Meanwhile Botho had sat down again and Franke, who had been busily stroking his hat all the time, said quietly to himself: “Yes, that is just how she told me about it.”

“And it could not be any other way, Herr Franke. For Lena — I rejoice with all my heart to be able to say so once more — Lena does not lie, and would sooner bite her tongue off than to boast or speak falsely. She has two

kinds of pride; one is to live by the work of her own hands, the other is to speak right out freely and make no false pretences and not to represent anything as more or less than it really is. 'I do not need to do it and I will not do it,' I have often heard her say. She certainly has a will of her own, perhaps rather more than she should have, and one who wanted to criticise her, might reproach her with being obstinate. But she only persists in what she thinks she can take the responsibility for, and she really can too, and that sort of strength of will is, I think, rather character than self-righteousness. I see by your nodding your head that we are of the same opinion, and that pleases me greatly. And now just one word more, Herr Franke. What has been, has been. If you cannot pass over it, I must respect your feeling. But if you can, I want to tell you, you will have an exceptionally good wife. For her heart is in the right place and she has a strong sense of duty and right and order."

"That is how I have always found Lena, and I believe that she will make me an uncommonly good wife, precisely as the Herr Baron says. Yes, one ought to keep the Commandments, one ought to keep them all, but yet there is a distinction, according to which commandments they are, and he who fails to keep one of them, may yet be good for something, but he who fails to keep another, even if it stands the very next one in the catechism, he is worthless and is condemned from the beginning and stands beyond the hope of grace."

Botho gazed at him in surprise and evidently did not know what to make of this solemn address. Gideon Franke however, who for his part had now gotten well started, had no longer any sense of the impression produced by his home-made opinions, and so went on in a tone that more and more suggested that of a preacher: "And he who, because of the weakness of the flesh sins against the sixth commandment, he may be forgiven if he repents and turns to better ways, but he who breaks the seventh, sins not merely through the weakness of the flesh but through the corruption of the soul, and he who lies and deceives, or slanders and bears false witness, he is rotten to the core and is a child of darkness, and for him there is no salvation, and he is like a field in which the nettles have grown so tall that the weeds always come uppermost, no matter how much good corn may be sown. And I will live and die by that and have always found it true. Yes, Herr Baron, the

important things are neatness and honesty and practicality. And in marriage it is the same. For 'honesty is the best policy,' and one's word is his word and one must be able to have confidence. But what has been, has been, and that is in the hands of God. And if I think otherwise about it, which I too respect, exactly as the Herr Baron does, then it is my place to keep away and not allow my love and inclination to get a foothold. I was in the United States for a long time, and although over there just the same as here, all is not gold that glitters, yet it is true, that there one learns to see differently and not always through the same glass. And one learns also that there are many ways to salvation and many ways to happiness. Yes, Herr Baron, there are many roads that lead to God, and there are many roads that lead to happiness, of that I feel sure in my very heart. And the one road is good and the other road is good. But every good road must be straight and open, and lie in the sun, without swamps or quicksands or will-o'-the-wisps. Truth is the main thing, and trustworthiness and honor."

With these words Franke had risen and Botho, who had politely gone to the door with him, gave him his hand.

"And now, Herr Franke, as we are bidding good-bye I will ask just one thing more: Please greet Frau Dörr from me, if you see her, and if the old friendship with her still continues, and above all give my greetings to good old Frau Nimptsch. Does she still have her gout and her days of suffering, of which she used to complain so constantly?"

"That is all over now."

"How so?" asked Botho.

"We buried her three weeks ago, Herr Baron. Just three weeks ago to-day."

"Buried her?" repeated Botho. "And where?"

"Over behind the Rollkrug, in the new Jacob's churchyard. . . . She was a good old woman. And how she did love Lena! Yes, Herr Baron, Mother Nimptsch is dead. But Frau Dörr is still living (and he laughed), and she will live a long time yet. And if she comes — it is a long way — I will give her your greeting. And I can see already

how pleased she will be. You know her, Herr Baron.
Oh yes, Frau Dörr”

And Gideon Franke took off his hat once more and the
door closed.

CHAPTER XXI

WHEN Rienäcker was alone again, he was as if benumbed by this meeting and by all that he had heard toward the close, of the interview. Whenever, since his marriage, he had recalled the little house in the garden and its inmates, he had as a matter of course pictured everything in his mind just as it had been formerly, and now everything was changed and he must find his way in a completely new world: there were strangers living in the little house, if indeed it was occupied at all; there was no fire burning in the fireplace any more, at least not day in and day out, and Frau Nimptsch, who had kept up the fire, was dead and buried in the new Jacob's churchyard. All this whirled round and round in his head, and suddenly he also recalled the day when, half seriously, half in jest, he had promised the good old woman to lay a wreath of immortelles on her grave. In the restlessness that had come over him, he was very glad that he had remembered the promise and decided to fulfil it at once. "To the Rollkrug at noon and the sun reflected from the ground — a regular journey to central Africa. But the good old woman shall have her wreath."

And he took his cap and sword at once and left the house.

At the corner there was a cab stand, a small one, indeed, and so it happened that in spite of the sign: "Standing room for three cabs" there was usually nothing there but standing room or, very seldom, one cab. It was so to-day also, which in consideration of the noon hour (when all cabs are in the habit of disappearing as if the earth had swallowed them) was not particularly surprising at this cab stand which was one merely in name. Therefore Botho went further along, until, near the Von der Heydt Bridge, he met a somewhat rickety vehicle, painted light green, with a red plush seat and drawn by a white horse. The horse seemed barely able to trot and Rienäcker could not keep from smiling rather pitifully when he thought of the "tour" that was in store for the poor beast. But as far as his eye could see, nothing better was in sight, and so he stepped up to the driver and said: "To the Rollkrug. Jacob's churchyard."

"Very good, Herr Baron."

“But we must stop somewhere on the way. I shall want to buy a wreath.”

“Very good, Herr Baron.”

Botho was somewhat surprised at the prompt and repeated use of his title and so he said: “Do you know me?”

“Yes, Herr Baron. Baron Rienäcker of Landgrafenstrasse. Close by the cab stand. I have often driven you before.”

During this conversation Botho had got in, meaning to make himself as comfortable as possible in the corner of the plush cushioned seat, but he soon gave up that idea, for the corner was as hot as an oven.

Rienäcker had, in common with all Brandenburg noblemen, the pleasing and good-hearted trait that he preferred to talk with plain people rather than with more “cultivated” folk, and so he began at once, while they were in the half shade of the young trees along the canal: “How hot it is! Your horse cannot have been much pleased when he heard me say Rollkrug.”

