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A WORD, ONLY A WORD

By Georg Ebers

Volume 5.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Spanish nature is contagious, thought Hans Eitelfritz, tossing on his couch in Ulrich's tent. What a queer fellow the gay young lad has become! Sighs are cheap with him, and every word costs a ducat. He is worthy all honor as a soldier. If they make him Eletto, it will be worth while to join the free army.

Ulrich had briefly told the lansquenet, how he had obtained the name of Navarrete and how he had come from Madrid and Lepanto to the Netherlands. Then he went to rest, but he could not sleep.

He had found his mother again. He now possessed the best gift Ruth had asked him to beseech of the "word." The soldier's sweetheart, the faithless wife, the companion of his rival, whom only yesterday he had avoided, the fortune-teller, the camp-sibyl, was the woman who had given him birth. He, who thought he had preserved his honor stainless, whose hand grasped the sword if another looked askance at him, was the child of one, at whom every respectable woman had the right to point her finger. All these thoughts darted through his brain; but strangely enough, they melted like morning mists when the sun rises, before the feeling of joy that he had his mother again.

Her image did not rise before his memory in Zorrillo's tent, but framed by balsams and wall-flowers. His vivid imagination made her twenty years younger, and how beautiful she still was, how winningly she could glance and smile. Every appreciative word, all the praises of the sibyl's beauty, good sense and kindness, which he had heard in the camp, came back freshly to his mind, and he would fain have started up to throw himself on her bosom, call her his mother, hear her give him all the sweet, pet names, which sounded so tender from her lips, and feel the caress of her soft hands. How rich the solitary man felt, how surpassingly rich! He had been entirely alone, deserted even by his mother! Now he was so no longer, and pleasant dreams blended with his ambitious plans, like golden threads in dark cloth.

When power was once his, he would build her a beautiful, cosy nest with his share of the booty. She must leave Zorrillo, leave him to-morrow. The little nest should belong to her and him alone, entirely alone, and when his soul longed for peace, love, and quiet, he would rest there with her, recall with her the days of his childhood, cherish and care for her, make her forget all her sins and sufferings, and enjoy to the full the happiness of having her again, calling a loving mother's heart his own.

At every breath he drew he felt freer and gayer. Suddenly there was a

rustling at the tent-door. He seized his two-handed sword, but did not raise it, for a beloved voice he recognized, called softly: "Ulrich, Ulrich, it is I!"

He started up, hastily threw on his doublet, rushed towards her, clasped her in his arms, and let her stroke his curls, kiss his cheeks and eyes, as in the old happy days. Then he drew her into the tent, whispering "Softly, softly, the snorer yonder is the German."

She followed him, leaned against him, and raised his hand to her lips; he felt them grow wet with tears. They had not yet said anything to each other, except how happy, how glad, how thankful they were to have each other again; then a sentinel passed, and she started up, exclaiming anxiously: "So late, so late; Zorrillo will be waiting!"

"Zorrillo!" cried Ulrich scornfully, "you have been a long time with him. If they give me the power...."

"They will choose you, child, they shall choose you," she hastily interrupted. "Oh, God! oh, God! perhaps this will bring you misfortune instead of blessing; but you desire it! Count Mannsfeld is coming tomorrow; Zorrillo knows it. He will bring a pardon for all; promotions too, but no money yet."

"Oh, ho!" cried Ulrich, "that may decide the matter."

"Perhaps so, you deserve to command them. You were born for some special purpose, and your card always turns up so strangely. Eletto! It sounds proud and grand, but many have been ruined by it...."

"Because power was too hard for them."

"It must serve you. You are strong. A child of good fortune. Folly! I will not fear. You have probably fared well in life. Ah, my lamb, I have done little for you, but one thing I did unceasingly: I prayed for you, poor boy, morning and night; have you noticed, have you felt it?"

He drew her to his heart again, but she released herself from his embrace, saying: "To-morrow, Ulrich; Zorrillo...."

