# FOTHERGILL JESSIE

## THE FIRST VIOLIN

Jessie Fothergill

# The First Violin

**Fothergill J.**

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# Содержание

# Jessie Fothergill
# The First Violin / A Novel

## CHAPTER I

### MISS HALLAM

"Wonderful weather for April!" Yes, it certainty was wonderful. I fully agreed with the sentiment expressed at different periods of the day by different members of my family; but I did not follow their example and seek enjoyment out-of-doors – pleasure in that balmy spring air. Trouble – the first trouble of my life – had laid her hand heavily upon me. The world felt disjointed and all upside-down; I very helpless and lonely in it. I had two sisters, I had a father and a mother; but none the less was I unable to share my grief with any one of them; nay, it had been an absolute relief to me when first one and then another of them had left the house, on business or pleasure intent, and I, after watching my father go down the garden-walk, and seeing the gate close after him, knew that, save for Jane, our domestic, who was caroling lustily to herself in the kitchen regions, I was alone in the house.

I was in the drawing-room. Once secure of solitude, I put down the sewing with which I had been pretending to employ myself, and went to the window – a pleasant, sunny bay. In that window stood a small work-table, with a flower-pot upon it containing a lilac primula. I remember it distinctly to this day, and I am likely to carry the recollection with me so long as I live. I leaned my elbows upon this table, and gazed across the fields, green with spring grass, tenderly lighted by an April sun, to where the river – the Skern – shone with a pleasant, homely, silvery glitter, twining through the smiling meadows till he bent round the solemn overhanging cliff crowned with mournful firs, which went by the name of the Rifted or Riven Scaur.

In some such delightful mead might the white-armed Nausicaa have tossed her cowslip balls among the other maids; perhaps by some such river might Persephone have paused to gather the daffodil – "the fateful flower beside the rill." Light clouds flitted across the sky, a waft of wind danced in at the open window, ruffling my hair mockingly, and bearing with it the deep sound of a church clock striking four.

As if the striking of the hour had been a signal for the breaking of a spell, the silence that had prevailed came to an end. Wheels came rolling along the road up to the door, which, however, was at the other side of the house. "A visitor for my father, no doubt," I thought indifferently; "and he has gone out to read the funeral service for a dead parishioner. How strange! I wonder how clergymen and doctors can ever get accustomed to the grim contrasts amid which they live!"

I suffered my thoughts to wander off in some such track as this, but they were all through dominated by a heavy sense of oppression – the threatening hand of a calamity which I feared was about to overtake me, and I had again forgotten the outside world.

The door was opened. Jane held it open and said nothing (a trifling habit of hers, which used to cause me much annoyance), and a tall woman walked slowly into the room. I rose and looked earnestly at her, surprised and somewhat nervous when I saw who she was – Miss Hallam, of Hallam Grange, our near neighbor, but a great stranger to us, nevertheless, so far, that is, as personal intercourse went.

"Your servant told me that every one was out except Miss May," she remarked, in a harsh, decided voice, as she looked not so much at me as toward me, and I perceived that there was something strange about her eyes.

"Yes; I am sorry," I began, doubtfully.

She had sallow, strongly marked, but proud and aristocratic features, and a manner with more than a tinge of imperiousness. Her face, her figure, her voice were familiar, yet strange to me – familiar because I had heard of her, and been in the habit of occasionally seeing her from my very earliest childhood; strange, because she was reserved and not given to seeing her neighbors' houses for purposes either of gossip or hospitality. I was aware that about once in two years she made a call at our house, the vicarage, whether as a mark of politeness to us, or to show that, though she never entered a church, she still chose to lend her countenance and approval to the Establishment, or whether merely out of old use and habit, I knew not. I only knew that she came, and that until now it had never fallen to my lot to be present upon any of those momentous occasions.

Feeling it a little hard that my coveted solitude should thus be interrupted, and not quite knowing what to say to her, I sat down and there was a moment's pause.

"Is your mother well?" she inquired.

"Yes, thank you, very well. She has gone with my sister to Darton."

"Your father?"

"He is well too, thank you. He has a funeral this afternoon."

"I think you have two sisters, have you not?"

"Yes; Adelaide and Stella."

"And which are you?"

"May; I am the second one."

All her questions were put in an almost severe tone, and not as if she took very much interest in me or mine. I felt my timidity increase, and yet – I liked her. Yes, I felt most distinctly that I liked her.

"May," she remarked, meditatively; "May Wedderburn. Are you aware that you have a very pretty north-country sounding name?"

"I have not thought about it."

"How old are you?"

"I am a little over seventeen."

"Ah! And what do you do all day?"

"Oh!" I began, doubtfully, "not much, I am afraid, that is useful or valuable."

"You are young enough yet. Don't begin to do things with a purpose for some time to come. Be happy while you can."

"I am not at all happy," I replied, not thinking of what I was saying, and then feeling that I could have bitten my tongue out with vexation. What could it possibly matter to Miss Hallam whether I were happy or not? She was asking me all these questions to pass the time, and in order to talk about something while she sat in our house.

"What makes you unhappy? Are your sisters disagreeable?"

"Oh, no!"

"Are your parents unkind?"

"Unkind!" I echoed, thinking what a very extraordinary woman she was and wondering what kind of experience hers could have been in the past.

"Then I can not imagine what cause for unhappiness you can have," she said, composedly.

I made no answer. I repented me of having uttered the words, and Miss Hallam went on:

"I should advise you to forget that there is such a thing as unhappiness. You will soon succeed."

"Yes – I will try," said I, in a low voice, as the cause of my unhappiness rose up, gaunt, grim and forbidding, with thin lips curved in a mocking smile, and glittering, snake-like eyes fixed upon my face. I shivered faintly; and she, though looking quickly at me, seemed to think she had said enough about my unhappiness. Her next question surprised me much.

"Are you fair in complexion?" she inquired.

"Yes," said I. "I am very fair – fairer than either of my sisters. But are you near-sighted?"

"Near sight*less*," she replied, with a bitter little laugh. "Cataract. I have so many joys in my life that Providence has thought fit to temper the sunshine of my lot. I am to content myself with the store of pleasant remembrances with which my mind is crowded, when I can see nothing outside. A delightful arrangement. It is what pious people call a 'cross,' or a 'visitation,' or something of that kind. I am not pious, and I call it the destruction of what little happiness I had."

"Oh, I am very, very sorry for you," I answered, feeling what I spoke, for it had always been my idea of misery to be blind – shut away from the sunlight upon the fields, from the hue of the river, from all that "lust of the eye" which meets us on every side.

"But are you quite alone?" I continued. "Have you no one to – "

I stopped; I was about to add, "to be kind to you – to take care of you?" but I suddenly remembered that it would not do for me to ask such questions.

"No, I live quite alone," said she, abruptly. "Did you think of offering to relieve my solitude?"

I felt myself burning with a hot blush all over my face as I stammered out:

"I am sure I never thought of anything so impertinent, but – but – if there was anything I could do – read or – "

I stopped again. Never very confident in myself, I felt a miserable sense that I might have been going too far. I wished most ardently that my mother or Adelaide had been there to take the weight of such a conversation from my shoulders. What was my surprise to hear Miss Hallam say, in a tone quite smooth, polished, and polite:

"Come and drink tea with me to-morrow afternoon – afternoon tea I mean. You can go away again as soon as you like. Will you?"

"Oh, thank you. Yes, I will."

"Very well. I shall expect you between four and five. Good-afternoon."

"Let me come with you to your carriage," said I, hastily. "Jane – our servant is so clumsy."

I preceded her with care, saw her seated in her carriage and driven toward the Grange, which was but a few hundred yards from our own gates, and then I returned to the house. And as I went in again, my companion-shadow glided once more to my side with soft, insinuating, irresistible importunity, and I knew that it would be my faithful attendant for – who could say how long?

# CHAPTER II

"Traversons gravement ce méchant mascarade qu'on appelle le monde"

The houses in Skernford – the houses of "the gentry," that is to say – lay almost all on one side an old-fashioned, sleepy-looking "green" toward which their entrances lay; but their real front, their pleasantest aspect, was on their other side, facing the river which ran below, and down to which their gardens sloped in terraces. Our house, the vicarage, lay nearest the church; Miss Hallam's house, the Grange, furthest from the church. Between these, larger and more imposing, in grounds beside which ours seemed to dwindle down to a few flower-beds, lay Deeplish Hall, whose owner, Sir Peter Le Marchant, had lately come to live there, at least for a time.

It was many years since Sir Peter Le Marchant, whose image at this time was fated to enter so largely and so much against my will into all my calculations, had lived at or even visited his estate at Skernford. He was a man of immense property, and report said that Deeplish Hall, which we innocent villagers looked upon as such an imposing mansion, was but one and not the grandest of his several country houses. All that I knew of his history – or rather, all that I had heard of it, whether truly or not, I was in no position to say – was but a vague and misty account; yet that little had given me a dislike to him before I ever met him.

Miss Hallam, our neighbor, who lived in such solitude and retirement, was credited with having a history – if report had only been able to fix upon what it was. She was popularly supposed to be of a grim and decidedly eccentric disposition. Eccentric she was, as I afterward found – as I thought when I first saw her. She seldom appeared either in church or upon any other public occasion, and was said to be the deadly enemy of Sir Peter Le Marchant and all pertaining to him. There was some old, far-back romance connected with it – a romance which I did not understand, for up to now I had never known either her or Sir Peter sufficiently to take any interest in the story, but the report ran that in days gone by – how far gone by, too, they must have been! – Miss Hallam, a young and handsome heiress, loved very devotedly her one sister, and that sister – so much was known as a fact – had become Lady Le Marchant: was not her monument in the church between the Deeplish Hall and the Hallam Grange pews? Was not the tale of her virtues and her years – seven-and-twenty only did she count of the latter – there recorded? That Barbara Hallam had been married to Sir Peter was matter of history: what was not matter of history, but of tradition which was believed in quite as firmly, was that the baronet had ill-treated his wife – in what way was not distinctly specified, but I have since learned that it was true; she was a gentle creature, and he made her life miserable unto her. She was idolized by her elder sister, who, burning with indignation at the treatment to which her darling had been subjected, had become, even in disposition, an altered woman. From a cheerful, open-hearted, generous, somewhat brusque young person, she had grown into a prematurely old, soured, revengeful woman. It was to her that the weak and injured sister had fled; it was in her arms that she had died. Since her sister's death, Miss Hallam had withdrawn entirely from society, cherishing a perpetual grudge against Sir Peter Le Marchant. Whether she had relations or none, friends or acquaintance outside the small village in which she lived, none knew. If so, they limited their intercourse with her to correspondence, for no visitor ever penetrated to her damp old Grange, nor had she ever been known to leave it with the purpose of making any journey abroad. If perfect silence and perfect retirement could hush the tongues of tradition and report, then Miss Hallam's story should have been forgotten. But it was not forgotten. Such things never do become forgotten.

It was only since Sir Peter had appeared suddenly some six weeks ago at Deeplish Hall, that these dry bones of tradition had for me quickened into something like life, and had acquired a kind of interest for me.

Our father, as vicar of the parish, had naturally called upon Sir Peter, and as naturally invited him to his house. His visits had begun by his coming to lunch one day, and we had speculated about him a little in advance, half jestingly, raking up old stories, and attributing to him various evil qualities of a hard and loveless old age. But after he had gone, the verdict of Stella and myself was, "Much worse than we expected." He was different from what we had expected. Perhaps that annoyed us. Instead of being able to laugh at him, we found something oppressive, chilling, to me frightful, in the cold, sneering smile which seemed perpetually hovering about his thin lips – in the fixed, snaky glitter of his still, intent gray eyes. His face was pale, his manners were polished, but to meet his eye was a thing I hated, and the touch of his hand made me shudder. While speaking in the politest possible manner, he had eyed over Adelaide and me in a manner which I do not think either of us had ever experienced before. I hated him from the moment in which I saw him looking at me with expression of approval. To be approved by Sir Peter Le Marchant, could fate devise anything more horrible? Yes, I knew now that it could; one might have to submit to the approval, to live in the approval. I had expressed my opinion on the subject with freedom to Adelaide, who to my surprise had not agreed with me, and had told me coldly that I had no business to speak disrespectfully of my father's visitors. I was silenced, but unhappy. From the first moment of seeing Sir Peter, I had felt an uncomfortable, uneasy feeling, which, had I been sentimental, I might have called a presentiment, but I was not sentimental. I was a healthy young girl of seventeen, believing in true love, and goodness, and gentleness very earnestly; "fancy free," having read few novels, and heard no gossip – a very baby in many respects. Our home might be a quiet one, a poor one, a dull one – our circle of acquaintance small, our distractions of the most limited description imaginable, but at least we knew no evil, and – I speak for Stella and myself – thought none. Our father and mother were persons with nothing whatever remarkable about them. Both had been handsome. My mother was pretty, my father good-looking yet. I loved them both dearly. It had never entered my head to do otherwise than love them, but the love which made the star and the poetry of my quiet and unromantic life was that I bore to Adelaide, my eldest sister. I believed in her devotedly, and accepted her judgment, given in her own peculiar proud, decided way, upon every topic on which she chose to express it. She was one-and-twenty, and I used to think I could lay down my life for her.

It was consequently a shock to me to hear her speak in praise – yes, in praise of Sir Peter Le Marchant. My first impulse was to distrust my own judgment, but no; I could not long do so. He was repulsive; he was stealthy, hard, cruel, in appearance. I could not account for Adelaide's perversity in liking him, and passed puzzled days and racked my brain in conjecture as to why when Sir Peter came Adelaide should be always at home, always neat and fresh – not like me. Why was Adelaide, who found it too much trouble to join Stella and me in our homely concerts, always ready to indulge Sir Peter's taste for music, to entertain him with conversation? – and she *could* talk. She was unlike me in that respect. I never had a brilliant gift of conversation. She was witty about the things she did know, and never committed the fatal mistake of pretending to be up in the things she did not know. These gifts of mind, these social powers, were always ready for the edification of Sir Peter. By degrees the truth forced itself upon me. Some one said – I overheard it – that "that handsome Miss Wedderburn was undoubtedly setting her cap at Sir Peter Le Marchant." Never shall I forget the fury which at first possessed me, the conviction which gradually stole over me that it was true. My sister Adelaide, beautiful, proud, clever – and, I had always thought, good, – had distinctly in view the purpose of becoming Lady Le Marchant. I shed countless tears over the miserable discovery, and dared not speak to her of it. But that was not the worst. My horizon darkened. One horrible day I discovered that it was I, and not Adelaide, who had attracted Sir Peter's attentions. It was not a scene, not a set declaration. It was a word in that smooth voice, a glance from that hated and chilling eye, which suddenly aroused me to the truth.

Shuddering, dismayed, I locked the matter up within my own breast, and wished with a longing that sometimes made me quite wretched that I could quit Skernford, my home, my life, which had lost

zest for me, and was become a burden to me. The knowledge that Sir Peter admired me absolutely degraded me in my own eyes. I felt as if I could not hold up my head. I had spoken to no one of what had passed within me, and I trusted it had not been noticed; but all my joy was gone. It was as if I stood helpless while a noisome reptile coiled its folds around me.

To-day, after Miss Hallam's departure, I dropped into my now chronic state of listlessness and sadness. They all came back; my father from the church; my mother and Adelaide from Darton, whither they had been on a shopping expedition; Stella from a stroll by the river. We had tea, and they dispersed quite cheerfully to their various occupations. I, seeing the gloaming gently and dim falling over the earth, walked out of the house into the garden, and took my way toward the river. I passed an arbor in which Stella and I had loved to sit and watch the stream, and talk and read Miss Austen's novels. Stella was there now, with a well-thumbed copy of "Pride and Prejudice" in her hand.

"Come and sit down, May," she apostrophized me. "Do listen to this about Bingley and Wickham."

"No, thank you," said I, abstractedly, and feeling that Stella was not the person to whom I could confide my woe. Indeed, on scanning mentally the list of my acquaintance, I found that there was not one in whom I could confide. It gave me a strange sense of loneliness and aloofness, and hardened me more than the reading of a hundred satires on the meannesses of society.

I went along the terrace by the river-side, and looked up to the left – traces of Sir Peter again. There was the terrace of Deeplish Hall, which stood on a height just above a bend in the river. It was a fine old place. The sheen of the glass houses caught the rays of the sun and glanced in them. It looked rich, old, and peaceful. I had been many a time through its gardens, and thought them beautiful, and wished they belonged to me. Now I felt that they lay in a manner at my feet, and my strongest feeling respecting them was an earnest wish that I might never see them again.

Thus agreeably meditating, I insensibly left our own garden and wandered on in the now quickly falling twilight into a narrow path leading across a sort of No-Man's-Land into the demesne of Sir Peter Le Marchant. In my trouble I scarcely remarked where I was going, and with my eyes cast upon the ground was wishing that I could feel again as I once had felt, when and was sadly wondering what I could do to escape from the net in which I felt myself caught, when a shadow darkened the twilight in which I stood, and looking up I saw Sir Peter, and heard these words:

**"I nothing had, and yet enough;"**

"Good-evening, Miss Wedderburn. Are you enjoying a little stroll?"

By, as it seemed to me, some strange miracle all my inward fears and tremblings vanished. I did not feel afraid of Sir Peter in the least. I felt that here was a crisis. This meeting would show me whether my fears had been groundless, and my own vanity and self-consciousness of unparalleled proportions, or whether I had judged truly, and had good reason for my qualms and anticipations.

It came. The alarm had not been a false one. Sir Peter, after conversing with me for a short time, did, in clear and unmistakable terms, inform me that he loved me, and asked me to marry him.

"I thank you," said I, mastering my impulse to cover my face with my hands, and run shuddering away from him. "I thank you for the honor you offer me, and beg to decline it."

He looked surprised, and still continued to urge me in a manner which roused a deep inner feeling of indignation within me, for it seemed to say that he understood me to be overwhelmed with the honor he proposed to confer upon me, and humored my timidity about accepting it. There was no doubt in his manner; not the shadow of a suspicion that I could be in earnest. There was something that turned my heart cold within me – a cool, sneering tone, which not all his professions of affection could disguise. Since that time I have heard Sir Peter explicitly state his conception of the sphere of woman in the world; it was not an exalted one. He could not even now quite conceal that while he told me he wished to make me his wife and the partner of his heart and possessions, yet he knew

that such professions were but words – that he did not sue for my love (poor Sir Peter! I doubt if ever in his long life he was blessed with even a momentary glimpse of the divine countenance of pure Love), but offered to buy my youth, and such poor beauty as I might have, with his money and his other worldly advantages.

Sir Peter was a blank, utter skeptic with regard to the worth of woman. He did not believe in their virtue nor their self-respect; he believed them to be clever actresses, and, taken all in all, the best kind of amusement to be had for money. The kind of opinion was then new to me; the effect of it upon my mind such as might be expected. I was seventeen, and an ardent believer in all things pure and of good report.

Nevertheless, I remained composed, sedate, even courteous to the last – till I had fairly made Sir Peter understand that no earthly power should induce me to marry him; till I had let him see that I fully comprehended the advantages of the position he offered me, and declined them.

"Miss Wedderburn," said he, at last – and his voice was as unruffled as my own; had it been more angry I should have feared it less – "do you fear opposition? I do not think your parents would refuse their consent to our union."

I closed my eyes for a moment, and a hand seemed to tighten about my heart. Then I said:

"I speak without reference to my parents. In such a matter I judge for myself."

"Always the same answer?"

"Always the same, Sir Peter."