“Oh, Rollkrug is well enough; Rollkrug is well enough because of the woods. When he gets there and smells the pines, he is always pleased. You see, he is from the country . . . Or perhaps it is the music too. At any rate, he always pricks up his ears.”

“Indeed,” said Botho. “He doesn’t look to me much like dancing. . . . But where can we get the wreath then? I do not want to get to the churchyard without a wreath.”

“Oh, there is plenty of time for that, Herr Baron. As soon as we get into the neighborhood of the churchyard, from the Halle Gate on and the whole length of the Pioneerstrasse.”

“Yes, yes, you are quite right. I was forgetting. . . .”

“And after that, until you are close to the churchyard, there are plenty more places.”

Botho smiled. “You are perhaps a Silesian?”

“Yes,” said the driver. “Most of us are. But I have been here a long time now, and so I am half a true Berliner.”

“And are you doing pretty well?”

“There is no use talking about ‘pretty well.’ Everything costs too much and one has to have always the best quality. And hay is dear. But I should do well enough, if only nothing would happen. But something is always sure to happen – to-day an axle breaks and to-morrow a horse falls down. I have another horse at home, a light bay, that used to be with the Fürstenwald Uhlans; a good horse, only he has no wind and he will not last much longer. And all of a sudden he will be gone. . . . And then the traffic police; never satisfied, you mustn’t go here and you mustn’t go there. And one is always having to repaint. And red plush is not to be had for nothing.”

While they were chatting together, they had driven along by the canal, as far as the Halle Gate. And now a battalion of infantry with the band playing spiritedly was coming straight toward them from the Kreuzberg, and Botho, who did not wish to meet acquaintances, urged the coachman to drive faster. And they passed rapidly over the Belle-Alliance Bridge, but on the further side, Botho asked the driver to stop, because he had seen a sign on one of the first houses that read: “Artistic and Practical Florist.” Three or four steps led into a shop, in the show window of which were all kinds of wreaths.

Rienäcker stepped out and went up the steps. As he entered the door, a bell rang sharply. “May I ask you to be so kind as to show me a pretty wreath?”

“A funeral wreath?”

“Yes.”

The young woman in black, who, perhaps because she sold mostly funeral wreaths, looked ridiculously like one of the Fates (even the shears were not lacking), came back quickly with an evergreen wreath with white roses among the green. She apologised at once for having only white roses. White camellias were far more expensive. Botho, for his part, was satisfied, declined to have more flowers shown him and only asked whether he could not have a wreath of immortelles in addition to the wreath

of fresh flowers.

The young woman seemed rather surprised at the old-fashioned notions that this question seemed to imply, but assented and immediately brought a box containing five or six wreaths of yellow, red and white immortelles.

“Which color would you advise me to take?”

The young woman smiled: “Immortelle wreaths are quite out of fashion. Possibly in winter. . . . And then only in case”

“I think I had better decide on this one at once.” And Botho took the yellow wreath that lay nearest him, hung it on his arm, put the wreath of white roses with it and got quickly into his cab. Both wreaths were rather large and took up so much room on the red plush seat that Botho thought of handing them over to the driver. But he soon decided against this change, saying to himself: “If one wants to carry a wreath to old Frau Nimptsch, one must be willing to own up to the wreath. And if one is ashamed of it, he should not have promised it.”

So he let the wreaths lie where they were, and almost forgot them, as the carriage immediately turned into a part of the road whose varied and here and there grotesque scenes led him aside from his former thoughts. On the right, at a distance of about five hundred paces, was a board fence, above which could be seen all sorts of booths, pavilions, and doorways decorated with lamps, and all covered with a wealth of inscriptions. Most of these were of rather recent, or even extremely recent, date, but a few of the biggest and brightest dated further back, and, although in a weather-beaten state, they had lasted over from the previous year. Among these pleasure resorts, and alternating with them, various artisans had set up their workshops, especially sculptors and stone cutters, who mostly exhibited crosses, pillars, and obelisks hereabouts, because of the numerous cemeteries. All this could not fail to strike whoever passed this way, and Rienäcker too was strangely impressed, as he read from the cab, with growing curiosity, the endless and strongly contrasted announcements and looked at the accompanying pictures. “Fräulein Rosella, the living wonder maiden”; “Crosses and Grave-stones at the Lowest Prices”; “Quick Photography, American Style”; “Russian Ball throwing, six shots for ten

pfennig”; “Swedish Punch with Waffles”; “Figaro’s Finest Opportunity, or the First Hairdressing Parlor in the World”; “Crosses and Gravestones at the Lowest Prices”; “Swiss Shooting Gallery”:

Shoot right quick and shoot right well,
Shoot and hit like William Tell.

And beneath this Tell himself with his son, his cross bow
and the apple.

Finally the cab reached the end of the long board fence and at this point the road made a sharp turn toward the wood and now, breaking the stillness of noon, the rattle of guns could be heard from the shooting stands. Otherwise everything was much the same on this continuation of the street: Blondin, clad only in his tights and his medals, was balancing on the tightrope, with fireworks flashing around him, while near him various small placards announced balloon ascensions as well as the pleasures of the dance. One read: “A Sicilian Night. At two o’clock Vienna Bonbon Waltzes.”

Botho, who had not seen this place for a long time, read all these placards with real interest, until after he had passed through the “wood,” where he found the shade very refreshing for a few minutes, and beyond which he turned into the principal street of a populous suburb that extended as far as Rixdorf. Wagons, two and even three abreast, were passing before him, until suddenly everything came to a standstill and the traffic was blocked. “What are we stopping for?” he asked, but before the coachman could answer, Botho heard cursing and swearing from in front, and saw that the wagons had become wedged. He leaned forward and looked about with interest, true to his fondness for plain people, and apparently the incident would have amused rather than annoyed him, if both the load and the inscription on a wagon that had stopped in front of him had not impressed him painfully. “Broken glass bought and sold, Max Zippel, Rixdorf” was painted in big letters on the high tailboard and a perfect mountain of pieces of glass was piled up in the body of the wagon. “Luck goes with glass”. . . . And he looked at the load with distaste and felt as if the fragments were cutting all his finger tips.

But at last the wagons moved on again and the horse

did his best to make up for lost time, and before long the driver stopped before a corner house, with a high roof and a projecting gable and ground floor windows so low that they were almost on a level with the street. An iron bracket projected from the gable, supporting a gilded key placed upright.

“What is that?” asked Botho.

“The Rollkrug.”

“Very well. Then we are nearly there. We only have to turn up hill here. I am sorry for the horse, but there is no help for it.”

