

occasioned by his wounds. Wild fancies, full of the terrible events of the evening, and mingled with the ardent desire for revenge, agitated the brain of the sick man. From time to time, Terka laid cooling herbs on the deep, bloody wounds with which his back and shoulders were covered, and then seated herself quietly at the head of his bed.

Day broke at last. The huntsman knew once more the loving hand that so gently touched his brow, and found a smile for the child to which Terka sadly pointed as their consolation. The little one sat on the floor, not far from them, playing with the bright hair that fell in light ringlets on her neck, and the rich abundance of which was the joy and pride of her parents.

Towards noon, the trampling of many horses was heard. The door was flung open, and the forester, who had on the previous day arrested his predecessor, and brought him to the Castle, now entered, accompanied by several youths.

"Your lord commands you," he cried, in a tone of peremptory insolence, "instantly to give up the fire-arms which you no doubt still have in the house. The Count himself waits without to be witness of your submission."

The huntsman, unable to speak, cast a look of deep meaning on Terka.

"Janos had but the one gun," she said, with downward look.

"Wretches, beware! A lie plunges you but deeper in disgrace. Deliver the arms that you persist in concealing."

The huntsman himself now made a sign of denial.

"We have hidden nothing," murmured the young wife, almost inaudibly.

The Count had overheard this conversation through the open door. "Drag him forth!" he cried, his voice trembling with rage, "that the hoof of my horse may trample this lying Magyar's soul out of its body. Do you hear? Out with him, or his punishment shall fall on those who hesitate. Let the house be searched," continued he, "and if there be found what he so obstinately denies, he shall pay for it with his life!"

The youths seized the sick man, and dragged him to the burning sand, which, at this place, covers the shore. Terka followed.

"Hold!" she cried, as she saw the raised whip of the furious Count suspended over the head of her husband, "Hold! one moment—I will fetch what you desire."

She went back into the house. In a few seconds she returned, with a rille in her hand.

"Here," said she, "is the weapon—and the ball with it!" and, before they were aware, she had taken a sure aim, and fired.

The Count, shot through the heart, fell from his horse. Janos sprang to his feet; his frantic wife, clasping him in her arms, whispered a few words in his ear. In an instant, they threw themselves together from the bank into the stream.

Their bodies were never found.

After these terrible events, the deserted child (then five years old) became an object of the tenderest care to the whole village. The inhabitants were incited to this, partly by a natural feeling of compassion; partly by a dim, unuttered sym-

pathy, which impelled them to take charge of the child whose unhappy mother had avenged them all. Several kind-hearted mothers tried to take the child to their homes, intending to regard it as one of their own; but she always returned to the hut of her parents. Neither kind nor harsh treatment could induce her to stay; she always seized the first opportunity to slip away unobserved. When hungry, she went into the village and asked for bread; if this were offered to her on condition of her not returning to the hut, she sadly bent her head, so beautifully adorned with sunny curls, and went home—her hunger unappeased. They asked her often if she did not fear being alone in the solitary hut: she then would smile, and, lifting her dark-blue eyes in wonderment to the face of the questioner, answer, "Father and mother are with me—you forget; they watch all night that no harm befall me." At last they were obliged to let the strange child have her way; but supplied her regularly and abundantly with food and clothes.

By degrees a kind of awe made the country people shun her. Her strange, reserved nature—the gentle sadness that was spread over her features—the ever-repeated assurance that her parents spent every night with her, gave occasion to rumours of all sorts among the superstitious. It was said that their restless spirits actually rose from their watery grave, to protect the darling they had forsaken. This belief at last prevailed so far that the people gradually avoided speaking to the girl, or having her in their homes; but everything she required was conveyed to a place, whence she, as if by a tacit agreement, came to fetch it. This estrangement coincided entirely with her own inclinations; she did not like the society of human beings, and had no knowledge of their ways. Thus, solitary and companionless, she ripened into a lovely maiden.

From sunrise until evening she was to be seen on the same spot, sitting on the shore, either in a musing, dreamy attitude, softly murmuring to the waves, and bending over them, as if listening for a reply; or combing with careful pride her lustrous golden hair, which dipped in the moving mirror of the water, and enveloped her in the sunshine, like a mantle of rays.

Eleven years had elapsed since the day on which the parents of the orphan had met their death. The old Count's oppression, far from being diminished, was redoubled, under the united sway of the two brothers; who vied with each other in inflicting pain and misery. While Franz was the terror of all the poor who were unable to render their lord the exact amount of money and labour due to him, Wilfred, the younger brother, was a libertine of the most licentious nature; who, in his wild passion for the banquet, and the chase, spared neither the goods nor the lands, neither the fields nor the fruits of his vassals. Every holy feeling of humanity seemed to be dried up in these two hearts. The father of a family trembled when Franz ordered him up to the castle, for this was the sure omen of apprehending misfortune. The mother murmured a short prayer, and hastened to conceal herself and her children in the remotest corner of the house, when the snorting of Wilfred's black horse was heard on the castle hill.