

BARBARA BLOMBERG - VOLUME 1.

GEORG EBERS*

Volume 1.

Translated from the German by Mary J. Safford

CHAPTER I.

The sun sometimes shone brightly upon the little round panes of the ancient building, the Golden Cross, on the northern side of the square, which the people of Ratisbon call "on the moor"; sometimes it was veiled by gray clouds. A party of nobles, ecclesiastics, and knights belonging to the Emperor's train were just coming out. The spring breeze banged behind them the door of the little entrance for pedestrians close beside the large main gateway.

The courtiers and ladies who were in the chapel at the right of the corridor started. "April weather!" growled the corporal of the Imperial Halberdiers to the comrade with whom he was keeping; guard at the foot of the staircase leading to the apartments of Charles V, in the second story of the huge old house.

"St. Peter's day," replied the other, a Catalonian. "At my home fresh strawberries are now growing in the open air and roses are blooming in the gardens. Take it all in all, it's better to be dead in Barcelona than alive in this accursed land of heretics!"

"Come, come," replied the other, "life is life! 'A live dog is better than a dead king,' says a proverb in my country."

"And it is right, too," replied the Spaniard. "But ever since we came here our master's face looks as if imperial life didn't taste exactly like mulled wine, either."

The Netherlander lowered his halberd and answered his companion's words first with a heavy sigh, and then with the remark: "Bad weather upstairs as well as down—the very worst! I've been in the service thirteen years, but I never saw him like this, not even after the defeat in

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Algiers. That means we must keep a good lookout. Present halberds!
Some one is coming down.”

Both quickly assumed a more erect attitude, but the Spaniard whispered to his comrade: ”It isn’t he. His step hasn’t sounded like that since the gout—”

”Quijada!” whispered the Netherlander, and both he and the man from Barcelona presented halberds with true military bearing; but the staves of their descending weapons soon struck the flags of the pavement again, for a woman’s voice had detained the man whom the soldiers intended to salute, and in his place two slender lads rushed down the steps.

The yellow velvet garments, with ash-gray facings, and cap of the same material in the same colours, were very becoming to these youths—the Emperor’s pages—and, though the first two were sons of German and Italian counts, and the third who followed them was a Holland baron, the sentinels took little more notice of them than of Queen Mary’s pointers following swiftly at their heels.

”Of those up there,” observed the halberdier from Haarlem under his breath, ”a man would most willingly stiffen his back for Quijada.”

”Except their Majesties, of course,” added the Catalonian with dignity.

”Of course,” the other repeated. ”Besides, the Emperor Charles himself bestows every honour on Don Luis. I was in Algiers at the time. A hundred more like him would have made matters different, I can tell you. If it becomed an insignificant fellow like me, I should like to ask why his Majesty took him from the army and placed him among the courtiers.”

Here he stopped abruptly, for, in spite of the gaily dressed nobles and ladies, priests, knights, and attendants who were passing up and down the corridor, he had heard footsteps on the stairs which must be those of men in high position. He was not mistaken—one was no less a personage than the younger Granvelle, the Bishop of Arras, who, notwithstanding his nine-and-twenty years, was already the favourite counsellor of Charles V; the other, a man considerably his senior, Dr. Mathys, of Bruges, the Emperor’s physician.

The bishop was followed by a secretary clad in black, with a portfolio under his arm; the leech, by an elderly assistant.

The fine features of the Bishop of Arras, which revealed a nature capable of laughter and enjoyment, now looked as grave as his companion’s—a fact which by no means escaped the notice of the courtiers in the corridor, but no one ventured to approach them with a question, although—it had begun to rain again—they stopped before going out of doors and stood talking together in low tones.

Many would gladly have caught part of their conversation, but no one dared to move nearer, and the Southerners and Germans among them did not understand the Flemish which they spoke.

Not until after the leech had raised his tall, pointed hat and the statesman had pressed his prelate's cap closer upon his short, wavy dark hair and drawn his sable-trimmed velvet cloak around him did several courtiers hasten forward with officious zeal to open the little side door for them.

Something must be going wrong upstairs.

Dr. Mathys's jovial face wore a very different expression when his imperial patient was doing well, and Granvelle always bestowed a friendly nod on one and another if he himself had cause to be content.

When the door had closed behind the pair, the tongues of the ecclesiastics, the secular lords, and the ladies in the corridor were again loosed; but there were no loud discussions in the various languages now mingling in the Golden Cross, far less was a gay exclamation or a peal of laughter heard from any of the groups who stood waiting for the shower to cease.

Although each individual was concerned about his own affairs, one thought, nevertheless, ruled them all—the Emperor Charles, his health, and his decisions. Upon them depended not only the destiny of the world, but also the weal and woe of the greatest as well as the humblest of those assembled here.

"Emperor Charles" was the spell by which the inhabitants of half the world obtained prosperity or ill-luck, war or peace, fulfilment or denial of the wishes which most deeply stirred their souls. Even the highest in the land, who expected from his justice or favour fresh good-fortune or the averting of impending disasters, found their way to him wherever, on his long and numerous journeys, he established his court.

Numerous petitioners had also flocked to Ratisbon, but the two great nobles who now entered the Golden Cross certainly did not belong to their number. One shook the raindrops from his richly embroidered velvet cloak and the plumes in his cap, the other from his steel helmet and suit of Milan mail, inlaid with gold. Chamberlain de Praet accosted the former, Duke Peter of Columna, in Italian; the latter, the Landgrave of Leuchtenberg, in a mixture of German and his Flemish native tongue. He had no occasion to say much, for the Emperor wished to be alone. He had ordered even crowned heads and ambassadors to be denied admittance.

The Duke of Columna gaily begged for a dry shelter until the shower was over, but the Landgrave requested to be announced to the Queen of Hungary.

The latter, however, had also declined to grant any audiences that afternoon. The royal lady, the Emperor's favourite sister, was in her own room, adjoining her imperial brother's, talking with Don Luis Quijada, the brave nobleman of whom the Spanish and the Netherland soldiers had spoken with equal warmth.

His personal appearance rendered it an easy matter to believe in the sincerity of their words, for the carriage of his slender, vigorous form revealed all the pride of the Castilian noble. His face, with its closely cut pointed beard, was the countenance of a true warrior, and the expression of his black eyes showed the valiant spirit of a loyal, kind, and simple heart.

The warm confidence with which Mary, the widow of the King of Hungary, who fell in the Turkish war, gazed into Quijada's finely modelled, slightly bronzed countenance proved that she knew how to estimate his worth aright. She had sent for him to open her whole heart.

The vivacious woman, a passionate lover of the chase, found life in Ratisbon unendurable. She would have left the city long ago to perform her duties in the Netherlands—which she ruled as regent in the name of her imperial brother—and devote herself to hunting, to her heart's content, if the condition of the monarch's health had not detained her near him.

She pitied Charles because she loved him, yet she was weary of playing the sick nurse.

She had just indignantly informed Quijada what an immense burden of work, in spite of the pangs of the gout, her suffering brother had imposed upon himself ever since the first cock-crow. But he would take no better care of himself, and therefore it was difficult to help him. Was it not utterly unprecedented? Directly after mass he had examined dozens of papers, made notes on the margins, and affixed his signature; then he received Father Pedro de Soto, his confessor, the nuncio, the English and the Venetian ambassadors; and, lastly, had an interview with young Granvelle, the Bishop of Arras, which had continued three full hours, and perhaps might be going on still had not Dr. Mathys, the leech, put an end to it.

Queen Mary had just found him utterly exhausted, with his face buried in his hands.

"And you, too," she added in conclusion, "can not help admitting that if this state of things continues there must be an evil end."

Quijada bent his head in assent, and then answered modestly:

"Yet your Majesty knows our royal master's nature. He will listen calmly to you, whom he loves, or to me, who was permitted to remain at his side

as a page, or probably to the two Granvelles, Malfalconnet, and others whom he trusts, when they venture to warn him—”

”And yet keep on in his mad career,” interrupted Queen Mary with an angry gesture of the hand.

”Plus ultra—more, farther—is his motto,” observed Quijada in a tone of justification.

”Forward ceaselessly, for aught I care, so long as the stomach and the feet are sound!” replied the Queen, raising her hand to the high lace ruff, which oppressed the breathing of one so accustomed to the outdoor air. ”But when, like him, a man must give up deer-stalking and at every movement makes a wry face and can scarcely repress a groan—it might move a stone to pity!—he ought to choose another motto. Persuade him to do so, Quijada, if you are really his friend.”

The smile with which the nobleman listened to this request plainly showed the futility of the demand.

The Queen noticed it, threw her arm aloft as if she were hurling a hunting spear, and exclaimed ”I’m not easily deceived, Luis. Whether you could or not, the will is lacking. You shun the attempt! Because you are young yourself, and can still cope with the bear and wild boar, you like the motto, which will probably lead to new wars, and thereby to fresh renown. But, alas! my poor, poor brother, who—how long ago it is!—could once have thrown even you upon the sand, what can he do, with this accursed gout? And besides, what more can the Emperor Charles gain, since there is no chance of obtaining the sovereignty of the world, of which he once dreamed? He must learn to be content! Surely at his age! It is easy to calculate, for his life began with the century, and this is its forty-sixth year. Of course, with you soldiers the years of warfare count double, and he—Duke Alba said so—was born a general. One need not be able to reckon far in order to number how many months he has spent in complete peace. And then he attained his majority at fifteen, and with what weighty cares the man of the ’plus ultra’ has loaded his shoulders since that time! You, and many others at the court, had still more to do, but, Luis, one thing, and it is the hardest burden, you were all spared. I know it. It is called responsibility. Compared with this all others are mere fluttering feathers. Its weight may become unendurable when the weal and woe of half the world are at stake. Thus every year of government was equal to three of war; but you, Luis—the question is allowable when put to a man—how old are you?”

”Within a few months of forty.”

”So young!” cried the Queen. ”Yet, when one looks at you closely, your appearance corresponds with your years.”