"Zorrillo, always Zorrillo," he repeated, his blood boiling angrily.

"You are mine and, if you love me, you will leave him."

"I cannot, Ulrich, it will not do. He is kind, you will yet be friends."

"We, we? On the day of judgment, nay, not even then! Are you more firmly bound to yon smooth fellow, than to my honest father? There stands something in the darkness, it is good steel, and if needful will cut the tie asunder."

"Ulrich, Ulrich !" wailed Flora, raising her hands beseechingly. "Not that, not that; it must not be. He is kind and sensible, and loves me fondly. Oh, Heaven! Oh, Ulrich! The mother has glided to her son at

night, as if she were following forbidden paths. Oh, this is indeed a punishment. I know how heavily I have sinned, I deserve whatever may befall me; but you, you must not make me more wretched, than I already am. Your father, heif he were still alive, for your sake I would crawl to him on my knees, and say: "Here I am, forgive me--but he is dead. Pasquale, Zorrillo lives; do not think me a vain, deluded woman; Zorrillo cannot bear to have me leave him...."

"And my father? He bore it. But do you know how? Shall I describe his life to you?"

"No, no! Oh, child, how you torture me! I know how I sinned against your father, the thought does not cease to torture me, for he truly loved me, and I loved him, too, loved him tenderly. But I cannot keep quiet a long time, and cast down my eyes, like the women there, it is not in my blood; and Adam shut me up in a cage and for many years let me see nothing except himself, and the cold, stupid city in the ravine by the forest. One day a fierce longing came upon me, I could not help going forth--forth into the wide world, no matter with whom or whither. The soldier only needed to hint and I fell.--I did not stay with him long, he was a windy braggart; but I was faithful to Captain Grandgagnage and accompanied the wild fellow with the Walloons through every land, until he was shot. Then ten years ago, I joined Zorrillo; he is my friend, he shares my feelings, I am necessary to his existence. Do not laugh, Ulrich; I well know that youth lies behind me, that I am old, yet Pasquale loves me; since I have had him, I have been more content and, Holy Virgin! now--I love him in return. Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven! Why is it so? This heart, this miserable heart, still throbs as fast as it did twenty years ago."

"You will not leave him?"

"No, no, I love him, and I know why. Every one calls him a brave man, yet they only half know him; no one knows him wholly as I do. No one else is so good, so generous. You must let me speak! Do you suppose I ever forgot you? Never, never! But you have always been to me the dear little boy; I never thought of you as a man, and since I could not have you and longed so greatly for you, for a child, I opened my heart to the soldiers' orphans, the little creature you saw in the tent is one of these poor things, I have often had two or three such babies at the same time. It would have been an abomination to Grandgagnage, but Zorrillo rejoices in my love for children, and I have given what the Walloon bequeathed me and his own booty to the soldiers' widows and the little naked babies in the camp. He was satisfied, for whatever I do pleases him. I will not, cannot leave him!"

She paused, hiding her face in her hands, but Ulrich paced to and fro, violently agitated. At last he said firmly: "Yet you must part from him. He or I! I will have nothing to do with the lover of my father's wife. I am Adam's son, and will be constant to him. Ah, mother, I have been deprived of you so long. You can tend strangers' orphaned children, yet you make your own son an orphan. Will you do this? No, a thousand times, no, you cannot! Do not weep so, you must not weep! Hear me, hear

me! For my sake, leave this Spaniard! You will not repent it. I have just been dreaming of the nest I will build for you. There I will cherish and care for you, and you shall keep as many orphan children as you choose. Leave him, mother, you must leave him for the sake of your child, your Ulrich!"

"Oh, God! oh, God!" she sobbed. "I will try, yes, I will try.... My child, my dear child!"

Ulrich clasped her closely in his arms, kissed her hair, and said, softly: "I know, I know, you need love, and you shall find it with me."

