

the last of a long line of nobles grew his household grain.

The Castle had been attacked more than once in days even within the memory of the neighbours, and had suffered in the conflict; only one portion of it, which had been built of more than ordinary strength and thickness, remained intact.

Within the great hall door, studded with iron nails, which grated harshly when it was opened, were cold stone corridors, innocent of matting, and staircases leading to rooms which it would have sorely taxed a modern upholsterer's ingenuity to render cheerful and attractive.

The unplastered walls were hung with mildewed tapestry, which moved and trembled with every passing draught. There were one or two tables, and a few grim old carved chairs of black oak, cushionless and straight-backed, which dated from sixteen hundred. Ornaments there were none, unless the guns, rifles, powder-horns, swords, and riding-whips which were profusely scattered about the two living or sitting-rooms, might come under that category.

There were no books, no flowers, no work-baskets, no bits of embroidery or half-finished stockings lying carelessly upon the table; none of the little knick-knacks which show a woman's presence in the house. Everything bespoke a solitary man's den.

One relic of their ancient grandeur Count Heinrich still possessed, and used every day. No matter how humble his fare might be—and it was plain and coarse enough sometimes—he always had it served up on plates and platters of solid silver.

He had enough of massive old plate to build up his ruined walls if he had chosen to consign it to the hammer; but he clung to it tenaciously. Not so much as a single cup had ever gone to the smelter's furnace, although the family revenues had diminished year by year, and the park timber had been sadly thinned. He kept his splendid plate, and used it freely. While there was a living Count Von Geoler, it should never go!

Although their worldly goods had waxed less, and their lands had passed into other keeping, until the present Count had not three hundred a-year to call his own, his position remained the same. He was the representative of an historic line, which had been famous for bravery in battle, and hospitality in times of peace.

There was not a prince nor a grand duke in the land who did not look upon him as their equal by claim of descent, and who would not have welcomed the recluse to his palace if he had cared to go there, which he seldom did. He was proud, and chafed bitterly under the fallen fortunes of his house, and would not be entertained by those whom he could not entertain in return.

With his training and pride of birth, it would have been impossible for him to engage in business. His farm yielded barely enough of produce to supply the requirements of his own small establishment, so that could not be turned to profit; and he had no spare money to risk in speculation.

Only by a wealthy marriage might he hope to retrieve the fallen glories of his house, and from that the handsome, single-hearted young man shrank with instinctive loathing. When he married—if he ever did—it should be some girl in her teens, whom he loved for herself alone.

No matter if she came dowdier of gold and jewels; if she brought him all the freshness of a heart's true and first love, he would ask for nothing more.

For six-and-twenty years cupid's winged darts had failed to penetrate his armour; but one had found a vulnerable place at last.

"Was it a good or an evil day for him?" he asked himself, as he tramped the woods, with his game-bag slung across his broad shoulders, after he had crossed the park to his wealthy kinsman's house, and had seen a blue-eyed English girl standing on one of its garden terraces—a simply-dressed girl, standing bareheaded in the sunshine, laughing gaily, and teasing one of his little cousins.

She could not see him where he was, behind a sheltering tree; so he stood and watched her playing with the child, until at last she caught the small urchin up in her arms, and went bounding lightly with him into the house. Then he followed her and was introduced.

Perhaps, if Madame Berg had foreseen what would happen, she would not have brought Lotty away from England; but it had not occurred to her or her husband that Heinrich, who had never been known to give a second glance to a stranger, or bestow a thought on any girl he knew, might fall in love with the English Lotty; or even should he, how could the Bergs imagine that she would return the fair, fresh-coloured young rustic's affection? She had been reared in a different school from the young noble, and spent yearly on dress and trifles an amount equal to his whole income.

Colonel Hunter was a quiet, easy-going man; liberal with his large means, and lenient to weakness; but would he allow his daughter to marry an Austrian, and make her home in a strange country—particularly a home so bare of all the comforts and luxuries to which she had been accustomed?

When the mischief was done, and the lovers had settled everything to their satisfaction, they took Madame into their confidence. In the first burst of surprise she did not know what to say to them, and silently looked from one to the other.