The driver gave the horse a cut with the whip and they began to go up a rather steep, hilly street, on one side of which lay the old Jacob’s cemetery, which was half closed up because of being over full, while across the street from the cemetery fence rose some high tenement houses.

In front of the last house stood some wandering musicians, apparently man and wife, with a horn and a harp. The woman was singing too, but the wind, which was rather strong here, blew the sound away up hill and only when Botho had gone more than ten steps beyond the poor old couple, was he able to distinguish the words and melody. It was the same song that they had sung so happily long ago on the walk to Wilmersdorf, and he sat up and looked out as if the music had called him back to the musicians. They, however, were facing another way and did not see him, but a pretty maid, who was washing windows on the gable side of the house, and who might have thought that the young officer was looking back at her, waved her chamois skin gayly at him and joined vigorously in the chorus:

Ich denke d’ran, ich danke dir mein Leben, doch du Soldat,
Soldat denkst du daran?

Botho threw himself back in the cab and buried his face in his hands, while an endlessly sweet, sad feeling swept over him. But the sadness outweighed the sweetness and he could not shake it off until he had left the town behind and saw the Müggelberg on the distant horizon in the blue midday haze.

Finally they drew up before the new Jacob's graveyard.

"Shall I wait?" said the driver.

"Yes. But not here. Down by the Rollkrug. And if you see those musicians again . . . here, this is for the poor woman."

CHAPTER XXII

BOTHO entrusted himself to the guidance of an old man who was busy near the entrance gate and found Frau Nimptsch's grave well cared for: ivy vines had been planted, a pot of geraniums stood between them and a wreath of immortelles was already hanging on a little iron stand. "Ah, Lena," said Botho to himself. "Always the same . . . I have come too late." And then he turned to the old man who was standing near and asked: "Was it a very small funeral?"

"Yes, it was very small indeed."

"Three or four?"

"Exactly four. And of course our old superintendent. He only made a prayer and the big middle-aged woman, about forty or so, who was here, cried all the time. And a young woman was here too. She comes once a week and last Sunday she brought the geranium. And she means to get a stone too, the kind that are fashionable now: a green polished one with the name and date on it."

And herewith the old man drew back with the politeness common to all who are employed about a cemetery, while Botho hung his wreath of immortelles together with Lena's, but the wreath of evergreens and white roses he laid around the pot of geraniums. And then he walked back to the entrance of the cemetery, after looking a little longer at the modest grave and thinking lovingly of good old Frau Nimptsch. The old man, who had meanwhile returned to the care of his vines, took off his cap and looked after him, and puzzled over the question, what could have brought such a fine gentleman (for after that last handshake of his, he had had no doubts as to the quality of the visitor) to the grave of an old woman. "There must be some reason for it. And he did not have the cab wait." However he could come to no conclusion, and at least to show his gratitude as best he could, he took a watering pot and filled it and then went to Frau Nimptsch's grave and watered the ivy, which had grown rather dry in the hot sun.

Meanwhile Botho had gone back to the cab, which was waiting by the Rollkrug, got in and an hour later had once more reached the Landgrafenstrasse. The driver jumped

down civilly and opened the door.

“Here,” said Botho, “. . . and this is extra. It was half an excursion”

“One might as well call it a whole one.”

“I see,” laughed Rienäcker. “Then I must give you a bit more?”

“It wouldn’t do any harm Thank you. Herr Baron.”

“But now feed your horse a little better, for my sake. He is a pitiful sight.”

And he nodded and ran up the steps.

There was not a sound in the house and even the servants were away, because they knew that he was usually at the club at about this time, at least during his wife’s absence. “Untrustworthy people,” he grumbled to himself and seemed quite provoked. Nevertheless he was glad to be alone. He did not want to see anyone and went and sat out on the balcony, to be alone with his dreams. But it was close under the awning which was down and had also a deep, drooping fringe and so he rose to put up the awning. That was better. The fresh air, which now entered freely, did him good and drawing a deep breath he stepped to the railing and looked over fields and woods to the castle tower of Charlottenburg, whose greenish copper roof shimmered in the bright afternoon sunshine.

“Behind lies Spandau,” said he to himself. “And behind Spandau there is an embankment and a railroad track which runs as far as the Rhine. And on that track I see a train, with many carriages and Katherine is sitting in one of them. I wonder how she looks? Well, of course. And what is she probably talking about? A little of everything. I think: piquant tales about the baths, or about Frau Salinger’s toilettes, and how it is really best in Berlin. And ought I not to be glad that she is coming home again? Such a pretty woman, so young, so happy and cheerful. And I am glad too. But she must not come to-day. For heaven’s sake, no. And yet I can believe it of her. She has not written for three days and it is quite likely that she is planning a surprise.”

He followed these fancies for a while yet, but then the pictures changed and, instead of Katherine's, long past images arose again in his mind: the Dörr's garden, the walk to Wilmersdorf, the excursion to Hankel's Ablage. That had been their last beautiful day, their last happy hour. . . . "She said then that a hair would bind too tight, and so she refused and did not want to do it. And I? Why did I insist upon it? Yes, there are such mysterious powers, such affinities that come from heaven or hell, and now I am bound and cannot free myself. Oh how dear and good she was that afternoon, while we were still alone and did not dream of being disturbed, and I cannot forget the picture of Lena among the grasses picking flowers here and there. I have the flowers still. But I will destroy them. Why should I keep the poor dead things, that only make me restless and might cost me what little happiness I have and disturb the peacefulness of my marriage, if ever another eye should see them."

And he rose from his seat on the balcony and passed through the whole length of the house to his workroom, which overlooked the courtyard and was very sunny in the morning, but was now in deep shadow. The coolness did him good and he went to a handsome desk which he had had ever since his bachelor days, and which had little ebony drawers decorated with various little silver garlands. In the middle, surrounded by these drawers there was a sort of temple-like structure with pillars and a pediment; this temple was meant to keep valuables in and had a secret drawer behind it, which closed with a spring. Botho pressed the spring and when the drawer sprung open, took out a small bundle of letters, tied up with a red cord, on top of which, as if put there as an afterthought, lay the flowers of which he had just been speaking. He weighed the packet in his hand and said, as he was untying the cord: "Great joy, great grief. Trials and tribulations. The old song."

He was alone and need fear no surprises. But still, fancying himself not sufficiently secure, he rose and locked the door. And only then did he take the topmost letter and read it. It was the one written the day before the walk to Wilmersdorf, and he now looked very tenderly at the words which he had formerly underlined with his pencil. "Stiehl. . . . Alléh. . . . How these poor dear little "h's" take my fancy to-day, more than all the orthog-

raphy in the world. And how clear the handwriting is. And how good and at the same time how playful is what she wrote. Ah, how happily her traits were mingled. She was both reasonable and passionate. Everything that she said showed character and depth of feeling. How poor a thing is culture, and how ill it compares with genuine qualities.”

