

"attack of heart," to which the countess was subject, and in the middle of dinner she fainted, and had to be carried to her room, which the rustic doctor, who was hastily fetched from a neighboring townlet, declared she would not be able to leave for some days.

So Alexis was free to roam, unspied upon by maternal eyes. As a rule, he had found it dull at the Schloss; but now he felt strangely content. His eyes wandered over the groups of shrubs that, parting, showed pictures of unmowed grassy lawns with flower beds and gravelled walks. The shadows at his feet were pale; the flag hung limply on its pole above the castle tower. It would be a fit day to lounge in the shade at Lise's feet, as he last did five long years ago, before he went to the military school. He paused, mentally contemplating the idea, and then walked through the open gates, left the castle behind him, and proceeded up the broad road leading to the village. First under the trees, then in the open, then under the high brick wall of Herr Barmann's garden. He rang a bell, and the green gate opened as if by itself. He stepped down into the square garden.

"Good morning." A thin, sharp-eyed man of middle age, in a Schlafrock or dressing gown, a cap on his grey hair and a long pipe between his lips, came down the steps from the house door. "It is long since you have been here, Count Alexis. You want Lise. The gnädige Frau sent the Jungfer Marie" (her maid) "to ask for Lise to go and sit with her."

How was it then that Alexis had not met her? Oh! that was easily explained. Lise went to the castle through the fields by the path that led from their garden gate to the shrubberies. "I always go that way," added the attendant, with a sharp, scrutinizing glance aside at the young man. "But now you are here, come in and tell me some news of Breslau." But Alexis refused. The suspicion he had felt that "they were trying to prevent his seeing Lise" was strengthening.

In the last field between the shrubberies around the Schloss and Herr Barmann's house was a piece of water, bordered by a narrow copse. Here there was a boathouse, where he and Lise used to play at being shipwrecked mariners on a desert island, going to and fro to the tiny islet in the middle of the lake in the curious three-cornered punt with the swan's head. Lise must pass here, and here Alexis went and waited for her.

While he was seriously pondering, Lise was coming home through the shrubberies, accompanied by the old white St. Bernard, Chance, who used to make the third young playfellow in those dear old days. Then he was a fluffy young pup with big, awkward paws and a silly, inquisitive face; now he was a sage old dog, whose long hair flapped as he marched sedately along, his dim eyes impervious to attractions that to his worn sensibilities were attractions no longer. Young with Alexis and Lise, his life had bounded on while their lives had crawled, and now that theirs were unfolding into the first passionate freshness of full noon, his was melting into the shades of fast-coming night. Yet even old Chance could be roused from his steady torpor. As Lise and he neared

the open field of the lake, he suddenly paused, sniffed, and with a short bark rushed away from his mistress. Lise heard a voice say, "Chance, dear old Chance," then back he came, leaping and fawning upon—Alexis!

She shrank back, her heart seemed to stop—then her life seemed smothered by an embrace. Alexis kissed her on both cheeks, as he had kissed his mother yesterday. Anger, ruffled dignity, restored her equilibrium. "How dare you," she said, retreating, and brushing her cheeks with her handkerchief.

"Then you are not my sister, my darling Lise? Because you are grown up and betrothed, you are going to cast me off? You forget your promise to love your adopted brother Alexis best in the world as long as you lived! Oh, Lise, you cannot mean it! Do not try to be silly, like the fashionable young ladies in town!"

His words were like a stream of sunshine. Lise forgot doubts, conventionalities, and looked up into the honest blue eyes, with their fringe of black lashes, that she knew so well. "We are no longer children," she said.

"Are only children to love and to be happy? Oh, Lise, be yourself, my sister; all these years that they have kept us apart home has not been home, it has been like a bad dream. There was no one whom my heart could speak to, so it got numb and stopped speaking till yesterday. Then, when I saw you again, it suddenly sprang up and seemed to warm me and bring me to consciousness again, and to-day it burns with joy as if it could fly from me and flutter to your feet, so dearly do I love my dear, long-lost sister."

Their hands clasped. They felt children again, basking in the warmth of an innocent sympathy in which ceremony and false shame died a sudden death. This sweet, blushing, serene woman was to Alexis the child Lise glorified; and Lise saw in the tall young man the little brother grown tall and strong.

Drawing her hand through his arm, Alexis led her along the path toward the boathouse. "Now that we are together again, at last," he said, joyously, "we must go over the old ground; you will come to all the places where we were so happy, once more, before we part forever, won't you, Lise?"

"Part forever!" The words were as a cold hand laid upon Lise's heart, yet she knew them true. Her life would weary itself out with dark, staid Franz Ulrich in the refined, museum-like Dresden, while Alexis—would fight, or enjoy a glittering peace, in the heart of a brilliant army.

"Don't let us talk of parting, just for to-day."

"They are trying to keep us apart, though, Lise," said he, bending his tall head as they passed under a tree. "These old people can't enjoy anything, so they grudge enjoyment to us."

They stood in the boathouse. The wavelets lapped the keel of the punt. Lise peered into the corners. "Our chairs and our tables are gone," she said. "Last time I came here they were all black and rotten, so I suppose they have been given to the poor for fuel."