"With you!" she repeated, sobbing. Then releasing herself from his embrace she hurried to the feverish woman, at whose summons she had left her tent.

As morning dawned, she returned home and found Zorrillo still awake. He enquired about her patient, and told her he had given the child something to drink while she was away.

Flora could not help weeping bitterly again, and Zorrillo, noticing it, exclaimed chidingly: "Each has his own griefs to bear, it is not wise to take strangers' troubles so deeply to heart."

"Strangers' troubles," she repeated, mournfully, and went to rest.

White-haired woman, why have you remained so young? All the cares and sorrows of youth and age are torturing you at the same time! One love is fighting a mortal battle with another in your breast. Which will conquer?

She knows, she knew it ere she entered the tent. The mother fled from the child, but she cannot abandon her new-found son. Oh, maternal love, thou dost hover in radiant bliss far above the clouds, and amid choirs of angels! Oh, maternal heart, thou dost bleed pierced with swords, more full of sorrows than any other!

Poor, poor Florette! On this July morning she was enduring superhuman tortures, all the sins she had committed arrayed themselves against her, shrieking into her ear that she was a lost woman, and there could be no pardon for her either in this world or the next. Yet!--the clouds drift by, birds of passage migrate, the musician wanders singing from land to land, finds love, and remorselessly strips off light fetters to seek others. His child imitates the father, who had followed the example of his, the same thing occurring back to their remotest ancestors! But eternal justice? Will it measure the fluttering leaf by the same standard as the firmly-rooted plant?

When Zorrillo saw Flora by the daylight, he said, kindly: "You have been weeping?"

"Yes," she answered, fixing her eyes on the ground. He thought she was anxious, as on a former occasion, lest his election to the office of

Eletto might prove his ruin, so he drew her towards him, exclaiming "Have no fear, Bonita. If they choose me, and Mannsfeld comes, as he promised, the play will end this very day. I hope, even at the twelfth hour, they will listen to reason, and allow themselves to be guided into the right course. If they make the young madcap Eletto--his head will be at stake, not mine. Are you ill? How you look, child! Surely, surely you must be suffering; you shall not go out at night to nurse sick people again!"

The words came from an anxious heart, and sounded warm and gentle. They penetrated Florette's inmost soul, and overwhelmed with passionate emotion she clasped his hands, kissed them, and exclaimed, softly "Thanks, thanks, Pasquale, for your love, for all. I will never, never forget it, whatever happens! Go, go; the drum is beating again."

Zorrillo fancied she was uttering mere feverish ravings, and begged her to calm herself; then he left the tent, and went to the place where the election was to be held.

As soon as Flora was alone, she threw herself on her knees before the Madonna's picture, but knew not whether it would be right to pray that her son might obtain an office, which had proved the ruin of so many; and when she besought the Virgin to give her strength to leave her lover, it seemed to her like treason to Pasquale.

Her thoughts grew confused, and she could not pray. Her mobile mind wandered swiftly from lofty to petty things; she seized the cards to see whether fate would unite her to Zorrillo or to Ulrich, and the red ten, which represented herself, lay close beside the green knave, Pasquale. She angrily threw them down, determined, in spite of the oracle, to follow her son.

Meantime in the camp drums beat, fifes screamed shrilly, trumpets blared, and the shouts and voices of the assembled soldiers sounded like the distant roar of the surf.

A fresh burst of military music rang out, and now Florette started to her feet and listened. It seemed as if she heard Ulrich's voice, and the rapid throbbing of her heart almost stopped her breath. She must go out, she must see and hear what was passing. Hastily pushing the white hair back from her brow, she threw a veil over it, and hurried through the camp to the spot where the election was taking place.

The soldiers all knew her and made way for her. The leaders of the mutineers were standing on the wall of earth between the field-pieces, and amid the foremost rank, nay, in front of them all, her son was addressing the crowd.