He picked up the second letter and meant to read the whole correspondence from beginning to end. But it distressed him too much. “What is the use? Why should I recall to life what is dead and must remain dead? I must destroy all this and I must hope that even memory itself will fade with the reminders that awakened it.”

Now that his mind was fully made up, he rose quickly from his desk, pushed the fire screen to one side and stepped to the little hearth to burn the letters. And slowly, as if he wanted to prolong the sweet sorrow, he let leaf by leaf fall on the hearth and vanish in the flames. The last thing left in his hand was the bunch of flowers and while he was thinking and pondering, a change of feeling come over him and he felt as if he must untie the strand of hair and look at each flower separately. But suddenly, as if overcome with superstitious fear, he threw the flowers after the letters.

One more flicker and all was wholly quenched and destroyed.

“Am I free now? . . . Do I want to be? I do not. It is all turned to ashes. And yet I am bound.”

CHAPTER XXIII

BOTHO gazed at the ashes. "How little and yet how much." And then he replaced the handsome fire screen, in the centre of which was a copy of a Pompeian frescoed figure. A hundred times his eye had glanced at it without noticing what it really was, but to-day he saw it and said: "Minerva with her shield and spear. But her spear is resting on the ground. Perhaps that signifies peace . . . Would that it might be so." And then he rose, closed the secret drawer which had now been despoiled of its chief treasure and returned to the front of the house.

As he was passing through the long, narrow corridor, he met the cook and the housemaid who were just coming back from a walk in the Zoological Garden. As he saw them both standing there nervous and confused, he felt a movement of compassion, but he controlled it and reminded himself, although indeed somewhat ironically, "that it was high time that an example should be made." So he began, as well as he could, to play the part of Jove with his thunderbolts. Where in the world had they been? Was that the proper way to behave? Their mistress might come home any time, perhaps even to-day, and he had no desire to hand over a disorganised household to her. And the man too? "Now, I don't want to know anything about it, I will not listen; least of all to any excuses." And when he had finished his little scolding, he walked on smiling, chiefly at himself. "How easy it is to preach and how hard it is to live up to one's principles. I am a hero only in words. Am I not myself out of bounds? Have I not myself, fallen away from correct and virtuous customs? That it has been, might be tolerated, but that it still is, that is the worst."

So saying he took his former seat on the balcony and rang. His man came now, almost more nervous and troubled than the women, but there was no longer any need, for the storm was over. "Tell the cook to get me something to eat. Well, what are you waiting for? Oh, I see now (and he laughed), there is nothing in the house. All this happens so conveniently. . . . Then some tea; bring me tea, that will surely be in the house. And let them make a couple of sandwiches. Good Lord, how hungry I am. . . . And have the evening papers come yet?"

“Very good, Herr Rittmeister.”

The tea table was soon served on the balcony and a bit of something to eat had also been discovered. Botho leaned back in a rocking chair and gazed thoughtfully at the little blue flame. Then he picked up his little wife’s monitor, the “Fremdenblatt,” and after that the “Kreuzzeitung,” and looked at the last page. “Heavens, how glad Katherine will be, when she can study this last page every day fresh from the source, that is, twelve hours earlier than in Schlangenbad. And is she not right? ‘Adalbert von Lichterloh, Government Referendar and Lieutenant of Reserves, and Hildegard von Lichterloh, *nee* Holtze, have the honor to announce their marriage which took place to-day.’ Wonderful! And really it is fine to see how life and love goes on in the world. Weddings and christenings! And now and then a few deaths interspersed. Oh well, one does not need to read them. Katherine does not, nor I either, and only when the Vandals have lost one of their ‘alten Herrn’ and I see the name of my regiment among the death notices do I read it; that interests me and it always seems to me as if the old camp at Hofbräu were invited to Walhalla. Spatenbräu is still more suitable.”

He laid the paper aside, because the bell r[an]g “Can she really” No, it was nothing but a bill of fare of soups sent up by the landlord with a charge of fifty pfennigs. But for all that he was much disturbed all the evening, because he constantly imagined the possibility of a surprise, and whenever he saw a cab with a trunk in front and a ladies travelling hat on the back seat turning into the Landgrafenstrasse, he would exclaim to himself: “That is she; she loves such doings and I can already hear her saying: I thought it would be so funny, Botho.”

However, Katherine did not come. A letter from her came next morning instead, in which she said that she should return on the third day after the date of the letter. “She wanted to travel with Frau Salinger again, for, take it for all in all, she was a very nice woman, with many pleasant traits, a great deal of style and also knew how to travel very comfortably.”

Botho laid down the letter and for the moment was sincerely pleased at the thought of seeing his pretty young wife within three days. “There is room in the human heart

for all sorts of contradictions. . . . She talks nonsense, certainly, but even a foolish young wife is better than none at all.”

Then he called the servants and told them that their mistress was coming back in three days; they must have everything in order and polish all the locks and other brasses. And there must be no fly specks on the big mirror.

Having given these housekeeping orders beforehand, he went to the barracks for his period of service there. “If anyone asks, I shall be back at five.”

His programme for the intervening time was, that until noon he would be on the parade ground, then ride for a couple of hours and after his ride dine at the club. If he did not find anyone else there, he would at least find Balafre, which implied two-handed whist and a wealth of true or untrue stories of the Court. For Balafre, however trustworthy he was, made it a principle to set aside one hour of the day for humbug and exaggeration. Indeed, with him, this activity took the lead among the pleasures of the mind.

And the programme was carried out just as it was planned. The big clock at the barracks was striking twelve as he sprang into the saddle and after he had passed the “Lindens” and immediately after the Luisenstrasse, he at last turned into a road that ran along beside the canal and further on ran in the direction of Plötzensee. As he rode along, he recalled the day when he had ridden here before, to gain courage for his parting with Lena, for the parting that had been so hard for him and that still had to be. That was three years ago. And what had there been for him in the meantime? Much happiness, certainly. But it had been no real happiness. A sugar plum, not much more. And who can live on sweets alone!

He was still brooding over these thoughts, when he saw two comrades coming along a bridle path from the woods towards the canal. They were Uhlans, as he could plainly see even from a distance by their “Czapkas.” But who were they? To be sure, he could not remain long in doubt and before they had approached within a hundred paces, Botho saw that they were the Rexins, cousins, and both from the same regiment.