"It would be most ungentlemanly to press the subject any further." His eyes were fixed upon me with the same cold, snake-like smile. "I will not be guilty of such a solecism. Your family affections, my dear young lady, are strong, I should suppose. Which – whom do you love best?"

Surprised at the blunt straightforwardness of the question, as coming from him, I replied thoughtlessly, "Oh, my sister Adelaide."

"Indeed! I should imagine she was in every way worthy the esteem of so disinterested a person as yourself. A different disposition, though – quite. Will you allow me to touch your hand before I retire?"

Trembling with uneasy forebodings roused by his continual sneering smile, and the peculiar evil light in his eyes, I yet went through with my duty to the end. He took the hand I extended, and raised it to his lips with a low bow.

"Good-evening, Miss Wedderburn."

Faintly returning his valediction, I saw him go away, and then in a dream, a maze, a bewilderment, I too turned slowly away and walked to the house again. I felt, I knew I had behaved well and discreetly, but I had no confidence whatever that the matter was at an end.

# CHAPTER III

"Lucifer, Star of the Morning! How art thou fallen!"

I found myself, without having met any one of my family, in my own room, in the semi-darkness, seated on a chair by my bedside, unnerved, faint, miserable with a misery such as I had never felt before. The window was open, and there came up a faint scent of sweetbrier and wall-flowers in soft, balmy gusts, driven into the room by the April night wind. There rose a moon and flooded the earth with radiance. Then came a sound of footsteps; the door of the next room, that belonging to Adelaide, was opened. I heard her come in, strike a match, and light her candle; the click of the catch as the blind rolled down. There was a door between her room and mine, and presently she passed it, and bearing a candle in her hand, stood in my presence. My sister was very beautiful, very proud. She was cleverer, stronger, more decided than I, or rather, while she had those qualities very strongly developed, I was almost without them. She always held her head up, and had one of those majestic figures which require no back-boards to teach them uprightness, no master of deportment to instill grace into their movements. Her toilet and mine were not, as may be supposed, of very rich materials or varied character; but while my things always looked as bad of their kind as they could – fitted badly, sat badly, were creased and crumpled – hers always had a look of freshness; she wore the merest old black merino as if it were velvet, and a muslin frill like a point-lace collar. There are such people in the world. I have always admired them, envied them, wondered at them from afar; it has never been my fate in the smallest degree to approach or emulate them.

Her pale face, with its perfect outlines, was just illumined by the candle she held, and the light also caught the crown of massive plaits which she wore around her head. She set the candle down. I sat still and looked at her.

"You are there, May," she remarked.

"Yes," was my subdued response.

"Where have you been all evening?"

"It does not matter to any one."

"Indeed it does. You were talking to Sir Peter Le Marchant. I saw you meet him from my bedroom window."

"Did you?"

"Did he propose to you?" she inquired, with a composure which seemed to me frightful. "Worldly," I thought, was a weak word to apply to her, and I was suffering acutely.

"He did."

"Well, I suppose it would be a little difficult to accept him."

"I did not accept him."

"What?" she inquired, as if she had not quite caught what I said.

"I refused him," said I, slightly raising my voice.

"What are you telling me?"

"The truth."

"Sir Peter has fif – "

"Don't mention Sir Peter to me again," said I, nervously, and feeling as if my heart would break. I had never quarreled with Adelaide before. No reconciliation afterward could ever make up for the anguish which I was going through now.

"Just listen to me," she said, bending over me, her lips drawn together. "I ought to have spoken to you before. I don't know whether you have ever given any thought to our position and circumstances. If not, it would be as well that you should do so now. Papa is fifty-five years old, and has three hundred a year. In the course of time he will die, and as his life is not insured, and he has regularly spent

every penny of his income – naturally it would have been strange if he hadn't – what is to become of us when he is dead?"

"We can work."

"Work!" said she, with inexpressible scorn. "Work! Pray what can we do in the way of work? What kind of education have we had? The village school-mistress could make us look very small in the matter of geography and history. We have not been trained to work, and, let me tell you, May, unskilled labor does not pay in these days."

"I am sure you can do anything, Adelaide, and I will teach singing. I can sing."

"Pooh! Do you suppose that because you can take C in alt. you are competent to teach singing? You don't know how to sing yourself yet. Your face is your fortune. So is mine my fortune. So is Stella's her fortune. You have enjoyed yourself all your life; you have had seventeen years of play and amusement, and now you behave like a baby. You refuse to endure a little discomfort, as the price of placing yourself and your family forever out of the reach of trouble and trial. Why, if you were Sir Peter's wife, you could do what you liked with him. I don't say anything about myself; but oh! May, I am ashamed of you, I am ashamed of you! I thought you had more in you. Is it possible that you are nothing but a romp – nothing but a vulgar tomboy? Good Heaven! If the chance had been mine!"

"What would you have done?" I whispered, subdued for the moment, but obstinate in my heart as ever.

"I am nobody now; no one knows me. But if I had had the chance that you have had to-night, in another year I would have been known and envied by half the women in England. Bah! Circumstances are too disgusting, too unkind!"

"Oh! Adelaide, nothing could have made up for being tied to that man," said I, in a small voice; "and I am not ambitious."

"Ambitious! You are selfish – downright, grossly, inordinately selfish. Do you suppose no one else ever had to do what they did not like? Why did you not stop to think instead of rushing away from the thing like some unreasoning animal?"

"Adelaide! Sir Peter! To marry him?" I implored in tears. "How could I? I should die of shame at the very thought. Who could help seeing that I had sold myself to him?"

"And who would think any the worse of you? And what if they did? With fifteen thousand a year you may defy public opinion."

"Oh, don't! don't!" I cried, covering my face with my hands. "Adelaide, you will break my heart!"

Burying my face in the bed-quilt, I sobbed irrepressibly. Adelaide's apparent unconsciousness of, or callousness to, the stabs she was giving me, and the anguish they caused me, almost distracted me.

She loosed my arm, remarking, with bitter vexation:

"I feel as if I could shake you!"

She left the room. I was left to my meditations. My head – my heart too – ached distractingly; my arm was sore where Adelaide had grasped it; I felt as if she had taken my mind by the shoulders and shaken it roughly. I fastened both doors of my room, resolving that neither she nor any one else should penetrate to my presence again that night.

What was I to do? Where to turn? I began now to realize that the *Res dom*, which had always seemed to me so abundant for all occasions, were really *Res Angusta*, and that circumstances might occur in which they would be miserably inadequate.

# CHAPTER IV

"Zu Rathe gehen, und vom Rath zur That."
*Briefe Beethoven's.*

There was surely not much in Miss Hallam to encourage confidences; yet within half an hour of the time of entering her house I had told her all that oppressed my heart, and had gained a feeling of greater security than I had yet felt. I was sure that she would befriend me. True, she did not say so. When I told her about Sir Peter Le Marchant's proposal to me, about Adelaide's behavior; when, in halting and stammering tones, and interrupted by tears, I confessed that I had not spoken to my father or mother upon the subject, and that I was not quite sure of their approval of what I had done, she even laughed a little, but not in what could be called an amused manner. When I had finished my tale, she said:

"If I understand you, the case stands thus: You have refused Sir Peter Le Marchant, but you do not feel at all sure that he will not propose to you again. Is it not so?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"And you dread and shrink from the idea of a repetition of this business?"

"I feel as if it would kill me."

"It would not kill you. People are not so easily killed as all that; but it is highly unfit that you should be subjected to a recurrence of it. I will think about it. Will you have the goodness to read me a page of this book?"

Much surprised at this very abrupt change of the subject, but not daring to make any observation upon it, I took the book – the current number of a magazine – and read a page to her.

"That will do," said she. "Now, will you read this letter, also aloud?"

She put a letter into my hand, and I read:

"Dear Madame, – In answer to your letter of last week, I write to say that I could find the rooms you require, and that by me you will have many good agreements which would make your stay in Germany pleasanter. My house is a large one in the Alléestrasse. Dr. Mittendorf, the oculist, lives not far from here, and the Städtische Augenklinik – that is, the eye hospital – is quite near. The rooms you would have are upstairs – suite of salon and two bedrooms, with room for your maid in another part of the house. I have other boarders here at the time, but you would do as you pleased about mixing with them.

"With all highest esteem,"Your devoted,"'Clara Steinmann.'"

"You don't understand it all, I suppose?" said she, when I had finished.

"No."

"That lady writes from Elberthal. You have heard of Elberthal on the Rhine, I presume?"

"Oh, yes! A large town. There used to be a fine picture-gallery there; but in the war between the – "

"There, thank you! I studied Guy's geography myself in my youth. I see you know the place I mean. There is an eye hospital there, and a celebrated oculist – Mittendorf. I am going there. I don't suppose it will be of the least use; but I am going. Drowning men catch at straws. Well, what else can you do? You don't read badly."

"I can sing – not very well, but I can sing."

"You can sing," said she, reflectively. "Just go to the piano and let me hear a specimen. I was once a judge in these matters."

I opened the piano and sung, as well as I could, an English version of "Die Lotus-blume."

My performance was greeted with silence, which Miss Hallam at length broke, remarking:

"I suppose you have not had much training?"

"Scarcely any."

"Humph! Well, it is to be had, even if not in Skernford. Would you like some lessons?"

"I should like a good many things that I am not likely ever to have."

"At Elberthal there are all kinds of advantages with regard to those things – music and singing, and so on. Will you come there with me as my companion?"

I heard, but did not fairly understand. My head was in a whirl. Go to Germany with Miss Hallam; leave Skernford, Sir Peter, all that had grown so weary to me; see new places, live with new people; learn something! No, I did not grasp it in the least. I made no reply, but sat breathlessly staring.

"But I shall expect you to make yourself useful to me in many ways," proceeded Miss Hallam.

At this touch of reality I began to waken up again.

"Oh, Miss Hallam, is it really true? Do you think they will let me go?"

"You haven't answered me yet."

"About being useful? I would do anything you like – anything in the world."

"Do not suppose your life will be all roses, or you will be woefully disappointed. I do not go out at all; my health is bad – so is my temper very often. I am what people who never had any trouble are fond of calling peculiar. Still, if you are in earnest, and not merely sentimentalizing, you will take your courage in your hands and come with me."

"Miss Hallam," said I, with tragic earnestness, as I took her hand, "I will come. I see you half mistrust me; but if I had to go to Siberia to get out of Sir Peter's way, I would go gladly and stay there. I hope I shall not be very clumsy. They say at home that I am, very, but I will do my best."

"They call you clumsy at home, do they?"

"Yes. My sisters are so much cleverer than I, and can do everything so much better than I can. I am rather stupid, I know."

"Very well, if you like to call yourself so, do. It is decided that you come with me. I will see your father about it to-morrow. I always get my own way when I wish it. I leave in about a week."

I sat with clasped hands, my heart so full that I could not speak. Sadness and gladness struggled hard within me. The idea of getting away from Skernford was almost too delightful; the remembrance of Adelaide made my heart ache.

# CHAPTER V

"Ade nun ihr Berge, ihr väterlich Haus!
Es treibt in die Ferne mich mächtig hinans."

*Volkslied.*

Consent was given. Sir Peter was not mentioned to me by my parents, or by Adelaide. The days of that week flew rapidly by.

I was almost afraid to mention my prospects to Adelaide. I feared she would resent my good fortune in going abroad, and that her anger at having spoiled those other prospects would remain unabated. Moreover, a deeper feeling separated me from her now – the knowledge that there lay a great gulf of feeling, sentiment, opinion between us, which nothing could bridge over or do away with. Outwardly we might be amiable and friendly to each other, but confidence, union, was fled over. Once again in the future, I was destined, when our respective principles had been tried to the utmost, to have her confidence – to see her heart of hearts; but for the present we were effectually divided. I had mortally offended her, and it was not a case in which I could with decency even humble myself to her. Once, however, she mentioned the future.

When the day of our departure had been fixed, and was only two days distant; when I was breathless with hurried repairing of old clothes, and the equally hurried laying in of a small stock of new ones; while I was contemplating with awe the prospect of a first journey to London, to Ostend, to Brussels, she said to me, as I sat feverishly hemming a frill:

"So you are going to Germany?"

"Yes, Adelaide."

"What are you going to do there?"

"My duty, I hope."

"Charity, my dear, and duty too, begins at home. I should say you were going away leaving your duty undone."

I was silent, and she went on:

"I suppose you wish to go abroad, May?"

"You know I have always wished to go."

"So do I."

"I wish you were going too," said I, timidly.

"Thank you. My views upon the subject are quite different. When I go abroad I shall go in a different capacity to that you are going to assume. I will let you know all about it in due time."

"Very well," said I, almost inaudibly, having a vague idea as to what she meant, but determined not to speak about it.

The following day the curtain rose upon the first act of the play – call it drama, comedy, tragedy, what you will – which was to be played in my absence. I had been up the village to the post-office, and was returning, when I saw advancing toward me two figures which I had cause to remember – my sister's queenly height, her white hat over her eyes, and her sunshade in her hand, and beside her the pale face, with its ragged eyebrows and hateful sneer, of Sir Peter Le Marchant.

Adelaide, not at all embarrassed by his company, was smiling slightly, and her eyes with drooped lids glanced downward toward the baronet. I shrunk into a cottage to avoid them as they came past, and waited. Adelaide was saying:

"Proud – yes, I am proud, I suppose. Too proud, at least, to – "

There! Out of hearing. They had passed. I hurried out of the cottage, and home.

The next day I met Miss Hallam and her maid (we three traveled alone) at the station, and soon we were whirling smoothly along our southward way – to York first, then to London, and so out into the world, thought I.

# CHAPTER VI

"Ein Held aus der Fremde, gar kühn."

We had left Brussels and Belgium behind, had departed from the regions of *Chemins de fer*, and entered those of *Eisenbahnen*. We were at Cologne, where we had to change and wait half an hour before we could go on to Elberthal. We sat in the wartesaal, and I had committed to my charge two bundles, with strict injunctions not to lose them.

Then the doors were opened, and the people made a mad rush to a train standing somewhere in the dim distance. Merrick, Miss Hallam's maid, had to give her whole attention to her mistress. I followed close in their wake, until, as we had almost come to the train, I cast my eyes downward and perceived that there was missing from my arm a gray shawl of Miss Hallam's, which had been committed to my charge, and upon which she set a fidgety kind of value, as being particularly warm or particularly soft.

Dismayed, I neither hesitated nor thought, but turned, fought my way through the throng of people to the waiting-room again, hunted every corner, but in vain, for the shawl. Either it was completely lost, or Merrick had, without my observing it, taken it under her own protection. It was not in the waiting-room. Giving up the search I hurried to the door: it was fast. No one more, it would seem, was to be let out that way; I must go round, through the passages into the open hall of the station, and so on to the platform again. More easily said than done. Always, from my earliest youth up, I have had a peculiar fancy for losing myself. On this eventful day I lost myself. I ran through the passages, came into the great open place surrounded on every side by doors leading to the platforms, offices, or booking offices. Glancing hastily round, I selected the door which appeared to my imperfectly developed "locality" to promise egress upon the platform, pushed it open, and going along a covered passage, and through another door, found myself, after the loss of a good five minutes, in a lofty deserted wing of the station, gazing wildly at an empty platform, and feverishly scanning all the long row of doors to my right, in a mad effort to guess which would take me from this delightful *terra incognito* back to my friends.

*Gepäck-Expedition*, I read, and thought it did not sound promising. Telegraphs bureau. Impossible! *Ausgang.* There was the magic word, and I, not knowing it, stared at it and was none the wiser for its friendly sign. I heard a hollow whistle in the distance. No doubt it was the Elberthal train going away, and my heart sunk deep, deep within my breast. I knew no German word. All I could say was "Elberthal;" and my nearest approach to "first-class" was to point to the carriage doors and say "Ein," which might or might not be understood – probably not, when the universal stupidity of the German railway official is taken into consideration, together with his chronic state of gratuitous suspicion that a bad motive lurks under every question which is put to him. I heard a subdued bustle coming from the right hand in the distance, and I ran hastily to the other end of the great empty place, seeing, as I thought, an opening. Vain delusion! Deceptive dream of the fancy! There was a glass window through which I looked and saw a street thronged with passengers and vehicles. I hurried back again to find my way to the entrance of the station and there try another door, when I heard a bell ring violently – a loud groaning and shrieking, and then the sound, as it were, of a train departing. A porter – at least a person in uniform, appeared in a door-way. How I rushed up to him! How I seized his arm, and dropping my rugs gesticulated excitedly and panted forth the word "Elberthal!"

"Elberthal?" said he in a guttural bass; "*Wollt ihr nach Elberthal, fräuleinchen!*"

There was an impudent twinkle in his eye, as it were impertinence trying to get the better of beer, and I reiterated "Elberthal," growing very red, and cursing all foreign speeches by my gods – a process often employed, I believe, by cleverer persons than I, with reference to things they do not understand.

"*Schon fort, Fräulein*," he continued, with a grin.

"But where – what – Elberthal!"

He was about to make some further reply, when, turning, he seemed to see some one, and assumed a more respectful demeanor. I too turned, and saw at some little distance from us a gentleman sauntering along, who, though coming toward us, did not seem to observe us. Would he understand me if I spoke to him? Desperate as I was, I felt some timidity about trying it. Never had I felt so miserable, so helpless, so utterly ashamed as I did then. My lips trembled as the new-comer drew nearer, and the porter, taking the opportunity of quitting a scene which began to bore him, slipped away. I was left alone on the platform, nervously snatching short glances at the person slowly, very slowly approaching me. He did not look up as if he beheld me or in any way remarked my presence. His eyes were bent toward the ground: his fingers drummed a tune upon his chest. As he approached, I heard that he was humming something. I even heard the air; it has been impressed upon my memory firmly enough since, though I did not know it then – the air of the march from Raff's Fifth Symphonie, the "Lenore." I heard the tune softly hummed in a mellow voice, as with face burning and glowing, I placed myself before him. Then he looked suddenly up as if startled, fixed upon me a pair of eyes which gave me a kind of shock; so keen, so commanding were they, with a kind of tameless freedom in their glance such as I had never seen before.

Arrested (no doubt by my wild and excited appearance), he stood still and looked at me, and as he looked a slight smile began to dawn upon his lips. Not an Englishman. I should have known him for an outlander anywhere. I remarked no details of his appearance; only that he was tall and had, as it seemed to me, a commanding bearing. I stood hesitating and blushing. (To this very day the blood comes to my face as I think of my agony of blushes in that immemorial moment.) I saw a handsome – a very handsome face, quite different from any I had ever seen before: the startling eyes before spoken of, and which surveyed me with a look so keen, so cool, and so bright, which seemed to penetrate through and through me; while a slight smile curled the light mustache upward – a general aspect which gave me the impression that he was not only a personage, but a very great personage – with a flavor of something else permeating it all which puzzled me and made me feel embarrassed as to how to address him. While I stood inanely trying to gather my senses together, he took off the little cloth cap he wore, and bowing, asked:

"*Mein Fräulein*, in what can I assist you?"

His English was excellent – his bow like nothing I had seen before. Convinced that I had met a genuine, thorough fine gentleman (in which I was right for once in my life), I began:

"I have lost my way," and my voice trembled in spite of all my efforts to steady it. "In a crowd I lost my friends, and – I was going to Elberthal, and I turned the wrong way – and – "

"Have come to destruction, *nicht wahr*?" He looked at his watch, raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders. "The Elberthal train is already away."

"Gone!" I dropped my rugs and began a tremulous search for my pocket-handkerchief. "What shall I do?"