The choice wavered between him and Zorrillo. Ulrich had already been speaking a long time. His cheeks were glowing and he looked so handsome, so noble, in his golden helmet, from beneath which floated his thick, fair locks, that her heart swelled with joy, and as the night grows brighter when the black clouds are torn asunder and the moon victoriously appears, grief and pain were suddenly irradiated by maternal love and

pride.

Now he drew his tall figure up still higher, exclaiming: "Others are readier and bolder with the tongue than I, but I can speak with the sword as well as any one."

Then raising the heavy two-handed sword, which others laboriously managed with both hands, he swung it around his head, using only his right hand, in swift circles, until it fairly whistled through the air.

The soldiers shouted exultingly as they beheld the feat, and when he had lowered the weapon and silence was restored, he continued, defiantly, while his breath came quick and short: "And where do the talkers, the parleyers seek to lead us? To cringe like dogs, who lick their masters' feet, before the men who cheat us. Count Mannsfeld will come to-day; I know it, and I have also learned that he will bring everything except what is our due, what we need, what we intend to demand, what we require for our bare feet, our ragged bodies; money, money he has not to offer! This is so, I swear it; if not, stand forth, you parleyers, and give me the lie! Have you inclination or courage to give the lie to Navarrete? --You are silent!--But we will speak! We will not suffer ourselves to be mocked and put off! What we demand is fair pay for good work. Whoever has patience, can wait. Mine is exhausted.

"We are His Majesty's obedient servants and wish to remain so. As soon as he keeps his bargain, he can rely upon us; but when he breaks it, we are bound to no one but ourselves, and Santiago! we are not the weaker party. We need money, and if His Majesty lacks ducats, a city where we can find what we want. Money or a city, a city or money! The demand is just, and if you elect me, I will stand by it, and not shrink if it rouses murmuring behind me or against me. Whoever has a brave heart under his armor, let him follow me; whoever wishes to creep after Zorrillo, can do so. Elect me, friends, and I will get you more than we need, with honor and fame to boot. Saint Jacob and the Madonna will aid us. Long live the king!"

"Long live the king! Long live Navarrete! Navarrete! Hurrah for Navarrete!" echoed loudly, impetuously from a thousand bearded lips.

Zorrillo had no opportunity to speak again. The election was made.

Ulrich was chosen Eletto.

As if on wings, he went from man to man, shaking hands with his comrades. Power, power, the highest prize on earth, was attained, was his! The whole throng, soldiers, tyros, women, girls and children, crowded around him, shouting his name; whoever wore a hat or cap, tossed it in the air, whoever had a kerchief, waved it. Drums beat, trumpets sounded, and the gunner ordered all the field-pieces to be discharged, for the choice pleased him.

Ulrich stood, as if intoxicated, amid the shouts, shrieks of joy, military music, and thunder of the cannon. He raised his helmet, waved

salutations to the crowd, and strove to speak, but the uproar drowned his words.

After the election Florette slipped quietly away; first to the empty tent then to the sick woman who needed her care.

The Eletto had no time to think of his mother; for scarcely had he given a solemn oath of loyalty to his comrades and received theirs, when Count Mannsfeld appeared.

The general was received with every honor. He knew Navarrete, and the latter entered into negotiations with the manly dignity natural to him; but the count really had nothing but promises to offer, and the insurgents would not give up their demand: "Money or a city!"

The nobleman reminded them of their oath of allegiance, made lavish use of kind words, threats and warnings, but the Eletto remained firm. Mannsfeld perceived that he had come in vain; the only concession he could obtain from Navarrete was, that some prudent man among the leaders should accompany him to Brussels, to explain the condition of the regiments to the council of state there, and receive fresh proposals. Then the count suggested that Zorrillo should be entrusted with the mission, and the Eletto ordered the quartermaster to prepare for departure at once. An hour after the general left the camp with Flora's lover in his train.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The fifth night after the Eletto's election was closing in, a light rain was falling, and no sound was heard in the deserted streets of the encampment except now and then the footsteps of a sentinel, or the cries of a child. In Zorrillo's tent, which was usually brightly lighted until a late hour of the night, only one miserable brand was burning, beside which sat the sleepy bar-maid, darning a hole in her frieze-jacket. The girl did not expect any one, and started when the door of the tent was violently torn open, and her master, followed by two newly-appointed captains, came straight up to her.