"Speak to us!" said Lotty. "Say that you are glad, or sorry, or cross, or something! Don't

look as if you were staring at two ghosts, when it's only Heinrich and I, who love each other, and want your blessing."

"Lotty, what will your parents say?" stammered Madame.

"Mamma will be pleased if I am happy; and papa—well, I don't know what he will say. Suppose I write to—or, no—suppose you write to him, Madame?"

"I cannot," replied Madame, gravely. "I know he does not like foreigners; he scarcely liked me, because I was a German. Heinrich must write himself. Lotty, dear, I must speak plainly to you both. I do not think your parents will ever sanction your engagement with Heinrich. You are an extravagant English girl, who has been accustomed to a large income and a well-appointed home. Heinrich is a splendid fellow. I love him dearly,"—here she laid her hand lightly upon his arm; "but he is very poor. His wife must be no fine lady; she would have to do a great deal of work herself, for she would have but few servants. His home would not look so poor, maybe, to a German girl, but to you it would seem miserable. Pardon me, Heinrich, dear," she said, for he had flushed from chin to brow. "I know how it will be; and I am sorry, very sorry. Your rank and your old name will count as nothing in Colonel Hunter's estimation. He will think that his daughter should do better, and in one sense no doubt might. Will you not give up this rash engagement? It's a risk at all times when two people of different nations marry. Charlotte, love, will you not be sensible, and give him up?"

"Never, never, never!" cried Lotty, passionately; "unless he gives me up, and he won't do that. I know that he is poor—poorer than most of papa's tenants; and he tells me his house is like a barn, and that his wife would have to make the bread. But I don't care; I'll make the butter, too, if he asks me to; and I'll live in two rooms, with horrid iron stoves, and no carpets, and never see an egg-cup again; but I'll not give him up. Madame, please write, and get them to say that they will receive Heinrich and like him, and never mind his not having much money. Tom won't mind—dear old Tom! Neither will Elma; but I can't say for the others. Oh, Madame, won't you write to-day?"

Madame only shook her head in answer, and Lotty burst into violent weeping; when Madame walked away, leaving Heinrich to comfort her with utterances of undying affection, and assurances that they would live comfortably upon next to nothing if they always lived in the country, which they would have to do, for he could not afford a respectable house in town.

Madame was better than her word. She wrote to Colonel Hunter that evening, and depicted Heinrich in glowing colours, telling of the ancient nobility of his family, and the many noble traits in his character. She mentioned that his income was very limited—at the furthest, perhaps, two hundred and fifty a-year; regretted that affairs had come to a climax before she was made aware of what had been going on, or she would have opposed it certainly until she had learned what were his ideas upon the subject.

Now that they had come to love each other, would it not be wisest, she pleaded, to make the best of it, and to let them marry, and be happy?

Lotty would have a poor home; but she would be a countess. Surely a little compensation lay in that; and as she would not be portionless herself, they might make a very respectable appearance.

She used other persuasive arguments as well; dwelt on Lotty's warm, impulsive nature, her strong will, and decided character.

"You may refuse your consent," she added, finally; "but knowing Charlotte as well as you do, you must be aware that when she makes up her mind to anything she is not to be moved; and this involves the happiness of all her after-life. Setting aside that Heinrich is an Austrian, which is no real objection, his small income is his only fault; and so I venture to entreat that you will write kindly to her."

Colonel Hunter took no notice of this letter beyond writing a short note to Lotty, ordering her to start at once for England.

For the first time in her life, Lotty disobeyed her father, and telegraphed back—

"I prefer to remain where I am for the present. Yours lovingly,

"C. H."

An answer came back promptly.

"Gordon Hunter leaves this evening to escort his sister to London."

"I shall not go!" she exclaimed, when she read it. "If he likes to drag me by the hair of my head, he may; but I'll not go willingly!"

"You must, dear, when Gordon comes for you," said Madame. "I cannot let you stay. Obey your father; go home, and trust to matters coming right in time. When your father sees Heinrich, he will change his mind. Have a little patience and wait."