"There is another – let me see – in one hour – two —*will 'mal nachsehen.* Will you come with me, Fräulein, and we will see about the trains."

"If you would show me the platform," said I. "Perhaps some of them may still be there. Oh, what will they think of me?"

"We must go to the wartesaal," said he. "Then you can look out and see if you see any of them."

I had no choice but to comply.

My benefactor picked up my two bundles, and, in spite of my expostulations, carried them with him. He took me through the door inscribed *Ausgang*, and the whole thing seemed so extremely simple now, that my astonishment as to how I could have lost myself increased every minute. He went before me to the waiting-room, put my bundles upon one of the sofas, and we went to the door. The platform was almost as empty as the one we had left.

I looked round, and though it was only what I had expected, yet my face fell when I saw how utterly and entirely my party had disappeared.

"You see them not?" he inquired.

"No – they are gone," said I, turning away from the window and choking down a sob, not very effectually. Turning my damp and sorrowful eyes to my companion, I found that he was still smiling to himself as if quietly amused at the whole adventure.

"I will go and see at what time the trains go to Elberthal. Suppose you sit down – yes?"

Passively obeying, I sat down and turned my situation over in my mind, in which kind of agreeable mental legerdemain I was still occupied when he returned.

"It is now half past three, and there is a train to Elberthal at seven."

"Seven!"

"Seven: a very pleasant time to travel, *nicht wahr*? Then it is still quite light."

"So long! Three hours and a half," I murmured, dejectedly, and bit my lips and hung my head. Then I said, "I am sure I am much obliged to you. If I might ask you a favor?"

"*Bitte, mein Fräulein!*"

"If you could show me exactly where the train starts from, and – could I get a ticket now, do you think?"

"I'm afraid not, so long before," he answered, twisting his mustache, as I could not help seeing, to hide a smile.

"Then," said I, with stoic calmness, "I shall never get to Elberthal – never, for I don't know a word of German, not one," I sat more firmly down upon the sofa, and tried to contemplate the future with fortitude.

"I can tell you what to say," said he, removing with great deliberation the bundles which divided us, and sitting down beside me. He leaned his chin upon his hand and looked at me, ever, as it seemed to me, with amusement tempered with kindness, and I felt like a very little girl indeed.

"You are exceedingly good," I replied, "but it would be of no use. I am so frightened of those men in blue coats and big mustaches. I should not be able to say a word to any of them."

"German is sometimes not unlike English."

"It is like nothing to me, except a great mystery."

"*Billet*, is 'ticket,'" said he persuasively.

"Oh, is it?" said I, with a gleam of hope. "Perhaps I could remember that. *Billet*," I repeated reflectively.

"Bil*let*," he amended; "not *Bil*lit."

"Bill-yet – Bill-*yet*," I repeated.

"And 'to Elberthal' may be said in one word, 'Elberthal.' '*Ein Billet – Elberthal – erster Classe.*'"

"*Ein Bill-yet*," I repeated, automatically, for my thoughts were dwelling more upon the charming quandary in which I found myself than upon his half-good-natured half-mocking instructions: "*Ein Bill-yet, firste – erste*– it is of no use. I can't say it. But" – here a brilliant idea struck me – "if you could write it out for me on a paper, and then I could give it to the man: he would surely know what it meant."

"A very interesting idea, but a *vivâ voce* interview is so much better."

"I wonder how long it takes to walk to Elberthal!" I suggested darkly.

"Oh, a mere trifle of a walk. You might do it in four or five hours, I dare say."

I bit my lips, trying not to cry.

"Perhaps we might make some other arrangement," he remarked. "I am going to Elberthal too."

"You! Thank Heaven!" was my first remark. Then as a doubt came over me: "Then why – why – "

Here I stuck fast, unable to ask why he had said so many tormenting things to me, pretended to teach me German phrases, and so on. The words would not come out. Meanwhile he, without apparently feeling it necessary to explain himself upon these points, went on:

"Yes. I have been at a probe" (not having the faintest idea as to what a probe might be, and not liking to ask, I held my peace and bowed assentingly). He went on, "And I was delayed a little. I had intended to go by the train you have lost, so if you are not afraid to trust yourself to my care we can travel together."

"You – you are very kind."

"Then you are not afraid?"

"I – oh, no! I should like it very much. I mean I am sure it would be very nice."

Feeling that my social powers were as yet in a very undeveloped condition, I subsided into silence, as he went on:

"I hope your friends will not be very uneasy?"

"Oh, dear no!" I assured him, with a pious conviction that I was speaking the truth.

"We shall arrive at Elberthal about half past eight."

I scarcely heard. I had plunged my hand into my pocket, and found – a hideous conviction crossed my mind – I had no money! I had until this moment totally forgotten having given my purse to Merrick to keep; and she, as pioneer of the party, naturally had all our tickets under her charge. My heart almost stopped beating. It was unheard of, horrible, this possibility of falling into the power of a total, utter stranger – a foreigner – a – Heaven only knew what! Engrossed with this painful and distressing problem, I sat silent, and with eyes gloomily cast down.

"One thing is certain," he remarked. "We do not want to spend three hours and a half in the station. I want some dinner. A four hours' probe is apt to make one a little hungry. Come, we will go and have something to eat."

The idea had evidently come to him as a species of inspiration, and he openly rejoiced in it.

"I am not hungry," said I; but I was, very. I knew it now that the idea "dinner" had made itself conspicuous in my consciousness.

"Perhaps you think not; but you are, all the same," he said. "Come with me, Fräulein. You have put yourself into my hands; you must do what I tell you."

I followed him mechanically out of the station and down the street, and I tried to realize that instead of being with Miss Hallam and Merrick, my natural and respectable protectors, safely and conventionally plodding the slow way in the slow continental train to the slow continental town, I was parading about the streets of Köln with a man of whose very existence I had half an hour ago been ignorant; I was dependent, too, upon him, and him alone, for my safe arrival at Elberthal. And I followed him unquestioningly, now and then telling myself, by way of feeble consolation, that he was a gentleman – he certainly was a gentleman – and wishing now and then, or trying to wish, with my usual proper feeling, that it had been some nice old lady with whom I had fallen in: it would have made the whole adventure blameless, and, comparatively speaking, agreeable.

We went along a street and came to a hotel, a large building, into which my conductor walked, spoke to a waiter, and we were shown into the restaurant, full of round tables, and containing some half dozen parties of people. I followed with stony resignation. It was the severest trial of all, this coming to a hotel alone with a gentleman in broad daylight. I caught sight of a reflection in a mirror of a tall, pale girl, with heavy, tumbled auburn hair, a brown hat which suited her, and a severely simple traveling-dress. I did not realize until I had gone past that it was my own reflection which I had seen.

"Suppose we sit here," said he, going to a table in a comparatively secluded window recess, partially overhung with curtains.

"How very kind and considerate of him!" thought I.

"Would you rather have wine or coffee, Fräulein?"

Pulled up from the impulse to satisfy my really keen hunger by the recollection of my "lack of gold," I answered hastily.

"Nothing, thank you – really nothing."

"*O doch!* You must have something," said he, smiling. "I will order something. Don't trouble about it."

"Don't order anything for me," said I, my cheeks burning. "I shall not eat anything."

"If you do not eat, you will be ill. Remember, we do not get to Elberthal before eight," said he. "Is it perhaps disagreeable to you to eat in the saal? If you like we can have a private room."

"It is not that at all," I replied; and seeing that he looked surprised, I blurted out the truth. "I have no money. I gave my purse to Miss Hallam's maid to keep and she has taken it with her."

With a laugh, in which, infectious though it was, I was too wretched to join:

"Is that all? Kellner!" cried he.

An obsequious waiter came up, smiled sweetly and meaningly at us, received some orders from my companion, and disappeared.

He seated himself beside me at the little round table.

"He will bring something at once," said he, smiling.

I sat still. I was not happy, and yet I could not feel all the unhappiness which I considered appropriate to the circumstances.

My companion took up a "Kölnische Zeitung," and glanced over the advertisements, while I looked a little stealthily at him, and for the first time took in more exactly what he was like, and grew more puzzled with him each moment. As he leaned upon the table, one slight, long, brown hand propping his head, and half lost in the thick, fine brown hair which waved in large, ample waves over his head, there was an indescribable grace, ease, and negligent beauty in the attitude. Move as he would, let him assume any possible or impossible attitude, there was still in the same grace, half careless, yet very dignified in the position he took.

All his lines were lines of beauty, but beauty which had power and much masculine strength; nowhere did it degenerate into flaccidity, nowhere lose strength in grace. His hair was long, and I wondered at it. My small experience in our delightful home and village circle had not acquainted me with that flowing style; the young men of my acquaintance cropped their hair close to the scalp, and called it the modern style of hair-dressing. It had always looked to me more like hair-undressing. This hair fell in a heavy wave over his forehead, and he had the habit, common to people whose hair does so, of lifting his head suddenly and shaking back the offending lock. His forehead was broad, open, pleasant, yet grave. Eyes, as I had seen, very dark, and with lashes and brows which enhanced the contrast to a complexion at once fair and pale. A light mustache, curving almost straight across the face, gave a smiling expression to lips which were otherwise grave, calm, almost sad. In fact, looking nearer, I thought he did look sad; and though when he looked at me his eyes were so piercing, yet in repose they had a certain distant, abstracted expression not far removed from absolute mournfulness. Broad-shouldered, long-armed, with a physique in every respect splendid, he was yet very distinctly removed from the mere handsome animal which I believe enjoys a distinguished popularity in the latter-day romance.

Now, as his eyes were cast upon the paper, I perceived lines upon his forehead, signs about the mouth and eyes telling of a firm, not to say imperious, disposition; a certain curve of the lips, and of the full, yet delicate nostril, told of pride both strong and high. He was older than I had thought, his face sparer; there were certain hollows in the cheeks, two lines between the eyebrows, a sharpness, or rather somewhat worn appearance of the features, which told of a mental life, keen and consuming. Altogether, an older, more intellectual, more imposing face than I had at first thought; less that of a young and handsome man, more that of a thinker and student. Lastly, a cool ease, deliberation, and leisureliness about all he said and did, hinted at his being a person in authority, accustomed to give orders and see them obeyed without question. I decided that he was, in our graceful home phrase, "master in his own house."

His clothing was unremarkable – gray summer clothes, such as any gentleman or any shop-keeper might wear; only in scanning him no thought of shop-keeper came into my mind. His cap lay

upon the table beside us, one of the little gray Studentenmutzen with which Elberthal soon made me familiar, but which struck me then as odd and outlandish. I grew every moment more interested in my scrutiny of this, to me, fascinating and remarkable face, and had forgotten to try to look as if I were not looking, when he looked up suddenly, without warning, with those bright, formidable eyes, which had already made me feel somewhat shy as I caught them fixed upon me.

"*Nun*, have you decided?" he asked, with a humorous look in his eyes, which he was too polite to allow to develop itself into a smile.

"I – oh, I beg your pardon!"

"You do not want to," he answered, in imperfect idiom. "But have you decided?"

"Decided what?"

"Whether I am to be trusted?"

"I have not been thinking about that," I said, uncomfortably, when to my relief the appearance of the waiter with preparations for a meal saved me further reply.

"What shall we call this meal?" he asked, as the waiter disappeared to bring the repast to the table. "It is too late for the *Mittagessen*, and too early for the *Abendbrod*. Can you suggest a name?"

"At home it would be just the time for afternoon tea."

"Ah, yes! Your English afternoon tea is very – " He stopped suddenly.

"Have you been in England?"

"This is just the time at which we drink our afternoon coffee in Germany," said he, looking at me with his impenetrably bright eyes, just as if he had never heard me. "When the ladies all meet together to talk scan —*O, behüte!* What am I saying? – to consult seriously upon important topics, you know. There are some low-minded persons who call the whole ceremony a Klatsch – Kaffeeklatsch. I am sure you and I shall talk seriously upon important subjects, so suppose we call this our Kaffeeklatsch, although we have no coffee to it."

"Oh, yes, if you like."

He put a piece of cutlet upon my plate, and poured yellow wine into my glass. Endeavoring to conduct myself with the dignity of a grown-up person and to show that I did know something, I inquired if the wine were hock.

He smiled. "It is not Hochheimer – not Rheinwein at all – he – no, it, you say – it is Moselle wine – 'Doctor.'"

"Doctor?"

"Doctorberger; I do not know why so called. And a very good fellow too – so say all his friends, of whom I am a warm one. Try him."

I complied with the admonition, and was able to say that I liked Doctorberger. We ate and drank in silence for some little time, and I found that I was very hungry. I also found that I could not conjure up any real feeling of discomfort or uneasiness, and that the prospective scolding from Miss Hallam had no terrors in it for me. Never had I felt so serene in mind, never more at ease in every way, than now. I felt that this was wrong – bohemian, irregular, and not respectable, and tried to get up a little unhappiness about something. The only thing that I could think of was:

"I am afraid I am taking up your time. Perhaps you had some business which you were going to when you met me."

"My business, when I met you, was to catch the train to Elberthal, which was already gone, as you know. I shall not be able to fulfill my engagements for to-night, so it really does not matter. I am enjoying myself very much."

"I am very glad I did meet you," said I, growing more reassured as I found that my companion, though exceedingly polite and attentive to me, did not ask a question as to my business, my traveling companions, my intended stay or object in Elberthal – that he behaved as a perfect gentleman – one who is a gentleman throughout, in thought as well as in deed. He did not even ask me how it was that my friends had not waited a little for me, though he must have wondered why two people left a young

girl, moneyless and ignorant, to find her way after them as well as she could. He took me as he found me, and treated me as if I had been the most distinguished and important of persons. But at my last remark he said, with the same odd smile which took me by surprise every time I saw it:

"The pleasure is certainly not all on your side, *mein Fräulein*. I suppose from that you have decided that I am to be trusted?"

I stammered out something to the effect that "I should be very ungrateful were I not satisfied with – with such a – " I stopped, looking at him in some confusion. I saw a sudden look flash into his eyes and over his face. It was gone again in a moment – so fleeting that I had scarce time to mark it, but it opened up a crowd of strange new impressions to me, and while I could no more have said what it was like the moment it was gone, yet it left two desires almost equally strong in me – I wished in one and the same moment that I had for my own peace of mind never seen him – and that I might never lose sight of him again: to fly from that look, to remain and encounter it. The tell-tale mirror in the corner caught my eye. At home they used sometimes to call me, partly in mockery, partly in earnest, "Bonny May." The sobriquet had hitherto been a mere shadow, a meaningless thing, to me. I liked to hear it, but had never paused to consider whether it were appropriate or not. In my brief intercourse with my venerable suitor, Sir Peter, I had come a little nearer to being actively aware that I was good-looking, only to anathematize the fact. Now, catching sight of my reflection in the mirror, I wondered eagerly whether I really were fair, and wished I had some higher authority to think so than the casual jokes of my sisters. It did not add to my presence of mind to find that my involuntary glance to the mirror had been intercepted – perhaps even my motive guessed at – he appeared to have a frightfully keen instinct.

"Have you seen the Dom?" was all he said; but it seemed somehow to give a point to what had passed.

"The Dom – what is the Dom?"

"The *Kölner Dom*; the cathedral."

"Oh, no! Oh, should we have time to see it?" I exclaimed. "How I should like it!"

"Certainly. It is close at hand. Suppose we go now."

Gladly I rose, as he did. One of my most ardent desires was about to be fulfilled – not so properly and correctly as might have been desired, but – yes, certainly more pleasantly than under the escort of Miss Hallam, grumbling at every groschen she had to unearth in payment.

Before we could leave our seclusion there came up to us a young man who had looked at us through the door and paused. I had seen him; had seen how he said something to a companion, and how the companion shook his head dissentingly. The first speaker came up to us, eyed me with a look of curiosity, and turning to my protector with a benevolent smile, said:

"Eugen Courvoisier! *Also hatte ich doch Recht!*"

I caught the name. The rest was of course lost upon me. Eugen Courvoisier? I liked it, as I liked him, and in my young enthusiasm decided that it was a very good name. The new-corner, who seemed as if much pleased with some discovery, and entertained at the same time, addressed some questions to Courvoisier, who answered him tranquilly but in a tone of voice which was very freezing; and then the other, with a few words and an unbelieving kind of laugh, said something about a *schöne Geschichte*, and, with another look at me, went out of the coffee-room again.

We went out of the hotel, up the street to the cathedral. It was the first cathedral I had ever been in. The shock and the wonder of its grandeur took my breath away. When I had found courage to look round, and up at those awful vaults the roofs, I could not help crying a little. The vastness, coolness, stillness, and splendor crushed me – the great solemn rays of sunlight coming in slanting glory through the windows – the huge height – the impression it gave of greatness, and of a religious devotion to which we shall never again attain; of pure, noble hearts, and patient, skillful hands, toiling, but in a spirit that made the toil a holy prayer – carrying out the builder's thought – great thought greatly executed – all was too much for me, the more so in that while I felt it all I could not analyze it. It was a

dim, indefinite wonder. I tried stealthily and in shame to conceal my tears, looking surreptitiously at him in fear lest he should be laughing at me again. But he was not. He held his cap in his hand – was looking with those strange, brilliant eyes fixedly toward the high altar, and there was some expression upon his face which I could not analyze – not the expression of a person for whom such a scene has grown or can grow common by custom – not the expression of a sight-seer who feels that he must admire; not my own first astonishment. At least he felt it – the whole grand scene, and I instinctively and instantly felt more at home with him than I had done before.

"Oh!" said I, at last, "if one could stay here forever, what would one grow to?"

He smiled a little.

"You find it beautiful?"

"It is the first I have seen. It is much more than beautiful."

"The first you have seen? Ah, well, I might have guessed that."

"Why? Do I look so countrified?" I inquired, with real interest, as I let him lead me to a little side bench, and place himself beside me. I asked in all good faith. About him there seemed such a cosmopolitan ease, that I felt sure he could tell me correctly how I struck other people – if he would.

"Countrified – what is that?"

"Oh, we say it when people are like me – have never seen anything but their own little village, and never had any adventures, and – "

"Get lost at railway stations, *und so weiter*. I don't know enough of the meaning of 'countrified' to be able to say if you are so, but it is easy to see that you – have not had much contention with the powers that be."

"Oh, I shall not be stupid long," said I, comfortably. "I am not going back home again."

"So!" He did not ask more, but I saw that he listened, and proceeded communicatively:

"Never. I have – not quarreled with them exactly, but had a disagreement, because – because – "

"Because?"

"They wanted me to – I mean, an old gentleman – no, I mean – "

"An old gentleman wanted you to marry him, and you would not," said he, with an odd twinkle in his eyes.

"Why, how can you know?"

"I think, because you told me. But I will forget it if you wish."

"Oh, no! It is quite true. Perhaps I ought to have married him."

"Ought!" He looked startled.

"Yes. Adelaide – my eldest sister – said so. But it was no use. I was very unhappy, and Miss Hallam, who is Sir Peter's deadly enemy – he is the old gentleman, you know – was very kind to me. She invited me to come with her to Germany, and promised to let me have singing lessons."

"Singing lessons?"

I nodded. "Yes; and then when I know a good deal more about singing, I shall go back again and give lessons. I shall support myself, and then no one will have the right to want to make me marry Sir Peter."

"*Du lieber Himmel!*" he ejaculated, half to himself. "Are you very musical, then?"

"I can sing," said I. "Only I want some more training."

"And you will go back all alone and try to give lessons?"