Quijada pointed to the gray locks on his temples, but the Queen eagerly

continued:

I noticed that at Brussels. And do you know what gave you those few white hairs? Simply the responsibility that so cruelly shortened the Emperor's youth, and which at least grazes you. As I saw him to-day, Luis, many a man of sixty has a more vigorous appearance."

"And yet, if your Majesty will permit me to say so," Quijada replied with a low bow, "he may be in a very different condition to-morrow. I heard Dr. Mathys himself remark that the life of a gouty patient was like a showery day in July—gloomy enough while the thunder-storm was raging, but radiant before and afterward until the clouds rose again. Surely your Majesty remembers how erect, how vigorous, and how knightly his bearing was when he greeted you on your arrival. The happiness of having his beloved sister again restored his paralyzed buoyancy speedily enough, although just at present there is certainly no lack of cares pressing upon him, and notwithstanding the disastrous conditions which we found existing among the godless populace here. That this cruel responsibility, however, can mature the mind without harming the body your Majesty is a living example."

"Nonsense!" retorted the regent in protest. "From you, at least, I forbid idle flattery!"

As she spoke she pointed with the riding whip, which, on account of her four-footed favourites, she carried in her hand, to her own hair. True, so far as it was visible under the stiff jewelled velvet cap which covered her head, the fair tresses had a lustrous sheen, and the braids, interwoven with pearls, were unusually thick, but a few silver threads appeared amid the locks which clustered around the intellectual brow.

Quijada saw them, and, with a respectful bow, answered.

"The heavy burden of anxiety for the Netherlands, which is not always rewarded with fitting gratitude."

"Oh, no," replied the Queen, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. "Yes, many things in Brussels rouse my indignation, but they do not turn my hair gray. It began to whiten up here, under the widow's cap, if you care to know it, and, if the Emperor's health does not improve, the locks there will soon look like my white Diana's."

Here she hesitated, and, accustomed both in the discharge of the duties of her office and during the chase not to deviate too far from the goal she had in view, she first gave her favourite dog, which had leaped on Don Luis in friendly greeting, a blow with her whip, and then said in a totally different tone:

"But I am not the person in question. You have already heard that you must help me, Luis. Did you see the Emperor yesterday after vespers?"

"I had the honour, your Majesty."

"And did not the conviction that he is in evil case force itself upon you?"

"I felt it so keenly that I spoke to Dr. Mathys of his feeble appearance, his bowed figure, and the other things which I would so gladly have seen otherwise."

"And these things? Speak frankly!"

"These things," replied the major-domo, after a brief hesitation, "are the melancholy moods to which his Majesty often resigns himself for hours."

"And which remind you of Queen Juana, our unhappy mother?" asked the Queen with downcast eyes.

"Remind is a word which your Majesty will permit me to disclaim," replied Quijada resolutely. "The great thinker, who never loses sight of the most distant goal, who weighs and considers again and again ere he determines upon the only right course in each instance—the great general who understands how to make far-reaching plans for military campaigns as ably as to direct a cavalry attack—the statesman whose penetration pierces deeper than the keen intelligence of his famous councillors—the wise law-giver, the ruler with the iron strength of will and unfailing memory, is perhaps the soundest person mentally among all of us at court-nay, among the millions who obey him. But, so far as my small share of knowledge extends, melancholy has nothing to do with the mind. It is dependent upon the state of the spirits, and springs from bile—"

"You learned that from Dr. Mathys," interrupted the royal lady, "and the quacks repeat it from their masters Hippocrates and Galen. Such parrot gabble does not please me. To my woman's reason, it seems rather that when the mind is ill we should try a remedy whose effect upon it has already been proved, and I think I have found it."

"I am still ignorant of it," replied Quijada eagerly; "but I would swear by my saint that you have hit upon the right expedient."

"Listen, then, and this time I believe you will have no cause to repent your hasty oath. Since death robbed our sovereign lord of his wife, and the gout has prevented his enjoyment of the chief pleasures of life—hunting, the tournament, and the other pastimes which people of our rank usually pursue—in what can he find diversion? The masterpieces of painters and other artists, the inventions of mechanics and clock-makers, and the works of scholars have no place here, but probably—"

"Then it is the noble art of music which your Majesty has in view,"

Quijada eagerly interrupted. "Admirable! For, since the days of King Saul and the harper David—"

"There is certainly no better remedy for melancholy," said the Queen, completing the exclamation of the loyal man. "But it could affect no one more favourably than the Emperor. You yourself know how keen a connoisseur he is, and how often this has been confirmed by our greatest masters. Need I remind you of the high mass in Cologne, at which the magnificent singing seemed fairly to reanimate him after the defection of the heretical archbishop—which threatens to have a disastrous influence upon my Netherlanders also—had robbed him of the last remnant of his enjoyment of life, already clouded? The indignation aroused by the German princes, and the difficult decision to which their conduct is forcing him, act upon his soul like poison. But hesitation is not in my nature, so I thought: Let us have music—good, genuine music. Then I sent a mounted messenger to order Gombert, the conductor of his orchestra, and the director of my choir of boys, to bring their musicians to Ratisbon. The whole company will arrive this evening. Dash forward is my motto, and not only while in the saddle during the chase. But, Luis, you must now tell me—"

"That your Majesty's sisterly affection has discovered the only right course," cried Quijada, deeply touched, pressing his lips respectfully to the flowing sleeve of her robe.

The major-domo's assurance undoubtedly sprang from the depths of his heart, yet the doubts which the hasty action of the vivacious sovereign aroused in his mind compelled him to represent to her, though with the courteous caution which his position demanded, that her bold measure might only too easily arouse the displeasure of the person whom it was intended to benefit. The expense it would entail especially troubled Quijada, and the Queen herself appeared surprised when he estimated the sum which would be required for the transportation of the band and the boy choir from Brussels to Ratisbon and back again.

Forty musicians, twelve boy singers, the leaders, and the paymaster must be moved, and in their train were numerous grooms and attendants, as well as conveyances for the baggage and the valuable instruments.

Besides, the question of accommodation for this large number in the already crowded city now arose, for the Queen confessed that, in order to make the surprise complete, no one had been commissioned to find lodgings.

The musicians, who had displayed the most praiseworthy promptness, would arrive three days earlier than she had expected.

The royal lady readily admitted that the utmost haste was necessary. Yet she knew that, if any one could accomplish the impossible, it was Quijada, where the object in view was to serve her and the Emperor.

The influence of this eulogy was doubled by a tender glance from her bright eyes, and the Spaniard promised to do everything in his power to secure the success of her beautiful surprise. There would undoubtedly be difficulties with his Majesty and the treasurer on the score of the expense, for their finances were at the very lowest ebb.

"There is always the same annoyance where money is concerned," cried the Queen irritably, "in spite of the vast sums which my Netherlands pour into the treasury—four times as much as Spain supplies, including the gold and silver of the New World. You keep it secret, but two fifths of the revenue from all the countries over which Charles reigns are contributed by my provinces. Torrents of ducats inundate your treasury, and yet—yet—it's enough to drive one mad!—in spite of this and the lamentable parsimony with which the Emperor deprives himself of both great and small pleasures—it is simply absurd!—the story is always: The finances are at the lowest ebb—save and save again. To protect the plumes in his new cap from being injured by the rain, the sovereign of half the world ordered an old hat to be brought, and waited in the shower until the shabby felt came. And where are the millions which this excellent economist saves from his personal expenses? The dragon War devours them all. True, he has vanquished foes enough, but the demon of melancholy, that makes even Dr. Mathys anxious, is far worse than the infidels before whom you were compelled to retreat in Algiers—far more terrible than the Turks and heretics combined. Yet what are you and the wise treasurer doing? The idea of lessening the salaries of the physician-in-ordinary and his colleagues has never entered the heads of the estimable gentlemen who call themselves his Majesty's faithful servants. Very well! Then put the musicians' travelling expenses upon the apothecary's bill. They have as much right to be there as the senna leaves. But, if the penny pinchers in the council of finance refuse to advance the necessary funds, why—charge this medicine to my account. I'll pay for it, in spite of the numerous leeches that suck my substance."

"It certainly will not come to that, your Majesty," replied Quijada soothingly. "Our sovereign lord knows, too, that it beseems him to be less rigid in saving. Only yesterday he dipped into his purse deeply enough for another remedy."

"What was that?" asked the Queen in surprise.

"He paid the debts of my colleague Malfalconnet, not less than ten thousand ducats."

"There it is!" exclaimed the regent, striking her hands sharply together. "The baron dispels the Emperor's melancholy by his ready wit, which often hits the nail on the head, and his nimble tongue, but my medicine must provide the fitting mood for Malfalconnet's dearly bought jests and witticisms to exert the proper influence."

"And, moreover," Quijada added gaily, "your Majesty will present the completed deed for the treasurer's action. But now I most humbly entreat you to dismiss me. I must inform the quartermasters at once, and look after the matter myself if your Majesty's costly magic pills are not to be spoiled by this wet April weather. Besides, many of the musicians are not the strongest of men."

Bowing as he spoke, he prepared to take leave of the Queen, but she detained him with the remark:

"Our invitation went to Sir Wolf Hartschwert also. He is a native of Ratisbon, and can aid you and the quartermasters in assigning lodgings."

"A fresh proof of the wise caution of my august mistress," replied Quijada. "If your Majesty will permit, I should like to talk with my royal patroness about this man shortly. I have something in my mind concerning him which can not be easily explained in a few words, especially as I know that the modest, trustworthy fellow—"

"If what you have in view is for his benefit," the Queen eagerly interrupted, "it is granted in advance."