Zorrillo held his hat in his hand, his hair, slightly tinged with grey, hung in a tangled mass over his forehead, but he carried himself as erect as ever. His body did not move, but his eyes wandered from one corner of the tent to another, and the girl crossed herself and held up two fingers towards him, for his dark glance fell upon her, as he at last exclaimed, in a hollow tone:

"Where is the mistress?"

"Gone, I could not help it" replied the girl.

"Where?"

"To the Eletto, to Navarrete."

"When?"

"He came and took her and the child, directly after you had left the camp."

"And she has not returned?"

"She has just sent a roast chicken, which I was to keep for you when you came home. There it is." Zorrillo laughed. Then he turned to his companions, saying:

"I thank you. You have now.... Is she still with the Eletto?"

"Why, of course."

"And who--who saw her the night before the election--let me sit down--who saw her with him then?"

"My brother," replied one of the captains. "She was just coming out of the tent, as he passed with the guard."

"Don't take the matter to heart," said the other. "There are plenty of women! We are growing old, and can no longer cope with a handsome fellow like Navarrete."

"I thought the sibyl was more sensible," added the younger captain.

"I saw her in Naples sixteen years ago. Zounds, she was a beautiful woman then! A pretty creature even now; but Navarrete might almost be her son. And you always treated her kindly, Pasquale. Well, whoever expects gratitude from women...."

Suddenly the quartermaster remembered the hour just before the election, when Florette had thrown herself upon his breast, and thanked him for his kindness; clenching his teeth, he groaned aloud.

The others were about to leave him, but he regained his self-control, and said:

"Take him the count's letter, Renato. What I have to say to him, I will determine later."

Zorrillo was a long time unlacing his jerkin and taking out the paper. Both of his companions noticed how his fingers trembled, and looked at each other compassionately; but the older one said, as he received the letter:

"Man, man, this will do no good. Women are like good fortune."

"Take the thing as a thousand others have taken it, and don't come to blows. You wield a good blade, but to attack Navarrete is suicide. I'll

take him the letter. Be wise, Zorrillo, and look for another love at once."

"Directly, directly, of course," replied the quartermaster; but as soon as he had sent the maid-servant away, and was entirely alone, he bowed his forehead upon the table and his shoulders heaved convulsively. He remained in this attitude a long time, then paced to and fro with forced calmness. Morning dawned long ere he sought his couch.

Early the next day he made his report to the Eletto before the assembled council of war, and when it broke up, approached Navarrete, saying, in so loud a tone that no one could fail to hear:

"I congratulate you on your new sweetheart."

"With good reason," replied the Eletto. "Wait a little while, and I'll wager that you'll congratulate me more sincerely than you do to-day."

The offers from Brussels had again proved unacceptable. It was necessary now to act, and the insurgent commander profited by the time at his disposal. It seemed as if "power" doubled his elasticity and energy. It was so delightful, after the march, the council of war, and the day's work were over, to rest with his mother, listen to her, and open his own heart. How had she preserved--yes, he might call it so--her aristocratic bearing, amid the turmoil, perils, and mire of camp-life, in spite of all, all! How cleverly and entertainingly she could talk about men and things, how comical the ideas, with which she understood how to spice the conversation, and how well versed he found her in everything that related to the situation of the regiments and his own position. She had not been the confidante of army leaders in vain.

By her advice he relinquished his plan of capturing Mechlin, after learning from spies that it was prepared and expecting the attack of the insurgents.