“Ah, Rienäcker,” said the elder. “Where are you going?”

“As far as the sky is blue.”

“That is too far for me.”

“Well, then, as far as Saatwinkel.”

“That is worth thinking of. I believe I will join the party, that is, provided that I do not intrude. . . . Kurt (and as he spoke he turned to his younger companion), I beg your pardon. But I want to speak with Rienäcker. And under the circumstances”

“You would rather speak with him privately. Just as you prefer, Bozel,” and Kurt von Rexin touched his hat and rode on. The cousin who had been addressed as Bozel, however, turned his horse around, took the left side of Rienäcker, who was far above him in rank and said: “Very well then, to Saatwinkel. We shall take care not to ride into the Tegeler rifle range.”

“At all events I shall try to avoid it,” replied Rienäcker, “first for my own sake and second for yours. And third and last because of Henrietta. What would that interesting brunette say, if her Bogislaw should be shot and killed and that too by some friend?”

“That would indeed give her a heartache,” answered Rexin, “and would also strike out one item in the reckoning between her and me.”

“What reckoning do you mean?”

“That is the very point, Rienäcker, about which I wanted to consult you.”

“To consult me? And about what point?”

“You ought to be able to guess it. It is not difficult. Naturally I mean an affair, an affair of my own.”

“An affair!” laughed Botho. “Why, I am at your service, Rexin. But, to be frank with you, I hardly know just what leads you to confide in me. I am not a remarkable fount of wisdom in any direction, least of all in this. And then,

too, we have quite different authorities. One of these you know very well. And moreover he is a special friend of yours and of your cousin's."

"Balafre?"

"Yes."

Rexin felt that there was something like reluctance or refusal in these words and stopped talking with some air of finality. But that was more than Botho had meant, and so he led on a little further. "Affairs. Pardon me, Rexin, there are so many affairs."

"Certainly. But however many there are, they are all different."

Botho shrugged his shoulders and smiled. But Rexin, evidently not meaning to be stopped the second time through his own sensitiveness, only repeated in an indifferent tone: "Yes, however many there are, yet they are different. And I wonder, Rienäcker, that you should be the one to shrug your shoulders. I really thought . . ."

"Well, then, out with it."

"So I will."

And after a while Rexin went on: "I have been through the University, and have served with the Uhlans, and before that (you know I joined them rather late) I was at Bonn and Göttingen and I need no instruction and advice when the case is a usual one. But when I examine myself carefully, I find that in my case the affair is not usual but exceptional."

"Everyone thinks that."

"To speak plainly, I feel myself engaged, and more than that, I love Henrietta, or to show you my feeling more plainly, I love my dark Yetta. Yes, this importunate pet name with its suggestion of the canteen suits me best, because I want to avoid all solemn airs in this connection. I feel sufficiently in earnest and just because I am in earnest, I feel no need of anything like pompous or artificial forms of speech. They only weaken the expression."

Botho nodded in agreement and refrained from every sign of derision or superiority, such as he had shown at first.

“Yetta,” Rexin went on, “is not descended from a line of angels nor is she one herself. But where can you find one who is? In our own sphere? Absurd. All these distinctions are purely artificial and the most artificial are to be found in the realm of virtue. Naturally, virtue and other such fine things do exist, but innocence and virtue are like Bismarck and Moltke, that is, they are rare. I have observed very carefully her life and conduct, I believe her to be genuine and I intend to act accordingly as far as possible. And now listen, Rienäcker. If, instead of riding beside this tiresome canal, as straight and monotonous as the forms and formulas of our society, I say, if we were now riding by the Sacramento instead of beside this wretched ditch, and if we had the diggings before us instead of the Tegeler shooting range, I would marry Yetta at once. I cannot live without her. She has bewitched me, and her simplicity, modesty and genuine love have more weight with me than ten countesses. But it is impossible. I cannot treat my parents so, and besides, I cannot leave the service at twenty-seven years of age, to become a cowboy in Texas or a waiter on a Mississippi steamer. Therefore the middle way. . . .”

“And what do you mean by that?”

“A union without formal sanction.”

“You mean a marriage without marriage.”

“If you like, yes. The mere word means nothing to me, just as little as legalisation, sanctification, or whatever else such things may be called; I am a bit touched with nihilism and have no real faith in the blessing of the church. But, to cut a long story short, I am in favor of monogamy, not on moral grounds, but because I cannot help it, and because of my own inborn nature. All relations are repugnant to me, where beginning and breaking off may happen within the same hour, so to speak. And if I just now called myself a nihilist, I may with still more justice call myself a Philistine. I long for simple forms, for a quiet, natural way of living, where heart speaks to heart and where one has the best that there is, faithfulness, love and freedom.”

“Freedom!” repeated Botho.

“Yes, Rienäcker. But since I well know that dangers may lurk here too and that the joy of freedom, perhaps all freedom, is a two-edged sword, that can wound, one never knows how, I wanted to ask you.”

“And I will answer you,” said Rienäcker, who was growing more and more serious, as these confidences recalled his own life, both past and present, to his mind. “Yes, Rexin, I will answer you as well as I can, and I believe that I am able to answer you. And so I implore you, keep out of all that. In such a relation as you are planning for, only two things are possible, and the one is fully as bad as the other. If you play the true and faithful lover, or what amounts to the same thing, if you break entirely with your position and birth and the customs of your class, sooner or later, if you do not go to pieces altogether, you will become a horror and a burden to yourself; but if things do not go that way, and if, as is more common, you make your peace, after a year or more, with your family and with the social order, then there is sorrow for the tie must be loosened which has been knit and strengthened by happiness, and alas, what means still more, by unhappiness and pain and distress. And that hurts dreadfully.”

Rexin looked as if he were about to answer, but Botho did not notice him and went on: “My dear Rexin, a short time ago you were speaking, in a way that might serve as a model of decorous expression, of relations ‘where beginning and breaking off may happen within the same hour,’ but these relations, which are really none at all, are not the worst. The worst are those, to quote you once more, which keep to the ‘middle course.’ I warn you, beware of this middle course, beware of half-way measures. What you think is gain is bankruptcy, and what seems to you a harbor means shipwreck. That way leads to no good, even if to outward appearances all runs smoothly and no curse is pronounced and scarcely a gentle reproach is uttered. And there is no other way. For everything brings its own natural consequences, we must remember that. Nothing that has happened can be undone, and an image that has once been engraved in the soul, never wholly fades out again, never completely disappears. Memory remains and comparisons will arise in the mind. And so once more, my friend, give up your intention or else the whole course of your life will be disturbed and you will never again win your way through to clearness and light. Many things may

be permitted, but not those that involve the soul, not those that entangle the heart, even if it is only your own.”

