

"Ah, Bess, Bess, I know that look! Now again you are thinking that once in your life you failed of truth."

"Yes; it does not trouble me now, but it does come back to my memory often, like a ghost I do not fear, but cannot get rid of."

"Would you do it again?"

"Yes, a thousand times."

"Then that is enough; and to comfort you, all the casuists are on the side of that good, stout lie. Let the past bury its dead sins. The graveyard for thy wicked memories need not be large."

"But, Johan —"

"No, no," he urged, smiling. "We will talk of more pleasant things."

"But I must talk. There are things from which escape is not easy. Over and over you have bid me cease when I have sorrowed at the thought of the vast ruin I made to save you. I am grieved, but I do not repent. I dream about it; it *will* come back."

"*Himmel!* to be haunted this way by all one's past sins! I have news for you that should lay all thy ghosts. I have waited, but to-day I can with freedom speak. I had to wait, and now we will have to be economical for two or three years."

"Why, Johan? But that matters little. Economy does not alarm me. What is it? Do not keep me waiting. I am—I am a little sensitive just now. Small things disturb me."

He turned and for a moment considered her anxiously. "What is it, my dear?" She looked to be in perfect health.