

"nee, sweet child? Ask what thou wilt."

She looked up at him a moment, standing there so tall and straight and fair, with the sun on his bright hair and the blue sky shining in his eyes, and then she put her hands over her face and sobbed aloud like a little child."

"Donner!" ejaculated the young count softly to himself, in great perplexity. Then he drew a step nearer. "Dear little Lieschen, don't cry, for pity's sake! What can I do for thee? Tell me."

"Oh, give me your love—your love!" she cried out passionately. "Love me, if only a little!" and then she broke down utterly and leaned her little brown head against his arm, crying bitterly.

"Why, that thou hast, dear one—not a little, but a great deal. Who could help loving thee?" he answered soothingly. "Ask something harder, for my love thou hast."

After a long pause she looked up through her tears. "And thou wilt—thou wilt come back one day?"

"Why, surely," said he. "I am not worth all these tears, pretty one! Be happy, right happy, till I come again. Adieu now, sweet child! Auf Wiedersehen! auf baldig Wiedersehen!" He stooped and kissed her on the forehead, and went away up the sand, turning under the syringas to wave another farewell, and then she heard his horse's hoofs clattering up the yard, and he was gone.

Gone! How it haunted her day after day as she passed in and out of the house, empty of his presence; down the garden and the meadows, which knew his step and voice no more; and upon the shore, where he had bidden her farewell! Weeks passed before she at all turned from that feeling of missing him so sorely to the hope of his return. He had said "Auf Wiedersehen!" Perhaps in a week, a month—perhaps at harvest-time—perhaps at Christmas—he would come, she thought, as the time went by.

But he did not come—not even when it was spring, and the early leaves came out, and the clouds lifted and shone white in the young sunshine, and the birds sang merrily.

Gustav came and went, and began to urge the marriage. Perhaps he saw that his betrothed was losing the pretty roses in her cheeks, and that the light in her eyes was growing sad and strange; and he—knowing as none but he knew how much he loved her—longed to take her himself in his own home and make her happy.

So they fixed a day at last, and Lieschen, like one in a dream, helped the old nurse to make all the preparations, and plied her needle busily.

All was ready at length, and two days

before the wedding Lieschen stood on the shore, her work done, and no more to do but to wait now for dawning of the day that was to bring Gustav and make her his wife.

As she stood there she seemed to hear a voice answering her own thoughts:

"Thou wilt lose all, bethink thee well—all if thou fail. Thy father's love, thy peaceful home, thy fair name, thy good, honest husband—all will be lost!"

"Alas, alas, I know it!" she answered, weeping; "but I can not, will not, fail!"

She went into the house and looked into the sitting-room. There sat her father in his chair asleep, the pipe still between his fingers, and the room dim with smoke. Her lips seemed to frame some word they vainly sought to utter, and then with a choking, stifled sob, she turned and stole away—away out of the house, across the meadows, and on toward the shore of the other side of the promontory, on which lay her father's farm. She was not strong, but something within her gave her power to walk all night in the chill spring weather. Long before noon the next day she had caught the Stralsund steamer on its backward way, and was being carried across the water to Stralsund.

She felt no weariness, no hunger, thirst, or cold and only longed to be on foot once more. She was quite familiar with the quaint old quiet town, and hurried up the quay, across the Water street, and up under the dark, shadowy Zemlower gateway, along the quiet streets where grass grows between the stones of the pavement, and the old gabled houses have looked down for hundreds of years upon the simple burgher life below. She went through the town and out into the country beyond, past many a pleasant little farm, where the storks were patching up their great nests on the thatched barns and cow-houses, and making their curious rattling cry as they flew to and fro. She remembered that the storks used to bring the summer in old days and all good gifts when they came back, and that this spring they had not yet come to her home on Rugen. In one little village she asked for a drink of milk, and they made her eat and rest a little while; but she was restless and anxious to be gone, so they let her go, though the wind was rising and blowing sharp and keen, and little flakes of snow were flying through the air.

By nightfall a fierce storm was blowing, and the air was thick with driving snow. Lieschen asked shelter at a farm lying a little back from the high road.

"How far is it to Friedenhagen?" she asked.

"What, hast thou friends at Frieder-