He could not enter upon a long siege with the means at his command; his first blow must not miss the mark. So he only showed himself near Brussels, sent Captain Montesdocca, who tried to parley again, back with his mission unaccomplished, marched in a new direction to mislead his foes, and then unexpectedly assailed wealthy Aalst in Flanders.

The surprised inhabitants tried to defend their well-fortified city, but the citizens' strength could not withstand the furious assault of the well-drilled, booty-seeking army.

The conquered city belonged to the king. It was the pledge of what the rebels required, and they indemnified themselves in it for the pay that had been withheld. All who attempted to offer resistance fell by the sword, all the citizens' possessions were seized by the soldiers, as the wages that belonged to them.

In the shops under the Belfry, the great tower from whence the bell summoned the inhabitants when danger threatened, lay plenty of cloth for

new doublets. Nor was there any lack of gold or silver in the treasury of the guild-hall, the strong boxes of the merchants, the chests of the citizens. The silver table-utensils, the gold ornaments of the women, the children's gifts from godparents fell into the hands of the conquerors, while a hundred and seventy rich villages near Aalst were compelled to furnish food for the mutineers.

Navarrete did not forbid the plundering. According to his opinion, what soldiers took by assault was well-earned booty. To him the occupation of Aalst was an act of righteous self-defence, and the regiments shared his belief, and were pleased with their Eletto.

The rebels sought and found quarters in the citizens' houses, slept in their beds, eat from their dishes, and drank their wine-cellars empty. Pillage was permitted for three days. On the fifth discipline was restored, the quartermaster's department organized, and the citizens were permitted to assemble at the guild-hall, pursue their trades and business, follow the pursuits to which they had been accustomed. The property they had saved was declared unassailable; besides, robbery had ceased to be very remunerative.

The Eletto was at liberty to choose his own quarters, and there was no lack of stately dwellings in Aalst. Ulrich might have been tempted to occupy the palace of Baron de Hierges, but passed it by, selecting as a home for his mother and himself a pretty little house on the market-place, which reminded him of his father's smithy. The bow-windowed room, with the view of the belfry and the stately guildhall, was pleasantly fitted up for his mother, and the city gardeners received orders to send the finest house-plants to his residence. Soon the sitting-room, adorned with flowers and enlivened by singing-birds, looked far handsomer and more cosy than the nest of which he had dreamed. A little white dog, exactly like the one Florette had possessed in the smithy, was also procured, and when in the evening the warm summer air floated into the open windows, and Ulrich sat alone with Florette, recalling memories of the past, or making plans for the future, it seemed as if a new spring had come to his soul. The citizens' distress did not trouble him. They were the losing party in the grim game of war, enemies--rebels. Among his own men he saw nothing but joyous faces; he exercised the power--they obeyed.

Zorrillo bore him ill-will, Ulrich read it in his eyes; but he made him a captain, and the man performed his duty as quartermaster in the most exemplary manner. Florette wished to tell him that the Eletto was her son, but the latter begged her to wait till his power was more firmly established, and how could she refuse her darling anything? She had grieved deeply, very deeply, but this mood soon passed away, and now she could be happy in Ulrich's society, and forget sorrow and heartache.

What joy it was to have him back, to be loved by him! Where was there a more affectionate son, a pleasanter home than hers? The velvet and brocade dresses belonging to the Baroness de Hierges had fallen to the Eletto. How young Florette looked in them! When she glanced into the mirror, she was astonished at herself.

Two beautiful riding-horses for ladies' use and elegant trappings had been found in the baron's stable. Ulrich had told her of it, and the desire to ride with him instantly arose in her mind. She had always accompanied Grandgagnage, and when she now went out, attired in a long velvet riding-habit, with floating plumes in her dainty little hat, beside her son, she soon noticed how admiringly even the hostile citizens and their wives looked after them. It was a pretty sight to behold the handsome soldier, full of pride and power, galloping on the most spirited stallion, beside the beautiful, white-haired woman, whose eyes sparkled with vivacious light.