"I shall not go to England until papa consents to our marriage. If you won't let me stay here, I'll go to Wirtstadt, and stay with Stannie and Mrs. Hall. I'll not go home to be met with cold words and angry looks. I'll drown myself in the Danube first. Perhaps that would be the best thing I could do, for I should not care to live separated from Heinrich."

"Your father dreads poverty for you," said Madame, sadly.

"That old tower may be full of rats—Herr Von Berg says it is; but I don't care—they won't eat me. Alice will call Heinrich a clown,

because he wears boots like a ploughman's; but I like boots with nails in them. And Gordon will curl his lip because Heinrich knows nothing about art or blue china. I love them all at home, Madame—you know I do; but rather than give up Heinrich, I would consent never to see one of them again!"

The rustic young Count was as decided on the matter as Lotty.

They might take her from him—say to England; but he would follow, and bring her back.

He saw no inequality in the match. He was poor and noble; she was rich, but her father was only a commoner—the scales were pretty evenly balanced.

The young Count, who had never been across the Channel, had no accurate idea of the position of a wealthy English squire of good family, whose lands had come down from father to son for generations, and could not realize that such a position was really equal to his own. He did not want the girl's English money; he wanted herself, to be the light of his days and the crowning glory of his life.

Yielding very unwillingly to his persuasions, Madame walked over to The Tower with Lotty on the morning of the day on which Gordon was expected.

They saw the place in all its poverty; the cold stone corridors and staircases, the carpetless rooms with their unplastered walls, the old worm-eaten chairs, and the faded window curtains crumbling at the touch through the agency of time and moths. They saw the barrack-like bedrooms, with their small wooden beds and scant toilet apparatus; and the kitchen which was underground among the empty cellars.

Lotty went into the garden—a neglected waste—and walked in the barren park. But the nakedness of the land had no terrors for her.

"I shall make things look ever so much better some day!" she said. "I shall put up white curtains. If I have no money to buy new ones, I'll tear up my white muslin dresses. And I'll get some nice low chairs, and some pretty little work-tables, and sit boxes of flowers into the window sills, and repaint the floors; and we can make the garden lovely. I think the place is beautiful—the ruined part looks so picturesque! Heinrich, your home is all that I could desire; never apologize about it again to me."

"You will have no carriage, no horses!" said Heinrich, ruefully. "I have always hitherto kept two racers, but I have just sold them, and there are only two strong farm-houses now."

"I need no carriage; I am young and strong, and can walk. Madame said that your wife must not be a fine lady; you shall not find that I am one, Heinrich. You know, don't you, that I would rather live in this old place with you than in a palace with anyone else?"

"I know," he said, fervently, "that you are an angel come to bless my life!"

"Come what may, they must not be parted now!" thought Madame Berg, as she listened to them. "If Lotty's mother was here she would understand and help them. I must try what I can do with Gordon when he comes. If she were my child, she should marry the man of her choice, though they might have both of them to work for their daily bread. But then I come from the working classes, and no doubt that makes a difference"—"Will you join us at supper-time, and meet Mr. Hunter, Heinrich?" she asked, breaking in abruptly on a plan of Lotty's for laying out the garden in spring. "It would be as well to see him at once."

"Thank you, Cousin Lily," answered the Count; "I will. I almost dread seeing him, though!" he added, with a laugh.

"You need not be afraid," said Lotty. "I suppose he expects to see a boor, who takes his gravy up with his knife, and helps himself to potatoes with his own fork, and smokes while the pudding is being brought on. If you had mentioned to papa that Heinrich eats like a Christian, perhaps he wouldn't have ordered me home. Why didn't you?"

"He will judge for himself some day—soon, I hope!" replied Madame.

The near prospect of seeing Gordon made Lotty restless and fidgety for the rest of the day after they had returned home. She took up a book and threw it down again; tried to work, and would not settle to it; arranged some fresh flowers in glasses, then tossed them out again, and leaving them lying in a heap upon the table, went up to the turret-room, and sat at the window, gazing wistfully in the direction of her lover's home.

A carriage came suddenly dashing wildly up the drive; the horses were steaming with perspiration and flecked with foam, but still the driver urged them on—recklessly and mercilessly, it seemed to Lotty.

