

needed the partial dusk of the other end of the apartment to be able to speak further. Felicitas felt his hand tremble. They were standing in the very spot where she had just had so terrible a conflict with herself; where she had been tempted to thrust a dagger into his heart, inflict a wound that would paralyze his whole mental existence. She bent her head like a culprit beneath the eyes, once so grave and stern, but now animated by a wondrous glow of happiness.

"Oh, Felicitas, suppose that you had fallen!" he began, and it seemed as though a shudder ran through his powerful frame at the bare thought. "Shall I tell you what you have inflicted upon me by the unyielding pride that would rather perish than appeal to the sensible judgement of others? Do you not think that one moment of such mortal agony, such indescribable suffering, can atone for years of injustice?"

He paused expectantly, but the young girl's pale lips did not move; her dark lashes drooped low on her cheeks.

"Your embittered views have become a part of your very nature," he said, after waiting a moment, in a low tone of intense disappointment. "It is impossible for you to understand any change." He had dropped her hands, but he now clasped her right hand again, pressing it closely to his heart. "Felicitas, you said a short time ago that you had idolized your mother—this mother called you Fay, I know that all who love you give you that name. So I, too, will say: 'Fay, I beg you to forgive me!'"

"I am no longer angry!" she gasped, in a stifled tone.

"That assurance from your lips means much; it even exceeds my expectations; but—it is far from satisfying me. What will it avail if we are reconciled, if we must part forever? What consolation will it be to know you are no longer angry, if I cannot hourly convince myself of it? When two people who have been so widely sundered as we, become reconciled, they belong to each other—I cannot bear to have even a single mile separate us. Go with me, Fay!"

"I have a horror of boarding-school life—I could never submit to the monotonous routine," she answered hastily, with evident effort.

A slight smile flitted over his face. "Ah, I would not inflict it upon you! The boarding-school plan was only a subterfuge, Fay. Why, one or two days might have passed without seeing you, and even when I did a dozen inquisitive school-girls would perhaps stand around us, listening to every word, or the strict preceptress, Frau Berg, would sit by and not allow me to hold this little hand in mine. No, I must be able to gaze at this dear, proud face every hour; I must know that when I return after toiling all day to discharge the duties of my profession, my Fay will be waiting for me. On quiet evenings, within my four walls, I must have the privilege of pleading: 'Fay, one song.' But all this can only be when—you become my wife."

Felicitas uttered a cry and tried to release her hand, but he held it firmly, drawing her still nearer to him.

"The thought alarms you, Felicitas!" he said, greatly agitated. "I will hope that you are only startled by my abruptness, nothing more. I am aware that it will perhaps require a long time ere you can give me what I long to possess—with your character, it will be difficult to hastily transform a 'hated enemy' into an object of warm affection. But I will woo you with the patience of imperishable love; I will wait—hard as the task may be—till you voluntarily say to me: 'John, I will!' I know what marvelous changes occur in the hearts of men. I fled from this little town to escape from myself the terrible mental conflicts I

was enduring, and, lo! the miracle was accomplished. Compared to the agony of longing that possessed me, my former struggles dwindled into nothing. I know that what I had defiantly and presumptuously resisted would be my life-long happiness. Fay, amid senseless prattle and coquettish faces the lonely girl with her resolute bearing, and the white brow behind which lived such noble thoughts was ever at my side as we journeyed over mountain and valley. She belonged to me, she was the other half of my life; I saw that I could not sever myself from her without dealing myself a mortal blow. And now give me one word of comfort, Felicitas!"

The young girl had gradually withdrawn her hand from his clasp. How was it possible that the change which had taken place in her expression while he was speaking, could have escaped his notice? Her eyes had long been bent upon the floor, her brow was contracted as though by severe physical pain, and her icy fingers were clasped convulsively.

"Do you ask comfort from me?" she answered, in a low, faint voice. "An hour ago you said to me: 'This shall be your last struggle,' and now you plunge me, with your own hand, into the most fearful conflict the human soul can endure. What is a battle against external foes compared to a struggle against ourselves and our own desires!" She raised her clasped hands and threw back her head with a gesture of despair. "I know not what crime I have committed that God should implant this wretched love in my heart."

