

She glanced round, startled, like a hunted creature. "Nothing, nothing. I don't know what I am saying. Oh! let me go," and she sprang up, and would have fled.

He stood in her path and waved her back. "Not yet," he said. "I have something to say to you, Lise. Sit down. Leave your hands in mine. Now look into my eyes and listen. You and I are before God, Lise, together—apart from the world—and here, if only for once, we should be true. Let us put aside subterfuge and pretence, and speak heart to heart, as we always did when we were innocent children. Your happiness is my dearest wish, and your happiness is at stake. Lise, I have only two things to ask you: the first is that you will look straight into my eyes, and tell me what you read there."

She struggled faintly. "You are hard—too hard upon me, Alexis."

Then she knew. "Look at me, Lise," he said, determinedly. She raised her eyes to his, and stayed, as if fascinated. Fate had met her on the very threshold of her life, stern, unrelenting—and she had succumbed. Alexis knew she was in his hands, at his mercy. Her eyes filled with tears, the corners of her mouth drooped pitifully.

"Do not make me say it," she sobbed; then her head fell upon his breast, her arms stole round his neck, where they were held by his, strong in triumph.

As the two, conqueror and conquered, sat still, the emotional waves of love, fear, regret and relief, beating upon their young souls, steadied by unity—a man who had been leaning motionless against the trunk of a tree in the background, staggered away into the shades as one drunk or demented, following the footpath as if by instinct till he came to an open glade, where the lengthening sunbeams quivered on the green moss, where a quiet pool mirrored the sky, and fair lilies lay peacefully on its surface as kind thoughts on a pure, God-loving soul. It was Franz Ulrich.

"Ulrich is very remiss. At least, he might have written," thought Herr Barmann, disappointed when he returned home to find no sign of his expected guest. Then he soothed his vexation by his usual resource—his pipe. He was pondering Lise's affairs in his mind as he smoked, leaning back in his chair on the grass plat, when the door bell sounded, and Ulrich appeared.

After Herr Barmann's joyous welcome was over, he said to his future son-in-law: "I cannot congratulate you on your looks. But perhaps you are anxious about Lise? She is only spending the afternoon at the pastor's. I will send for her."

"Pray do not," was on Ulrich's lips—arrested by a peal of the bell. He well knew who it was. "Prepare Lise to meet me," he said abruptly to her father, and disappeared into the house. The white dress fluttered in the sunlight, and in a moment Lise's arms were round her father's neck, her warm kisses were on his cheek. She was exalted in the first ecstasy of happy love. Alexis had her promise that she would tell Ulrich the truth, and would strive with him against the natural obstacles that

must occur before the child brother and sister could be grown-up man and wife; and she was happy with a bright happiness she had not known for years.

"My little dove has enjoyed her afternoon at the pastor's," said Herr Barmann, his face broadening with satisfaction. "And she little knows the happiness in store for her. I might tease you, Lischen, but God forbid! I will not keep you in suspense. Ulrich is here!"

It was well that it was dark. As he said those three pregnant words Lise seemed to shrink and collapse. She stood an instant as if paralyzed, then some one came out, a voice that was Franz's sounded cheerily, her hand was clasped in the kind, close grasp she knew so well.

"We must tell Lise why I am here. We owe her an explanation." Franz had seated himself on a garden chair, and was striking a match to light his cigar. Lise's fingers clenched upon the back of her father's chair to save herself from falling. She was giddy with emotion. Then Franz, in his usual straight, stern fashion, told Lise the circumstances of his visit. He was there, by invitation, to draw up the count's will; after which Herr Barmann expatiated upon the family affairs of the noble family, and related how the whole hopes of both the count and countess were centred in their only son.

"Which, it is to be hoped, the young man will repay in the future," said Franz, drily.

"The count is far too shrewd to leave the door open for possible thieves," was Herr Barmann's remark. "From what I heard from the gnädige Frau, all will be arranged that should Count Alexis take any serious step against their wish he will be a beggar. This is only right. Alexis is young and impetuous. He has a good heart, but with his expectations is naturally flattered, and is a target for unscrupulous people. If he knows that the first filial disobedience will be followed by disinheritance, he will think twice before he acts."

"True," assented Franz. Then he started up. A white figure glided out of sight and disappeared. "Lise has gone," he remarked.

"Only to see about supper, my friend," said the intendant. "Let us smoke."

Meanwhile poor Lise was going through her first great agony. She was too intrinsically good to deceive herself. She realized the position. She knew that her duty was plain: to give up Alexis, at once, for always, and afterwards to tell Franz what had passed between them and the true state of her feelings, leaving the issue in his hands.

"I must write to Alexis to-night." Her paper was before her, her pen was dipped in the ink, then between her and the blank page came the recollection of the bright, boyish face as she had seen it last, glowing with love and triumph. The pen was dashed down. "I cannot; it is too cruel!" she sobbed. But with the relief of tears came tender thoughts that cooled her passion as if it were fanned by angels' wings; thoughts of her dead mother, whose pain had been lessened, whose death had been consoled, by the countess. Should she repay her mother's best friend by a cruel injury—for such Lise's