

your thoughts, and of a sudden become the most superstitious of all men?"

"How is it? Superstition! No; I am not superstitious—I am cautious, circumspect, and the like, on account of the diabolical superstitions. Be that as it may, one must be cheated in one way or another. The girl is dear to me—therefore I command you once for all, to break off all acquaintance with the so-called Herr Von Hahn."

"But what will his father say?"

"The old man will say nothing—how could he? But in God's name, let him say what he pleases! I command you to send away the seducer!"

Madame Bantes was embarrassed. She came up to him fondly, and confidently laid her hand on his shoulder, saying in a soft, entreating tone:

"Dear husband, consider to what you are urged on by a frenzied fear! On account of a pale complexion, and a black dress, you must believe that an innocent stranger is a ghost. But if you persist in commanding me to contribute to your injustice, I will obey! Yet consider! Frederika and I have already invited him to stay and take dinner with us."

"That is enough to make one drop down with apoplexy!" cried Herr Bantes. "Invited to dinner! He must have a vapor charm in his breath, that he bewitched you, as the African serpent does the little bird which must sooner or later approach open destruction. Away with him! away! away!"

At that moment, with a very lively air, came Frederika.

"Where is Herr Von Hahn?" said her mother ill-humoredly.

"He has gone to the tavern for a moment, but he will return soon. He is certainly a good, noble man—"

"There we have it now!" cried Herr Bantes. "In a quarter of an hour's conversation, she has got so far as to say, 'he is a good, noble man.' Who? Can you say that you love Waldrich? Oh! that he were here! I will have nothing to do with Herr Von Hahn. Let us decline his acquaintance. Let us tell him a lie—an honest shift—that I was suddenly taken sick; we regret it very much, but cannot have the pleasure of seeing him here, and the like."

Frederika was frightened at his vehemence.

"Hear me a little, papa! You must know all he told me,—an excellent man;—and you, he —"

"Stop there!" said Herr Bantes; "I will hear nothing more. I have already heard too much—here, child, let me have my way. Call it superstition, or what you will, but hear me out."

The Dead Guest may resemble Herr Von Hahn, or Herr Von Hahn the Dead Guest; for this I care not; but I must and will not have anything to do with him. If you will make your dear, good, excellent man; immediately leave Herbesheim forever. I will give you my word of honor I will consider Waldrich the son of my old friend. I spoke to you at the time I wrote to the Banker, to make him, as in honor bound, retract. You shall be his as soon as the Blackamoor is away. There, take my hand—now can you induce him to pack off immediately?"

"Well!" cried Frederika, beaming with joy and love, "he will go at once. Allow me to see him a moment alone."

"There you have it, again! No! Away with him! Write him a few lines, telling him not to come to dinner—to be off!"

It was of no use to contradict him, and the premium he offered was too valuable to be lost. She therefore wrote to the young Banker, that on account of her father's illness, she must withdraw her invitation to dinner, requesting him, moreover, if he had the least esteem or friendship for her, to leave the city immediately, for on his absence depended the happiness and peace of her family—promising to send by the next post, a letter, explaining the reasons of her extraordinary, but highly urgent request.

CHAPTER VI.

CONVERSATION WITH THE DEAD GUEST.

A servant carried Frederika's letter to the Inn, and enquired for the Banker Von Hahn. He went on this occasion very unwillingly, though desirous of seeing the much-talked of Dead Guest at a distance. But when he opened the door of the Banker's room, as he had been instructed to do, he quickly drew back, as he saw the tall white man in black, approach, and heard him say in a hollow voice:

"What do you want?"

The figure now seemed taller, whiter, and blacker than he had before thought him to be.

"Hold! for pity's sake!" cried the affrighted man, on whose countenance was visibly depicted the anguish of fear, of death. "I have nothing to do with you; but I wish to see the Banker Herr Von Hahn."

"I am he."

"Yourself?" said the poor man trembling, because he had not the strength to stand firm—

"For God's sake! let me return!"

"I do not detain you; but who sent you?"

"Miss Bantes."

"For what?"

"This letter will—" With these words, which