CHAPTER XXIV

A TELEGRAM sent just as Katherine was on the point of departure arrived on the third day: "I shall arrive this evening. K."

And she actually arrived. Botho was at the station and was presented to Frau Salinger, who declined all thanks for her good companionship during the journey, and kept repeating how fortunate she had been, and above all how fortunate he must be in having such a charming young wife. "Look here, Herr Baron, if I were so fortunate as to be her husband, I would never part from such a wife even for three days." And then she began to complain of men in general, but in the same breath she added an urgent invitation to Vienna. "We have a nice little house less than an hour from Vienna, and a couple of saddle horses and a good table. In Prussia you have schools and in Vienna we have cooking. And I don't know which I prefer."

"I know," said Katherine, "and I think Botho does too."

Hereupon they separated and our young couple got into an open carriage, after having given orders for sending the baggage home.

Katherine leaned back and put her little feet up on the back seat, on which lay a gigantic bouquet, a parting attention from the Schlangenbad landlady who was perfectly delighted with the charming lady from Berlin. Katherine took Botho's arm and clung to him caressingly, but only for a few moments, then she sat up again and said, as she held the great bouquet in place with her parasol: "It is really charming here, so many people and the river so crowded with boats that they can scarcely find their way in or out. And so little dust. I think it is really a blessing, that they sprinkle now and everything is drenched with water; of course one had better not wear long dresses. And only look at the baker's wagon with the dog harnessed in. Isn't he too comical? Only the canal . . . I don't know, it is still just about the same. . . ."

"Yes," laughed Botho, "it is just about the same. Four weeks of July heat have not managed to improve it."

As they were passing under some young trees, Katherine

plucked a linden leaf, placed it over the hollow of her hand and struck it so that it made a popping sound. "We always used to do that at home. And at Schlangenbad, when we had nothing better to do, we would pop leaves and do all sorts of little tricks that we used to do when we were children. Can you imagine it, I really care a great deal for such foolish little things and yet I am quite old and have finished with them."

"But, Katherine. . . ."

"Yes, yes, a regular matron, you will see. . . . But just look, Botho, there is the rail fence again and the old ale-house with the comical and rather improper name, that we used to laugh at so heartily at boarding-school. I thought the place was gone long ago. But the Berliners will not let anything of that sort go, a place like that will always keep on; all that is needed is a queer name, that amuses people."

Botho vacillated between pleasure over Katherine's return and fleeting moments of discontent. "I find you a good deal changed, Katherine."

"Certainly I am. And why should I be changed? I was not sent to Schlangenbad to change, at least not my character and conversation. And whether I have changed in some other ways, *mon cher ami, nous verrons.*"

"Quite matronly now?"

She held her hand over his mouth and pushed back her veil, which had fallen half over her face, and directly afterwards they passed the Potsdam railway viaduct, over the iron framework of which an express train was just rushing. It made both a thundering and a trembling and when they had left the bridge behind, Katherine said: "It is always disagreeable to me to be directly under it."

"But it is no better for those who are up there."

"Perhaps not. But it is all in the idea. Ideas always have so much influence. Don't you think so too?" And she sighed, as if some dreadful thing that had taken a terrible hold upon her life had suddenly come before her mind. But then she went on: "In England, so Mr. Armstrong, an acquaintance at the baths, told me (I must tell you more about him, besides he married an Alvensleben) — in England,

he said, they bury the dead fifteen feet deep. Now fifteen feet deep is no worse than five feet, but I felt distinctly, while he was telling me about it, how the clay, for that is the correct English word, must weigh like a ton on the breast. For in England they have a very heavy clay soil.”

“Did you say Armstrong. . . . There was an Armstrong in the Baden Dragoons.”

“A cousin of his. They are all cousins, the same as with us. I am glad that I can describe him to you with all his little peculiarities. A regular cavalier with his mustache turned up, and he really went a little too far with that. He looked very comical, with those twisted ends, which he was always twisting more.”

In about ten minutes the carriage drew up before the door and Botho gave her his arm and led her in. A garland hung over the large door of the corridor and a tablet with the inscription “Willkommen” (“Welcome”), from which, alas, one “l” was wanting, hung somewhat crookedly from the garland. Katherine looked up, read it and laughed.

“Willkommen! But only with one ‘l’ that is to say, only half. Dear me. An ‘L’ is the letter for Love, too. Well then, you too shall have only half of everything.”

And so she walked through the door into the corridor, where the cook and housemaid were already standing waiting to kiss her hand.

“Good day, Bertha; good day, Minette. Yes, children, here I am again. Well, how do you think I look? Have I improved?” And before the maids could answer, which indeed she was not expecting, she went on: “But you have both improved. Especially you, Minette, you have really grown quite stout.”

Minette was embarrassed and looked straight before her, and Katherine added goodnaturedly: “I mean only here around your chin and neck.”

Meantime the man servant came in also. “Why, Orth, I was growing anxious about you. The Lord be praised, there was no need; you are none the worse for wear, only a trifle pale. But the heat causes that. And still the same freckles.”

“Yes, gracious lady, they stay.”

“Well, that is right. Always fast color.”

While this talk was in progress she had reached her bedroom, where Botho and Minette followed her, while the other two retired to their kitchen.

“Now, Minette, help me. My cloak first. And now take my hat. But be careful, or else we shall never know how to get rid of the dust. And now tell Orth to set the table out on the balcony. I have not eaten a bite all day, because I wanted everything to taste good here at home. And now go, my dear girl; go Minette.”

Minette hastened to leave the room, while Katherine remained standing before the tall glass and arranged her hair which was in some disorder. At the same time she looked at Botho in the glass, for he was standing near her and looking at his pretty young wife.

“Now, Botho,” said she with playful coquetry and without turning around to look at him.

And her affectionate coquetry was cleverly enough calculated so that he embraced her while she gave herself up to his caresses. He put his arms around her waist and lifted her up in the air. “Katherine, my little doll, my dear little doll.”

“A doll, a dear little doll. I ought to be angry at that, Botho. For one plays with dolls. But I am not angry, on the contrary. Dolls are usually loved best and treated best. And that is what I like.”

CHAPTER XXV

IT was a glorious morning, the sky was half clouded and in the gentle west wind the young couple sat on the balcony, while Minette was clearing the coffee table, and looked over toward the Zoological Garden where the gay cupolas of the elephant houses shone softly in the dim morning light.