Zorrillo often met them, when they passed the guildhall, and Florette always gave him a friendly greeting with her whip, but he intentionally averted his eyes or if he could not avoid it, coldly returned her recognition.

This wounded her deeply, and when alone, it often happened that she sunk into gloomy reverie and, with an aged, weary face, gazed fixedly at the floor. But Ulrich's approach quickly cheered and rejuvenated her.

Florette now knew what her son had experienced in life, what had moved his heart, his soul, and could not contradict him, when he told her that power was the highest prize of existence.

The Eletto's ambitious mind could not be satisfied with little Aalst. The mutineers had been outlawed by an edict from Brussels, but the king had nothing to do with this measure; the shameful proclamation was only intended to stop the wailing of the Netherlanders. They would have to pay dearly for it! There was a great scheme in view.

The Antwerp of those days was called "as rich as the Indies;" the project under consideration was the possibility of manoeuvring this abode of wealth into the hands of the mutineers; the whole Spanish army in the Netherlands being about to follow the example of the regiments in Aalst.

The mother was the friend and counsellor of the son. At every step he took he heard her opinion, and often yielded his own in its favor. This interest in the direction of great events occupied the sibyl's versatile mind. When, on many occasions, pros and cons were equal in weight, she brought out the cards, and this oracle generally turned the scale.

No high aim, no desire to accomplish good and great things in wider spheres, influenced the thoughts and actions of this couple.

What cared they, that the weal and woe of thousands depended on their decision? The deadly weapon in their bands was to them only a valuable utensil in which they delighted, and with which fruits were plucked from the trees.

Ulrich now saw the fulfilment of Don Juan's words, that power was an arable field; for there were many full ears in Aalst for them both to harvest.

Florette still nursed, with maternal care, the soldier's orphan which she had taken to her son's house; the child, born on a bed of straw--was now clothed in dainty linen, laces and other beautiful finery. It was necessary to her, for she occupied herself with the helpless little creature when, during the long morning hours of Ulrich's absence, sorrowful thought troubled her too deeply.

Ulrich often remained absent a long time, far longer than the service required. What was he doing? Visiting a sweetheart? Why not? She only marvelled that the fair women did not come from far and near to see the handsome man.

Yes, the Eletto had found an old love. Art, which he had sullenly forsaken. News had reached his ears, that an artist had fallen in the defence of the city. He went to the dead man's house to see his works, and how did he find the painter's dwelling! Windows, furniture were shattered, the broken doors of the cupboards hung into the rooms on their bent hinges. The widow and her children were lying in the studio on a heap of straw. This touched his heart, and he gave alms with an open hand to the sorrowing woman. A few pictures of the saints, which the Spaniards had spared, hung on the walls; the easel, paints and brushes had been left untouched.

A thought, which he instantly carried into execution, entered his mind. He would paint a new standard! How his heart beat, when he again stood before the easel!

He regarded the heretics as heathens. The Spaniards were shortly going to fight against them and for the faith. So he painted the Saviour on one side of the standard, the Virgin on the other. The artist's widow sat to him for the Madonna, a young soldier for the Christ.

No scruples, no consideration for the criticisms of teachers now checked his creating hand; the power was his, and whatever he did must be right.

He placed upon the Saviour's bowed figure, Costa's head, as he had painted it in Titian's studio, and the Madonna, in defiance of the stern judges in Madrid, received the sibyl's face, to please himself and do honor to his mother. He made her younger, transformed her white hair to gleaming golden tresses. One day he asked Flora to sit still and think of something very serious; he wanted to sketch her.

She gaily placed herself in position, saying:

"Be quick, for serious thoughts don't last long with me."

A few days later both pictures were finished, and possessed no mean degree of merit; he rejoiced that after the long interval he could still accomplish something. His mother was delighted with her son's masterpieces, especially the Madonna, for she instantly recognized herself, and was touched by this proof of his faithful remembrance. She had looked exactly like it when a young girl, she said; it was strange

how precisely he had hit the color of her hair; but she was afraid it was blaspheming to paint a Madonna with her face; she was a poor sinner, nothing more.