"I shall not only try, I shall do it," I corrected him.

"And do you like the prospect?"

"If I can get enough money to live upon, I shall like it very much. It will be better than living at home and being bothered."

"I will tell you what you should do before you begin your career," said he, looking at me with an expression half wondering, half pitying.

"What? If you could tell me anything."

"Preserve your voice, by all means, and get as much instruction as you can; but change all that waving hair, and make it into unobjectionable smooth bands of no particular color. Get a mask to wear over your face, which is too expressive; do something to your eyes to alter their – "

The expression then visible in the said eyes seemed to strike him, for he suddenly stopped, and with a slight laugh, said:

"*Ach, was rede ich für dummes Zeug!* Excuse me, *mein Fräulein*."

"But," I interrupted, earnestly, "what do you mean? Do you think my appearance will be a disadvantage to me?"

Scarcely had I said the words than I knew how intensely stupid they were, how very much they must appear as if I were openly and impudently fishing for compliments. How grateful I felt when he answered, with a grave directness, which had nothing but the highest compliment in it – that of crediting me with right motives:

"*Mein Fräulein*, how can I tell? It is only that I knew some one, rather older than you, and very beautiful, who had such a pursuit. Her name was Corona Heidelberger, and her story was a sad one."

"Tell it me," I besought.

"Well, no, I think not. But – sometimes I have a little gift of foresight, and that tells me that you will not become what you at present think. You will be much happier and more fortunate."

"I wonder if it would be nice to be a great operatic singer," I speculated.

"*O, behüte!* don't think of it!" he exclaimed, starting up and moving restlessly. "You do not know – you an opera singer – "

He was interrupted. There suddenly filled the air a sound of deep, heavenly melody, which swept solemnly adown the aisles, and filled with its melodious thunder every corner of the great building. I listened with my face upraised, my lips parted. It was the organ, and presently, after a wonderful melody, which set my heart beating – a melody full of the most witchingly sweet high notes, and a breadth and grandeur of low ones such as only two composers have ever attained to, a voice – a single woman's voice – was upraised. She was invisible, and she sung till the very sunshine seemed turned to melody, and all the world was music – the greatest, most glorious of earthly things.

"Blute nur, liebes Herz!
Ach, ein Kind das du erzogen,
Das an deiner Brust gesogen,
Drohet den Pfleger zu ermorden
Denn es ist zur Schlange worden."

"What is it?" I asked below my breath, as it ceased.

He had shaded his face with his hand, but turned to me as I spoke, a certain half-suppressed enthusiasm in his eyes.

"Be thankful for your first introduction to German music," said he, "and that it was grand old Johann Sebastian Bach whom you heard. That is one of the soprano solos in the *Passions-musik*– that is music."

There was more music. A tenor voice was singing a recitative now, and that exquisite accompaniment, with a sort of joyful solemnity, still continued. Every now and then, shrill, high, and clear, penetrated a chorus of boys' voices. I, outer barbarian that I was, barely knew the name of Bach and his "Matthaus Passion," so in the pauses my companion told me by snatches what it was about. There was not much of it. After a few solos and recitatives, they tried one or two of the choruses. I sat in silence, feeling a new world breaking in glory around me, till that tremendous chorus came; the organ notes swelled out, the tenor voice sung "Whom will ye that I give unto you?" and the answer came, crashing down in one tremendous clap, "Barrabam!" And such music was in the world, had

been sung for years, and I had not heard it. Verily, there may be revelations and things new under the sun every day.

I had forgotten everything outside the cathedral – every person but the one at my side. It was he who roused first, looking at his watch and exclaiming.

"*Herrgott!* We must go to the station, Fräulein, if we wish to catch the train."

And yet I did not think he seemed very eager to catch it, as we went through the busy streets in the warmth of the evening, for it was hot, as it sometimes is in pleasant April, before the withering east winds of the "merry month" have come to devastate the land and sweep sickly people off the face of the earth. We went slowly through the moving crowds to the station, into the wartesaal, where he left me while he went to take my ticket. I sat in the same corner of the same sofa as before, and to this day I could enumerate every object in that wartesaal.

It was after seven o'clock. The outside sky was still bright, but it was dusk in the waiting-room and under the shadow of the station. When "Eugen Courvoisier" came in again, I did not see his features so distinctly as lately in the cathedral. Again he sat down beside me, silently this time. I glanced at his face, and a strange, sharp, pungent thrill shot through me. The companion of a few hours – was he only that?

"Are you very tired?" he asked, gently, after a long pause. "I think the train will not be very long now."

Even as he spoke, clang, clang, went the bell, and for the second time that day I went toward the train for Elberthal. This time no wrong turning, no mistake. Courvoisier put me into an empty compartment, and followed me, said something to a guard who went past, of which I could only distinguish the word *allein*; but as no one disturbed our privacy, I concluded that German railway guards, like English ones, are mortal.

After debating within myself for some time, I screwed up my courage and began:

"Mr. Courvoisier – your name is Courvoisier, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Will you please tell me how much money you have spent for me to-day?"

"How much money?" he asked, looking at me with a provoking smile.

The train was rumbling slowly along, the night darkening down. We sat by an open window, and I looked through it at the gray, Dutch-like landscape, the falling dusk, the poplars that seemed sedately marching along with us.

"Why do you want to know how much?" he demanded.

"Because I shall want to pay you, of course, when I get my purse," said I. "And if you will kindly tell me your address, too – but how much money did you spend?"

He looked at me, seemed about to laugh off the question, and then said:

"I believe it was about three thalers ten groschen, but I am not at all sure. I can not tell till I do my accounts."

"Oh, dear!" said I.

"Suppose I let you know how much it was," he went on, with a gravity which forced conviction upon me.

"Perhaps that would be the best," I agreed. "But I hope you will make out your accounts soon."

"Oh, very soon. And where shall I send my bill to?"

Feeling as if there were something not quite as it should be in the whole proceeding, I looked very earnestly at him, but could find nothing but the most perfect gravity in his expression. I repeated my address and name slowly and distinctly, as befitted so business-like a transaction, and he wrote them down in a little book.

"And you will not forget," said I, "to give me your address when you let me know what I owe you."

"Certainly – when I let you know what you owe me," he replied, putting the little book into his pocket again.

"I wonder if any one will come to meet me," I speculated, my mind more at ease in consequence of the business-like demeanor of my companion.

"Possibly," said he, with an ambiguous half smile, which I did not understand.

"Miss Hallam – the lady I came with – is almost blind. Her maid had to look after her, and I suppose that is why they did not wait for me," said I.

"It must have been a very strong reason, at any rate," he said, gravely.

Now the train rolled into the Elberthal station. There were lights, movement, a storm of people all gabbling away in a foreign tongue. I looked out. No face of any one I knew. Courvoisier sprung down and helped me out.

"Now I will put you into a drosky," said he, leading the way to where they stood outside the station.

"Alléestrasse, thirty-nine," he said to the man.

"Stop one moment," cried I, leaning eagerly out. At that moment a tall, dark girl passed us, going slowly toward the gates. She almost paused as she saw us. She was looking at my companion; I did not see her face, and was only conscious of her as coming between me and him, and so anoying me.

"Please let me thank you," I continued. "You have been so kind, so very kind – "

"*O, bitte sehr!* It was so kind in you to get lost exactly when and where you did," said he, smiling. "*Adieu, mein Fräulein*," he added, making a sign to the coachman, who drove off.

I saw him no more. "Eugen Courvoisier" – I kept repeating the name to myself, as if I were in the very least danger of forgetting it – "Eugen Courvoisier." Now that I had parted from him I was quite clear as to my own feelings. I would have given all I was worth – not much, truly – to see him for one moment again.

Along a lighted street with houses on one side, a gleaming shine of water on the other, and trees on both, down a cross-way, then into another street, very wide, and gayly lighted, in the midst of which was an avenue.

We stopped with a rattle before a house door, and I read, by the light of the lamp that hung over it, "39."

# CHAPTER VII

## ANNA SARTORIUS

I was expected. That was very evident. An excited-looking *Dienstmädchen* opened the door, and on seeing me, greeted me as if I had been an old friend. I was presently rescued by Merrick, also looking agitated.

"Ho, Miss Wedderburn, at last you are here! How Miss Hallam has worried, to be sure."

"I could not help it, I'm very sorry," said I, following her upstairs – up a great many flights of stairs, as it seemed to me, till she ushered me into a sitting-room where I found Miss Hallam.

"Thank Heaven, child! you are here at last. I was beginning to think that if you did not come by this train, I must send some one to Köln to look after you."

"By this train!" I repeated, blankly. "Miss Hallam – what – do you mean? There has been no other train."

"Two; there was one at four and one at six. I can not tell you how uneasy I have been at your non-appearance."

"Then – then – " I stammered, growing hot all over. "Oh, how horrible!"

"What is horrible?" she demanded. "And you must be starving. Merrick, go and see about something to eat for Miss Wedderburn. Now," she added, as her maid left the room, "tell me what you have been doing."

I told her everything, concealing nothing.

"Most annoying!" she remarked. "A gentleman, you say. My dear child, no gentleman would have done anything of the kind. I am very sorry for it all."

"Miss Hallam," I implored, almost in tears, "please do not tell any one what has happened to me. I will never be such a fool again. I know now – and you may trust me. But do not let any one know how – stupid I have been. I told you I was stupid – I told you several times. I am sure you must remember."

"Oh, yes, I remember. We will say no more about it."

"And the gray shawl," said I.

"Merrick had it."

I lifted my hands and shrugged my shoulders. "Just my luck," I murmured, resignedly, as Merrick came in with a tray.

Miss Hallam, I noticed, continued to regard me now and then as I ate with but small appetite. I was too excited by what had passed, and by what I had just heard, to be hungry. I thought it kind, merciful, humane in her to promise to keep my secret and not expose my ignorance and stupidity to strangers.

"It is evident," she remarked, "that you must at once begin to learn German, and then if you do get lost at a railway station again, you will be able to ask your way."

Merrick shook her head with an inexpressibly bitter smile.

"I'd defy any one to learn this 'ere language, ma'am. They call an accident a *Unglück*; if any one could tell me what that means, I'd thank them, that's all."

"Don't express your opinions, Merrick, unless you wish to seem deficient in understanding; but go and see that Miss Wedderburn has everything she wants – or rather everything that can be got – in her room. She is tired, and shall go to bed."

I was only too glad to comply with this mandate, but it was long ere I slept. I kept hearing the organ in the cathedral, and that voice of the invisible singer – seeing the face beside me, and hearing the words, "Then you have decided that I am to be trusted?"

"And he was deceiving me all the time!" I thought, mournfully.

I breakfasted by myself the following morning, in a room called the speisesaal. I found I was late. When I came into the room, about nine o'clock, there was no one but myself to be seen. There was a long table with a white cloth upon it, and rows of the thickest cups and saucers it had ever been my fate to see, with distinct evidences that the chief part of the company had already breakfasted. Baskets full of *Brödchen* and pots of butter, a long India-rubber pipe coming from the gas to light a theemaschine – lots of cane-bottomed chairs, an open piano, two cages with canaries in them; the kettle gently simmering above the gas-flame; for the rest, silence and solitude.

I sat down, having found a clean cup and plate, and glanced timidly at the theemaschine, not daring to cope with its mysteries, until my doubts were relieved by the entrance of a young person with a trim little figure, a coquettishly cut and elaborately braided apron, and a white frilled morgenhaube upon her hair, surmounting her round, heavenward-aspiring visage.

"*Guten morgen, Fräulein*," she said, as she marched up to the darkly mysterious theemaschine and began deftly to prepare coffee for me, and to push the Brödchen toward me. She began to talk to me in broken English, which was very pretty, and while I ate and drank, she industriously scraped little white roots at the same table. She told me she was Clara, the niece of Frau Steinmann, and that she was very glad to see me, but was very sorry I had had so long to wait in Köln yesterday. She liked my dress, and was it *echt Englisch*– also, how much did it cost?

She was a cheery little person, and I liked her. She seemed to like me too, and repeatedly said she was glad I had come. She liked dancing she said. Did I? And she had lately danced at a ball with some one who danced so well —*aber*, quite indescribably well. His name was Karl Linders, and he was, *ach!* really a remarkable person. A bright blush, and a little sigh accompanied the remark. Our eyes met, and from that moment Clara and I were very good friends.

I went upstairs again, and found that Miss Hallam proposed, during the forenoon, to go and find the Eye Hospital, where she was to see the oculist, and arrange for him to visit her, and shortly after eleven we set out.

The street that I had so dimly seen the night before, showed itself by daylight to be a fair, broad way. Down the middle, after the pleasant fashion of continental towns, was a broad walk, planted with two double rows of lindens, and on either side this lindenallee was the carriage road, private houses, shops, exhibitions, boarding-houses. In the middle, exactly opposite our dwelling, was the New Theater, just drawing to the close of its first season. I looked at it without thinking much about it. I had never been in a theater in my life, and the name was but a name to me.

Turning off from the pretty allee, and from the green Hofgarten which bounded it at one end, we entered a narrow, ill-paved street, the aspect of whose gutters and inhabitants alike excited my liveliest disgust. In this street was the Eye Hospital, as was presently testified to us by a board bearing the inscription, "Städtische Augenklinik."

We were taken to a dimly lighted room in which many people were waiting, some with bandages over their eyes, others with all kinds of extraordinary spectacles on, which made them look like phantoms out of a bad dream – nearly all more or less blind, and the effect was surprisingly depressing.

Presently Miss Hallam and Merrick were admitted to an inner room, and I was left to await their return. My eye strayed over the different faces, and I felt a sensation of relief when I saw some one come in without either bandage or spectacles. The new-comer was a young man of middle height, and of proportions slight without being thin. There was nothing the matter with his eyes, unless perhaps a slight short-sightedness; he had, I thought, one of the gentlest, most attractive faces I had ever seen; boyishly open and innocent at the first glance; at the second, indued with a certain reticent calm and intellectual radiance which took away from the first youthfulness of his appearance. Soft, yet

luminous brown eyes, loose brown hair hanging round his face, a certain manner which for me at least had a charm, were the characteristics of this young man. He carried a violin-case, removed his hat as he came in, and being seen by one of the young men who sat at desks, took names down, and attended to people in general, was called by him:

"Herr Helfen – Herr Friedhelm Helfen!"

"*Ja – hier!*" he answered, going up to the desk, upon which there ensued a lively conversation, though carried on in a low tone, after which the young man at the desk presented a white card to "Herr Friedhelm Helfen," and the latter, with a pleasant "Adieu," went out of the room again.

Miss Hallam and Merrick presently returned from the consulting-room, and we went out of the dark room into the street, which was filled with spring sunshine and warmth; a contrast something like that between Miss Hallam's life and my own, I have thought since. Far before us, hurrying on, I saw the young man with the violin-case; he turned off by the theater, and went in at a side door.

An hour's wandering in the Hofgarten – my first view of the Rhine – a dull, flat stream it looked, too. I have seen it since then in mightier flow. Then we came home, and it was decided that we should dine together with the rest of the company at one o'clock.

A bell rang at a few minutes past one. We went down-stairs, into the room in which I had already breakfasted, which, in general, was known as the saal. As I entered with Miss Hallam I was conscious that a knot of lads or young men stood aside to let us pass, and then giggled and scuffled behind the door before following us into the saal.

Two or three ladies were already seated, and an exceedingly stout lady ladled out soup at a side table, while Clara and a servant-woman carried the plates round to the different places. The stout lady turned as she saw us, and greeted us. She was Frau Steinmann, our hostess. She waited until the youths before spoken of had come in, and with a great deal of noise had seated themselves, when she began, aided by the soup-ladle, to introduce us all to each other.

We, it seemed, were to have the honor and privilege of being the only English ladies of the company. We were introduced to one or two others, and I was assigned a place by a lady introduced as Fräulein Anna Sartorius, a brunette, rather stout, with large dark eyes which looked at me in a way I did not like, a head of curly black hair cropped short, an odd, brusque manner, and a something peculiar, or, as she said, *selten* in her dress. This young lady sustained the introduction with self-possession and calm. It was otherwise with the young gentlemen, who appeared decidedly mixed. There were some half dozen of them in all – a couple of English, the rest German, Dutch, and Swedish. I had never been in company with so many nationalities before, and was impressed with my situation – needlessly so.

All these young gentlemen made bows which were, in their respective ways, triumphs of awkwardness, with the exception of one of our compatriots, who appeared to believe that himself and his manners were formed to charm and subdue the opposite sex. We then sat down, and Fräulein Sartorius immediately opened a conversation with me.

"*Sprechen Sie Deutsch, Fräulein?*" was her first venture, and having received my admission that I did not speak a word of it, she continued, in good English:

"Now I can talk to you without offending you. It is so dreadful when English people who don't know German persist in thinking that they do. There was an English-woman here who always said *wer* when she meant where, and *wo* when she meant who. She said the sounds confused her."

The boys giggled at this, but the joke was lost upon me.

"What is your name?" she continued; "I didn't catch what Frau Steinmann said."

"May Wedderburn," I replied, angry with myself for blushing so excessively as I saw that all the boys held their spoons suspended, listening for my answer.

"May —*das heisst Mai*," said she, turning to the assembled youths, who testified that they were aware of it, and the Dutch boy, Brinks, inquired, gutturally:

"You haf one zong in your language what calls itself, 'Not always Mai,' haf you not?"

"Yes," said I, and all the boys began to giggle as if something clever had been said. Taken all in all, what tortures have I not suffered from those dreadful boys. Shy when they ought to have been bold, and bold where a modest retiringness would better have become them. Giggling inanely at everything and nothing. Noisy and vociferous among themselves or with inferiors; shy, awkward and blushing with ladies or in refined society – distressing my feeble efforts to talk to them by their silly explosions of laughter when one of them was addressed. They formed the bane of my life for some time.

"Will you let me paint you?" said Fräulein Sartorius, whose big eyes had been surveying me in a manner that made me nervous.

"Paint me?"

"Your likeness, I mean. You are very pretty, and we never see that color of hair here."

"Are you a painter?"

"No, I'm only a *Studentin* yet; but I paint from models. Well, will you sit to me?"

"Oh, I don't know. If I have time, perhaps."

"What will you do to make you not have time?"

I did not feel disposed to gratify her curiosity, and said I did not know yet what I should do.

For a short time she asked no more questions, then

"Do you like town or country best?"

"I don't know. I have never lived in a town."

"Do you like amusements – concerts, and theater, and opera?"

"I don't know," I was reluctantly obliged to confess, for I saw that the assembled youths, though not looking at me openly, and apparently entirely engrossed with their dinners, were listening attentively to what passed.

"You don't know," repeated Fräulein Sartorius, quickly seeing through my thin assumption of indifference, and proceeding to draw me out as much as possible. I wished Adelaide had been there to beat her from the field. She would have done it better than I could.

"No; because I have never been to any."

"Haven't you? How odd! How very odd! Isn't it strange?" she added, appealing to the boys. "Fräulein has never been to a theater or a concert."

I disdained to remark that my words were being perverted, but the game instinct rose in me. Raising my voice a little, I remarked:

"It is evident that I have not enjoyed your advantages, but I trust that the gentlemen" (with a bow to the listening boys) "will make allowances for the difference between us."

The young gentlemen burst into a chorus of delighted giggles, and Anna, shooting a rapid glance at me, made a slight grimace, but looked not at all displeased. I was, though, mightily; but, elate with victory, I turned to my compatriot at the other end of the table, and asked him at what time of the year Elberthal was pleasantest.

