

The next morning Lise was herself. Her brief imprisonment was over. She went singing about the house, and after the midday meal was over, dressed herself carefully in a fresh white dress, trimmed with ribbons whose color matched her blue eyes, and taking her work-bag, went to the pastor's.

At the end of the village the simple little church, with the tall, sharp spire, stood in the graveyard. Close by was the pastor's house, a white cottage, half hidden by foliage. As Lise approached, some little girls who were playing in the garden ran to the low fence and welcomed her, clapping their hands.

"Here's Lischen!" they cried, and their mother, a thin, little woman with kind eyes, dressed as simply as any peasant in a colored cotton gown, came out of the house, not pausing for a moment in her busy knitting.

"That is right," she said, and mother, children and Lise went and sat on the benches under the slender, waving trees at the end of the garden.

After yesterday's mental turmoil it soothed the girl to be in that quiet spot. Sitting there on the bench, the flickering shadows playing quietly upon the turf at her feet, the quiet, round-eyed children gravely watching her as she showed them the new stitch, Lise felt softened and inclined to justify the elders for separating her from Alexis.

"Perhaps it is as well," she thought; then she blushed. She had recognized in that instant that they loved each other—that she was false to Franz!

"Why are you so red, Lise?" asked little Elizabeth, quaintly. Mother, why is Lise so red?"

"The sun, I suppose," said the Frau Pastorin, and she asked after Herr Ulrich.

Lise turned pale. "I have not heard from him for some days," was her reply.

"There is nothing wrong, I hope, my child?"

Lise shook her head. "Not with *him*," she said, significantly.

"With you, then, Lise?"

Lise glanced upward. This discovery of her own feelings, coming suddenly, as a shock, had unhinged her. She felt almost delirious. She spoke, and hardly knew what she said, but her last words were an appeal for advice. She found herself begging the Frau Pastorin to tell her whether a girl would be justified in breaking an engagement should she find out she could not love the man to whom she was betrothed, as a woman should love her husband.

The Frau Pastorin was aghast. In her experience girls were generally only too glad to be betrothed to a good, kind man.

"You had better ask the pastor," she said, and hurried away into the house to get his coffee, for she saw him coming.

"Ah, Lise!" said the pastor, coming toward them. "It is hot," and he took off his hat and sank into a garden chair.

The Frau Pastorin felt the confidence a responsibility; and presently, when the pastor settled to smoke after

drinking his coffee, she sent the children away and told her husband Lise had something to ask him. But Lise could not speak, so the good woman, with delicate tact, proposed the question Lise had asked. The pastor smoked in silence, and Lise bent low over her work. Then he said:

"You ask me whether a woman's whim should be allowed to break a good man's heart? A curious question, Lise."

She looked up, startled.

"I am not using extravagant expressions. A betrothal is a solemn contract. A man does not ask a woman to be his wife unless he feels that he loves her as his wife; and no true German girl places her hand in his and vows herself to him without a reciprocal feeling. With others, volatile and frivolous, who do not recognize the sanctity of marriage, I have nothing to do. They should apply to citizens of the world for advice."

"You are severe, Herr Pastor," said Lise. She could hardly speak, and presently she pleaded home work, said good-bye, and left them.

Little Elizabeth ran to the garden fence and peeped wistfully after her young godmother, watching the white figure growing smaller and smaller, as the girl walked quickly across the fields, till it quivered against the dark forest shades like a nodding daisy, and disappeared. Then the child started back.

"Hulloa, little one," said a man's voice, and a tall figure seemed to tower above her like a giant. "Fraulein Lise is here, is she not?"

"No, Count Alexis," quavered the shy, childish voice. "Lise went away in a hurry, and she is in the forest."

"Thank you, little one."

And before little Elizabeth had recovered her fright and confusion, Alexis seemed growing smaller and smaller as he strode rapidly after Lise.

"He does go quick," thought the pastor's daughter, bobbing her white-capped little head over the fence, and watching the tall, military figure till it too disappeared. Then she had a fresh surprise. She saw a grave young man, with a black beard, coming along the road. He stopped opposite Elizabeth, and fixing his serious black eyes upon her, lifted his cap, and asked her "which was Herr Barmann's house?"

The child stared, fascinated. Her thoughts traveling those mysterious and misunderstood mental paths of childhood, she said, "Do you want Lise, too, like Count Alexis?"

A strange expression crossed the man's face. He adjusted a strap that pressed his shoulder too tightly, then he said with a sad smile, "Then you know Fraulein Lise?"

"She is my godmother."

"She is here?"

"No; there—there," and Elizabeth pointed gravely to the forest. The dark young man hesitated, looked round, then absently raising his cap, took the same road as the others.

The pastor's words had been as powerful words often are to the mentally lethargic—they had suddenly and