

"No," she said, at last. "If I am false and faithless to Sándor in heart, it is not *you* who must turn me—you, least of all! So——"

"Don't trouble yourself, Mein Herr," said Vitéz. "It is very kind of you; but I see most things: and I see that the lady feels bound to pay her debt in full to her first lover before her conscience will allow her to take a second. Well, consciences are queer things; and so are women; and so, for that matter, are men. It's a pity that I should be the debt which has to be paid; but one must die some time; and I assure you there is no better way of dying than on the scaffold—none. I almost envied Endélyi Sándor, to be operated upon so skilfully. Skilfully—ah, that's what hurts me: that I, *I* should be a *corpus vile*, for a blundering woman to try her hand on. Madam, do not put the ablest headsman in Hungary to the shame of assisting at a bungle. It made me creep to see the clumsy style in which you were about to operate upon this gentleman. Fortunately, you will now have a proper sword: and I assure you that more depends upon the weapon than you may be aware. . . . Allow me. Let me arrange it for you. There—keep your fingers upon the hilt precisely like that. Bah! Don't clutch it in that stupid way: the sword of justice isn't a carving-knife, madam. Probably, as a novice, you won't do much execution at the first stroke. I should like to put you through a course of cabbage-heads for half-an-hour. No? Then, with your sword poised so, fix your eyes hard upon the exact spot where you will strike, and never move them. That's the worst