"Oh," said he, "it's always pleasant to me, but that's owing to myself. I make it so."

Just then, several of the other lads rose, pushing their chairs back with a great clatter, bowing to the assembled company, and saying "Gesegnete Mahlzeit!" as they went out.

"Why are they going, and what do they say?" I inquired of Miss Sartorius, who replied, quite amiably:

"They are students at the Realschule. They have to be there at two o'clock, and they say, 'Blessed be the meal-time,' as they go out."

"Do they? How nice!" I could not help saying.

"Would you like to go for a walk this afternoon?" said she.

"Oh, very much!" I had exclaimed, before I remembered that I did not like her, and did not intend to like her. "If Miss Hallam can spare me," I added.

"Oh, I think she will. I shall be ready at half past two; then we shall return for coffee at four. I will knock at your door at the time."

On consulting Miss Hallam after dinner, I found she was quite willing for me to go out with Anna, and at the time appointed we set out.

Anna took me a tour round the town, showed me the lions, and gave me topographical details. She showed me the big, plain barrack, and the desert waste of the Exerzierplatz spreading before it. She did her best to entertain me, and I, with a childish prejudice against her abrupt manner, and the free, somewhat challenging look of her black eyes, was reserved, unresponsive, stupid. I took a prejudice against her – I own it – and for that and other sins committed against a woman who would have been my friend if I would have let her, I say humbly, *Mea culpa!*

"It seems a dull kind of a place," said I.

"It need not be. You have advantages here which you can't get everywhere. I have been here several years, and as I have no other home I rather think I shall live here."

"Oh, indeed."

"You have a home, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"Brothers and sisters?"

"Two sisters," I replied, mightily ruffled by what I chose to consider her curiosity and impertinence; though, when I looked at her, I saw what I could not but confess to be a real, and not unkind, interest in her plain face and big eyes.

"Ah! I have no brothers and sisters. I have only a little house in the country, and as I have always lived in a town, I don't care for the country. It is so lonely. The people are so stupid too – not always though. You were offended with me at dinner, *nicht wahr*?"

"Oh, dear, no!" said I, very awkwardly and very untruly. The truth was, I did not like her, and was too young, too ignorant and *gauche* to try to smooth over my dislike. I did not know the pain I was giving, and if I had, should perhaps not have behaved differently.

"*Doch!*" she said, smiling. "But I did not know what a child you were, or I should have let you alone."

More offended than ever, I maintained silence. If I were certainly touchy and ill to please, Fräulein Sartorius, it must be owned, did not know how to apologize gracefully. I have since, with wider knowledge of her country and its men and women, got to see that what made her so inharmonious was, that she had a woman's form and a man's disposition and love of freedom. As her countrywomen taken in the gross are the most utterly "in bonds" of any women in Europe, this spoiled her life in a manner which can not be understood here, where women in comparison are free as air, and gave no little of the brusqueness and roughness to her manner. In an enlightened English home she would have been an admirable, firm, clever woman; here she was that most dreadful of all abnormal growths – a woman with a will of her own.

"What do they do here?" I inquired, indifferently.

"Oh, many things. Though it is not a large town there is a School of Art, which brings many painters here. There are a hundred and fifty – besides students."

"And you are a student?"

"Yes. One must have something to do – some *carrière*– though my countrywomen say not. I shall go away for a few months soon, but I am waiting for the last great concert. It will be the 'Paradise Lost' of Rubenstein."

"Ah, yes!" said I, politely, but without interest. I had never heard of Rubenstein and the "Verlorenes Paradies." Before the furor of 1876, how many scores of provincial English had?

"There is very much music here," she continued. "Are you fond of it?"

"Ye-es. I can't play much, but I can sing. I have come here partly to take singing lessons."

"So!"

"Who is the best teacher?" was my next ingenuous question.

She laughed.

"That depends upon what you want to learn. There are so many: violin, *Clavier*, that is piano, flute, 'cello, everything."

"Oh!" I replied, and asked no more questions about music; but inquired if it were pleasant at Frau Steinmann's.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Is it pleasant anywhere? I don't find many places pleasant, because I can not be a humbug, so others do not like me. But I believe some people like Elberthal very well. There is the theater – that makes another element. And there are the soldiers and *Kaufleute*– merchants, I mean, so you see there is variety, though it is a small place."

"Ah, yes!" said I, looking about me as we passed down a very busy street, and I glanced to right and left with the image of Eugen Courvoisier ever distinctly if unconfessedly present to my mental view. Did he live at Elberthal? and if so, did he belong to any of those various callings? What was he? An artist who painted pictures for his bread? I thought that very probable. There was something free and artist-like in his manner, in his loose waving hair and in his keen susceptibility to beauty. I thought of his emotion at hearing that glorious Bach music. Or was he a musician – what Anna Sartorius called *ein Musiker*? But no. My ideas of musicians were somewhat hazy, not to say utterly chaotic; they embraced only two classes: those who performed or gave lessons, and those who composed. I had never formed to myself the faintest idea of a composer, and my experience of teachers and performers was limited to one specimen – Mr. Smythe, of Darton, whose method and performances would, as I have since learned, have made the hair of a musician stand horrent on end. No – I did not think he was a musician. An actor? Perish the thought, was my inevitable mental answer. How should I be able to make any better one? A soldier, then? At that moment we met a mounted captain of Uhlans, harness clanking, accouterments rattling. He was apparently an acquaintance of my companion, for he saluted with a grave politeness which sat well upon him. Decidedly Eugen Courvoisier had the air of a soldier. That accounted for all. No doubt he was a soldier. In my ignorance of the strictness of German military regulations as regards the wearing of uniform, I overlooked the fact that he had been in civilian's dress, and remained delighted with my new idea; Captain Courvoisier. "What is the German for captain?" I inquired, abruptly.

"*Hauptmann.*"

"Thank you." Hauptmann Eugen Courvoisier – a noble and a gallant title, and one which became him. "How much is a thaler?" was my next question.

"It is as much as three shillings in your money."

"Oh, thank you," said I, and did a little sum in my own mind. At that rate then, I owed Herr Courvoisier the sum of ten shillings. How glad I was to find it came within my means.

As I took off my things, I wondered when Herr Courvoisier would "make out his accounts." I trusted soon.

# CHAPTER VIII

"Probe zum verlorenen Paradiese."

Miss Hallam fulfilled her promise with regard to my singing lessons. She had a conversation with Fräulein Sartorius, to whom, unpopular as she was, I noticed people constantly and almost instinctively went when in need of precise information or a slight dose of common sense and clear-headedness.

Miss Hallam inquired who was the best master.

"For singing, the Herr Direktor," replied Anna, very promptly. "And then he directs the best of the musical vereins – the clubs – societies, whatever you name them. At least he might try Miss Wedderburn's voice."

"Who is he?"

"The head of anything belonging to music in the town – königlicher musik-direktor. He conducts all the great concerts, and though he does not sing himself, yet he is one of the best teachers in the province. Lots of people come and stay here on purpose to learn from him."

"And what are these vereins?"

"Every season there are six great concerts given, and a seventh for the benefit of the direktor. The orchestra and chorus together are called a verein – musik-verein. The chorus is chiefly composed of ladies and gentlemen – amateurs, you know —*Dilettanten*. The Herr Direktor is very particular about voices. You pay so much for admission, and receive a card for the season. Then you have all the good teaching – the *Proben*."

"What is a *Probe*?" I demanded, hastily, remembering that Courvoisier had used the word.

"What you call a rehearsal."

Ah! then he was musical. At last I had found it out. Perhaps he was one of the amateurs who sung at these concerts, and if so, I might see him again, and if so – But Anna went on:

"It is a very good thing for any one, particularly with such a teacher as von Francius."

"You must join," said Miss Hallam to me.

"There is a probe to-night to Rubinstein's 'Paradise Lost,'" said Anna. "I shall go, not to sing, but to listen. I can take Miss Wedderburn, if you like, and introduce her to Herr von Francius, whom I know."

"Very nice! very much obliged to you. Certainly," said Miss Hallam.

The probe was fixed for seven, and shortly after that time we set off for the Tonhalle, or concert-hall, in which it was held.

"We shall be much too early," said she. "But the people are shamefully late. Most of them only come to *klatsch*, and flirt, or try to flirt, with the Herr Direktor."

This threw upon my mind a new light as to the Herr Direktor, and I walked by her side much impressed. She told me that if I accepted I might even sing in the concert itself, as there had only been four proben so far, and there were still several before the haupt-probe.

"What is the haupt-probe?" I inquired.

"General rehearsal – when Herr von Francius is most unmerciful to his stupid pupils. I always attend that. I like to hear him make sport of them, and then the instrumentalists laugh at them. Von Francius never flatters."

Inspired with nightmare-like ideas as to this terrible haupt-probe, I found myself, with Anna, turning into a low-fronted building inscribed "Städtische Tonhalle," the concert-hall of the good town of Elberthal.

"This way," said she. "It is in the rittersaal. We don't go to the large saal till the haupt-probe."

I followed her into a long, rather shabby-looking room, at one end of which was a low orchestra, about which were dotted the desks of the absent instrumentalists, and some stiff-looking Celli and Contrabassi kept watch from a wall. On the orchestra was already assembled a goodly number of young men and women, all in lively conversation, loud laughter, and apparently high good-humor with themselves and everything in the world.

A young man with a fuzz of hair standing off about a sad and depressed-looking countenance was stealing "in and out and round about," and distributing sheets of score to the company. In the conductor's place was a tall man in gray clothes, who leaned negligently against the rail, and held a conversation with a pretty young lady who seemed much pleased with his attention. It did not strike me at first that this was the terrible direktor of whom I had been hearing. He was young, had a slender, graceful figure, and an exceedingly handsome, though (I thought at first) an unpleasing face. There was something in his attitude and manner which at first I did not quite like. Anna walked up the room, and pausing before the estrade, said:

"Herr Direktor!"

He turned: his eyes fell upon her face, and left it instantly to look at mine. Gathering himself together into a more ceremonious attitude, he descended from his estrade, and stood beside us, a little to one side, looking at us with a leisurely calmness which made me feel, I knew not why, uncomfortable. Meanwhile, Anna took up her parable.

"May I introduce the young lady? Miss Wedderburn, Herr Musik-Direktor von Francius. Miss Wedderburn wishes to join the verein, if you think her voice will pass. Perhaps you will allow her to sing to-night?"

"Certainly, *mein Fräulein*," said he to me, not to Anna. He had a long, rather Jewish-looking face, black hair, eyes, and mustache. The features were thin, fine, and pointed. The thing which most struck me then, at any rate, was a certain expression which, conquering all others, dominated them – at once a hardness and a hardihood which impressed me disagreeably then, though I afterward learned, in knowing the man, to know much more truly the real meaning of that unflinching gaze and iron look.

"Your voice is what, *mein Fräulein*?" he asked.

"Soprano."

"Sopran? We will see. The soprani sit over there, if you will have the goodness."

He pointed to the left of the orchestra, and called out to the melancholy-looking young man, "Herr Schonfeld, a chair for the young lady!"

Herr von Francius then ascended the orchestra himself, went to the piano, and, after a few directions, gave us the signal to begin. Till that day – I confess it with shame – I had never heard of the "Verlorenes Paradies." It came upon me like a revelation. I sung my best, substituting *do*, *re*, *mi*, etc., for the German words. Once or twice, as Herr von Francius's forefinger beat time, I thought I saw his head turn a little in our direction, but I scarcely heeded it. When the first chorus was over, he turned to me:

"You have not sung in a chorus before?"

"No."

"So! I should like to hear you sing something *sola*." He pushed toward me a pile of music, and while the others stood looking on and whispering among themselves, he went on, "Those are all sopran songs. Select one, if you please, and try it."

Not at all aware that the incident was considered unprecedented, and was creating a sensation, I turned over the music, seeking something I knew, but could find nothing. All in German, and all strange. Suddenly I came upon one entitled "Blute nur, liebes Herz," the sopran solo which I had heard as I sat with Courvoisier in the cathedral. It seemed almost like an old friend. I opened it, and found it had also English words. That decided me.

"I will try this," said I, showing it to him.

He smiled. "'*S ist gut!*" Then he read the title off the song aloud, and there was a general titter, as if some very great joke were in agitation, and were much appreciated. Indeed I found that in general the jokes of the Herr Direktor, when he condescended to make any, were very keenly relished by at least the lady part of his pupils.

Not understanding the reason of the titter I took the music in my hand, and waiting for a moment until he gave me the signal, sung it after the best wise I could – not very brilliantly, I dare say, but with at least all my heart poured into it. I had one requisite at least of an artist nature – I could abstract myself upon occasion completely from my surroundings. I did so now. It was too beautiful, too grand. I remembered that afternoon at Köln – the golden sunshine streaming through the painted windows, the flood of melody poured forth by the invisible singer; above all, I remembered who had been by my side, and I felt as if again beside him – again influenced by the unusual beauty of his face and mien, and by his clear, strange, commanding eyes. It all came back to me – the strangest, happiest day of my life. I sung as I had never sung before – as I had not known I could sing.

When I stopped, the tittering had ceased; silence saluted me. The young ladies were all looking at me; some of them had put on their eye-glasses; others stared at me as if I were some strange animal from a menagerie. The young gentlemen were whispering among themselves and taking sidelong glances at me. I scarcely heeded anything of it. I fixed my eyes upon the judge who had been listening to my performance – upon von Francius. He was pulling his mustache and at first made no remark.

You have sung that song before, *gnädiges Fräulein*?"

"No. I have heard it once. I have not seen the music before."

"So!" He bowed slightly, and turning once more to the others, said:

"We will begin the next chorus. 'Chorus of the Damned,' Now, *meine Herrschaften*, I would wish to impress upon you one thing, if I can, that is – Silence, *meine Herren*!" he called sharply toward the tenors, who were giggling inanely among themselves. "A chorus of damned souls," he proceeded, composedly, "would not sing in the same unruffled manner as a young lady who warbles, 'Spring is come – tra, la, la! Spring is come – lira, lira!' in her mamma's drawing-room. Try to imagine yourself struggling in the tortures of hell" – (a delighted giggle and a sort of "Oh, you dear, wicked man!" expression on the part of the young ladies; a nudging of each other on that of the young gentlemen), "and sing as if you were damned."

Scarcely any one seemed to take the matter the least earnestly. The young ladies continued to giggle, and the young gentlemen to nudge each other. Little enough of expression, if plenty of noise, was there in that magnificent and truly difficult passage, the changing choruses of the condemned and the blessed ones – with its crowning "Weh!" thundering down from highest soprano to deepest bass.

"Lots of noise, and no meaning," observed the conductor, leaning himself against the rail of the estrade, face to his audience, folding his arms and surveying them all one after the other with cold self-possession. It struck me that he despised them while he condescended to instruct them. The power of the man struck me again. I began to like him better. At least I venerated his thorough understanding of what was to me a splendid mystery. No softening appeared in the master's eyes in answer to the rows of pretty appealing faces turned to him; no smile upon his contemptuous lips responded to the eyes – black, brown, gray, blue, yellow – all turned with such affecting devotion to his own. Composing himself to an insouciant attitude, he began in a cool, indifferent voice, which had, however, certain caustic tones in it which stung me at least to the quick:

"I never heard anything worse, even from you. My honored Fräulein, my *gnädigen Herren*, just try once to imagine what you are singing about! It is not an exercise – it is not a love song, either of which you would no doubt perform excellently. Conceive what is happening! Put yourself back into those mythical times. Believe, for this evening, in the story of the forfeited Paradise. There is strife between the Blessed and the Damned; the obedient and the disobedient. There are thick clouds in the heavens – smoke, fire, and sulphur – a clashing of swords in the serried ranks of the angels: can

not you see Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, leading the heavenly host? Can not some of you sympathize a little with Satan and his struggle?"

Looking at him, I thought they must indeed be an unimaginative set! In that dark face before them was Mephistopheles at least —*der Geist der stets verneint*– if nothing more violent. His cool, scornful features were lighted up with some of the excitement which he could not drill into the assemblage before him. Had he been gifted with the requisite organ he would have acted and sung the chief character in "Faust" *con amore*.

"*Ach, um Gotteswillen!*" he went on, shrugging his shoulders, "try to forget what you are! Try to forget that none of you ever had a wicked thought or an unholy aspiration – "

("Don't they see how he is laughing at them?" I wondered.)

"You, Chorus of the Condemned, try to conjure up every wicked thought you can, and let it come out in your voices – you who sing the strains of the blessed ones, think of what blessedness is. Surely each of you has his own idea! Some of you may agree with Lenore:

"'Bei ihm, bei ihm ist Seligkeit,
Und ohne Wilhelm Holle!'

"If so, think of him; think of her – only sing it, whatever it is. Remember the strongest of feelings:

"'Die Engel nennen es Himmelsfreude
Die Teufel nennen es Höllenqual,
Die Menschen nennen es – Liebe!'

"And sing it!"

He had not become loud or excited in voice or gesticulation, but his words, flung at them like so many scornful little bullets, the indifferent resignation of his attitude, had their effect upon the crew of giggling, simpering girls and awkward, self-conscious young men. Some idea seemed vouchsafed to them that perhaps their performance had not been quite all that it might have been; they began in a little more earnest, and the chorus went better.

For my own part, I was deeply moved. A vague excitement, a wild, and not altogether a holy one, had stolen over me. I understood now how the man might have influence. I bent to the power of his will, which reached me where I stood in the background, from his dark eyes, which turned for a moment to me now and then. It was that will of his which put me as it were suddenly into the spirit of the music, and revealed me depths in my own heart at which I had never even guessed. Excited, with cheeks burning and my heart hot within me, I followed his words and his gestures, and grew so impatient of the dull stupidity of the others that tears came to my eyes. How could that young woman, in the midst of a sublime chorus, deliberately pause, arrange the knot of her neck-tie, and then, after a smile and a side glance at the conductor, go on again with a more self-satisfied simper than ever upon her lips? What might not the thing be with a whole chorus of sympathetic singers? The very dullness which in face prevailed revealed to me great regions of possible splendor, almost too vast to think of.

At last it was over. I turned to the direktor, who was still near the piano, and asked timidly:

"Do you think I may join? Will my voice do?"

An odd expression crossed his face; he answered, dryly:

"You may join the verein, *mein Fräulein*– yes. Please come this way with me. Pardon, Fräulein Stockhausen – another time. I am sorry to say I have business at present."

A black look from a pretty brunette, who had advanced with an engaging smile and an open score to ask him some question, greeted this very composed rebuff of her advance. The black look was directed at me – guiltless.

Without taking any notice of the other, he led Anna and me to a small inner room, where there was a desk and writing materials.

"Your name, if you will be good enough?"

"Wedderburn."

"Your *Vorname*, though – your first name."

"My Christian name – oh, May."

"M – a —*na*! Perhaps you will be so good as to write it yourself, and the street and number of the house in which you live."

I complied.

"Have you been here long?"

"Not quite a week."

"Do you intend to make any stay?"

"Some months, probably."

"Humph! If you wish to make any progress in music, you must stay much longer."

"It – I – it depends upon other people how long I remain."

He smiled slightly, and his smile was not unpleasant; it lighted up the darkness of his face in an agreeable manner.

"So I should suppose. I will call upon you to-morrow at four in the afternoon. I should like to have a little conversation with you about your voice. Adieu, *meine Damen*."

With a slight bow which sufficiently dismissed us, he turned to the desk again, and we went away.

Our homeward walk was a somewhat silent one. Anna certainly asked me suddenly where I had learned to sing.