“I really know nothing yet about your experiences,” said Botho. “You went right to sleep, and sleep is sacred to me. But now I want to hear all about it. Tell me.”

“Oh yes, tell you; what shall I tell you? I wrote you so many letters that you must know Anna Grävenitz and Frau Salinger quite as well as I do, or perhaps still better, for among other things I wrote more than I knew myself.”

“Perhaps. But you always said, ‘More about this when we meet.’ And that time has now come, or do you want me to think you are keeping something from me? I know actually nothing at all about your excursions and yet you were in Wiesbaden. You said indeed that there were only colonels and old generals in Weisbaden, but there are Englishmen there too. And speaking of Englishmen reminds me of your Scotchman, about whom you were going to tell me. Let me see, what was his name?”

“Armstrong; Mr. Armstrong. He certainly was a delightful man, and I cannot understand his wife, an Alvensleben, as I think I told you before, who was always embarrassed whenever he spoke. And yet he was a perfect gentleman, who always respected himself, even when he let himself go and showed a certain nonchalance. At such moments, gentlemen are always the most easily recognised. Don’t you agree with me? He wore a blue necktie and a yellow summer suit, and he looked as if he had been sewed into it, and Anna Grävenitz always used to say: ‘There comes the penholder.’ And he always carried a big, open umbrella, a habit he had formed in India. For he was an officer in a Scotch regiment, that had been stationed a long time in Madras or Bombay, or perhaps it may have been Delhi. But any way it is all the same. And what had he not been through! His conversation was charming, even if sometimes one hardly knew how to take it.”

“So he was too forward? Insolent?”

“I beg your pardon, Botho, how can you speak so? Such a man as he; a cavalier *comme il faut*. I will give you an example of his style of conversation. Opposite us sat an old lady, the wife of General von Wedell, and Anna Grävenitz asked her (I believe it was the anniversary of Königgratz), whether it was true that thirty-three Wedells fell in the seven years’ war? Old Frau von Wedell said that it was quite true, and added that there had really been more. All who were present, were astonished at so great a number, excepting Mr. Armstrong, and when I playfully took him to task, he said that he could not get excited over such small numbers. ‘Small numbers!’ I interrupted him, but he laughed and added, for the sake of refuting me, that one hundred and thirty-three of the Armstrongs had perished in the various wars and feuds of their clan. And when Frau von Wedell at first refused to believe this, but finally (as Mr. A. stuck to his story) asked eagerly, whether the whole hundred and thirty-three had really ‘fallen’? he replied ‘No, my dear lady, not exactly fallen. Most of them were hung as horse thieves by the English, who were then our enemies.’ And when everybody was horrified over this unsuitable, one might almost say embarrassing tale of hanging, he swore that ‘we were wrong to be offended by any such a thing, for times and opinions had changed and as far as his own immediate family were concerned, they regarded their heroic forbears with pride. The Scottish method of warfare for three hundred years had consisted of cattle lifting and horse stealing. Different lands, different customs,’ and he could not see any great difference between stealing land and stealing cattle.”

“He is a Guelph in disguise,” said Botho, “but there is a good deal to say for his view.”

“Surely. And I was always on his side, when he made such statements. Oh, he would make you die of laughter. He used to say that one should not take anything seriously, it did not pay, and fishing was the only serious occupation. He would occasionally go fishing for a fortnight on Loch Ness or Loch Lochy – only think what funny names they have in Scotland – and he would sleep in the boat, and when the sun rose, there he was again; and when the fortnight was ended, he would moult and his whole sunburnt skin would come off and then he would have a skin like a baby. And he did all this through vanity, for a smooth, even color is really the best thing that one can have. And as he said this, he

looked at me in such a way, that I did not know how to answer for a moment. Oh, you men! But yet from the beginning I really had a warm attachment for him and took no offence at his way of talking, which sometimes pursued one subject for some time, but far, far oftener shifted constantly here and there. One of his favorite sayings was: 'I cannot bear to have one dish stay on the table a whole hour; if only it is not always the same, I am much better pleased when the courses are changed rapidly.' And so he was always jumping from the hundreds into the thousands."

"Then you must have met on common ground," laughed Botho.

"So we did. And we mean to write to each other, in the same style in which we used to talk; we agreed on that as we were saying good-bye. Our men, even your friends, are always so thoroughgoing. And you are the most thoroughgoing of all, which sometimes annoys me and puts me quite out of patience. And you must promise me that you will be more like Mr. Armstrong and try to talk a little more simply and amusingly and a little faster and not always on the same subject."

Botho promised to amend his ways, and as Katherine, who loved superlatives, after describing a phenomenally rich American, an absolutely albino Swede with rabbit's eyes, and a fascinating Spanish beauty — had closed with an afternoon excursion to Limburg, Oranienstein and Nassau, and had described to her husband in turn the crypt, the cadets' training school and the water-cure establishment, she suddenly pointed to the towers of the castle at Charlottenburg and said: "Do you know, Botho, we must go there to-day or to Westend or to Hallensee. The Berlin air is rather heavy and there is none of the breath of God in it, as there is in the country where the poets so justly praise it. And when one has just come back fresh from nature, as I have, one has learned to love once more what I might call purity and innocence. Ah, Botho, what a treasure an innocent heart is. I have fully determined to keep my heart pure. And you must help me. Yes, you must promise me. No, not that way; you must kiss me three times on my forehead like a bride. I want no tenderness, I want a kiss of consecration And if we take lunch, a warm dish, of course, we can get out there at about three."

And so they went on their excursion and although the air of Charlottenburg was still less like the breath of God than the Berlin air, yet Katherine was fully determined to stay in the castle park and to give up Hallensee. Westend was so tiresome and Hallensee was half a journey further, almost as far as Schlangenbad. But in the castle park one could see the mausoleum, where the blue lights were always so strangely moving, indeed she might say it was as if a bit of heaven had fallen into one's soul. That produced a thoughtful mood and led to pious reflections. And even if it were not for the mausoleum, still there was the bridge where you could see the carp, the bridge with the bell on it, and if a great big mossy carp came swimming by, it always seemed to her as if it were a crocodile. And perhaps there might be a woman there with round cakes and wafers, and one might buy some and so, in a small way, do a good work. She said a "good work" on purpose and avoided the word Christian, for Frau Salinger was always charitable.

And everything went according to the programme, and when the carps had been fed they both walked further into the park until they reached the Belvedere with its rococo figures and its historical associations. Katherine knew nothing of these associations and Botho therefore took occasion to tell her of the ghosts of the departed Emperor and Electors whom General von Bischofswerder caused to appear at this very place in order to arouse King Frederick William the Second from his lethargy, or what amounted to the same thing, to get him out of the hands of his lady love and bring him back to the path of virtue.