The promise reached Quijada just as he gained the threshold; ere he crossed it, Queen Mary called to him again, saying frankly: "I will not let you go so, Luis! You are an honest man, and I am ashamed to deceive you. The cure of his Majesty's melancholy is my principal object, it is true, but one half the expense of this medicine ought to be credited to me; for—but do not tell the treasurer—for it will afford me relief also. I can endure these rooms no longer. The forest is putting forth its first green leafage. The birds are returning. Red deer are plenty in the woods along the Danube. I must get out of doors into the open air. As matters are now, I could not leave his Majesty; but when the band and the boy choir are at his disposal, they will dispel his melancholy moods, and I can venture later to leave him to you and Malfalconnet, whose wit will be freshly seasoned by the payment of his debts. O Luis! if only I can get out of doors! Meanwhile, may music do for my imperial brother what we anticipate! And one thing more: Take Master Adrian with you. I released him from attendance upon the Emperor until midnight. It was no easy matter. When you have provided the favourites of Apollo with lodgings, come to me again, however late the hour may be. Sir Wolf Hartschwert must call early to-morrow morning. The nuncio brought some new songs from Rome. The music is too high for my voice, and the knight understands how to transpose the notes for me better than even the leader of the choir, Appenzelder."

CHAPTER II.

The April sun, ere it sank to rest, had won the victory and kindly dried the garments of the horsemen who were approaching Ratisbon by the Nuremberg road.

A young man who had ridden forward in advance of the great train of travellers behind him checked his steed above the village of Kneiting, just where the highway descended in many a curve to the valley of the Danube, and gazed at the landscape whose green spring leafage, freshened by rain, appeared before him.

His heart throbbed faster, and he thought that he had seen no fairer prospect in all the wide tract of earth over which he had wandered during the past five years. Below him were green meadows and fields, pleasant villages, and the clear, full current of the Danube, along whose left bank extended a beautifully formed mountain chain, whose declivity toward the river presented a rich variety to the eye, for sometimes it was clothed in budding groves, sometimes displayed picturesque bare cliffs, and again vineyards in which labourers were working. From the farthest distance the steeples of Ratisbon offered the first greeting to the resting horseman.

What a wealth of memories this pleasant landscape awoke in the mind of the returning traveller! How often he had walked through these charming valleys, climbed these heights, stopped in these villages! It was difficult for him to turn from this view, but he let his bay horse have its way when the companion whom he had left behind overtook him here, and the animal followed the other's black Brabant steed, with which it had long been on familiar terms. He rode slowly at his friend's side into the valley.

Both silently feasted their eyes upon the scene opening with increasing magnificence before them.

As they reached the village of Winzer, the victorious sun was approaching the western horizon, and diffused over it a fan of golden rays. The gray cloud bank above, which a light breeze was driving before it, was bordered with golden edges. The young green foliage, refreshed by the rain, glittered as richly and magnificently as emerald and chrysopruse, and the primroses and other early spring flowers, which had just grown up along the roadside and in the meadows, shone in brighter colours than in the full light of noon. The big fresh drops on the leaves and blossoms sparkled and glittered in the last rays of the sun.

Now Ratisbon also appeared.

The city, with its throng of steeples, was surrounded by a damp vapour

which the reflection of the sun coloured with a faint, scarcely perceptible roseate hue. The notes of bells from the twin towers of the cathedral and the convent of Nieder Munster, from St. Emmeram on the right, and the church of the Dominicans on the left, echoed softly in this hour when Nature and human activity were at rest—often dying away in the distance—to greet the returning citizen.

Obeying an involuntary impulse, Wolf Hartschwert raised his hat. Within the shelter of the walls of this venerable city he had played as a boy, completed his school and student days, and early felt the first quickened throbbing of the heart. Here he had first been permitted to test what knowledge he had won in the schools of poetry and music.

He had remained in Ratisbon until his twenty-first year, then he had ventured out into the world, and, after an absence of five years, he was returning home again.

But was the stately city before him really his home?

When he had just gazed down upon it from the height, this question had occupied his thoughtful mind.

He had not been born on the shore of this river, but of the Main. All who had been dearest to him in Ratisbon—the good people who had reared him from his fourth year as their own child, the woman who gave him birth, and the many others to whom he was indebted for kindnesses—were no longer there.

But why had he not thought first of the mother, who is usually the centre of the circle of love, and whose figure precedes every other, now that he was approaching the place where she rested beneath the turf? He asked himself the question with a faint feeling of self-reproach, but he did not confess the true reason.

When the summons to Ratisbon had reached him in Brussels, he had been joyously ready to obey it—nay, he had felt it a great happiness to see again the beloved place for which he had never ceased to long. And yet, the nearer he approached it, the more anxiously his heart throbbed.

When, soon after noonday, the rain drenched him, he had experienced no discomfort, because such exquisite sunny visions of the future had hovered before him; but as the sky cleared they had shrivelled and doubt of the result of the decision which he was riding to meet had cast everything else into the shade.

Now the whole city appeared before him, and, as he looked at the cathedral, whose machicolated tower permitted the rosy hue of the sky to shine through, his heart rose again, and he gazed with grateful delight at the verdant spring attire of his home and the magnificence with which she greeted him; her returning son.

"Isn't it beautiful here?" he asked, suddenly breaking the silence as he turned to Massi, the violinist, who rode at his side, and then was secretly grateful to him when, after a curt "Very pleasant," he disturbed him with no further speech.

It was so delightful to listen to the notes of the bells, so familiar to him, whose pure tones had accompanied with their charming melody all his wanderings in childhood and youth. At the same time, the mood in which the best musical ideas came to him suddenly overpowered him. A new air, well worth remembering, pressed itself on him unbidden, and his excited imagination showed him in its train himself, and by his side, first, a romping, merry child, and then a girlish figure in the first budding charm of youth. He thought he heard her sing, and old, unforgotten notes of songs swiftly crowded out his own musical creations.

Every tone from the fresh red lips of the lovely fair-haired girl awakened a new memory. The past lived again, and, without his volition, transformed the image of the child of whom he had thought whenever he recalled his youthful days in Ratisbon into that of a lovely bride, with the myrtle wreath on her waving hair, while beside her he beheld himself with the wedding bouquet on his slashed velvet holiday doublet.

He involuntarily seized the saddlebag which contained the handsomest gift he had bought in Brussels for the person who had drawn him back to Ratisbon with a stronger power of attraction than anything else. If all went well, that very day, perhaps, he might have the right to call her his own.

These visions of the future aroused so joyous a feeling in his young soul that Massi, the violinist, read in his by no means mobile features what was passing in his mind. His cheery "Well, Sir Knight!" awakened his ever-courteous colleague and travelling companion from his dream, and, when the latter started and turned toward him, Alassi gaily continued: "To see his home and his family again does, indeed, make any man glad! The sight of yonder shining steeples and roofs seems to make your heart laugh, Sir Wolf, and, by Our Lady, you have good reason to bestow one or more candles upon her, for, besides other delightful things, a goodly heritage is awaiting you in Ratisbon."

Here he paused, for the sunny radiance vanished simultaneously from the sky and from his companion's face. The violinist, as if in apology, added: "Some trouble always precedes an inheritance, and who knows whether, in your case also, rumour did not follow the evil custom of lying or making a mountain out of a molehill?"

Wolf Hartschwert slightly shrugged his shoulders and calmly answered:

"It is all true about the heritage, Massi, and also the trouble, but it is unpleasant to hear you, too, call me 'Sir.' Let it drop for the

future, if we are to be intimate. To others I shall, of course, be the knight or cavalier. You know what the title procures for a man, though your saying—

’Knightly Knightly rank with lack of land
More care than joy hath at command,’

is but too true. As for the heritage, an old friend has really named me in his will, but you must not expect that it is a large bequest. The man who left it to me was a plain person of moderate property, and I myself shall not learn until the next few days what I am to receive in addition to his modest house.”

”The more it is, the more cordially I shall congratulate you,” cried the violinist, and then looked back toward the other travellers.

Wolf did the same, and turned his horse. If he did not urge on the loiterers the gate, which was closed at nightfall, would need to be opened for them, for the five troopers who acted as escort had deemed their duty done when Winzer was reached, and made themselves comfortable in the excellent tavern there.

The carters had used the lash stoutly, yet it had been no easy matter to advance rapidly. The rain had softened the road, and the horses and beasts of burden were sorely wearied by the long trip from Brussels to Ratisbon, which had been made in hurried days’ journeys. The train of horsemen and wagons stretched almost beyond the range of vision, for it comprised the whole world-renowned orchestra of the Emperor Charles, and Queen Mary’s boy choir.

Only the leaders were absent. Gombert had left Brussels later than the others, and hastened after them with post-horses, overtaking them about an hour before, when he induced Appenzelder, the leader of the boy choir, to enter his carriage, though the latter was reluctant to leave the young singers who were intrusted to his care. As to the other travellers, the Queen and Don Luis Quijada had made a great mistake in their calculations—the number considerably exceeded a hundred. Neither had thought of the women and children who accompanied the musicians.

Most of the women were the wives of the members of the orchestra, who had availed themselves of this opportunity to see something of the world. Others, from motives of love or jealousy, would not part from their husbands. The little children had been taken because their mothers, who were fond of travelling and, like their husbands, were natives of all countries, possessed no relatives in Brussels who would care for them.

The jealous spouses especially had not joined the party without cogent reasons, for the mirth in the first long wagon, covered with a linen tilt, was uproarious enough.

Wolf and his companion heard shrill laughter and loud shrieks echoing from its dusky interior.

The younger men and the women who liked journeying were sitting in motley confusion upon the straw which covered the bottom of the vehicle, and the boisterous mirth of the travellers gave ample proof that the huge jugs of wine carried with them as the Emperor's provision for the journey had been freely used.

In the second cart, an immense ark, swaying between four wheels and drawn by a team of four horses, grave older artists sat silently opposite to each other, all more or less exhausted by the continual rocking motion of the long ride. These men and the other travellers were joyfully surprised by the news that the goal of the journey was already at hand. Pressing their heads together, they gazed out of the open linen tilt which arched above the first cart or crowded to the little windows of the coaches to see Ratisbon.

