

A contemptuous smile grimaced the wrinkled face of the old woman, and was her only answer.

"You care little then for the wishes of her who marries," said Ulrich, sadly: "what you think necessary is *not* her happiness; it is only that there may be in your family the best hunter of the mountains."

"And we have always had him," proudly replied Trina.

"But what has he brought you," continued Ulrich, getting more animated, "except poverty, anguish and widowhood? Where are now the remains of those who placed there these spoils of which you are so proud? Have they not all had avalanches for their winding-sheet, and the bottom of a precipice for their burying-ground?"

"Who told you the contrary?" returned Trina, with lofty coldness. "Did I ever tell you of long life, rest or riches? In the histories of noble families, do we not read that all the men die in war? Very well, our husbands die on the mountains; that is their field of battle, and shame will be to the first who dies in his bed."

Freneli clasped her hands with an exclamation, which seemed to protest, but the old woman interrupted her in a tone of imperious impatience.

"Silence! silence! foolish child; you are not asked what you think. Happily it is not *you* who have the command; enough for you to listen and hold your tongue. I am speaking to one who wishes to know how husbands may enter here—he knows it now—he has seen what each one must add to our treasures of honor."

"So no one will be accepted who has not fulfilled this condition?" observed Ulrich, "and Cousin Hans himself —"

"Hans does not ask anything," hastily interrupted she. "Hans is at his duty—a good opportunity will come for him some day, and his ball will go in the right direction; meantime he is occupied in feeding us."

"And you may add that he has that

preference against all justice," said Ulrich, energetically, "for I also have a right to give —"

"Nothing," finished the old woman. "The Hausers have always lived from the mountains; nephew Hans and uncle Job gather for us up there, and their harvest is enough."

CHAPTER IV.

As she spoke these words, the clinking of rolling stones under a hasty step was heard in the path leading to the cottage. Freneli raised her head to listen and said:

"It is he."

Nearly at the same moment, the door was roughly pushed open, and Hans entered.

He wore the complete dress of a chamois hunter, vest and trousers of cloth, scarred and jagged from climbing, thick shoes, covered with leather gaiters, fringed with bits of ice, and a felt hat, soddened by the rain. At his side hung the hatchet used for cutting paths on the snowy points, his ramrod, and a cartridge case containing his ammunition: a large bag of red stuff, rolled in a belt, was slung over his left shoulder.

He had come in like a tempest, and, stopping in the middle of the hut, let the butt end of his gun fall loudly to the earth. Aunt Trina saw at a glance that his chase had been unsuccessful.

Without saying a word, she signed to Freneli to stir the fire, while she went herself to a little sideboard, whence she took all that was wanted to spread the table for the evening meal. It was only then that the hunter noticed Ulrich, who, rising, went towards him.

"God be with you, Hans," said he.

Hans made no reply, but sent a quick glance towards Freneli, whose eyes at that moment were fastened on the young carver.

He passed to the fire without speaking, and sitting down on the block