"That must be Gordon," she said, aloud; "but why such frantic haste?" And springing to her feet, she flew down the long-winding stairs to meet him.

Madame Berg had already met him; they were standing outside the door, just under the porticulis, and Gordon was telling her something in a nervous, hurried manner. Their backs were towards Lotty as she crossed the hall, but at the sound of her footsteps they both turned and looked at her. Gordon was as pale as any living man could be, and his expression was one alternating between fear and despair.

"What has happened?" she cried, taking both his hands within her own. What is it? Why do you look so frightened?"

He drew her closer to him, and continued his conversation with Madame Berg.

"If you can supply me with fresh horses,"

he said, "I'll post back again as soon as they have been put into the carriage, and we shall be in London to-morrow night."

Madame gave the order to a servant standing near, who went instantly to obey it.

"Perhaps I have lost valuable time in coming here," he added, "but Lotty had to be considered."

"Oh, what is it? Tell me what it is!" cried Lotty, in an agony of mind.

Gordon took a slip of paper from Madame's hand, and giving it to his sister, said, "This telegram was awaiting me in Vienna; instead of turning back at once, I posted on here for you."

With trembling hands, she opened it, and read:

"From Mrs. Hunter to Gordon Hunter. Come back at once. Elma has been missing for twenty-four hours."

Every drop of blood in her veins seemed to congeal as she read the few words. She forgot her Austrian lover, who was impatiently counting the hours until he could be again beside her. She forgot her determination to resist all fraternal authority and remain where she was; remembering nothing save Elma's silent sayings pertaining to the angels.

The telegram dropped from her nerveless fingers to the tessellated hall-floor, and lay there unheeded.

The fresh horses were already in the carriage. Madame Berg opened the door and shook out the fur rug, while Gordon helped Lotty in.

"Good-bye, Lotty, dear," said Madame, kissing her. "I shall pack your things, and bring them to you. I'll follow you to-morrow."

Lotty did not hear those words; her senses were annihilated by the shock they had received.

"Oh, tell the man to drive quickly!" Lotty gasped.

The man knew his orders, and obeyed them well. One crack of his whip, and they were flying down the avenue.

She had not even remembered to leave a parting message for her lover; did not raise her head to look out as they dashed swiftly past his gates. To get back to England as speedily as possible, and find Elma, was at that moment the sole wish and object of her life.

How often Gordon had anticipated his first visit to Altborg Schloss it would be difficult to tell.

There was so much for him to see. And now he had come to the very door, and had seen nothing; and in the bustle and excitement of the moment, did not know that he had not even been asked to cross the threshold.

(To be continued.)

VARIETIES.

At no very distant date indicators will be affixed to every pillar letter-box in England to show the time at which the box was last cleared.

WHEN one reads in a poem of angels who "carol blive," one is apt to think that the author is Mr. Lewis Carroll, with whom delighted readers have passed so many "fratious days" in that "tulgey wood," where the jabberwock bumbles and the momeraths outrange. But, no! The author is Mr. R. Montgomerie Ranking, who, in his volume "Fulgencius," not only makes angels carol blive, but introduces us to "tom-tits in the pery," "sun-drakes," and women with "plum-blue hair gold-coiled about a thrapple. Mr. Ranking is, it is perhaps needless to say, "utter."

ANOTHER literary *trouvaille* of importance has been made at Geneva, in the shape of a series of letters by Sismondi, during the period of 1815-30. One of them is a valuable pendant to his correspondence with his mother during the Hundred Days, and gives a terrible picture of the Restoration, on Napoleon's return from Elba. "The presumption of the Bourbons," says Sismondi, "was only equalled by their pusillanimity; they had applied themselves industriously to insulting and discouraging the army; the departments of the Government were all in a state of chaos; the Assembly passed whole days in secret session; but no one dared speak when the doors were opened, and plundering went on on all sides. Another letter gives a gloomy picture of the France of 1830, just before the Revolution of July, and there is a curiously sound criticism of Hugo's "Hernani," declaring, "after all, it is very bad; and some poetical gems, and the touching expansion of the love of an old man,—a theme that others have always made ridiculous,—cannot atone for so many barbarisms—even in our eyes." Sismondi was then nearly sixty.

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