

One warm Sunday morning, during harvest time, Wilfred had ridden out with a dozen fleet greyhounds, to course the hare, little caring in his wild mood for the horror with which he filled the pious villagers by this unholy disturbance of the Sabbath. The sport did not prove successful; the dogs had been at fault—the horse had failed in speed—the game had escaped the hunter. He relieved his ill-temper by pulling at the mouth of his Arabian horse till it bled; and giving the dogs, that, aware of their crime, were slinking fearfully away, a taste of the whip. In his obstinate determination to reach his prey, he had ridden farther than usual: now, hungry and vexed, he sought to shorten the way back to the castle by leaping over every obstacle. After proceeding madly in this way for half an hour, a cool, refreshing breeze suddenly roused the heated rider from his sullen brooding. He looked up and found himself on a sandy road, by the bank of the Danube. He was about to slacken his pace, both for his own and his horse's sake, when the animal, shying and starting aside, stopped short. Surprised at this unusual movement, he looked around for the cause of the horse's fear.

The sight that met his eyes, although far from exciting a similar feeling in him, held him for some moments motionless. A few paces from him, on a grassy hillock, lay the orphan (her head resting on her arm), unconscious of the rider's approach.

A magical loveliness gleamed from her countenance, which was bent towards the stream with an arch smile, such as petted children wear when they venture to play tricks on grave people. Meanwhile, she cast into the waters bunches and garlands of wild flowers, which lay heaped in her lap. Her long bright hair, gently borne on the wind, now floated in sunny filaments around her, and now enveloped in rich shining folds her slender form. The whole apparition was one of entrancing beauty, rare and captivating.

Much less would have sufficed to enflame the excitable heart of the Austrian; he alighted from his horse, and approached the maiden, fearing all the while lest some illusion might be dazzling his senses, and the whole enchantment dissolve into air before he reached it. She did not look up; but continued playing with the flowers.

"Who art thou?" he at length exclaimed, almost trembling with emotion. "Say, art thou woman, or immortal?"

There was no answer.

The Count drew nearer, and sat down at her feet. "Listen!" he resumed, "I feel, by the passionate beating of my heart, that thou art mortal, like myself. I know not whence thou comest, nor what thy name. It matters not. Woman reigns but by beauty's power. Reign over all that is mine, and over me!" With these words he tried to seize her hand. The maiden now looked up for the first time; and on her countenance was depicted only childish vexation at the interruption. "Hush!" she said; you speak so loud that I cannot hear what they are telling me."

"Leave thy childish play," said the knight, caressingly. "Dost thou not hear? Dost thou not understand what I offer thee? I, Count

Wilfred, lord of this wide domain, implore thy love. Follow me to my castle; and, let the world say what it will, thou shalt be Lord Wilfred's wife.

The maiden listened thoughtfully to his words; a sad foreboding flitted unconsciously like a shadow over her clear brow. "I do not understand—I know not what you would with me—I feel only that your presence alarms and disturbs me." With these words she turned from him, as though in anger.

The Count stood up, he felt a gush of that impatience which always seized him on the slightest contradiction; but a glance at the fascinating creature before him subdued it.

"Thou art a child, yet a charming, a wondrous child. Understand, then, oh sweet wild maiden! Thou shalt become my wife—shalt go with me to my castle—shalt leave this place never to return."

Of all Wilfred had said, the orphan understood only that he purposed to remove her from her home.

In anxious fear she sprang up. "Leave this place!—Depart!" she cried. "Stranger, why torment me with such words? Know you not that I am the orphan? Leave me!" she continued, and clasped her hands imploringly. "Leave me to myself! Do you not hear?" and she bent, in a listening attitude, over the Danube—"They murmur. I fear they are displeased with me." She threw herself weeping on her knees: "Be not angry with me, loved ones! Never will the orphan leave this place!"

A shudder ran through the Knight. A dim recollection began to dawn on his mind. Involuntarily, his thoughts reverted to his father, who had been murdered on these banks. The details of the awful event had always, so far as was possible, been concealed from him and his brother. Why did the shade of his father now rise to his imagination, dark and bloody?

"Thou little fool," he exclaimed, "thou little frantic fool! Art though really so unacquainted with men and the world as not to know that each of my words is a thunderbolt, before which every will trembles and is silent? I tell thee thou must follow me."

With these words he clasped the maiden in his arms, and sought to draw her away.

The orphan sprang up. The anger of outraged modesty glowed on her cheek: her dark-blue eye flashed as if it would annihilate the insolent intruder.

"Help!" she cried; "help! Am I quite forsaken?"

On the surrounding heights appeared groups of country people on their way to the neighbouring church, who, anxious spectators of the unequal contest, ventured not to stay their dreaded master.

"Thou strugglest in vain, mischievous little witch!" exclaimed Wilfred, as he strove to lift her on his horse.

"Help!" cried the maiden again.

The groups on the hills crowded together. The bells of the village church began to sound the summons to the holy service.

With a violent movement of despair, the orphan