

danger, but the brilliant sunbeams breaking through the branches, dazzled him so that he was forced to turn away his eyes. When he had seated himself again, he saw the leafy stem as before, clearly outlined upon the sunny ground, but now a dark mass lay among the tender shadow flowers, and by spasmodic movements betrayed that it was at its deadly work. He knew not why it affected him so strangely; he struck at the writhing clump with his cane, but the summer wind passed through the thicket of branches overhead and the shadows swept together and eluded him. He had already raised his cane for another blow, when the point of a little silken slipper came in view.

He looked up; Francisca stood before him; the feather of the quill behind her ear stood off from her powdered hair like the outspread wing of a white dove. She laughed; at first inaudibly, you could only see it. He leaned back and gazed upon her with delight; she laughed so joyously, so easily; it rippled all over her like a breeze passing over a lake, nobody else laughed as she did.

"What are you doing?" she cried at last.

"Only nonsense, Francisca; I am fighting with shadows."

"You may leave that alone."

He sought to take hold of her hands, but at this moment she chanced to look towards the wall, and taking a pen-knife out of her pocket she began to cut the full blown roses from off the bushes.

"I shall make pot-pourri this evening," she said, as she carefully gathered the roses in a little heap on the ground. He looked on patiently; he knew it was useless to seek to interrupt her.

"And now?" he asked, as she shut the knife and slipped it into her pocket again.

"Now, Constantine!—to listen together to the passing hours." And so it was. In the great pear tree in front of them the bull-finches flew to and fro; deep among the foliage they heard the chirping of the nestlings; at intervals the murmur of the flowing stream fell on their half-conscious ears; stray blossoms sank now and again at their feet; the Dutch musical clock over in the house played its chime at every quarter. Gradually silence fell upon both. But at length a desire to hear the beloved name uttered aloud, overcame him.

"Francisca!" he murmured half to himself. "Constantine!"

And, as if surprised after the long stillness by her voice, and discovering a fresh charm in its sound, he said, "You should sing, Francisca!"

She shook her head. "You know that is not for a burgher's daughter."

He did not speak for a moment; then, taking hold of her hand, he said: "Don't talk in that way, not even in jest. You know you had once lessons from the organist; what do you mean?"

She looked at him gravely, but soon a bright glance flashed from her eyes. "Oh!" she cried, "don't look so serious! I'll tell you what it is—I am too clever at book-keeping."

He laughed, and she joined with him. "Are you not too clever for me, Francisca?"

"Perhaps—you don't know how!" And as she spoke a different and deeper tone came into her voice. "When you were first quartered here," she continued, "and lived with my brother Fritz, I was quite a little school-girl. Often when I came home in the afternoon, I would steal into the hall and stand near when you practised your fencing. But you never took the least notice of me; indeed, once, when your foil struck my pinafore, you said: 'Go and sit in the window, child!' Oh, you don't know what hard words these were! Then I began to fall on all sorts of plans, and when companions came to play with me, I would try to get one of the other girls—I could never do it myself—to ask you to join in our games; and then, when you stood amongst us—"

"Well, then, Francisca!"

"Then I ran past you so often that at last you could not help catching hold of me by my white dress."

She had become crimson. He laid his fingers between hers and held them tightly clasped. After a pause she looked up timidly into his face and asked: "Did you never notice anything of it?"

"Oh, yes; at last!" said he, "you know you grew up at last."

"And then—tell me how it all happened?" He looked full at her, as if seeking to read in her face whether he durst speak. "Who knows," said he, "if it would ever have come to anything? But the burgomaster's wife once said"—