"I have not learned properly. I can't help singing."

"I did not know you had a voice like that," said she again.

"Like what?"

"Herr von Francius will tell you all about it to-morrow," said she, abruptly.

"What a strange man Herr von Francius is!" said I. "Is he clever?"

"Oh, very clever."

"At first I did not like him. Now I think I do, though."

She made no answer for a few minutes; then said:

"He is an excellent teacher."

# CHAPTER IX

## HERR VON FRANCIUS

When Miss Hallam heard from Anna Sartorius that my singing had evidently struck Herr von Francius, and of his intended visit, she looked pleased – so pleased that I was surprised.

He came the following afternoon, at the time he had specified. Now, in the broad daylight, and apart from his official, professional manner, I found the Herr Direktor still different from the man of last night, and yet the same. He looked even younger now than on the estrade last night, and quiet though his demeanor was, attuned to a gentlemanly calm and evenness, there was still the one thing, the cool, hard glance left, to unite him with the dark, somewhat sinister-looking personage who had cast his eyes round our circle last night, and told us to sing as if we were damned.

"Miss Hallam, this is Herr von Francius," said I. "He speaks English," I added.

Von Francius glanced from her to me with a somewhat inquiring expression.

Miss Hallam received him graciously, and they talked about all sorts of trifles, while I sat by in seemly silence, till at last Miss Hallam said:

"Can you give me any opinion upon Miss Wedderburn's voice?"

"Scarcely, until I have given it another trial. She seems to have had no training."

"No, that is true," she said, and proceeded to inform him casually that she wished me to have every advantage I could get from my stay in Elberthal, and must put the matter into his hands. Von Francius looked pleased.

For my part, I was deeply moved. Miss Hallam's generosity to one so stupid and ignorant touched me nearly.

Von Francius, pausing a short time, at last said:

"I must try her voice again, as I remarked. Last night I was struck with her sense of the dramatic point of what we were singing – a quality which I do not too often find in my pupils. I think, *mein Fräulein*, that with care and study you might take a place on the stage."

"The stage!" I repeated, startled, and thinking of Courvoisier's words.

But von Francius had been reckoning without his host. When Miss Hallam spoke of "putting the matter into his hands," she understood the words in her own sense.

"The stage!" said she, with a slight shiver. "That is quite out of the question. Miss Wedderburn is a young lady – not an actress."

"So! Then it is impossible to be both in your country?" said he, with polite sarcasm. "I spoke as simple *Künstler*– artist – I was not thinking of anything else. I do not think the *gnädiges Fräulein* will ever make a good singer of mere songs. She requires emotion to bring out her best powers – a little passion – a little scope for acting and abandon before she can attain the full extent of her talent."

He spoke in the most perfectly matter-of-fact way, and I trembled. I feared lest this display of what Miss Hallam would consider little short of indecent laxity and Bohemianism, would shock her so much that I should lose everything by it. It was not so, however.

"Passion – abandon! I think you can not understand what you are talking about!" said she. "My dear sir, you must understand that those kind of things may be all very well for one set of people, but not for that class to which Miss Wedderburn belongs. Her father is a clergyman" – von Fraucius bowed, as if he did not quite see what that had to do with it – "in short, that idea is impossible. I tell you plainly. She may learn as much as she likes, but she will never be allowed to go upon the stage."

"Then she may teach?" said he, inquiringly.

"Certainly. I believe that is what she wishes to do, in case – if necessary."

"She may teach, but she may not act," said he, reflectively. "So be it, then! Only," he added as if making a last effort, "I would just mention that, apart from artistic considerations, while a lady may wear herself out as a poorly paid teacher, a *prima donna*– "

Miss Hallam smiled with calm disdain.

"It is not of the least use to speak of such a thing. You and I look at the matter from quite different points of view, and to argue about it would only be to waste time."

Von Francius, with a sarcastic, ambiguous smile, turned to me:

"And you, *mein Fräulein*?"

"I – no. I agree with Miss Hallam," I murmured, not really having found myself able to think about it at all, but conscious that opposition was useless. And, besides, I did shrink away from the ideas conjured up by that word, the "stage."

"So!" said he, with a little bow and a half smile. "Also, I must try to make the round man fit into the square hole. The first thing will be another trial of your voice; then I must see how many lessons a week you will require, and must give you instructions about practicing. You must understand that it is not pleasure or child's play which you are undertaking. It is a work in order to accomplish which you must strain every nerve, and give up everything which in any way interferes with it."

"I don't know whether I shall have time for it," I murmured, looking doubtfully toward Miss Hallam.

"Yes, May; you will have time for it," was all she said.

"Is there a piano in the house?" said von Francius. "But, yes, certainly. Fräulein Sartorius has one; she will lend it to us for half an hour. If you were at liberty, *mein Fräulein*, just now – "

"Certainly," said I, following him, as he told Miss Hallam that he would see her again.

As he knocked at the door of Anna's sitting-room she came out, dressed for walking.

"*Ach, Fräulein!* will you allow us the use of your piano for a few minutes?"

"*Bitte!*" said she, motioning us into the room. "I am sorry I have an engagement, and must leave you."

"Do not let us keep you on any account," said he, with touching politeness; and she went out.

"*Desto besser!*" he observed, shrugging his shoulders.

He pulled off his gloves with rather an impatient gesture, seated himself at the piano, and struck some chords, in an annoyed manner.

"Who is that old lady?" he inquired, looking up at me. "Any relation of yours?"

"No – oh, no! I am her companion."

"So! And you mean to let her prevent you from following the career you have a talent for?"

"If I do not do as she wishes, I shall have no chance of following any career at all," said I. "And, besides, how does any one know that I have a talent – for – for – what you say?"

"I know it; that is why I said it. I wish I could persuade that old lady to my way of thinking!" he added. "I wish you were out of her hands and in mine. *Na!* we shall see!"

It was not a very long "trial" that he gave me; we soon rose from the piano.

"To-morrow at eleven I come to give you a lesson," said he. "I am going to talk to Miss Hallam now. You please not come. I wish to see her alone; and I can manage her better by myself, *nicht wahr*!"

"Thank you," said I in a subdued tone.

"You must have a piano, too," he added; "and we must have the room to ourselves. I allow no third person to be present in my private lessons, but go on the principle of Paul Heyse's hero, Edwin, either in open lecture, or *unter vier Augen*."

With that he held the door open for me, and as I turned into my room, shook hands with me in a friendly manner, bidding me expect him on the morrow.

Certainly, I decided, Herr von Francius was quite unlike any one I had ever seen before; and how awfully cool he was and self-possessed. I liked him well, though.

The next morning Herr von Francius gave me my first lesson, and after that I had one from him nearly every day. As teacher and as acquaintance he was, as it were, two different men. As teacher he was strict, severe, gave much blame and little praise; but when he did once praise me, I remember, I carried the remembrance of it with me for days as a ray of sunshine. He seemed never surprised to find how much work had been prepared for him, although he would express displeasure sometimes at its quality. He was a teacher whom it was impossible not to respect, whom one obeyed by instinct. As man, as acquaintance, I knew little of him, though I heard much – idle tales, which it would be as idle to repeat. They chiefly related to his domineering disposition and determination to go his own way and disregard that of others. In this fashion my life became busy enough.

# CHAPTER X

## "LOHENGRIN."

As time went on, the image of Eugen Courvoisier, my unspoken of, unguessed at, friend, did not fade from my memory. It grew stronger. I thought of him every day – never went out without a distinct hope that I might see him; never came in without vivid disappointment that I had not seen him. I carried three thalers ten groschen so arranged in my purse that I could lay my hand upon them at a moment's notice, for as the days went on it appeared that Herr Courvoisier had not made up his accounts, or if he had, had not chosen to claim that part of them owed by me.

I did not see him. I began dismally to think that after all the whole thing was at an end. He did not live at Elberthal – he had certainly never told me that he did, I reminded myself. He had gone about his business and interests – had forgotten the waif he had helped one spring afternoon, and I should never see him again. My heart fell and sunk with a reasonless, aimless pang. What did it, could it, ought it to matter to me whether I ever saw him again or not? Nothing, certainly, and yet I troubled myself about it a great deal. I made little dramas in my mind of how he and I were to meet, and how I would exert my will and make him to take the money. Whenever I saw an unusually large or handsome house, I instantly fell to wondering if it were his, and sometimes made inquiries as to the owner of any particularly eligible residence. I heard of Brauns, Müllers, Piepers, Schmidts, and the like, as owners of the same – never the name Courvoisier. He had disappeared – I feared forever.

Coming in weary one day from the town, where I had been striving to make myself understood in shops, I was met by Anna Sartorius on the stairs. She had not yet ceased to be civil to me – civil, that is, in her way – and my unreasoning aversion to her was as great as ever.

"This is the last opera of the season," said she, displaying a pink ticket. "I am glad you will get to see one, as the theater closes after to-night."

"But I am not going."

"Yes, you are. Miss Hallam has a ticket for you. I am going to chaperon you."

"I must go and see about that," said I, hastily rushing upstairs.

The news, incredible though it seemed, was quite true. The ticket lay there. I picked it up and gazed at it fondly. Stadttheater zu Elberthal. Parquet, No. 16. As I had never been in a theater in my life, this conveyed no distinct idea to my mind, but it was quite enough for me that I was going. The rest of the party, I found, were to consist of Vincent, the Englishman, Anna Sartorius, and the Dutch boy, Brinks.

It was Friday evening, and the opera was "Lohengrin." I knew nothing, then, about different operatic styles, and my ideas of operatic music were based upon duets upon selected airs from "La Traviata," "La Somnambula," and "Lucia." I thought the story of "Lohengrin," as related by Vincent, interesting. I was not in the least aware that my first opera was to be a different one from that of most English girls. Since, I have wondered sometimes what would be the result upon the musical taste of a person who was put through a course of Wagnerian opera first, and then turned over to the Italian school – leaving Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck, to take care of themselves, as they may very well do – thus exactly reversing the usual (English) process.

Anna was very quiet that evening. Afterward I knew that she must have been observing me. We were in the first row of the parquet, with the orchestra alone between us and the stage. I was fully occupied in looking about me – now at the curtain hiding the great mystery, now behind and above me at the boxes, in a youthful state of ever-increasing hope and expectation.

"We are very early," said Vincent, who was next to me, "very early, and very near," he added, but he did not seem much distressed at either circumstance.

Then the gas was suddenly turned up quite high. The bustle increased cheerfully. The old, young, and middle-aged ladies who filled the *Logen* in the *Erster Rang*– hardened theater-goers, who came as regularly every night in the week during the eight months of the season as they ate their breakfasts and went to their beds, were gossiping with the utmost violence, exchanging nods and odd little old-fashioned bows with other ladies in all parts of the house, leaning over to look whether the parquet was well filled, and remarking that there were more people in the *Balcon* than usual. The musicians were dropping into the orchestra. I was startled to see a fair face I knew – that pleasant-looking young violinist with the brown eyes, whose name I had heard called out at the eye hospital. They all seemed very fond of him, particularly a man who struggled about with a violoncello, and who seemed to have a series of jokes to relate to Herr Helfen, exploding with laughter, and every now and then shaking the loose thick hair from his handsome, genial face. Helfen listened to him with a half smile, screwing up his violin and giving him a quiet look now and then. The inspiring noise of tuning up had begun, and I was on the very tiptoe of expectation.

As I turned once more and looked round, Vincent said, laughing, "Miss Wedderburn, your hat has hit me three times in the face." It was, by the by, the brown hat which had graced my head that day at Köln.

"Oh, has it? I beg your pardon!" said I, laughing too, as I brought my eyes again to bear on the stage. "The seats are too near toge – "

Further words were upon my lips, but they were never uttered. In roving across the orchestra to the foot-lights my eyes were arrested. In the well of the orchestra immediately before my eyes was one empty chair, that by right belonging to the leader of the first violins. Friedhelm Helfen sat in the one next below it. All the rest of the musicians were assembled. The conductor was in his place, and looked a little impatiently toward that empty chair. Through a door to the left of the orchestra there came a man, carrying a violin, and made his way, with a nod here, a half smile there, a tap on the shoulder in another direction. Arrived at the empty chair, he laid his hand upon Helfen's shoulder, and bending over him, spoke to him as he seated himself. He kept his hand on that shoulder, as if he liked it to be there. Helfen's eyes said as plainly as possibly that he liked it. Fast friends, on the face of it, were these two men. In this moment, though I sat still, motionless, and quiet, I certainly realized as nearly as possible that impossible sensation, the turning upside down of the world. I did not breathe. I waited, spell-bound, in the vague idea that my eyes might open and I find that I had been dreaming. After an earnest speech to Helfen the new-comer raised his head. As he shouldered his violin his eyes traveled carelessly along the first row of the parquet – our row. I did not awake; things did not melt away in a mist before my eyes. He was Eugen Courvoisier, and he looked braver, handsomer, gallanter, and more apart from the crowd of men now, in this moment, than even my sentimental dreams had pictured him. I felt it all: I also know now that it was partly the very strength of the feeling that I had – the very intensity of the admiration which took from me the reflection and reason for the moment. I felt as if every one must see how I felt. I remembered that no one knew what had happened; I dreaded lest they should. I did the most cowardly and treacherous thing that circumstances permitted to me – displayed to what an extent my power of folly and stupidity could carry me. I saw these strange bright eyes, whose power I felt, coming toward me. In one second they would be upon me. I felt myself white with anxiety. His eyes were coming – coming – slowly, surely. They had fallen upon Vincent, and he nodded to him. They fell upon me. It was for the tenth of a second only. I saw a look of recognition flash into his eyes – upon his face. I saw that he was going to bow to me. With (as it seemed to me) all the blood in my veins rushing to my face, my head swimming, my heart beating, I dropped my eyes to the play-bill upon my lap, and stared at the crabbed German characters – the names of the players, the characters they took. "Elsa – Lohengrin."

I read them again and again, while my ears were singing, my heart beating so, and I thought every one in the theater knew and was looking at me.

"Mind you listen to the overture, Miss Wedderburn," said Vincent, hastily, in my ear, as the first liquid, yearning, long-drawn notes sounded from the violins.

"Yes," said I, raising my face at last, looking or rather feeling a look compelled from me, to the place where he sat. This time our eyes met fully. I do not know what I felt when I saw him look at me as unrecognizingly as if I had been a wooden doll in a shop window. Was he looking past me? No. His eyes met mine direct – glance for glance; not a sign, not a quiver of the mouth, not a waver of the eyelids. I heard no more of the overture. When he was playing, and so occupied with his music, I surveyed him surreptitiously; when he was not playing, I kept my eyes fixed firmly upon my play-bill. I did not know whether to be most distressed at my own disloyalty to a kind friend, or most appalled to find that the man with whom I had spent a whole afternoon in the firm conviction that he was outwardly, as well as inwardly, my equal and a gentleman – (how the tears, half of shame, half of joy, rise to my eyes now as I think of my poor, pedantic little scruples then!) the man of whom I had assuredly thought and dreamed many and many a time and oft was – a professional musician, a man in a band, a German band, playing in the public orchestra of a provincial town. Well! well!

In our village at home, where the population consisted of clergymen's widows, daughters of deceased naval officers, and old women in general, and those old women ladies of the genteelest description – the Army and the Church (for which I had been brought up to have the deepest veneration and esteem, as the two head powers in our land – for we did not take Manchester, Birmingham, and Liverpool into account at Skernford) – the Army and the Church, I say, look down a little upon Medicine and the Law, as being perhaps more necessary, but less select factors in that great sum – the Nation, Medicine and the Law looked down very decidedly upon commercial wealth, and Commerce in her turn turned up her nose at retail establishments, while one and all – Church and Army, Law and Medicine, Commerce in the gross and Commerce in the little – united in pointing the finger at artists, musicians, literati, *et id omne genus*, considering them, with some few well-known and orthodox exceptions, as bohemians, and calling them "persons." They were a class with whom we had and could have nothing in common; so utterly outside our life that we scarcely ever gave a thought to their existence. We read of pictures, and wished to see them; heard of musical wonders, and desired to hear them – as pictures, as compositions. I do not think it ever entered our heads to remember that a man with a quick life throbbing in his veins, with feelings, hopes, and fears and thoughts, painted the picture, and that in seeing it we also saw him – that a consciousness, if possible, yet more keen and vivid produced the combinations of sound which brought tears to our eyes when we heard "the band" – beautiful abstraction – play them! Certainly we never considered the performers as anything more than people who could play – one who blew his breath into a brass tube; another into a wooden pipe; one who scraped a small fiddle with fine strings, another who scraped a big one with coarse strings.

I was seventeen, and not having an original mind, had up to now judged things from earlier teachings and impressions. I do not ask to be excused. I only say that I was ignorant as ever even a girl of seventeen was. I did not know the amount of art and culture which lay among those rather shabby-looking members of the Elberthal *städtische Kapelle*– did not know that that little cherubic-faced man, who drew his bow so lovingly across his violin, had played under Mendelssohn's conductorship, and could tell tales about how the master had drilled his band, and what he had said about the first performance of the "Lobgesang." The young man to whom I had seen Courvoisier speaking was – I learned it later – a performer to ravish the senses, a conductor in the true sense – not a mere man who waves the stick up and down, but one who can put some of the meaning of the music into his gestures and dominate his players. I did not know that the musicians before me were nearly all true artists, and some of them undoubted gentlemen to boot, even if their income averaged something under that of a skilled Lancashire operative. But even if I had known it as well as possible, and had been aware that there could be nothing derogatory in my knowing or being known by one of them, I could not

have been more wretched than I was in having been, as it were, false to a friend. The dreadful thing was, or ought to be – I could not quite decide which – that such a person should have been my friend.

"How he must despise me!" I thought, my cheeks burning, my eyes fastened upon the play-bill. "I owe him ten shillings. If he likes he can point me out to them all and say, 'That is an English girl – lady I can not call her. I found her quite alone and lost at Köln, and I did all I could to help her. I saved her a great deal of anxiety and inconvenience. She was not above accepting my assistance; she confided her story very freely to me; she is nothing very particular – has nothing to boast of – no money, no knowledge, nothing superior; in fact, she is simple and ignorant to quite a surprising extent; but she has just cut me dead. What do you think of her?'"

Until the curtain went up, I sat in torture. When the play began, however, even my discomfort vanished in my wonder at the spectacle. It was the first I had seen. Try to picture it, oh, worn-out and *blasé* frequenter of play and opera! Try to realize the feelings of an impressionable young person of seventeen when "Lohengrin" was revealed to her for the first time – Lohengrin, the mystic knight, with the glamour of eld upon him – Lohengrin, sailing in blue and silver like a dream, in his swan-drawn boat, stepping majestic forth, and speaking in a voice of purest melody, as he thanks the bird and dismisses it:

"Dahin, woher mich trug dein Kahn
Kehr wieder mir zu unserm Glück!
Drum sei getreu dein Dienst gethan,
Leb wohl, leb wohl, mein lieber Schwan."

