

—looking at the dog—and here he took my hand with an enchanting smile—‘are a good and amiable snake, and I like you. After all, one *must* love something, were it only a dog. Is it not so, old Otto? Though all the world should prove cold and false, thou, at least, will never forsake me, wilt thou, old warrior?’

‘The dog whined, and springing up, and placing his huge paws around his master’s neck, laid his head on his shoulder. At the moment from my peculiar mood, there was something affecting in this little scene. I could not but view with commiseration this wretched slave of passion; he was so unhappy, so solitary, so desolate; cut off from all human ties and human sympathies. Apparently, Sturmwald observed my evident sympathy, for, disengaging himself from the animal, he rose hastily. ‘This is childish folly. I leave the place almost immediately. I have ordered post-horses, and as for my goods and chattels, a worthy burgher of the town has taken them off my hands. Come, fill and pledge me for perhaps, the last time.’ Shortly after, his carriage was announced, and we walked together out of doors. With a warm pressure of the hand, and a kind farewell, he stepped into his caleche, his old servant mounted the seat behind, the peostillion cracked his whip, Otto trotted soberly beside the horses, and in a few minutes the whole party vanished from my sight. Six months rolled slowly and tediously away, when I was agreeably surprised to receive, one day, a letter from my cousin, the Baron Rosenthal, requesting my immediate presence to witness his approaching nuptials. I found little or no difficulty in procuring a short leave of absence, but from unavoidable detention, it was only by hard travelling that I was enabled to reach the castle on the wedding day. After a hasty toilette, (too hasty, as I thought, for a young lieutenant of Hussars,) Frederic led me to the assembly of mothers, aunts, pretty cousins and pretty girls, who surrounded the lovely and blushing woman with whom his future fate for weal or wo was about to be linked. The solemn and irrevocable words had been uttered, the feast had sped merrily, the brilliant ball which was to conclude this day of joy had commenced, and Frederic, (such is the custom with us,) was about to lead off a Polish dance with his charming wife, when a servant approaching him communicated some tidings in a whisper.— They were evidently of evil import, for Frederic became pale and deeply agitated. In a few moments a door of the ball room was

thrown wide open, and in a loud voice the chamberlain announced the ‘Prince Dorlinski.’ A tall, imposing figure occupied the door-way.— Advancing a few steps, he removed his velvet travelling cap and a blaze of light revealed the lofty brow and pale features of *Sturmwald*.

‘‘I fear,’ he said with an air of cold but measured ceremony, ‘that I intrude on the Baron Rosenthal at an inauspicious moment; however, if to-morrow—’

‘‘No, sir!’ exclaimed Frederic, ‘*this moment!* There’s nothing between us that may not be arranged. Follow me, sir, immediately.’

‘His wife and sisters, alarmed by his looks, almost involuntarily clung around him. By a strong effort, he succeeded in stifling his emotion, and disengaged himself from the anxious circle which surrounded him, with a hasty promise to return immediately. As for myself, the whole horrid truth flashed like lightning through my brain, as I obeyed a motion of my cousin to follow him, and seizing an old friend of the family, named Blomberg, by the arm, we silently followed Frederic and his mysterious visitor. Not a word was uttered, as we passed the echoing vaulted passages of the old castle, and entered a spacious, lofty apartment, deserted but brilliantly illuminated; for, on this festive night every window sent forth a blaze of light. And never did the light shine on a group of human beings more agitated by deep emotion, than the one which now stood in that ancient hall. The dreadful silence was at length broken by the deep but unflinching voice of the unwelcome guest.

‘‘I come to demand the fulfilment of a pledge given to me at our last meeting; is the Baron Rosenthal prepared to redeem it?’

‘Before Frederic could reply, I seized Sturmwald’s hand. ‘For God’s sake carry this dreadful business no farther! It is too horrible! Would you murder him in cold blood? Think not that we will stand by and calmly witness this awful tragedy.’

‘‘Hold!’ he haughtily replied, ‘you address the Prince Dorlinski. I am alone within your walls. You may take my life, you may deluge this pavement with my blood, but my last moment of consciousness will be blessed by the thought that *he* will be dishonoured for ever, and that a foul blot will rest on *his* escutcheon.’

‘Turning to Frederic with a sneering smile, ‘If, however, the Baron Rosenthal will deign to request me to restore him his pledge, I will at once relieve you from my presence.’

‘‘No!’ said Frederic, with a violent effort