"And did it do any good?" asked Katherine.

"No."

"What a pity! Anything like that always moves me so painfully. And if I consider that the unhappy prince (for he must have been unhappy) was the father-in-law of Queen Luise then my heart bleeds. How she must have suffered! I can never rightly imagine such things in our Prussia. And you say Bischofswerder was the name of the general who caused the ghosts to appear?"

"Yes. At court they called him the tree toad."

"Because he brought on changes of weather?"

“No, because he wore a green coat.”

“Oh, that is too comical! . . . The tree toad!”

CHAPTER XXVI

AS the sun was setting the young couple reached home, and after Katherine had given her hat and cloak to Minette and had ordered tea, she followed Botho into his room, because she thought it fitting to spend the whole of the first day after her journey in his company, and besides she really wished to stay with him.

Botho was content, and because she was shivering, he put a cushion under her feet and spread a plaid over her. Soon afterwards he was called away, on account of some official business which required prompt attention.

The time passed and since the cushion and plaid did not quite suffice to give the requisite warmth, Katherine rang and asked the servant to bring a couple of pieces of wood; she was so cold.

At the same time she rose, to set the fire screen to one side, and in doing this, she saw the little heap of ashes, which still lay on the iron plate of the fire place.

At this very moment Botho came in again and was startled at what he saw. But he was immediately reassured, as Katherine pointed to the ashes and said in her most playful tone: "What does this mean, Botho. Look there, I have caught you again. Now confess. Love letters? Yes or no?"

"Of course you will believe what you choose."

"Yes or no?"

"Very well then; yes."

"That is right. Now I am satisfied. Love letters! That is too comical. But perhaps we had better burn them twice; first to ashes and then to smoke. Perhaps that will bring good luck."

And she took the pieces of wood that the servant had brought in the meantime, laid them skilfully together and started to light them with a couple of matches. The wood caught. In a moment the fire was blazing brightly and as she drew the armchair up before it and put her feet com-

fortably on the iron fender to warm them, she said: "And now I will tell you the story of the Russian, who naturally was not a Russian. But she was a very clever person. She had almond eyes, all such persons have almond eyes, and she gave out that she was at Schlangenbad for the sake of the cure. Well, one knows what that means. She had no doctor, at least no regular physician, but every day she went to Frankfort or Wiesbaden, or even to Darmstadt, and she always had an escort. And some even said that it was not always the same one. And you just ought to have seen her toilettes and her conceited airs! She would scarcely bow to anyone when she came to the table d'hôte with her chaperon. For she had a chaperon — that is always the first requisite for such ladies. And we called her 'the Pompadour,' I mean the Russian, and she knew that we called her that too. And the general's wife, old Frau von Wedell, who was entirely on our side and was quite indignant over this doubtful person (for she was a person, there could be no doubt about that) — Frau Wedell, I say, said right out loud across the table: 'Yes, ladies, the fashions change in everything even in pockets large and small and in purses long and short. When I was young, there were still Pompadours, but now there are no longer any Pompadours. Is not that so? There are no longer any Pompadours?' And as she said this we all laughed and looked at the Pompadour. But the shocking person won a victory over us for all that for she said in a loud, sharp tone (old Frau von Wedell was rather deaf) 'Yes, Frau Generalin, it is exactly as you say. Only it is strange, that as the Pompadours went out reticules came in, and presently they were called Ridicules and such Ridicules we still have.' And as she spoke she looked at good old Frau von Wedell, who, since she could not answer, rose from the table and left the room. And now I should like to ask you, what have you to say to this? What do you think of such impertinence?. . . But, Botho, you are not saying anything. You are not listening. . . ."

"Oh yes, I am, Katherine. . . ."

Three weeks later there was a wedding in Jacob's church, the cloister-like court in front of which was filled with a large and curious crowd, mostly workingmen's wives, some of them with children on their arms. But there were some school children and street children among them too. A number of carriages drove up, from one of the first of which a couple alighted, who were accompanied by laughter and

comments, as long as they were in sight.

“Such a figure!” said one of the women who stood nearest.

“Figure?”

“Well, her hips.”

“They are more like the sides of a whale.”

“That is right.”

And doubtless this conversation would have continued longer, had not the bride’s carriage driven up just at this moment. The servant sprang down from the box and hastened to open the door, but the bridegroom himself, a thin man in a tall hat and high pointed collar, was quicker than he and gave his hand to his bride, a very pretty girl, who, as is usually the case with brides was less admired for her beauty than for her white satin dress. Then both walked up the few stone steps which were covered with a somewhat worn carpet then over the court and directly afterwards through the church door. All eyes followed them.

“And she has no wreath?” said the same woman whose critical eye had shortly before looked so severely at Frau Dörr’s figure.

“Wreath? . . . Wreath? . . . Didn’t you know then?
. . . . Haven’t you heard anything whispered about?”

“Oh, so that is it. Of course I have. But, my dear Kornatzki, if everybody paid attention to rumors there would be no more wreaths and Schmidt on the Friedrichsstrasse might as well shut up shop at once.”

“Yes, yes,” laughed Kornatzki, “so he might. And after all, for such an old man! At least fifty years have gone over his head and he looks as if he might be going to celebrate his silver wedding at the same time.”

“Yes indeed. That is just how he looked. And did you see his old-fashioned high collar? I never saw anything like it.”

“Well, he could use it to kill her with, if there are any more rumors.”

“Yes, he can do that.”

And so the talk ran on a little longer, while the organ prelude could already be heard from the church.

The next morning Rienäcker and Katherine were sitting at breakfast, this time in Botho’s workroom, both windows of which stood wide open to let in the air and light. Some mating swallows were flying and twittering all about the yard, and Botho, who was in the habit of giving them crumbs every morning, was just reaching for the basket again for the same purpose when the hearty laughter of his young wife who for the last five minutes had been absorbed in her favorite newspaper, caused him to set the basket down again.

“Now, Katherine, what is it? You seem to have found something uncommonly nice.”

“So I have It is simply too comical, the names that one sees! And always in the notices of weddings or engagements. Just listen. . . .”

“I am all ears.”

“Gideon Franke, Master Mechanic, and Magdalena Franke, nee Nimptsch respectfully beg leave to announce their marriage which took place to-day. . . Nimptsch. Can you imagine anything funnier? And then Gideon!”

Botho took the paper, but only as a means of concealing his embarrassment. Then he handed it back, and said in as careless a tone as he could muster: “What have you against Gideon, Katherine? Gideon is better than Botho.”