Elsa, with the wonder, the gratitude, the love, and alas! the weakness in her eyes! The astonished Brabantine men and women. They could not have been more astonished than I was. It was all perfectly real to me. What did I know about the stage? To me, yonder figure in blue mantle and glittering armor was Lohengrin, the son of Percivale, not Herr Siegel, the first tenor of the company, who acted stiffly, and did not know what to do with his legs. The lady in black velvet and spangles, who gesticulated in a corner, was an "Edelfrau" to me, as the programme called her, not the chorus leader, with two front teeth missing, an inartistically made-up countenance, and large feet. I sat through the first act with my eyes riveted upon the stage. What a thrill shot through me as the tenor embraced the soprano, and warbled melodiously, "*Elsa, ich liebe Dich!*" My mouth and eyes were wide open, I have no doubt, till at last the curtain fell. With a long sigh I slowly brought my eyes down and "Lohengrin" vanished like a dream. There was Eugen Courvoisier standing up – he had resumed the old attitude – was twirling his mustache and surveying the company. Some of the other performers were leaving the orchestra by two little doors. If only he would go too! As I nervously contemplated a graceful indifferent remark to Herr Brinks, who sat next to me, I saw Courvoisier step forward. Was he, could he be going to speak to me? I should have deserved it, I knew, but I felt as if I should die under the ordeal. I sat preternaturally still, and watched, as if mesmerized, the approach of the musician. He spoke again to the young man whom I had seen before, and they both laughed. Perhaps he had confided the whole story to him, and was telling him to observe what he was going to do. Then Herr Courvoisier tapped the young man on the shoulder and laughed again, and then he came on. He was not looking at me; he came up to the boarding, leaned his elbow upon it, and said to Eustace Vincent:

"Good-evening: *wie geht's Ihnen?*"

Vincent held out his hand. "Very well, thanks. And you? I haven't seen you lately."

"Then you haven't been at the theater lately," he laughed. He never testified to me by word or look that he had ever seen me before. At last I got to understand as his eyes repeatedly fell upon me without the slightest sign of recognition, that he did not intend to claim my acquaintance. I do not know whether I was most wretched or most relieved at the discovery. It spared me a great deal of embarrassment; it filled me, too, with inward shame beyond all description. And then, too, I was

dismayed to find how totally I had mistaken the position of the musician. Vincent was talking eagerly to him. They had moved a little nearer the other end of the orchestra. The young man, Helfen, had come up, others had joined them. I, meanwhile, sat still – heard every tone of his voice, and took in every gesture of his head or his hand, and I felt as I trust never to feel again – and yet I lived in some such feeling as that for what at least seemed to me a long time. What was the feeling that clutched me – held me fast – seemed to burn me? And what was that I heard? Vincent speaking:

"Last Thursday week, Courvoisier – why didn't you come? We were waiting for you?"

"I missed the train."

Until now he had been speaking German, but he said this distinctly in English and I heard every word.

"Missed the train?" cried Vincent in his cracked voice.

"Nonsense, man! Helfen, here, and Alekotte were in time and they had been at the probe as much as you."

"I was detained in Köln and couldn't get back till evening," said he. "Come along, Friedel; there's the call-bell."

I raised my eyes – met his. I do not know what expression was in mine. His never wavered, though he looked at me long and steadily – no glance of recognition – no sign still. I would have risked the astonishment of every one of them now, for a sign that he remembered me. None was given.

"Lohengrin" had no more attraction for me. I felt in pain that was almost physical, and weak with excitement as at last the curtain fell and we left our places.

"You were very quiet," said Vincent, as we walked home. "Did you not enjoy it?"

"Very much, thank you. It was very beautiful," said I, faintly.

"So Herr Courvoisier was not at the *soirée*," said the loud, rough voice of Anna Sartorius.

"No," was all Vincent said.

"Did you have anything new? Was Herr von Francius there too?"

"Yes; he was there too."

I pondered. Brinks whistled loudly the air of Elsa's "Brautzug," as we paced across the Lindenallée. We had not many paces to go. The lamps were lighted, the people were thronging thick as in the daytime. The air was full of laughter, talk, whistling and humming of the airs from the opera. My ear strained eagerly through the confusion. I could have caught the faintest sound of Courvoisier's voice had it been there, but it was not. And we came home; Vincent opened the door with his latch-key, said, "It has not been very brilliant, has it? That tenor is a stick," and we all went to our different rooms. It was in such wise that I met Eugen Courvoisier for the second time.

# CHAPTER XI

"Will you sing?"

The theater season closed with that evening on which "Lohengrin" was performed. I ran no risk of meeting Courvoisier face to face again in that alarming, sudden manner. But the subject had assumed diseased proportions in my mind. I found myself confronted with him yet, and week after week. My business in Elberthal was music – to learn as much music and hear as much music as I could: wherever there was music there was also Eugen Courvoisier – naturally. There was only one *städtische Kapelle* in Elberthal. Once a week at least – each Saturday – I saw him, and he saw me at the unfailing instrumental concert to which every one in the house went, and to absent myself from which would instantly set every one wondering what could be my motive for it. My usual companions were Clara Steinmann, Vincent, the Englishman, and often Frau Steinmann herself. Anna Sartorius and some other girl students of art usually brought sketch-books, and were far too much occupied in making studies or caricatures of the audience to pay much attention to the music. The audience were, however, hardened; they were used to it. Anna and her friends were not alone in the practice. There were a dozen or more artists or *soi-disant* artists busily engaged with their sketch-books. The concert-room offered a rich field to them. One could at least be sure of one thing – that they were not taking off the persons at whom they looked most intently. There must be quite a gallery hidden away in some old sketch-books – of portraits or wicked caricatures of the audience that frequented the concerts of the Instrumental Musik Verein. I wonder where they all are? Who has them? What has become of the light-hearted sketchers? I often recall those homely Saturday evening concerts; the long, shabby saal with its faded out-of-date decorations; its rows of small tables with the well-known groups around them; the mixed and motley audience. How easy, after a little while, to pick out the English, by their look of complacent pleasure at the delightful ease and unceremoniousness of the whole affair; their gladness at finding a public entertainment where one's clothes were not obliged to be selected with a view to outshining those of every one else in the room; the students shrouded in a mystery, secret and impenetrable, of tobacco smoke. The spruce-looking school-boys from the Gymnasium and Realschule, the old captains and generals, the Fräulein their daughters, the *gnädigen Frauen* their wives; dressed in the disastrous plaids, checks, and stripes, which somehow none but German women ever got hold of. Shades of Le Follet! What costumes there were on young and old for an observing eye! What bonnets, what boots, what stupendously daring accumulation of colors and styles and periods of dress crammed and piled on the person of one substantial Frau Generalin, or Doctorin or Professorin! The low orchestra – the tall, slight, yet commanding figure of von Francius on the estrade; his dark face with its indescribable mixture of pride, impenetrability and insouciance; the musicians behind him – every face of them well known to the audience as those of the audience to them: it was not a mere "concert," which in England is another word for so much expense and so much vanity – it was a gathering of friends. We knew the music in which the Kapelle was most at home; we knew their strong points and their weak ones; the passage in the Pastoral Symphony where the second violins were a little weak; that overture where the blaseninstrumente came out so well – the symphonies one heard – the divine wealth of undying art and beauty! Those days are past: despite what I suffered in them they had their joys for me. Yes; I suffered at those concerts. I must ever see the one face which for me blotted out all others in the room, and endure the silent contempt which I believed I saw upon it. Probably it was my own feeling of inward self-contempt which made me believe I saw that expression there. His face had for me a miserable, basilisk-like attraction. When I was there he was there, I must look at him and endure the silent, smiling disdain which I at least believed he bestowed upon me. How did he contrive to do it? How often our eyes met, and every time it happened he looked me full in the face, and never would give me the faintest gleam of recognition!

It was as though I looked at two diamonds, which returned my stare unwinkingly and unseeingly. I managed to make myself thoroughly miserable – pale and thin with anxiety and self-reproach I let this man, and the speculation concerning him, take up my whole thoughts, and I kept silence, because I dreaded so intensely lest any question should bring out the truth. I smiled drearily when I thought that there certainly was no danger of any one but Miss Hallam ever knowing it, for the only person who could have betrayed me chose now, of deliberate purpose, to cut me as completely as I had once cut him.

As if to show very decidedly that he did intend to cut me, I met him one day, not in the street, but in the house, on the stairs. He sprung up the steps, two at a time, came to a momentary pause on the landing, and looked at me. No look of surprise, none of recognition. He raised his hat; that was nothing; in ordinary politeness he would have done it had he never seen me in his life before. The same cold, bright, hard glance fell upon me, keen as an eagle's, and as devoid of every gentle influence as the same.

I silently held out my hand.

He looked at it for a moment, then with a grave coolness which chilled me to the soul, murmured something about "not having the honor," bowed slightly, and stepping forward, walked into Vincent's room.

I was going to the room in which my piano stood, where I had my music lessons, for they had told me that Herr von Francius was waiting. I looked at him as I went into the room. How different he was from that other man; darker, more secret, more scornful-looking, with not less power, but so much less benevolence.

I was *distrait*, and sung exceedingly ill. We had been going through the solo soprano parts of the "Paradise Lost." I believe I sung vilely that morning. I was not thinking of Eva's sin and the serpent, but of other things, which, despite the story related in the Book of Genesis, touched me more nearly. Several times already had he made me sing through Eva's stammering answer to her God's question:

"Ah, Lord!.. The Serpent!
The beautiful, glittering Serpent,
With his beautiful, glittering words,
He, Lord, did lead astray
The weak Woman!"

"Bah!" exclaimed von Francius, when I had sung it some three or four times, each time worse, each time more distractedly. He flung the music upon the floor, and his eyes flashed, startling me from my uneasy thoughts back to the present. He was looking at me with a dark cloud upon his face. I stared, stooped meekly, and picked up the music.

"Fräulein, what are you dreaming about?" he asked, impatiently. "You are not singing Eva's shame and dawning terror as she feels herself undone. You are singing – and badly, too – a mere sentimental song, such as any school-girl might stumble through. I am ashamed of you."

"I – I," stammered I, crimsoning, and ashamed for myself too.

"You were thinking of something else," he said, his brow clearing a little. "*Na!* it comes so sometimes. Something has happened to distract your attention. The amiable Miss Hallam has been a little *more* amiable than usual."

"No."

"Well, well. '*S ist mir egal.* But now, as you have wasted half an hour in vanity and vexation, will you be good enough to let your thoughts return here to me and to your duty? or else – I must go, and leave the lesson till you are in the right voice again."

"I am all right – try me," said I, my pride rising in arms as I thought of Courvoisier's behavior a short time ago.

"Very well. Now. You are Eva, please remember, the first woman, and you have gone wrong. Think of who is questioning you, and – "

"Oh, yes, yes, I know. Please begin."

He began the accompaniment, and I sung for the fifth time Eva's scattered notes of shame and excuse.

"Brava!" said he, when I had finished, and I was the more startled as he had never before given me the faintest sign of approval, but had found such constant fault with me that I usually had a fit of weeping after my lesson; weeping with rage and disappointment at my own shortcomings.

"At last you know what it means," said he. "I always told you your forte was dramatic singing."

"Dramatic! But this is an oratorio."

"It may be called an oratorio, but it is a drama all the same. What more dramatic, for instance, than what you have just sung, and all that goes before? Now suppose we go on. I will take Adam."

Having given myself up to the music, I sung my best with earnestness. When we had finished von Francius closed the book, looked at me, and said:

"Will you sing the 'Eva' music at the concert?"

"I?"

He bowed silently, and still kept his eyes fixed upon my face, as if to say, "Refuse if you dare."

"I – I'm afraid I should make such a mess of it," I murmured at last.

"Why any more than to-day?"

"Oh! but all the people!" said I, expostulating; "it is so different."

He gave a little laugh of some amusement.

"How odd! and yet how like you!" said he. "Do you suppose that the people who will be at the concert will be half as much alive to your defects as I am? If you can sing before me, surely you can sing before so many rows of – "

"Cabbages? I wish I could think they were."

"Nonsense! What would be the use, where the pleasure, in singing to cabbages? I mean simply inhabitants of Elberthal. What can there be so formidable about them?"

I murmured something.

"Well, will you do it?"

"I am sure I should break down," said I, trying to find some sign of relenting in his eyes. I discovered none. He was not waiting to hear whether I said "yes" or "no," he was waiting until I said "yes."

"If you did," he replied, with a friendly smile, "I should never teach you another note."

"Why not?"

"Because you would be a coward, and not worth teaching."

"But Miss Hallam?"

"Leave her to me."

I still hesitated.

"It is the *premier pas qui coûte*," said he, keeping a friendly but determined gaze upon my undecided face.

"I want to accustom you to appearing in public," he added. "By degrees, you know. There is nothing unusual in Germany for one in your position to sing in such a concert."

"I was not thinking of that; but that it is impossible that I can sing well enough – "

"You sing well enough for my purpose. You will be amazed to find what an impetus to your studies, and what a filip to your industry will be given by once singing before a number of other people. And then, on the stage – "

"But I am not going on the stage."

"I think you are. At least, if you do otherwise you will do wrong. You have gifts which are in themselves a responsibility."

"I – gifts – what gifts?" I asked, incredulously. "I am as stupid as a donkey. My sisters always said so, and sisters are sure to know; you may trust them for that."

"Then you will take the soprano solos?"

"Do you think I can?"

"I don't think you can; I say you must. I will call upon Miss Hallam this afternoon. And the *gage*– fee – what you call it? – is fifty thalers."

"What!" I cried, my whole attitude changing to one of greedy expectation. "Shall I be paid?"

"Why, *natürlich*," said he, turning over sheets of music, and averting his face to hide a smile.

"Oh! then I will sing."

"Good! Only please to remember that it is my concert, and I am responsible for the soloists; and pray think rather more about the beautiful glittering serpent than about the beautiful glittering thalers."

"I can think about both," was my unholy, time-serving reply.

Fifty thalers. Untold gold!

# CHAPTER XII

"Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter."

It was the evening of the haupt-probe, a fine moonlight night in the middle of May – a month since I had come to Elberthal, and it seemed so much, so very much more.

To my astonishment – and far from agreeable astonishment – Anna Sartorius informed me of her intention to accompany me to the probe. I put objections in her way as well as I knew how, and said I did not think outsiders were admitted. She laughed, and said:

"That is too funny, that you should instruct me in such things. Why, I have a ticket for all the proben, as any one can have who chooses to pay two thalers at the *sasse*. I have a mind to hear this. They say the orchestra are going to rebel against von Francius. And I am going to the concert to-morrow, too. One can not hear too much of such fine music; and when one's friend sings, too – "

"What friend of yours is going to sing?" I inquired, coldly.

"Why, you, you *allerliebster kleiner Engel*," said she, in a tone of familiarity, to which I strongly objected.

I could say no more against her going, but certainly displayed no enthusiastic desire for her company.

The probe, we found, was to be in the great saal; it was half lighted, and there were perhaps some fifty people, holders of probe-tickets, seated in the parquet.

"You are going to sing well to-night," said von Francius, as he handed me up the steps – "for my sake and your own, *nicht wahr*?"

"I will try," said, I, looking round the great orchestra, and seeing how full it was – so many fresh faces, both in chorus and orchestra.

And as I looked, I saw Courvoisier come in by the little door at the top of the orchestra steps and descend to his place. His face was clouded – very clouded; I had never seen him look thus before. He had no smile for those who greeted him. As he took his place beside Helfen, and the latter asked him some question, he stared absently at him, then answered with a look of absence and weariness.

"Herr Courvoisier," said von Francius – and I, being near, heard the whole dialogue – "you always allow yourself to be waited for."

Courvoisier glanced up. I with a new, sudden interest, watched the behavior of the two men. In the face of von Francius I thought to discover dislike, contempt.

"I beg your pardon; I was detained," answered Courvoisier, composedly.

"It is unfortunate that you should be so often detained at the time when your work should be beginning."

Unmoved and unchanging, Courvoisier heard and submitted to the words, and to the tone in which they were spoken – sarcastic, sneering, and unbelieving.

"Now we will begin," pursued von Francius, with a disagreeable smile, as he rapped with his baton upon the rail. I looked at Courvoisier – looked at his friend, Friedhelm Helfen. The former was sitting as quietly as possible, rather pale, and with the same clouded look, but not deeper than before; the latter was flushed, and eyed von Francius with no friendly glance.

There seemed a kind of slumbering storm in the air. There was none of the lively discussion usual at the proben. Courvoisier, first of the first violins, and from whom all the others seemed to take their tone, sat silent, grave and still. Von Francius, though quiet, was biting. I felt afraid of him. Something must have happened to put him into that evil mood.

My part did not come until late in the second part of the oratorio. I had almost forgotten that I was to sing at all, and was watching von Francius and listening to his sharp speeches. I remembered what Anna Sartorius had said in describing this haupt-probe to me. It was all just as she had said. He

was severe; his speeches roused the phlegmatic blood, set the professional instrumentalists laughing at their amateur co-operators, but provoked no reply or resentment. It was extraordinary, the effect of this man's will upon those he had to do with – upon women in particular.

There was one haughty-looking blonde – a Swede – tall, majestic, with long yellow curls, and a face full of pride and high temper, who gave herself decided airs, and trusted to her beauty and insolence to carry off certain radical defects of harshness of voice and want of ear. I never forgot how she stared me down from head to foot on the occasion of my first appearance alone, as if to say, "What do you want here?"

It was in vain that she looked haughty and handsome. Addressing her as Fräulein Hulstrom, von Francius gave her a sharp lecture, and imitated the effect of her voice in a particularly soft passage with ludicrous accuracy. The rest of the chorus was tittering audibly, the musicians, with the exception of Courvoisier and his friend, nudging each other and smiling. She bridled haughtily, flashed a furious glance at her mentor, grew crimson, received a sarcastic smile which baffled her, and subsided again.

So it was with them all. His blame was plentiful; his praise so rare as to be almost an unknown quantity. His chorus and orchestra were famed for the minute perfection and precision of their play and singing. Perhaps the performance lacked something else – passion, color. Von Francius, at that time at least, was no genius, though his talent, his power, and his method were undeniably great. He was, however, not popular – not the Harold, the "beloved leader" of his people.

It was to-night that I was first shown how all was not smooth for him; that in this art union there were splits – "little rifts within the lute," which, should they extend, might literally in the end "make the music mute." I heard whispers around me. "Herr von Francius is angry." – "*Nicht wahr*?" – "Herr Courvoisier looks angry too." – "Yes, he does." – "There will be an open quarrel there soon." – "I think so." – "They are both clever; one should be less clever than the other." – "They are so opposed." – "Yes. They say Courvoisier has a party of his own, and that all the orchestra are on his side." – "So!" in accents of curiosity and astonishment – "*Ja wohl!* And that if von Francius does not mind, he will see Herr Courvoisier in his place," etc., etc., without end. All which excited me much, as the first glimpse into the affairs of those about whom we think much and know little (a form of life well known to women in general) always does interest us.

These things made me forget to be nervous or anxious. I saw myself now as part of the whole, a unit in the sum of a life which interested me. Von Francius gave me a sign of approval when I had finished, but it was a mechanical one. He was thinking of other things.

The probe was over. I walked slowly down the room looking for Anna Sartorius, more out of politeness than because I wished for her company. I was relieved to find that she had already gone, probably not finding all the entertainment she expected, and I was able, with a good conscience, to take my way home alone.

My way home! not yet. I was to live through something before I could take my way home.