Even the old Neapolitan nurse, who was predicting future events from a pack of cards, dropped them and peered out. But the noise in the second tilted wagon was especially confused, for there the gay shouts of the boy choir, only half of whom were on horseback, mingled with the loud talking of the women, the screams of the babies, and the barking of the dogs.

The groans of two young singers who were seriously ill were drowned by the din and heeded by no one except the old drummer's pitying wife, who sometimes wiped the perspiration from the sufferers' brows or supported their heads.

Other carts, containing the musicians' instruments, followed this tilted wagon. Some members of the orchestra would not part with theirs, and behind the saddle of many a mounted virtuoso or attendant was fastened a violin case or a shapeless bag which concealed some other instrument.

A large number of musicians mounted on horses or mules surrounded the two-wheeled cart in which sat Hernbeize of Ghent, the treasurer of the orchestra, and his fat wife. The corpulent couple, squeezed closely together, silent and out of humour, had taken no notice of each other or their surrounding since Frau Olympia had presumed to drag her husband by force out of the first wagon, where he was paying a visit to a clarionet player's pretty young wife.

Whenever Wolf appeared he urged the horsemen and drivers to greater haste, and thus the musical caravan, with its unauthorized companions, succeeded in passing through the gate ere it closed. Beyond it the travellers were received by Quijada, the imperial valet, Adrian Dubois, and several quartermasters, who meanwhile had provided lodgings.

The major-domo greeted the musicians with dignified condescension, Wolf

with familiar friendship. Master Adrian, the valet, also shook hands cordially with him and Massi, the "first violin" of the orchestra. Finally Don Luis rode up to Wolf and informed him that the Queen of Hungary wished to speak to him early the next morning, and that he also had something important to discuss at the earliest opportunity. Then he listened to the complaints of the quartermasters.

These men, who performed their duties with great lack of consideration, had supposed that they had provided for all the expected arrivals, but, after counting heads, they discovered that the billets were sufficient for only half the number. Their attempt to escape providing for the wives was baffled by the vigorous interposition of the treasurer and by a positive order from Quijada.

Of course, under these circumstances they were very glad to have Sir Wolf Hartschwert return his billet—the room in the Crane allotted to him by the valet was large enough to accommodate half a dozen women.

The nobleman returning to his home had no occasion to find shelter in a tavern.

Yet, as he wished to remove the traces of the long ride ere he entered his own house and appeared before the person for whose sake he had gladly left Brussels, he asked Massi's permission to use his room in the Red Cock for a short time.

Leonhard Leitgeb, the landlord, and his bustling better half received Wolf as a neighbour's son and an old acquaintance. But, after they had shown him and Massi to the room intended for them and gone downstairs again, the landlady of the Cock shook her head, saying:

"He was always a good lad and a clever one, too, but even if a duke's coronet should fall upon the thin locks of the poor knight's son I should never take him for a real nobleman."

"Better let that drop," replied her husband. "Besides, the fine fellow is of more consequence since he had the legacy. If he should come here for our Kattl, I'll wager you wouldn't keep him waiting."

"Indeed I wouldn't," cried the landlady, laughing. "But just hear what a racket those soldiers are making again down below!"

Meanwhile Wolf was hurriedly attending to his outer man.

Massi had stretched himself on the thin cushion which covered the seat of the wooden bench in the bay-window, and thrust his feet far out in front of him.

As he watched the Ratisbon knight diligently use the little hand mirror while arranging his smooth, fair locks, he straightened himself, saying:

"No offence, Sir Knight, but when I think of the radiant face with which you gazed down into the valley of the Danube from the hill where you stopped before sunset, and now see how zealously you are striving to adorn your person, it seems to me that there must be in this good city some one for whom you care more than for all you left behind in Brussels. At your age, that is a matter of course, if there is a woman in the case, as I suppose. I know very well what I should do if I were in your place. Longing often urges me back to Spain like a scourge. I have already told you why I left my dear wife there in our home. A few more years in the service, and our savings and the pension together will be enough to support us there and lay aside a little marriage dowry for our daughter. When I have what is necessary, I shall turn my back on the orchestra and the court of Brussels that very day, dear as music is to me, and sure as I am that I shall never again find a leader like our Gombert. You do not yet know with how sharp a tooth yearning rends the soul of the man whom Fate condemns to live away from his family. This place is your home, and dearer to you than any other, so build yourself a snug nest here with the person you have in mind."

"How gladly I would do so!" replied the young knight, "but whether I can must be decided within the next few days."

"Inde-e-ed?" drawled Massi; then he bent his eyes thoughtfully upon the floor for a short time, and, after calling Wolf by name in a tone of genuine friendly affection, he frankly added: "Surely you know how dear a comrade you are to me! Yet precisely for that reason I stick to my counsel. It's not only on account of the homesickness—I am, thinking rather of your position at court—and, let me speak candidly, it is unworthy of a nobleman and a musician of such ability. The regent is graciously disposed toward you, and you praise her liberality, but do you yourself know the name of the office which you fill? More than enough is placed upon you, and yet, so far as I see, nothing complete. They understand admirably how to make use of you. It would be well if that applied solely to the musician. But sometimes she makes you secretary, and you have to waste whole days in writing letters and do penance for having learned so many languages; sometimes you must share in the folly of arranging performances, and your wealth of knowledge is industriously utilized in preparing mythological figures and devising new ideas for the exhibitions at which we have to furnish the music. This affords plenty of labour, but others reap the credit. Recently the Bishop of Arras even asked you to write in German what he dictated in French, although you are in the regent's service, and just at that time you were transposing the old church songs for the boy choir. I regret to see you do such tradesmen's work without adequate reward. Why, even if her Majesty would give you a fat living or appoint you to the imperial council which directs musical affairs in the Netherlands! Pardon me, Sir Wolf! But give people an inch, and they take an ell, and your ever ready obligingness will injure you, for the harder it is to win a thing the higher its value becomes. You made yourself too cheap at court here

people will surely know how to put a higher value upon a man who is equally skilful in Netherland, Italian, and German music. In counterpoint you are little inferior to Maestro Gombert, and, besides, you play as many instruments as you have fingers on your hands. We all like to have you lead us, because you do it with such delicate taste and comprehension, and, moreover, with a vigour which one would scarcely expect from you. You will not lack patrons. Look around you here or elsewhere for a position as leader of an orchestra. Goinbert, to relieve himself a little, would like to have de Hondt come from Antwerp to Brussels. His place would be the very one for you if you find nothing worthy of you here, where you have a house of your own and other things that bind you to the city."

"Here I should probably be obliged to crowd somebody else out of one in order to obtain a position," replied Wolf, "and I am unwilling to do so."

"You are wrong," cried the violinist. "The course of the world causes the stronger—and that you are—to take precedence of the weaker. Learn at last to give up this modest withdrawal and elbow your way forward!"

"Pressing and jostling are not in my nature;" replied Wolf with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "Since I may hope to be relieved of anxiety concerning my daily bread, I am disposed to leave the court and seek quiet happiness in a more definite circle of duties at home. You see, Massi, it is just the same with us human beings as with material things. There is my man cutting the rope from yonder package with his sharp knife. The contents are distributed in a trice, and yet it was tiresome to collect them and pack them carefully. Thus it would need only a word to separate myself from the court; but to join it again would be a totally different affair. There have been numerous changes in this city since I went away, and many a hand which pressed mine in farewell is no longer here, or would perhaps be withdrawn, merely because I am a Catholic and intend to stay here among the Protestants. Besides—lay the roll on the table, Janche—besides, as you have already heard, the final decision does not depend upon myself.—Take care, Jan. That little package is breakable!"

This last exclamation was addressed to Wolf's Netherland servant, who was just unpacking his master's leather bag.

Massi noticed that the articles taken out could scarcely be intended for a man's use, and, pointing to a piece of Flanders velvet, he gaily remarked:

"So my guess was correct. Here, too, the verdict is to be pronounced by beardless lips." Wolf blushed like a girl, but, after the violinist had waited a short time for the confirmation of his conjecture, he continued more gravely:

"It ill befits me to intrude upon your secret. Every one must go his own

way, and I have wondered why a person who so readily renders a service to others pursues his own path so unsocially. Will you ever let your friend know what stirs your heart?"

"I should often have confided in you gladly," replied Wolf, "but a certain shyness always restrained me. How can others be interested in what befalls a lonely, quiet fellow like me? It is not my habit to talk much, but you will always find me ready to use hand and brain in behalf of one who is as dear to me as you, Massi."

"You have already given me proof of that," replied the violinist, "and I often marvel how you find time, without neglecting your own business, to do so much for others with no payment except thanks. I thought you would accomplish something great, because you paid no heed to women; but probably you depend on other powers, for if it is a pair of beautiful eyes whose glance is to decide so important a matter—"

"Never mind that," interrupted Wolf beseechingly, raising his hand soothingly. "I confess with Terentius that nothing human is strange to me. As soon as the decision comes, I will tell you—but you alone—several particulars. Now accept my thanks for your well-meant counsel and the use of your room. I'll see you again early to-morrow. I promised Gombert and the leader of the boy choir to lend them a helping hand, so we shall probably meet at the rehearsal.—Go to the stable, Janche, and see that the groom has rubbed the bay down thoroughly. As for the rolls and packages here—"

"I'll help you carry them," said the violinist, seizing his shoes; but Wolf eagerly declined his assistance, and went out to ask the landlord to let him have one of his men.

But the servants of the overcrowded Red Cock all had their hands full, so the nine-year-old son of the Leitgeb couple and the cellar man's two somewhat younger boys, who had not yet gone to bed, were made bearers of the parcels.

How eager they were to do something which suited grown people, and, when Wolf described the place where they were to carry the articles, Fran Leitgeb sympathizingly helped him, and charged the children to hold the valuable packages very carefully. They must not spare the knocker in the second story of the cantor house, for old Ursula's hearing was no longer the best, and since the day before yesterday—Kathl had brought the news home—she had been ill. "Some rare luck," the landlady continued, "will surely follow the knight up to the Blumbergs. The same old steep path, leads there; but as to Wawer!—it would be improper to say Jungfrau Barbara—you will surer open your eyes—" Here she was summoned to the kitchen, and Wolf followed his little assistants into the street.

