

work than waltzing; but a mode of retaliation ye' remained in store. She was two years older than I; and I exerted myself to believe that Ethelind must be growing an old maid. My grandmother saw how things were going. Worthy old woman! she had set her heart on the match: I know not for what reason, but doubtless it was something about my grandfather. However, she found consolation in her unfulfilling proverb, as in all household games and lotteries at Christmas-time, Shrovetide and Easter, I was sure to draw Ethelind for a partner, to my ill-concealed chagrin and her undisguised amusement.

It must have been to baffle the Fates in this design that I took with great ardour to the gay Widow Wessing and her daughter Louisa. Madame Wessing's husband had been an officer. She was in Paris with the allied army, and understood *ton* ever after; her income being small, however, obliged the lady to live in our street, though deeply impressed with its old-fashionedness. Most people liked the widow and her daughter: they were always so gay, and had such stores of gossip, besides being up to the *mode*; but some said the ladies were cunningly selfish in a small way, and would do anything for their own petty interests or amusement. Each was the pattern of the other, and they were both pretty little girls. It was true, the mother was thirty-seven, and the daughter seventeen; but both sang, danced, and coquetted, no mortal man being able to espy any difference in dress or manners, except that at times the widow was rather the more childish of the two. Upon my sincerity, I cannot tell which it was that brought me under bondage; but the probabilities of the case are rather in favor of Louisa. Certain I am, that we danced a great many evenings, and sang a number of duetts together, while her mamma sent me captivating notes of invitation to her little quadrille-parties and friendly teas; and assured everybody in my hearing, that I was the exact resemblance of Alexander, emperor of all the Russias, when she saw him enter the Tuileries ball-room with the Duchesse de Berri on his arm.

My grandmother and I sat at our coffee in the second parlor: a low wainscotted room, with four of Solomon's Proverbs carved in different compartments of its ceiling, a cupboard in every corner, and a narrow glass-door opening into the garden. It was April-time: the violets were blooming on the sunny bank by the old house-gable, and the buds bursting on the great walnut-tree. My grandmother sat in her nut-brown gown and snow-white kerchief—the dress she always wore on common days—listening to me, good woman! giving a full and particular account of one of the said quadrille-parties which I had attended on the previous night. She heard all, from the wreath in Louisa's hair to the last ice, and then laying down her empty cup, said quietly as usual: "Fritz, I think it is time you were married."

The news surprised me, and I stared my grandmother in the face; but she went on in the same calm tone: "There's Ethelind Simbert would make you a good wife; she is my own god-daughter, and I think we would all agree."

"Grandmother," said I, plucking up resolution, "I will do anything else to please you; but I

don't like Ethelind Simbert, and I won't marry her."

"Well, Fritz," said my grandmother, neither angry nor astonished, "Ethelind Simbert is a good girl, though you don't like her; but whom you don't like, you can't be expected to marry—so we will think no more of the matter; and I'll tell the Simberts. I'm going there at Easter; it falls on the fourteenth, you know. That will be fifty years complete since your grandfather and I spent our last Easter at Meldorf, and you—oh, I mean your mother!—a prattling child with us. Fritz, you and I will go and see the old place together, and never mind this matter. If Ethelind don't suit you, she will somebody else; and what is to be, will be."

That proverb was like cheese—for nothing ever came after it; and it was settled that my grandmother and I should spend our Easter with the industrious Simberts at Meldorf. The excursion was neither grand nor fashionable, yet I felt called upon to mention it at Madame Wessing's.

"Oh, how charming!" exclaimed the fair widow, in her most enthusiastic manner. "To retire, as one may say, among simple shepherds. Do you know, I hear that those people make their own cheese and linen?"

"How delightful!" chimed in Louisa. "Mamma, don't you remember that darling rustic of a schoolmaster who came to inquire after papa's papers?"

"Ah, yes!" said the widow, flourishing her cambric; "he was an early friend of my adored Auguste. Charming man! He and his wife—a most unworldly, amiable soul—have often invited us to Meldorf; but after my irreparable loss, I never had spirits for the journey."

"Indeed, mamma, we will visit them this very Easter," said Louisa. "It will be such a surprise to the darling old couple; and we both require country air."

"Ha! yes; the winter has been too much for us," said the widow, with a languishing look at me.

I of course sympathised; and a visit to the charming schoolmaster was determined on. The following day brought further intelligence: Madame Wessing called to say, how delightful it would be for us to travel in company—one carriage could be hired for us all, the widow remarked, besides, she and Louisa had no gentleman to take care of them; and both ladies looked confidence in my powerful protection. It is needless to say, that the project was received with acclamations on this side of the house, and my grandmother hoped that Providence would take care of us all. We went accordingly; but, readers, of the travelling time I beg leave to say as little as possible. It was more tedious in those days than at present; and doubtless my grandmother was justified in averring that we were well over it, when, on a sunny April afternoon, we saw the gray church-spire and clustering roofs of Meldorf, rising in the midst of a great plain, which looked like one well-cultivated farm.

Meldorf was as old as the Teutonic conquest. It had been fortified against the Slavonic pagans, and dismantled by a prince of the Hohenstaufen line. War had not come near it for centuries; commerce had forgotten it; and a more rural, country-like spot, to be called a town I never saw.