

I saw that a dream of possible happiness had dimmed her eyes with tears. That dream, she thought, could never be realized. I had been told that she had given her heart to a young officer, and that poverty was an insuperable bar to their marriage.

One morning I received a message from Madame Jansen begging me to call upon her. I lost no time in obeying the summons. In spite of the heat of that June day the old woman was pacing up and down her room, leaning heavily upon her stick. She wore a gray cloak buttoned to the chin, and on her head a black lace bonnet adorned by a red rose. Her false curls hung negligently around her face.

"I wish to consult you on a grave matter," she said. "I am told that the daughter of a rich merchant is engaged to marry a count. Now, I do not see why my niece should not also win a coronet."

"I do not see, madame, how, without money—"

"I have power to alter my will."

Madame Jansen seemed to be full of this new notion. She walked briskly up and down the room, talking to herself. At length she paused and said:

"There must surely be a starving count somewhere in this town who would be willing for a little money— My niece—she is not to be despised. During the short visit she paid me I noticed that she was beautiful. She seems to have had a good education, and there is that about her which reminds me of my own youth. Yes, I will leave her a princely fortune."

I was much surprised, but said nothing. After the death of Madame Jansen, Matilde, with millions of thalers in her lap, might choose a husband for herself and let the shadowy count fade into thin air.

Madame Jansen begged me to prepare the necessary documents for a revocation of her previous will. "Time presses," she said. "My niece is so beautiful she will be engaging herself to some one in her own sphere of life; we have no time to lose. Next week I shall open my reception rooms. Monsieur le comte shall be invited. I will present him to my niece, and as to my nephew, the chef de police, he shall do the honors. Come up stairs, I want you to see everything with your own eyes."

The key grated in the lock as with difficulty we opened the door of the large ballroom. In the embrasures of the windows lay legions of dead moths, and the floor was thick with dust. My attention was suddenly arrested by two full-sized portraits; one was that of an elderly man with a round, sensual face and small eyes; the other was a beautiful young woman in the vestments of a Bacchante. From her shapely shoulders fell a white tunic, while in her raven black hair—which was clipped over the brows—a crimson ribbon was entwined. The joy of life seemed to be reflected by those eyes. I saw in this portrait the original of my grandfather's miniature—line for line the same—only larger and lifelike! A light tap on my shoulder recalled my wandering thoughts; Madame Jansen was smiling placidly at my side.

"It must have been a good likeness, although people

thought that the artist had not quite caught the fairness of my complexion or the bright sparkle of my eyes."

"Is it *your* portrait?" I asked.

"And whose else could it be? The celebrated Groger of Hamburg painted it when I was newly married. My husband paid six hundred ducats for the pair."

"Have you been to Antwerp?" I asked suddenly.

"Have I ever been to Antwerp?" she echoed. "Ah! indeed, and in the flower of beauty, too! My father owned three of the largest vessels in the port. We spent six weeks there."

And she paced up and down the long room, leaning on her stick, growing more and more animated as her memory rekindled the glories of the past.

"We lived a strange life there!" she exclaimed, suddenly. "A Russian squadron was at anchor in the offing, and the officers gave dances on board their ships. They soon found out that there was a beauty on board my father's ship, whose equal they could not have found had they swept the Netherlands. I was soon their welcome guest, and in time became the queen of their fetes. They would come ashore to fetch me in a barge dressed with flags. They were all at my feet—the officers and the sons of noble German families who were studying at Antwerp. But I repulsed them all, and still rejoice at it."

I looked at her in blank amazement. What vanity was embodied in that recital! Her wrinkled cheeks were slightly flushed, which brought into greater relief her age and frightful thinness. At length, in a voice so sweet that it did not seem to come from those shrunken lips, she said:

"Do you know, my friend, why I had confidence in you, and, from the first, in you only? Because I noticed in you a resemblance—a likeness. Among the young merchants of Antwerp there was one whom I had known a long time. Young man," she continued, in a strange, sad voice, "have you ever seen a woman repulse, with her eyes wide open, that which should have been her greatest happiness? I don't know why I repulsed him. He was as handsome as the pictures of St. John. Perhaps he was not rich! No, he was not rich. He was richer." And she pointed at the portrait beside hers.

"That is your husband, I suppose?"

Madame Jansen smiled bitterly, and then continued her self-examination:

"Perhaps he was not good?" This time there was no bitterness in her smile. "Yes, he was good, and that was perhaps the reason why I repulsed him. And he loved me! I know that he secretly had a copy of my portrait made, and then betook himself to the New World. But that is a long, long time ago," she murmured. "Ah! if only I knew whether he were still alive! He, or his children, or even his grandchildren!"

At these words she dropped her stick and joined her hands as though in prayer; she trembled in every limb.

A feeling of intense pity crept into my heart and I was about to speak. I had it on my lips to tell her that I could bring a souvenir of the friend of her youth; that I was his grandson! But her voice checked me.