CHAPTER III.

The cantor house was only a few steps from the Red Cock, and Wolf knew every stone in the street, which was named for the tavern. Yet that very circumstance delayed him, for even the smallest trifle which had changed during his absence attracted his attention.

He had already noticed at the familiar inn that the gay image of the Madonna and Cluld, and the little lamp above, were no longer there. The pictures of the saints had been removed from the public rooms, and even the painting which had been impressed upon his memory from boyhood—like a sign of the house—had vanished. A large red cock, crowing with wide-open beak at the Apostle Peter, had been there.

This venerable work of an old artist ought to have been retained, no matter what doctrine the Leitgebs now professed. Its disappearance affected the knight unpleasantly.

It also induced him to see whether the Madonna with the swords in her heart, which, at the time of his departure, had adorned the Ark, the great house at the corner of the Haidplatz, had met with the same fate, and this sacred witness of former days had likewise been sacrificed to the iconoclasm of the followers of the new Protestant faith. This also grieved him, and urged him to go from street to street, from church to church, from monastery to monastery, from one of the chapels which no great mansion in his native land lacked to another, in order to ascertain what else religious fanaticism had destroyed; but he was obliged to hasten if he wished to be received by those in his home whom he most desired to see.

The windows of the second story in the Golden Cross, opposite to the Ark, were brilliantly lighted. The Emperor Charles lodged there, and probably his royal sister also. Wolf had given his heart to her with the devotion with which he had always clung to every one to whom he was indebted for any kindness. He knew her imperial brother's convictions, too, and when he saw at one of the windows a man's figure leaning, motionless against the casement with his hand pressed upon his brow, he realized what deep indignation had doubtless seized upon him at the sight of the changes which had taken place here during the five years of his absence.

But Emperor Charles was not the man to allow matters which aroused his wrath and strong disapproval to pass unpunished. Wolf suspected that the time was not far distant when yonder monarch at the window, who had won so many victories, would have a reckoning with the Smalcalds, the allied Protestants of Germany, and his vivid imagination surrounded him with an almost mystical power.

He would surely succeed in becoming the master of the Protestant princes;

but was the steel sword the right weapon to destroy this agitation of the soul which had sprung from the inmost depths of the German nature? He knew the firm, obstinate followers of the new doctrine, for there had been a time when his own young mind had leaned toward it.

Since those days, however, events had happened which had bound him by indestructible fetters to the old faith. He had vowed to his dying mother to remain faithful to the Holy Church and loyally to keep his oath. It was not difficult for one of his modest temperament to be content with the position of spectator of the play of life which he occupied. He was not born for conflict, and from the seat to which he had retired he thought he had perceived that the burden of existence was easier to bear, and the individual not only obtained external comfort, but peace of mind more speedily, if he left to the Church many things which the Protestant was obliged to settle for himself. Besides, as such, he would have missed many beautiful and noble things which the old faith daily bestowed upon him, the artist.

People in Ratisbon held a different opinion. Defection from the Roman Catholic Church, which seemed to him reprehensible, was considered here a sacred duty, worthy of every sacrifice. This threatened to involve him in fresh spiritual conflicts, and, as he dreaded such things as nocturnal birds shun the sunlight, he stood still, thoughtfully asking himself whether he ought not at once to give up the desire of striking new roots into this perilous soil.

Only one thing really bound him to Ratisbon, and that was by no means the house which he had inherited, but a very young girl, and, moreover, a very changeable one, of whose development and life he had heard nothing during his absence except that she had not become another's wife. Perhaps this girl, whose charm and musical talent, according to his opinion, were unequalled in Ratisbon, had remained free solely because she was keeping the promise made when, a child of sixteen, she bade him farewell. She had told him, though only in her lively childish fashion, that she would wait for him and become his wife when he returned home a made man. Yet it now seemed that she had been as sincerely in earnest in that youthful betrothal as he himself.

This fair hope crowded every scruple far into the shade. If Barbara had kept her troth to him, he would reward her. Wherever he might build his nest with her, he would be sure of the richest happiness. Therefore he persisted in making his decision for the future depend upon her reception.

The only question was whether it had not already grown too late for him to visit her and her father, who went to bed with the chickens. But the new clock in Jacobsplatz pealed only nine bell-like strokes through the stillness of the evening, and, as he had sent his gifts in advance, he was obliged to follow them.

He might now regard the cantor house, which was quickly gained, as his own. Though it was now in the deepest darkness, he gazed up at the high, narrow building, with the pointed arches of the windows and the bracket which supported the image of St. Cecilia carved from sandstone, as intently as if he could distinguish every defect in the windows, every ornament carved in the ends of the beams.

The second story, which projected above the ground floor into the street, was completely dark; but a faint glimmer of light streamed from the little window over the spurge laurel tree, and—this was the main thing—the bow window in the third story was still lighted.

She whom he sought was waiting there with her father, while beneath it was the former abode of the precentor and organist and his wife, who had reared Wolf, and whose heir, after the old man's death, he had become.

He would take up his quarters in the room which he had occupied as a scholar, where he had studied, practised music, trained himself in the art of composition, and in leisure hours had even drawn and painted a little.

Old Ursula, as he had learned from the legal document which informed him of his inheritance, was taking care of the property bequeathed to him. With what pleasure the old maid-servant, faithful soul, who had come with him—then a little four-year-old boy—and his mother to Ratisbon twenty-two years ago, would make a bed for him and again cook the pancakes, which she knew to be his favourite dish!

The thought of the greeting awaiting him from her dispelled the timidity with which he had set his foot on the first of the three steps that led up to the threshold of the house. He had no occasion to use the knocker; a narrow, long streak of light showed that, notwithstanding the late hour, the outer door was ajar.

Now he heard an inner door open, and this again aroused the anxiety he had just conquered. Suppose that he should find Wawerl below? Ardently as he yearned for her to whom all the love of his heart belonged, this meeting would have come too quickly. Yet she might very easily happen to be in the lower story, for the lighted window beside the door belonged to the little house chapel, and since her confirmation she had undertaken to sweep it, clean the candlesticks and lamps, and keep them in order, fill the vases on the little altar with blossoms, and adorn the image of the Madonna with flowers on Lady day and other festivals.

How often he had helped the child and heard her father call her "his little sacrist"!

The chapel here had gained greater importance to him when the Blombergs

placed above the altar the Madonna and Child which he, who tried all the arts, had copied with his own hand from an ancient painting. This had been in July; but when, on the Virgin's Assumption day in August, Barbara was twining a beautiful garland of summer flowers around it, and he, with an overflowing heart, was helping her, his head accidentally struck against hers, and to comfort her he compassionately kissed the bruised spot. Only a short time ago she had frankly thrown her arms around his neck if she wanted him to gratify a wish or forgive an offence without ever receiving a response to her affection. This time he had been the aggressor, and received an angry rebuff; during the little scuffle which now followed, Wolf's heart suddenly grew hot, and his kiss fell upon her scarlet lips. The first was followed by several others, until steps on the stairs parted the young lover from the girl, who offered but a feeble resistance.

Now he remembered the incident, and his cheeks flushed again. Oh, if to-day he should possess the right to have those refractory lips at his disposal!

During the five months spent in Ratisbon after that attack in the chapel he had more than once been bold enough to strive for more kisses, but always in vain, and rarely without bearing away a sharp reprimand, for Barbara had felt her slight resistance in the chapel as a grave offence. She had permitted something forbidden under the eyes of the Virgin's image, and this had seemed to her so wicked that she had confessed it, and not only been sternly censured, but had a penance imposed.

Barbara had not forgotten this, and had understood how to keep him aloof with maidenly austerity until, on the evening before his departure, he had hung around her neck the big gold thaler his godfather had given him.

Then, obeying an impulse of gratitude, she had thrown her arms around his neck; but even then she would not allow him to kiss her lips again. Instead, she hastily drew back to examine the gold thaler closely, praised its weight and beauty, and then promised Wolf that when she was rich and he had become a great lord she would have a new goblet made for him out of just such coins, like one which she had seen at the Wollers in the Ark, the richest of her wealthy relatives.

As Wolf now recalled this promise it vexed him again.

What had he expected from that parting hour—the vow of eternal fidelity, a firm betrothal, ardent kisses, and a tender embrace? But, instead of obtaining even one of these beautiful things, he had become involved in a dispute with Barbara because he desired to receive nothing from her, and only claimed the right of showering gifts upon her later.

This had pleased her, and, when he urged her to promise to wait for him and become his wife when he returned home a made man, she laughed gaily, and declared that she liked him, and, if it should be he who obtained for

her what she now had in mind, she would be glad.

Then his loving heart overflowed, and with her hands clasped in his he entreated her to give up these arrogant thoughts, be faithful to him, and not make him wretched.

The words had poured so ardently, so passionately from the quiet, sedate young man's lips that the girl was thoroughly frightened, and wrenched her hands from his grasp. But when she saw how deeply her struggling hurt him, she voluntarily held out her right hand, exclaiming:

"Only succeed while you are absent sufficiently to build a house like our old one in the Kramgasse, and when the roof is on and your knightly escutcheon above the door we will move in together, and life will be nothing but music and happiness."

This was all that gave him the right to consider her as his betrothed bride, for after a brief farewell and a few kisses of the hand flung to him from the threshold, she had escaped to the little bow-windowed room and thereby also evaded from the departing lover an impressive, well-prepared speech concerning the duties of a betrothed couple.

Yet in Rome and Brussels Wolf had held fast to the conviction that a beloved betrothed bride was awaiting him in Ratisbon.

So long as his foster-parents lived he had had news from them of the Blombergs. After the death of the old couple, Barbara's father had answered in a very awkward manner the questions which he had addressed to him in a letter, and his daughter wrote a friendly message under the old captain's signature. True, it was extremely brief, but few fiery love letters ever made the recipient happier or were more tenderly pressed to the lips.