I went out of the large saal through the long veranda into the street. A flood of moonlight silvered it. There was a laughing, chattering crowd about me – all the chorus; men and girls, going to their homes or their lodgings, in ones or twos, or in large cheerful groups. Almost opposite the Tonhalle was a tall house, one of a row, and of this house the lowest floor was used as a shop for antiquities, curiosities, and a thousand odds and ends useful or beautiful to artists, costumes, suits of armor, old china, anything and everything. The window was yet lighted. As I paused for a moment before taking my homeward way, I saw two men cross the moonlit street and go in at the open door of the shop. One was Courvoisier; in the other I thought to recognize Friedhelm Helfen, but was not quite sure about it. They did not go into the shop, as I saw by the bright large lamp that burned within, but along the passage and up the stairs. I followed them, resolutely beating down shyness, unwillingness, timidity. My reluctant steps took me to the window of the antiquity shop, and I stood looking in before I could make up my mind to enter. Bits of rococo ware stood in the window, majolica jugs, chased metal dishes and bowls, bits of Renaissance work, tapestry, carpet, a helm with the vizor up, gaping

at me as if tired of being there. I slowly drew my purse from my pocket, put together three thalers and a ten groschen piece, and with lingering, unwilling steps, entered the shop. A pretty young woman in a quaint dress, which somehow harmonized with the place, came forward. She looked at me as if wondering what I could possibly want. My very agitation gave calmness to my voice as I inquired,

"Does Herr Courvoisier, a musiker, live here?"

"*Ja wohl!*" answered the young woman, with a look of still greater surprise. "On the third *étage*, straight upstairs. The name is on the door."

I turned away, and went slowly up the steep wooden uncarpeted staircase. On the first landing a door opened at the sound of my footsteps, and a head was popped out – a rough, fuzzy head, with a pale, eager-looking face under the bush of hair.

"Ugh!" said the owner of this amiable visage, and shut the door with a bang. I looked at the plate upon it; it bore the legend, "Hermann Duntze, Maler." To the second *étage*. Another door – another plate: "Bernhardt Knoop, Maler." The house seemed to be a resort of artists. There was a lamp burning on each landing; and now, at last, with breath and heart alike failing, I ascended the last flight of stairs, and found myself upon the highest *étage* before another door, on which was roughly painted up, "Eugen Courvoisier." I looked at it with my heart beating suffocatingly. Some one had scribbled in red chalk beneath the Christian name, "Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter." Had it been done in jest or earnest? I wondered, and then knocked. Such a knock!

"*Herein!*"

I opened the door, and stepped into a large, long, low room. On the table, in the center, burned a lamp, and sitting there, with the light falling upon his earnest young face, was Helfen, the violinist, and near to him sat Courvoisier, with a child upon his knee, a little lad with immense dark eyes, tumbled black hair, and flushed, just awakened face. He was clad in his night-dress and a little red dressing-gown, and looked like a spot of almost feverish, quite tropic brightness in contrast with the grave, pale face which bent over him. Courvoisier held the two delicate little hands in one of his own, and was looking down with love unutterable upon the beautiful, dazzling child-face. Despite the different complexion and a different style of feature too, there was so great a likeness in the two faces, particularly in the broad, noble brow, as to leave no doubt of the relationship. My musician and the boy were father and son.

Courvoisier looked up as I came in. For one half moment there leaped into his eyes a look of surprise and of something more. If it had lasted a second longer I could have sworn it was welcome – then it was gone. He rose, turned the child over to Helfen, saying, "One moment, Friedel," then turned to me as to some stranger who had come on an errand as yet unknown to him, and did not speak. The little one, from Helfen's knee, stared at me with large, solemn eyes, and Helfen himself looked scarcely less impressed.

I have no doubt I looked frightened – I felt so – frightened out of my senses. I came tremulously forward, and offering my pieces of silver, said, in the smallest voice which I had ever used:

"I have come to pay my debt. I did not know where you lived, or I should have done it long before."

He made no motion to take the money, but said – I almost started, so altered was the voice from that of my frank companion at Köln, to an icy coldness of ceremony:

"*Mein Fräulein*, I do not understand."

"You – you – the things you paid for. Do you not remember me?"

"Remember a lady who has intimated that she wishes me to forget her? No, I do not."

What a horribly complicated revenge! thought I, as I said, ever lower and lower, more and more shamedfacedly, while the young violinist sat with the child on his knee, and his soft brown eyes staring at me in wonder:

"I think you must remember. You helped me at Köln, and you paid for my ticket to Elberthal, and for something that I had at the hotel. You told me that was what I owed you."

I again tendered the money; again he made no effort to receive it, but said:

"I am sorry that I do not understand to what you refer. I only know it is impossible that I could ever have told you you owed me three thalers, or three anything, or that there could, under any circumstances, be any question of money between you and me. Suppose we consider the topic at an end."

Such a voice of ice, and such a manner, to chill the boldest heart, I had never yet encountered. The cool, unspeakable disdain cut me to the quick.

"You have no right to refuse the money," said I, desperately. "You have no right to insult me by – by – " An appropriate peroration refused itself.

Again the sweet, proud, courteous smile; not only courteous, but courtly; again the icy little bow of the head, which would have done credit to a prince in displeasure, and which yet had the deference due from a gentleman to a lady.

"You will excuse the semblance of rudeness which may appear if I say that if you unfortunately are not of a very decided disposition, I am. It is impossible that I should ever have the slightest intercourse with a lady who has once unequivocally refused my acquaintance. The lady may honor me by changing her mind; I am sorry that I can not respond. I do not change my mind."

"You must let us part on equal terms," I reiterated. "It is unjust – "

"Yourself closed all possibility of the faintest attempt at further acquaintance, *mein Fräulein*. The matter is at an end."

"Herr Courvoisier, I – "

"At an end," he repeated, calmly, gently, looking at me as he had often looked at me since the night of "Lohengrin," with a glance that baffled and chilled me.

"I wish to apologize – "

"For what?" he inquired, with the faintest possible look of indifferent surprise.

"For my rudeness – my surprise – I – "

"You refer to one evening at the opera. You exercised your privilege, as a lady, of closing an acquaintance which you did not wish to renew. I now exercise mine, as a gentleman, of saying that I choose to abide by that decision, now and always."

I was surprised. Despite my own apologetic frame of mind, I was surprised at his hardness; at the narrowness and ungenerosity which could so determinedly shut the door in the face of an humble penitent like me. He must see how I had repented the stupid slip I had made; he must see how I desired to atone for it. It was not a slip of the kind one would name irreparable, and yet he behaved to me as if I had committed a crime; froze me with looks and words. Was he so self-conscious and so vain that he could not get over that small slight to his self-consequence, committed in haste and confusion by an ignorant girl? Even then, even in that moment I asked myself these questions, my astonishment being almost as great as my pain, for it was the very reverse, the very opposite of what I had pictured to myself. Once let me see him and speak to him, I had said to myself, and it would be all right; every lineament of his face, every tone of his voice, bespoke a frank, generous nature – one that could forgive. Alas! and alas! this was the truth!

He had come to the door; he stood by it now, holding it open, looking at me so courteously, so deferentially, with a manner of one who had been a gentleman and lived with gentlemen all his life, but in a way which at the same time ordered me out as plainly as possible.

I went to the door. I could no longer stand under that chilling glance, nor endure the cool, polished contempt of the manner. I behaved by no means heroically; neither flung my head back, nor muttered any defiance, nor in any way proved myself a person of spirit. All I could do was to look appealingly into his face; to search the bright, steady eyes, without finding in them any hint of softening or relenting.

"Will you not take it, please?" I asked, in a quivering voice and with trembling lips.

"Impossible, *mein Fräulein*," with the same chilly little bow as before.

Struggling to repress my tears, I said no more, but passed out, cut to the heart. The door was closed gently behind me. I felt as if it had closed upon a bright belief of my youth. I leaned for a moment against the passage wall and pressed my hand against my eyes. From within came the sound of a child's voice, "*Mein vater*," and the soft, deep murmur of Eugen's answer; then I went downstairs and into the open street.

That hated, hateful three thalers ten groschen were still clasped in my hand. What was I to do with it? Throw it into the Rhine, and wash it away forever? Give it to some one in need? Fling it into the gutter? Send it him by post? I dismissed that idea for what it was worth. No; I would obey his prohibition. I would keep it – those very coins, and when I felt inclined to be proud and conceited about anything on my own account, or disposed to put down superhuman charms to the account of others, I would go and look at them, and they would preach me eloquent sermons.

As I went into the house, up the stairs to my room, the front door opened again and Anna Sartorius overtook me.

"I thought you had left the probe?" said I, staring at her.

"So I had, *Herzchen*," said she, with her usual ambiguous, mocking laugh; "but I was not compelled to come home, like a good little girl, the moment I came out of the Tonhalle. I have been visiting a friend. But where have you been, for the probe must have been over for some time? We heard the people go past; indeed, some of them were staying in the house where I was. Did you take a walk in the moonlight?"

"Good-night," said I, too weary and too indifferent even to answer her.

"It must have been a tiring walk; you seem weary, quite *ermüdet*," said she, mockingly, and I made no answer.

"A haupt-probe is a dismal thing after all," she called out to me from the top of the stairs.

From my inmost heart I agreed with her.

# CHAPTER XIII

## KAFFEEKLATSCH

"*Phillis.* I want none o' thy friendship!
*Lesbia.* Then take my enmity!"

"When a number of ladies meet together to discuss matters of importance, we call it 'Kaffeeklatsch,'" Courvoisier had said to me on that never-forgotten afternoon of my adventure at Köln.

It was my first kaffeeklatsch which, in a measure, decided my destiny. Hitherto, that is, up to the end of June, I had not been at any entertainment of this kind. At last there came an invitation to Frau Steinmann and to Anna Sartorius, to assist at a "coffee" of unusual magnitude, and Frau Steinmann suggested that I should go with them and see what it was like. Nothing loath, I consented.

"Bring some work," said Anna Sartorius to me, "or you will find it *langweilig*– slow, I mean."

"Shall we not have some music?"

"Music, yes, the sweetest of all – that of our own tongues. You shall hear every one's candid opinion of every one else – present company always excepted, and you will see what the state of Elberthal society really is – present company still excepted. By a very strange chance the ladies who meet at a klatsch are always good, pious, virtuous, and, above all, charitable. It is wonderful how well we manage to keep the black sheep out, and have nothing but lambs immaculate."

"Oh, don't!"

"Oh, bah! I know the Elberthal *Klatscherei*. It has picked me to pieces many a time. After you have partaken to-day of its coffee and its cakes, it will pick you to pieces."

"But," said I, arranging the ruffles of my very best frock, which I had been told it was *de rigueur* to wear, "I thought women never gossiped so much among men."

Fräulein Sartorius laughed loud and long.

"The men! *Du meine Güte!* Men at a kaffeeklatsch! Show me the one that a man dare even look into, and I'll crown you – and him too – with laurel, and bay, and the wild parsley. A man at a kaffee —*mag Gott es bewahren!*"

"Oh!" said I, half disappointed, and with a very poor, mean sense of dissatisfaction at having put on my pretty new dress for the first time only for the edification of a number of virulent gossips.

"Men!" she reiterated with a harsh laugh as we walked toward the Goldsternstrasse, our destination. "Men – no. We despise their company, you see. We only talk about them directly or indirectly from the moment of meeting to that of parting."

"I'm sorry there are no gentlemen," said I, and I was. I felt I looked well.

Arrived at the scene of the kaffee, we were conducted to a bedroom where we laid aside our hats and mantles. I was standing before the glass, drawing a comb through my upturned hair, and contemplating with irrepressible satisfaction the delicate lavender hue of my dress, when I suddenly saw reflected behind me the dark, harshly cut face of Anna Sartorius. She started slightly; then said, with a laugh which had in it something a little forced:

"We are a contrast, aren't we? Beauty and the Beast, one might almost say. *Na! 's schad't nix.*"

I turned away in a little offended pride. Her familiarity annoyed me. What if she were a thousand times cleverer, wittier, better read than I? I did not like her. A shade crossed her face.

"Is it that you are thoroughly unamiable?" said she, in a voice which had reproach in it, "or are all English girls so touchy that they receive a compliment upon their good looks as if it were an offense?"

"I wish you would not talk of my 'good looks' as if I were a dog or a horse!" said I, angrily. "I hate to be flattered. I am no beauty, and do not wish to be treated as if I were."

"Do you always hate it?" said she from the window, whither she had turned. "*Ach!* there goes Herr Courvoisier!"

The name startled me like a sudden report. I made an eager step forward before I had time to recollect myself – then stopped.

"He is not out of sight yet," said she, with a curious look, "if you wish to see him."

I sat down and made no answer. What prompted her to talk in such a manner? Was it a mere coincidence?

"He is a handsome fellow, *nicht wahr*?" she said, still watching me, while I thought Frau Steinmann never would manage to arrange her cap in the style that pleased her. "But a *Taugenichts* all the same," pursued Anna as I did not speak. "Don't you think so?" she added.

"A *Taugenichts*– I don't know what that is."

"What you call a good-for-nothing."

"Oh."

"*Nicht wahr?*" she persisted.

"I know nothing about it."

"I do. I will tell you all about him some time."

"I don't wish to know anything about him."

"So!" said she, with a laugh.

Without further word or look I followed Frau Steinmann down-stairs.

The lady of the house was seated in the midst of a large concourse of old and young ladies, holding her own with a well-seasoned hardihood in the midst of the awful Babel of tongues. What a noise! It smote upon and stunned my confounded ear. Our hostess advanced and led me with a wave of the hand into the center of the room, when she introduced me to about a dozen ladies: and every one in the room stopped talking and working, and stared at me intently and unwinkingly until my name had been pronounced, after which some continued still to stare at me, and commenting openly upon it. Meanwhile I was conducted to a sofa at the end of the room, and requested in a set phrase, "*Bitte, Fräulein, nehmen sie platz auf dem sofa*," with which long custom has since made me familiar, to take my seat upon it. I humbly tried to decline the honor, but Anna Sartorius, behind me, whispered:

"Sit down directly, unless you want to be thought an utter barbarian. The place has been kept for you."

Deeply impressed, and very uncomfortable, I sat down. First one and then another came and spoke and talked to me. Their questions and remarks were much in this style:

"Do you like Elberthal? What is your Christian name? How old are you? Have you been or are you engaged to be married? They break off engagements in England for a mere trifle, don't they? *Schrecklich!* Did you get your dress in Elberthal? What did it cost the *elle*? Young English ladies wear silk much more than young German ladies. You never go to the theater on Sunday in England – you are all *pietistisch*. How beautifully you speak our language! Really no foreign accent!" (This repeatedly and unblushingly, in spite of my most flagrant mistakes, and in the face of my most feeble, halting, and stammering efforts to make myself understood.) "Do you learn music? singing? From whom? Herr von Francius? *Ach, so!*" (Pause, while they all look impressively at me. The very name of von Francius calls up emotions of no common order.) "I believe I have seen you at the proben to the 'Paradise Lost.' Perhaps you are the lady who is to take the solos? Yes! *Du lieber Himmel!* What do you think of Herr von Francius? Is he not nice?" (*Nett*, though, signifies something feminine and finikin.) "No? How odd! There is no accounting for the tastes of English women. Do you know many people in Elberthal? No? *Schade!* No officers? not Hauptmann Sachse?" (with voice growing gradually shriller), "nor Lieutenant Pieper? Not know Lieutenant Pieper! *Um Gotteswillen!* What do you mean? He is so handsome! such eyes! such a mustache! *Herrgott!* And you do not know him? I

will tell you something. When he went off to the autumn maneuvers at Frankfort (I have it on good authority), twenty young ladies went to see him off."

"Disgusting!" I exclaimed, unable to control my feelings any longer. I saw Anna Sartorius malignantly smiling as she rocked herself in an American rocking-chair.

"How! disgusting? You are joking. He had dozens of bouquets. All the girls are in love with him. They compelled the photographer to sell them his photograph, and they all believe he is in love with them. I believe Luise Breidenstein will die if he doesn't propose to her."

"They ought to be ashamed of themselves."

"But he is so handsome, so delightful. He dances divinely, and knows such good riddles, and acts —*ach, himmlisch!*"

"But how absurd to make such a fuss of him!" I cried, hot and indignant. "The idea of going on so about a man!"

A chorus, a shriek, a Babel of expostulations.

"Listen, Thekla! Fräulein Wedderburn does not know Lieutenant Pieper, and does not think it right to *schwärm* for him."

"The darling! No one can help it who knows him!" said another.

"Let her wait till she does know him," said Thekla, a sentimental young woman, pretty in a certain sentimental way, and graceful too – also sentimentally – with the sentiment that lingers about young ladies' albums with leaves of smooth, various-hued note-paper, and about the sonnets which nestle within the same. There was a sudden shriek:

"There he goes! There is the Herr Lieutenant riding by. Just come here, *mein Fräulein*! See him! Judge for yourself!"

A strong hand dragged me, whether I would or not, to the window, and pointed out to me the Herr Lieutenant riding by. An adorable creature in a Hussar uniform; he had pink cheeks and a straight nose, and the loveliest little model of a mustache ever seen; tightly curling black hair, and the dearest little feet and hands imaginable.

"Oh, the dear, handsome, delightful follow!" cried one enthusiastic young creature, who had scrambled upon a chair in the background and was gazing after him while another, behind me, murmured in tones of emotion:

"Look how he salutes – divine, isn't it?"

I turned away, smiling an irrepressible smile. My musician, with his ample traits and clear, bold eyes, would have looked a wild, rough, untamable creature by the side of that wax-doll beauty – that pretty little being who had just ridden by. I thought I saw them side by side – Herr Lieutenant Pieper and Eugen Courvoisier. The latter would have been as much more imposing than the former as an oak is more imposing than a spruce fir – as Gluck than Lortzing. And could these enthusiastic young ladies have viewed the two they would have been true to their lieutenant; so much was certain. They would have said that the other was a wild man, who did not cut his hair often enough, who had large hands, whose collar was perhaps chosen more with a view to ease and the free movement of the throat than to the smallest number of inches within which it was possible to confine that throat; who did not wear polished kid boots, and was not seen off from the station by twenty devoted admirers of the opposite sex, was not deluged with bouquets. With a feeling as of something singing at my heart I went back to my place, smiling still.

"See! she is quite charmed with the Herr Lieutenant! Is he not delightful?"

"Oh, very; so is a Dresden china shepherd, but if you let him fall he breaks."

"*Wie komisch!* how odd!" was the universal comment upon my eccentricity. The conversation had wandered off to other military stars, all of whom were *reizend*, *hübsch*, or *nett*. So it went on until I got heartily tired of it, and then the ladies discussed their female neighbors, but I leave that branch of the subject to the intelligent reader. It was the old tune with the old variations, which were rattled over in the accustomed manner. I listened, half curious, half appalled, and thought of various

speeches made by Anna Sartorius. Whether she were amiable or not, she had certainly a keen insight into the hearts and motives of her fellow-creatures. Perhaps the gift had soured her.

Anna and I walked home alone. Frau Steinmann was, with other elderly ladies of the company, to spend the evening there. As we walked down the Königsallée – how well to this day do I remember it! the chestnuts were beginning to fade, the road was dusty, the sun setting gloriously, the people thronging in crowds – she said suddenly, quietly, and in a tone of the utmost composure:

"So you don't admire Lieutenant Pieper so much as Herr Courvoisier?"

"What do you mean?" I cried, astonished, alarmed, and wondering what unlucky chance led her to talk to me of Eugen.

"I mean what I say; and for my part I agree with you – partly. Courvoisier, bad though he may be, is a man; the other a mixture of doll and puppy."

She spoke in a friendly tone; discursive, as if inviting confidence and comment on my part. I was not inclined to give either. I shrunk with morbid nervousness from owning to any knowledge of Eugen. My pride, nay, my very self-esteem, bled whenever I thought of him or heard him mentioned. Above all, I shrunk from the idea of discussing him, or anything pertaining to him, with Anna Sartorius.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.