

"Do you know Ernst?" asked Eric, quickly.

The sisters looked at each other and smiled. "Oh, yes; a little."

The two friends sat talking with the sisters till late. They found so many things to talk of; and Schwartz sat before Eric, looking up into his face, switching his great tail on the floor, as if he knew him.

When Carl and Eric met at breakfast the next morning, the snow still fell fast. All travelling was out of the question; there was nothing for it but to wait patiently till it cleared up. Even then Eric acknowledged that it would be a day or two before the snow would be fit for travelling. Fortunately, Carl had materials for painting with him, so Eric sat down and employed himself in making a sketch of the scene with the wolves, of the night before. Carl came and looked over his shoulder.

"That is it," he said; "but don't you think, Eric, it would be as well to ask Mademoiselle Marie to sit for her portrait? It would make the thing more complete. It really is perfect. It is the scene itself. And the dark group of the hounds and the wolf! I think, though, Schwartz would not be quite satisfied with his portrait if he saw it. Let us ask his black seigneurie to favour us with a sitting."

When the sisters heard what Eric was about, they asked to be allowed to see the picture, and Eric was obliged to finish it in their room, where Schwartz, very gravely, sat for his portrait. Carl made a small model of him for Katrine, who received it with a well-pleased smile.

"I will make one life-size, for you, when I return to Rome;" he said, "I feel in a very industrious mood. I will have him struggling with the wolf."

It was not to be supposed that Eric saw so much of Marie with impunity. Whenever their eyes met, a strange spasm passed through his breast, and he could not even speak to her without embarrassment. On the afternoon of the second day, the snow had quite ceased, and the strong easterly wind which still remained promised to harden the snow, so as to make it fit to tread in a few hours. The blacksmith had repaired the sleigh of the two sisters; he had been hard at work in the inn-yard for an hour, and Eric had been sketching him for Marie. It was fixed that they should leave Stettin the next morning. Katrine was gone to see if

Fritz was well enough to accompany them, and had left Marie in their room reading. A knock was heard at the door, and Marie said, "Come in."

The door opened and Eric appeared. When he saw Marie alone in the room, he stood there irresolute; not knowing whether to advance or retreat. As Marie raised her eyes from her book he came forward. "I—I forgot my pencil," he said, "and we are packing up the drawing-materials."

"Is this it?" said Marie, rising and coming forward with it in her hands. "I found it on the table."

Eric did not look at the pencil; he looked at the hand, and from the hand he looked at the face. She held out the pencil, and he took, not the pencil only, but the hand with it. She did not withdraw it; he felt it tremble in his. In another moment his arm was round her waist, and his lips were pressed to her forehead.

"We shall meet sooner than you expect," said Katrine, guiltily, in answer to Carl, who asked them if they were going all the way to Strahlen that day, when he and Eric escorted the sisters to their sleigh next morning. Marie was silent; but, when Eric tucked the warm furs round her, the smile she gave him said something for all that.

CHAPTER IV.

Ernst Walderthorn walked to and fro in the withdrawing-room of Kronenthal. His face was anxious, though he strove to smile, and words of hope were on his lips, which, to judge from his unequal steps and restless eyes, seemed far from his heart.

"You may depend on it, dear mother, that Eric never left Stettin that stormy night. Every one must have seen the storm coming up all the evening. You may rest assured he slept safely under the hospitable roof of the Gelderstern."

"Heaven grant it may be as you say, my son," answered the lady to whom his words were addressed.

The lady of Kronenthal, as she was always called, had not long passed the prime of life. She was about forty-five, and bore her years well, though the traces of deep sorrow were to be seen on her still handsome countenance. The likeness between her and her children was very remarkable, and there could be no doubt as to whence Eric derived his broad forehead and deep intellectual eye. She was tall and