The girl he loved still bore the name of Barbara Blomberg.

This outweighed a whole archive of long letters. The captain, who, for the sake of fighting the infidels, had so sadly neglected his property that his own house in the Kramgasse fell into the hands of his creditors, had rented the second story in the cantor house. Barbara at that time was very small, but now she had ceased to be a child, and, after she devoted herself earnestly to acquiring the art of singing, the old warrior had undertaken to keep the little chapel in order.

The task certainly seemed strangely ill-suited to the tall, broad-shouldered man with the bushy eyebrows, long beard, and mustache twisted stiffly up at the ends, who had obtained in Tunis and during the Turkish war the reputation of being one of the most fearless heroes, and carried away severe wounds; but he knew how to make scoffers keep their distance, and did not trouble himself at all about other people.

Regularly every evening he went down the stairs and performed the duty he had undertaken with the punctilious care of a neat housewife.

He was a devout man, and did his work there in the hope of pleasing the Holy Virgin, because the reckless old warrior was indebted to her for more than one deliverance from impending death, and because he trusted that she would repay it to him in his child.

Besides, his income was not large enough for him to keep a maid-servant of his own, and he could not expect old Ursel, who had worked for the preceptor and his wife, and performed the roughest labour in the third story for a mere "thank you," to take care of the chapel also. She had plenty to do, and besides she had been a Protestant three years, and took the Lord's Supper in a different form.

This would have induced him to break off every connection with his old friend's maid-servant had not his kind, grateful heart forbidden him to hurt her feelings. Besides, she was almost indispensable to his daughter and himself; it was difficult enough, in any case, for the nobly born captain to meet the obligations imposed by his position.

He now received only a very small portion of the profits of the lumber trade which had supported his ancestors, his father, and himself very handsomely, for he had been compelled to mortgage his share in the business.

Notwithstanding the title of "Captain" with which his imperial commander had honoured him when he received his discharge, the pension he had was scarcely worth mentioning, and, besides, it was very irregularly paid. Therefore the father and daughter had tried to obtain some means of earning money which could be kept secret from their fellow-citizens. The "Captain" busied himself with tracing coats-of-arms, ornaments, and inscriptions upon tin goblets, mugs, tankards, and dishes. Barbara, when she had finished her exercises in singing, washed fine laces. This was done entirely in secret. A certain Frau Lerch, who when a girl had served Barbara's dead mother as waiting maid, and now worked as a dressmaker for the most aristocratic women in Ratisbon, privately obtained this employment. It was partly from affection for the young lady whom she had tended when a child; but the largest portion of Barbara's earnings returned to her, for she cut for the former all the garments she needed to appear among her wealthy relatives and young companions at dances, musical entertainments, banquets, and excursions to the country. True, Frau Lerch, who was a childless woman, worked very cheaply for her, and, when she heard that Barbara had again been the greatest beauty, it pleased her, and she saw her seed ripening.

What a customer the vain darling, who was very ambitious, promised to become in the future as the wife of a rich aristocrat! She would undoubtedly be that. There was absolute guarantee of it in her marvellously beautiful head, with its abundant golden hair, her

magnificent figure, which—she could not help knowing it—was unequalled in Ratisbon, and her nightingale voice.

Even old Blomberg, who kept aloof from the meetings of his distinguished fellow-citizens, but, on the other hand, when his supply of money would permit, enjoyed a drinking bout at the tavern with men of the sword all the more, rejoiced to hear his daughter's rare gifts lauded. The use of the graver was thoroughly distasteful and unsuited to his rank; but even the most laborious work gained a certain charm for his paternal heart when, while wiping the perspiration from his brow, he thought of what his diligence would allow him to devote to the adornment and instruction of his daughter.

He preferred to be alone at home, and his reserved, eccentric nature had caused his relatives to shun his house, which doubtless seemed to them contemptibly small.

Barbara endured this cheerfully, for, though she had many relatives and acquaintances among the companions of her own age, she possessed no intimate friend.

As a child, Wolf had been her favourite playmate, but now visits from her aunts and cousins would only have interrupted her secret work, and disturbed her practice of singing.

When Wolf entered the house, the captain had just left the chapel. He did not notice the returning owner, for people must have made their way into the quiet dwelling. At least he had heard talking in the entry of the second story, where usually it was even more noiseless than in his lodgings in the third, since it was tenanted only by old Ursel, who was now confined to her bed.

Wolf saw Barbara's father, whose height surpassed the stature of ordinary men by a head, hurrying up the stairs. It was a strange, and, for children, certainly an alarming, sight—his left leg, which had been broken by a bullet from a howitzer, had remained stiff, and, as he leaped up three stairs at a time, he stretched his lean body so far forward that it seemed as though he could not help losing his balance at the next step. He was in haste, for he thought that at last he could again acquit himself manfully and cope with one or rather with two or three of the burglars who, since the Duke of Bavaria had prohibited the conveyance of provisions into Ratisbon as a punishment for its desertion of the Catholic Church, had pursued their evil way in the city.

He first discovered with what very small ill-doers he had to deal when he held the little lamp toward them, and, to his sincere vexation, found that they were only little boys, who, moreover, were the children of honest folk, and therefore could scarcely be genuine scoundrels.

Yet it could hardly be any laudable purpose which brought them at so late

an hour to the cantor house, and therefore, with the intention of turning the serious attack into a mirthful one; he shouted in a harsh voice the gibberish which he had compounded of scraps of all sorts of languages, and whose effect upon unruly youngsters he had tested to his own amusement.

As his rough "Larum gardum quantitere runze punze ke hi voi la" now reached the little ones, the impression was far deeper than he had intended, for the cellar man's youngest son, a little fellow six years old, first shrieked aloud, and, when the terrible old man's long arms barred his way, he began to cry piteously.

This troubled the kind-hearted giant, who was really fond of children, and, ere the little lad was aware of it, the captain's free left hand grasped the waistband of his little leather breeches and lifted him into the air.

The swift act doubled the terror and anguish of the struggling little wight.

As the strong man held him on his arm he fought bravely with his fat little fists and his sturdy little legs. But though in the unequal conflict the boy pitilessly pulled the powerful monster's grayish yellow imperial and bushy mustache, and the captain recognised the child from the Red Cock as one of the rascals who often shouted their nickname of "Turkey gobbler" after his tall figure, conspicuous from its height and costume, he strove with honest zeal to soothe the little one.

His deep voice, meanwhile, sounded so gentle and friendly, and his promise to give him a piece of spice cake which he was bringing home to Ursel to sweeten the disagreeable taste of her medicine produced so soothing an influence, that little Hans at last looked up at him trustingly and hopefully.

The cellar man's oldest son, who had violently assaulted the old gentleman to release his little brother, now stood penitently before him, and the landlord's boy related, in somewhat confused but perfectly intelligible words, the object of their coming, and in whose name they were bringing the roll and yonder little package to old Ursel.

The story sounded humble enough, but as soon as the captain had set little Hans on his feet and bent curiously over the forerunners of the dear friend, which had been placed on the little bench by the door, the three boys dashed down the stairs, and the shrill voice of the landlord's son shrieked from the lowest step one "Turkey gobbler" and "Pope's slave" after another.

"Satan's imps!" shouted the old man; but the outer door, which banged below him, showed that pursuit of the naughty mockers would result to his disadvantage. Then as, with an angry shake of the head, he drew back

from the banisters, he saw his daughter's playmate.

How dear the latter was to him, and how fully his aged heart had retained its capacity of feeling, were proved by the reception which he gave the returning knight. The injury just inflicted seemed to have been entirely forgotten. With tears in his eyes and a voice tremulous with deep emotion, he drew Wolf toward him, kissing first his head, which reached only to his lips, then his cheeks and brow. Then, with youthful vivacity, he expressed his pleasure in seeing him again, and, without permitting Wolf to speak, he repeatedly exclaimed:

"And my Wawerl, and Ursel in there! There'll be a jubilee!"

When Wolf had at last succeeded in returning his old friend's greeting and then expressed a wish, first of all, to clasp the faithful old maid-servant's hand, the old gentleman's beaming face clouded, and he said, sighing:

"What has not befallen us here since you went away, my dear Wolf! My path has been bordered with tombstones as poplars line the highway. But we will let the dead rest. Nothing can now disturb their peace. Old Ursel, too, is longing for the end of life, and we ought not to grudge it to her. Only I dread the last hour, and still more the long eternity which will follow it, for the good, patient woman entered the snare of the Satanic Protestant doctrine, and will not hear of taking the holy sacrament."

Wolf begged him to admit him at once, but Blomberg declared that, after the attack of apoplexy which she had recently had, one thing and another might happen if she should so unexpectedly see the man to whom her whole heart clung. Wolf would do better first to surprise the girl upstairs, who had no suspicion of his presence. He, Blomberg, must look after the old woman now. He would carry those things—he pointed to the parcels which the boys had left—into the young nobleman's old room. Ursel had always kept it ready for his return, as though she expected him daily. This suited Wolf, only he insisted upon having his own way about the articles he had brought, and took them upstairs with him.

He would gladly have greeted the faithful nurse of his childhood at once, yet it seemed like a fortunate dispensation that, through the old man's delay below, his wish to have his first meeting with the woman he loved without witnesses should be fulfilled.

CHAPTER IV.

In spite of the darkness and the zigzag turns of the stairs, Wolf was so familiar with every corner of the old house that he did not even need to grope his way with his hand.

He found the door of the Blomberg lodgings open. Putting down in the anteroom whatever might be in his way while greeting Barbara, and carrying the roll of velvet under his arm and a little box in his pocket, he entered the chamber which the old man called his artist workshop. It was in total darkness, but through the narrow open door in the middle of the left wall one could see what was going on in Barbara's little bow-windowed room. This was quite brightly lighted, for she was ironing and crimping ruffs for the neck, small lace handkerchiefs, and cuffs.

