

"do? Sooner or later I must give my consent. I had resolved to acquaint your father with the disappointment, and request that you would give yourself no more trouble about it. I am very sorry for it! What will my old friend think of me?"

Herr Bantes could say no more, for terror had deprived him of his speech. The Guest sitting opposite to him, contrary to all expectation, had not heard all unmoved and coldly; but his countenance, before still and sad, cleared up visibly at the words "love intrigue," and "betrothal," as if it was fitting for him to act well towards a maiden who had bestowed her heart and faith upon another. But it did not escape Herr Bantes that the pale countenance, as if it had betrayed itself, quickly assumed a discontented expression.

"Trouble not yourself on that account," said Herr Von Mahn—"nor my father, for my sake."

Herr Bantes thought to himself "I understand you already." But he determined to play a false game in order to remove this dreadful seducer from his poor Erderika.

"I would sincerely wish," said he, "not to leave you in the tavern, and would request you to make my house your home; but for the story of the commander—you see how it is? A second bridegroom in the absence of the other—this you also understand well! The people in so small a city would have, as you know, a great deal to say. But had my daughter——"

"I pray you make no apologies," said the Banker's son. "I am not badly off at the tavern. I see how it is. If you will only permit me to wait on Miss Bantes and pay my devoirs!"

"But you——"

"I could never excuse myself, if I had been in Herbesheim, and had not seen the bride that was designed for me."

"But you are——"

"I envy the gentleman commander. All that was told me of the rare beauty and loveliness of the young lady——"

"You are too kind."

"It would be the greatest honor that could be conferred upon me, to be received into your excellent family, and to be called the son of a man, of whom my father never speaks without tender emotion."

"Your most obedient humble servant."

"Dare I request at least, to be introduced to the young lady?"

"It grieves me much, indeed, that she is this evening with my wife at a large party; and there is a rule that no one shall under any pretext whatever, presume to introduce a stranger. But——"

"It imports little for this evening; indeed I

always feel myself fatigued in a large company where one is always more or less constrained. I would rather see her in her own household."

Herr Bantes silently bowed.

"That is still better; and you will permit me to see the young lady once alone, that I may impart to her—that I may say, what——"

Herr Bantes was frightened—he thought to himself "There we have it! now he pursues his end in a straight line." He hawked and hemmed. The stranger was silent, expecting Herr Bantes would speak; but, seeing that he did not, he continued:

"I hope by my communication with the young lady to secure her favor, and to gain her esteem, while I correct any false impressions she may have received concerning me, though but a poor equivalent for what she was once to be to me."

Herr Bantes endeavored by many *ifs* and *buts* to prevent or decline the threatened visit, with its accompanying dreadful consequences. He spoke anxiously, but with an embarrassed and increasing politeness. The Dead Guest appeared not to, or not to wish to, understand him; and still continued his importunate demand. The situation of Herr Bantes was painful in the extreme, as in fancy he already saw his child encircled by the profligate artifices of the majestic apparition; and with a twisted neck!

During this conversation, which had continued for some time, night rapidly approached. As the Dead Guest would not absolutely withdraw, Herr Bantes suddenly arose and expressed his regret that he must leave him, as unavoidable business called him away. In this manner he forced the departure of the Guest, who, after again asking permission to call, abruptly took his leave.

Herr Bantes hastened to the winter assembly at the Burgomaster's; but he was unusually quiet and meditative. They spoke of nothing, nor nobody, but the Dead Guest. They wished to know if he carried a heavy chest of gold with him, and if he knew all the brides of Herbesheim already—if he was a very pleasant man,—and if they could perceive a smell of corruption about him; but the greatest gossips did not very willingly agree with what Herr Bantes said concerning the figure which before him had assumed the appearance of the rich Banker.

As soon as Herr Bantes arrived at home with his wife and daughter, he related to them the visit of the Dead Guest, and how he flattered himself that he had despatched him for once, and for all. At the commencement both were astonished, or rather frightened. But they both laughed, when they heard the name of the bridegroom from the city. They laughed outright