He extended his arms to clasp her to his breast, but she put out both hands to repel him, though a light of happiness flashed over her face for a moment. "Yes, I love you—you shall know it!" she repeated, in tones wavering between exultations and tears. "I could say at this moment: 'John, I will!' but these words shall never be uttered."

He started back, with a death-like pallor on his face. He knew "the girl with the resolute bearing and white brow" far too well, not to be aware that this sentence raised an eternal barrier between them.

"You fled from X—, and why?" she began again in a firmer tone, drawing herself up to her full height and gazing intently into the eyes, whose sparkle had suddenly faded. "I will tell you. Your love for me was a crime against your family; it overthrew all your most cherished principles, and therefore was to be uprooted from your heart like an evil weed. That you returned from your flight uncured was no fault of yours—you yielded to the same power which compels me to love against my will. It must indeed have been a terrible struggle, ere all these proud merchant princes were forced to make way for the juggler's child—nothing in the world will make me believe that I could retain this place throughout my life. You told me a few weeks ago of your immovable belief that differences of social rank must inevitably cause unhappiness in marriage. Heaven only knows how many years you have maintained this conviction; it can hardly have vanished in six weeks without leaving even a trace—it is only covered, temporarily disowned. And, though it has yielded to other convictions, what must not happen to efface from my mind the recollection of your words."

She paused a moment in exhaustion. The professor had covered his eyes with his hand, and a slight quiver was visible around his firm lips. Now he let it fall, and said, sadly: "The past is against me—yet you are mistaken, Felicitas. Oh, God! how shall I prove it to you?"

"Not the slightest change has occurred in our external circumstances," she continued, inexorably. "No stain has fallen upon your family,

nor have I been elevated from my despised position—it is solely my personal qualities that have wrought this transformation; it would be foolhardy and unprincipled for me to profit by the moment, when, forcibly repressing your firm convictions, you listen only to the voice of love. I ask you on your conscience, do you not set a very high value on the past of your family? And have you succeeded, even for an instant, in persuading yourself that these ancestors, who all married women whose position was equal to their own, could approve their descendant's marriage with a low born girl!"

"Felicitas, you say you love me, and yet so torture me!" he cried.

Her glance, which had rested steadily on his face, softened. Who would have expected to see in those proud, repellent eyes the look of unspeakable tenderness which now shone in them! She took his right hand in both her own.

"When you described just now a life by your side, I suffered more than can be expressed in words," she said, with deep emotion; "hundreds of others, perhaps, would have shut their eyes to the future and grasped present happiness, but, constituted as I am, I can not do it. All my life through, the fear of your repentance would stand between us." At every gloomy glance, every frown upon your brow, I should think: Now the time has come when he regrets the change in his opinions, when he secretly turns from me as the cause of his ruin! I should make you miserable by this mistrust, which I could not conquer!"

"This is a terrible requital!" he said, in a low tone full of intense suffering. "But I will gladly take this wretchedness upon me! I will bear your distrust, no matter how it wounds me, without a murmur. A time must come when all will be bright between us. Felicitas, I will make you a home into which such thoughts can not enter. Of course I shall often bring home many a gloomy look and frown—those are inevitable in my profession—but, if my Fay is there, the frowns will vanish, the gloom grow radiant with light. Can you really have the heart to crush out your own love, and make a man, on whom you might bestow the highest earthly happiness, utterly wretched?"

Felicitas had gradually approached the door; she felt that her strength of will was deserting her under his eloquent pleading, yet she must be firm for his sake.

"If you could live alone with me in absolute retirement," she said, seizing the handle of the door as though it was her last support, "I would willingly go with you. Do not think I fear the world and its judgment—its opinions are usually blind and undiscerning, but in intercourse with society I dread the foe within our own nature. There a 'respectable origin' has great weight, and I know that you are in harmony with this belief. You have great family pride—though at this moment you will not heed it—in associating with the favored few, sooner or later the regretful thought must come that you had sacrificed much for me."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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