The light required for this purpose was diffused by a couple of tallow candles and also by the coals which heated the irons.

As she bent over the glow, it shone into her beautiful face and upon her magnificent fair hair, which rippled in luxuriant confusion about her round head or fell in thick waves to her hips. The red kerchief which had confined it was lying on the floor. Another had slipped from her neck and was hanging on the corner of the ironing board. Her stockings had lost their fastenings and slipped down to her feet, revealing limbs whose whiteness and beauty of form vied with the round arms which, after holding the iron near her hot cheeks, she moved with eager diligence.

The image of a vivacious, early developed child had impressed itself upon Wolf's mind. Now he stood before a maiden in the full bloom of her charms, whose superb symmetry of figure surprised and stirred him to the depths of his nature.

In spite of her immature youth, he had cherished her in his inmost heart. youth, she confronted him as an entirely new and doubly desirable creature. The quiet longing which had mastered him was transformed into passionate yearning, but he restrained it by exerting all the strength of will peculiar to him, for a voice within cried out that he was too insignificant for this marvellous maiden.

But when she dipped the tips of her fingers into the dainty little bowl, which he had once given her for a birthday present, sprinkled the linen with water, and meanwhile sang in fresh, clear notes the 'ut, re, me, fa, sol, la' of Perissone Cambio's singing lesson, new wonder seized him. What compass, what power, what melting sweetness the childish voice against whose shrillness his foster-father and he himself had zealously struggled now possessed! Neither songstress nor member of the boy choir whom he had heard in Italy or the Netherlands could boast of such bell-like purity of tone! He was a connoisseur, and yet it seemed as though

every tone which he heard had received the most thorough cultivation.

Who in Ratisbon could have been her teacher? To whom did she owe this masterly training? As if by a miracle, he knew not whether from looking or listening, he found a combination of notes which he had long been seeking for the motet on which he was working. When he had registered it, and she sang a few passages from it, what an exquisite delight awaited him! But what should he do now? Ought he to surprise her in this way? It would certainly have been proper to be first announced by her father; but he could not bring himself even to stir a foot. Beads of perspiration stood upon his brow. Panting for breath, he seized his handkerchief to wipe it, and in doing so the roll of velvet which he had held under his arm fell on the floor.

Wolf stooped, and, ere he had straightened himself again, he heard Barbara call in a questioning tone, "Father?" and saw her put down the iron and stand listening.

Then, willing or not, he was obliged to announce his presence, and, with a timid "It is I, Wolf," he approached the little bow-windowed room and hesitatingly crossed the threshold.

"Wolf, my tame Wolf," she repeated gaily, without being in the least concerned about the condition of her dress. "I knew that we should soon meet again, for, just think of it! I dreamed of you last night. I was entering a golden coach. It was very high, so I put my foot on your hand, and you lifted me in."

Then, without the least embarrassment, she held out her right hand, but slapped his fingers smartly when he passionately endeavoured to raise it to his lips.

Yet the blow was not unkindly meant, for even while he drew back she voluntarily clasped both his hands, scrutinized him intently from head to foot, and said calmly:

"Welcome to the old home, Sir Knight!" Then, laughing gaily, she added: "Why, such a thing is unprecedented! Not a feature, not a look is unlike what it used to be! And yet you've been roaming five years in foreign lands! Changes take place—only look at me!—changes take place more swiftly here in Ratisbon. How you stare at me! I thought so! Out with it! Hasn't the feather-head of those days become quite a charming young lady?"

Now Wolf would gladly have made as many flattering speeches as she could desire, but his tongue refused to obey him. The new meeting was too unlike his expectation. The sight of the self-conscious woman who, in her wonderful beauty, stood leaning with folded arms on the ironing-table stirred his heart and senses too strongly.

Standing motionless, he strove for words, while his eyes revealed plainly enough the passionate rapture which agitated his soul. Barbara perceived what was passing in his thoughts, and also noticed how her dress had become disarranged during her work.

Flushing slightly, she pursed up her lips as if to whistle, and with her head thrust forward she blew into the air in his direction. Then, shaking her finger at him, she hastily sat down on the chest beside the fireplace, wound the kerchief which had fallen off closer around her neck, and, without the least embarrassment, pulled up her stockings.

"What does it matter!" she cried with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "How often we two have waded together in water above our knees, like the storks! And yet such a thing turns the head of a youth who has returned from foreign lands a made man, and closes his bearded lips! Have you given me even a single honest word of welcome? That's the way with all of you! And you? If you stand there already like a dumb sign-post, how will it be when I thoroughly turn your head like all the rest with my singing?"

"I've heard you already!" he answered quickly; "magical, bewildering, magnificent! Who in the world wrought this miracle with your voice?"

"There we have it!" she cried, laughing merrily and clapping her hands. "To make you speak, one need only allude distantly to music. That, too, has remained unchanged, and I am glad, for I have much to ask you in relation to it. I can learn many things from you still. But what have you there in your hand? Is it anything pretty from Brabant?" This question flowed from her lips with coaxing tenderness, and she passed her soft hand swiftly over his cheek.

How happy it made him!

Hitherto he had been the receiver—nay, an unfair taker—but now he was to become the giver and she would be pleased with his present.

As if relieved from a nightmare, he now told her that he had gone from Rome, through the Papal Legate Contarini, whom he had accompanied to Italy as a secretary skilled in German and music—to the imperial court, where he now enjoyed the special favour of the Regent of the Netherlands, the widowed Queen of Hungary; that the royal lady, the sister of the Emperor Charles, had chosen him to be director of her lessons in singing, and also permitted him to write German letters for her; and what assistance worthy of all gratitude he had enjoyed through the director of the imperial musicians, Gombert, the composer and leader of the royal orchestra, and his colleague Appenzelder, who directed the Queen's boy choir.

At the mention of these names, Barbara listened intently. She had sung several of Gombert's compositions, and was familiar with one of

Appenzelder's works.

When she learned that both must have arrived in Ratisbon several hours before, she anxiously asked Wolf if he would venture to make her acquainted with these great masters.

Wolf assented with joyous eagerness, while Barbara's cheeks crimsoned with pleasure at so valuable a promise.

Yet this subject speedily came to a close, for while talking Wolf had ripped the linen cover in which the roll of velvet was sewed, and, as soon as he unfolded the rich wine-coloured material, Barbara forgot everything else, and burst into loud exclamations of pleasure and admiration. Then, when Wolf hastened out and with hurrying fingers opened the little package he had brought and gave her the costly fur which was to serve as trimming for the velvet jacket, she again laughed gleefully, and, ere Wolf was aware of it, she had thrown her arms around his neck and kissed him on both cheeks.

He submitted as if dazed, and did not even regain his senses sufficiently to profit by what she had granted him with such unexpected liberality. Nor did she allow him to speak as she loosed her arms from his neck, for, with a bewitching light in her large, blue eyes, fairly overflowing with grateful tenderness, she cried:

"You dear, dear, kind little Wolf! To think that you should have remembered me so generously! And how rich you must be! If I had become so before you, I should have given myself a dress exactly like this. Now it's mine, just as though it had dropped from the sky. Wine-coloured Flanders velvet, with a border of dark-brown marten fur! I'll parade in it like the Duchess of Bavaria or rich Frau Fugger. Holy Virgin! if that isn't becoming to my golden hair! Doesn't it just suit me, you little Wolf and great spendthrift? And when I wear it at the dance in the New Scale or sing in it at the Convivium musicum, my Woller cousins and the Thun girl will turn yellow with envy."

Wolf had only half listened to this outburst of delight, for he had reserved until the last his best offering—a sky-blue turquoise breastpin set with small diamonds. It brought him enthusiastic thanks, and Barbara even allowed him to fasten the magnificent ornament with his own fingers, which moved slowly and clumsily enough.

Then she hurried into her chamber to bring the hand-mirror, and when in an instant she returned and, at her bidding, he held the shining glass before her, she patted his cheeks with their thin, fair, pointed beard, and called him her faithful little Wolf, her clear, stupid pedant and Satan in person, who would fill her mind with vanity.

Finally, she laid the piece of velvet over the back of a chair, let it fall down to the floor, and threw the bands of fur upon it. Every graver

word, every attempt to tell her what he expected from her, the girl cut short with expressions of gratitude and pleasure until her father returned from the suffering Ursel.

Then, radiant with joy, she showed the old man her new treasures, and the father's admiration and expressions of gratitude were not far behind the daughter's.

It seemed as though Fate had blessed the modest rooms in Red Cock Street with its most precious treasures.

It might be either Wolf's return, the hopes for his daughter which were associated with it in the crippled old warrior's heart, or the unexpected costly gifts, to which Wolf had added for his old friend a Netherland drinking vessel in the form of a silver ship, which had moved the old gentleman so deeply, but at any rate he allowed himself to be tempted into an act of extravagance, and, in an outburst of good spirits which he had not felt for a long time, he promised Wolf to fetch from the cellar one of the jugs of wine which he kept there for his daughter's wedding.

"Over this liquid we will open our hearts freely to each other, my boy," he said. "The night is still long, and even at the Emperor's court there is nothing better to be tasted. My dead mother used to say that there are always more good things in a poor family which was once rich than in a rich one which was formerly poor."

CHAPTER V.

The captain limped out into the cellar, but Barbara was already standing behind the table again, moving the irons.

"When I am rich," she exclaimed, in reply to Wolf, who asked her to stop her work in this happy hour and share the delicious wine with him and her father, "I shall shun such maid-servant's business. But what else can be done? We have less money than we need to keep up our position, and that must be remedied. Besides, a neatly crimped ruff is necessary if a poor girl like me is to stand beside the others in the singing rehearsal early to-morrow morning. Poor folks are alike everywhere, and, so long as I can do no better—but luck will come to me, too, some day—this right hand must be my maid. Let it alone, or my iron will burn your fingers!"

This threat was very nearly fulfilled, for Wolf had caught her right hand to hold it firmly while he at last compelled her to hear that his future destiny depended upon her decision.

How much easier he had expected to find the wooing! Yet how could it

be otherwise? Every young man in Ratisbon was probably courting this peerless creature. No doubt she had already rebuffed many another as sharply as she had just prevented him from seizing her hand. If her manner had grown more independent, she had learned to defend herself cleverly.

He would first try to assail her heart with words, and they were at his disposal in black and white. He had placed in the little box with the breastpin a piece of paper on which he had given expression to his feelings in verse. Hitherto it had remained unnoticed and fluttered to the ground. Picking it up, he introduced his suit, after a brief explanation, by reading aloud the lines which he had composed in Brussels to accompany his gifts to her.

It was an easy task, for he had painted rather than written his poetic homage, with beautiful ornaments on the initial letters, and in the most careful red and black Gothic characters, which looked like print. So, with a vivacity of intonation which harmonized with the extravagance of the poetry, he began:

”Queen of my heart wert thou in days of old,
Beloved maid, in childhood’s garb so plain;
I bring thee velvet now, and silk and gold
Though I am but a poor and simple swain
That in robes worthy of thee may be seen
My sovereign, of all thy sex the queen.”

Barbara nodded pleasantly to him, saying: ”Very pretty. Perhaps you might arrange your little verse in a duo, but how you must have taxed your imagination, you poor fellow, to transform the flighty good-for-nothing whom you left five years ago into a brilliant queen!”

”Because, even at that time,” he ardently exclaimed. ”I had placed you on the throne of my heart, because the bud already promised—Yet no! In those days I could not suspect that it would unfold into so marvellous a rose. You stand before me now more glorious than I beheld you in the most radiant of all my dreams, and therefore the longing to possess you, which I could never relinquish, will make me appear almost insolently bold. But it must be risked, and if you will fulfil the most ardent desire of a faithful heart—”

”Gently, my little Wolf, gently,” she interposed soothingly. ”If I am right, you mounted our narrow stairs to seek a wife and, when my father returns, you will ask for my hand.”

”That I will,” the young knight declared with eager positiveness. ”Your ’Yes’ or ’No,’ Wawerl, is to me the decree of Fate, to which even the gods submit without opposition.”

”Indeed?” she answered, uttering the word slowly, with downcast eyes.

Then suddenly drawing herself to her full height, she added with a graver manner than he had ever seen her wear: "It is fortunate that I have learned the stories of the gods which are so popular in the Netherlands. If any one else should come to me with such pretences, I would scarcely believe that he had honest intentions. You are in earnest, Wolf, and wish to make me your wife. But 'Yes' and 'No' can not be spoken as quickly as you probably imagine. You were always a good, faithful fellow, and I am sincerely attached to you. But have I even the slightest knowledge of what you obtained abroad or what awaits you here?"

"Wawerl!" he interrupted reproachfully. "Would I as an honest man seek your hand if I had not made money enough to support a wife whose expectations were not too extravagant? You can not reasonably doubt that, and now, when the most sacred of bonds is in question, it ought—"

"It ought, you think, to satisfy me?" she interrupted with confident superiority. "But one of two things must follow this sacred bond—happiness or misery in the earthly life which is entered from the church steps. I am tired of the miserable starving and struggling, my dear Wolf. Marriage must at least rid me of these gloomy spectres. My father will not let you leave soon the good wine he allows himself and you to enjoy—you know that. Tell him how you are situated at the court, and what prospects, you have here in Ratisbon or elsewhere; for instance, I would gladly go to the magnificent Netherlands with my husband. Inform yourself better, too, of the amount of your inheritance. The old man will take me into his confidence early to-morrow morning. But I will confess this to you now: The most welcome husband to me would be a zealous and skilful disciple of music, and I know that wish will be fulfilled with you. If, perhaps, you are already what I call a successful man, we will see. But—I have learned that—no happiness will thrive on bread and water, and even a modest competence, as it is called, won't do for me."

"But Wawerl," he interrupted dejectedly, "what could be better than true, loyal love? Just hear what I was going to tell you, and have not yet reached."

But Barbara would not listen, cutting his explanation short with the words:

"All that is written as distinctly on the tender swain's face as if I had it before me in black letter, but unfortunately it has as little power to move me to reckless haste as the angry visage into which your affectionate one is now transformed. The Scripture teaches us to prove before we retain. Yet if, on this account, you take me for a woman whose heart and hand can be bought for gold, you are mistaken. Worthy Peter Schlumperger is constantly courting me. And I? I have asked him to wait, although he is perhaps the richest man in the city. I might have Bernard Crafft, too, at any time, but he, perhaps, is as much too young as Herr Peter is too old, yet, on the other hand, he owns the Golden

Cross, and, besides, has inherited a great deal of money and a flourishing business. I keep both at a distance, and I did the same—only more rigidly—last year when the Count Palatine von Simmern made me proposals which would have rendered me a rich woman, but only aroused my indignation. I dealt more indulgently with the Ratisbon men, but I certainly shall take neither of them, for they care more for the wine in the taproom than the most exquisite pleasures which music offers, and, besides, they are foes of our holy faith, and Herr Schlumperger is even one of those who most zealously favour the heretical innovations.”

Here she hesitated and her eyes met his with distrustful keenness as she asked in an altered tone:

”And you? Have not you returned to the false doctrines with which your boyish head was bewildered in the school of poetry?”

”I confided to you then,” he exclaimed, deeply hurt, ”the solemn vow I made to my poor mother ere she closed her eyes in death.”

”Then that obstacle is removed,” Barbara answered in a more gentle tone, ”but I will not take back even a single word of what I have said about other matters. I am not like the rest of the girls. My father—Holy Virgin!—how much too late he was born! Among the Crusaders this fearless hero, whom the pepper-bags here jeer at as a ’Turkey gobbler,’ would have been sure of every honour. How ill-suited he is for any mercantile business, on the other hand, he has unfortunately proved. Wherever he attempted anything, disappointment followed disappointment. To fight in Tunis against the crescent, he let our flourishing lumber trade go to ruin! And my mother! How young I was when her dead body was borne out of the house, yet I can still see the haughty woman—whose image I am said to be—in her trailing velvet robe, with plumes waving amid the curls arranged in a towering mass upon her head. She was dressed in that way when the men came to sell our house in the Kramgasse at auction. She must have been one of the women under whose management, as a matter of course, the household is neglected.”

”How can you talk so about your own mother?” Wolf interrupted in a somewhat reproachful tone.

”Because we are not here to flatter the dead or to speak falsely to each other, but to understand how matters are between us,” she answered gravely. ”How you are constituted is best known to yourself, but it seems to me that while far away you have formed a totally false opinion of me, whom you placed upon the throne of your heart, and I wish to correct it, that you may not plunge into misfortune like a deluded simpleton and drag me with you. Where, as in my case, so many things are different from what the good and humble would desire them to be, it is not very pleasant to open one’s whole heart to another, and there is no one else in the world for whom I would do it. Perhaps I shall not succeed at all, for often enough I am incomprehensible to myself.

I shall understand myself most speedily if I bring before my mind my father's and my mother's nature, and recall the ancient saying that young birds sing like the old ones. My father—I love him in spite of all his eccentricities and weaknesses. Dear me! he needs me so much, and would be miserable without me. Though he is a head taller than you, he has remained a child.”

”But a good, kind-hearted one!” Wolf interrupted with warm affection.

”Of course,” Barbara eagerly responded; ”and if I have inherited from him anything which is ill-suited to me, it is the fearless courage which does not beseech us women. We progress much farther if we hold back timidly. Therefore, often as it impels me to resistance, I yield unless it is too strong for me. Besides, but for your interruption, I should have said nothing about my father. What concerns us I inherited from my mother, and, as I mean kindly toward you, this very heritage compels me to warn you against marrying me if you are unable to support me so that I can make a good appearance among Ratisbon wives. Moreover, poor church mouse though I am, I sometimes give them one thing and another to guess, and I haven't far to travel to learn what envy is. In my present position, however, compassion is far more difficult to bear than ill-will. But I by no means keep out of the way on that account. I must be seen and heard if I am to be happy, and I shall probably succeed so long as my voice retains the melting tone which is now peculiar to it. Should anything destroy that, there will be a change. Then—I know this in advance—I shall tread in the footsteps of my mother, who had no means of satisfying her longing for admiration except her pretty face, her beautiful figure, and the finery which she stole from the poverty of her husband, and her only child. How you are staring at me again! But I can not forget that now; for, had it not been so, we should still be living in our own house as a distinguished family of knightly rank, and I should have no need to spend my best hours in secretly washing laces for others—yes, for others, Wolf—to gain a wretched sum of which even my father must be ignorant. You do not know how we are obliged to economize, and yet I can only praise the pride of my father, who induced me to return the gifts which the Council sends to the house by the town clerk when I sing in the Convivium musicum. But what a pleasure it is to show the bloated fellow the door when he pulls out the linen purse! True, many things must be sacrificed to do it, and how hard that often is can not be described. I would not bear it long. But, if I were your wife and you had only property enough for a modest competence, you would scarcely fare better, through my fault, than my poor father. That would surely be the result”—she raised her voice in passionate eagerness as she spoke:

”I know myself. As for the immediate future, I feel that the ever-increasing longing for better days and the rank which is my due will kill me if I do not satisfy it speedily. I shall never be content with any half-way position, and I fear you can not offer me more. Talk with my father, and think of it during the night. Were I in your place, I would

at once resign the wish to win a person like me, for if you really love me as ardently as it seems, you will receive in exchange only a lukewarm liking for your person and a warm interest in what you can accomplish; but in other respects, far worse than nothing—peril after peril. But if you will be reasonable and give up your suit, I shall not blame you a moment. How bewildered you still stare at me! But there comes father, and I must finish my work before the irons get cold.”

Wolf gazed after her speechlessly, while she withdrew behind the table as quietly as if they had been discussing the most commonplace things.