Florette was glad that the work was finished, for restlessness again began to torture her, and the mornings had been so lonely. Zorrillo--it caused her bitter pain--had not cast even a single glance at her, and she began to miss the society of men, to which she had been accustomed. But she never complained, and always showed Ulrich the same cheerful face, until the latter told her one day that he must leave her for some time.

He had already defeated in little skirmishes small bodies of peasants and citizens, who had taken the field against the mutineers; now Colonel Romero called upon him to help oppose a large army of patriots, who had assembled between Lowen and Tirlemont, under the command of the noble Sieur de Floyon. It was said to consist of students and other rebellious brawlers, and so it proved; but the "rebels" were the flower of the youth of the shamefully-oppressed nation, noble souls, who found it unbearable to see their native land enslaved by mutinous hordes.

Ulrich's parting with his mother was not a hard one. He felt sure of victory and of returning home, but the excitable woman burst into tears as she bade him farewell.

The Eletto took the field with a large body of troops; the majority of the mutineers, with them. Captain and Quartermaster Zorrillo, remained behind to hold the citizens in check.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A considerable, but hastily-collected army of patriots had been utterly routed at Tisnacq by a small force of disciplined Spaniards.

Ulrich had assisted his countrymen to gain the speedy victory, and had been greeted by his old colonel, the brave Romero, the bold cavalry-commander, Mendoza, and other distinguished officers as one of themselves. Since these aristocrats had become mutineers, the Eletto was a brother, and they did not disdain to secure his cooperation in the attack they were planning upon Antwerp.

He had shown great courage under fire, and wherever he appeared, his countrymen held out their hands to him, vowing obedience and loyalty unto death.

Ulrich felt as if he were walking on air, mere existence was a joy to him. No prince could revel in the blissful consciousness of increasing power, more fully than he. The evening after the decision he had attended a splendid banquet with Romero, Vargas, Mendoza, Tassis, and the next morning the prisoners, who had fallen into the hands of his men, were brought before him.

He had left the examination of the students, citizens' sons, and peasants to his lieutenant; but there were also three noblemen, from whom large ransoms could be obtained. The two older ones had granted what he asked and been led away; the third, a tall man in knightly armor, was left last.

Ulrich had personally encountered the latter. The prisoner, mounted upon a tall steed, had pressed him very closely; nay, the Eletto's victory was not decided, until a musket-shot had stretched the other's horse on the ground.

The knight now carried his arm in a sling. In the centre of his coat of mail and on the shoulder-pieces of his armor, the ensigns armorial of a noble family were embossed.

"You were dragged out from under your horse," said the Eletto to the knight. "You wield an excellent blade."

He had spoken in Spanish, but the other shrugged his shoulders, and answered in the German language "I don't understand Spanish."

"Are you a German?" Ulrich now asked in his native tongue. "How do you happen to be among the Netherland rebels?"

The nobleman looked at the Eletto in surprise. But the latter, giving him no time for reflection, continued "I understand German; your answer?"

"I had business in Antwerp?"

"What business?"

"That is my affair."

"Very well. Then we will drop courtesy and adopt a different tone."

"Nay, I am the vanquished party, and will answer you."

"Well then?"

"I had stuffs to buy."

"Are you a merchant?"

The knight shook his head and answered, smiling: "We have rebuilt our castle since the fire."

"And now you need hangings and artistic stuff. Did you expect to capture them from us?"

"Scarcely, sir."

"Then what brought you among our enemies?"

"Baron Floyon belongs to my mother's family. He marched against you, and as I approved his cause...."

"And pillage pleases you, you felt disposed to break a lance."

"Quite right."

"And you have done your cause no harm. Where do you live?"

"Surely you know: in Germany."

"Germany is a very large country."

"In the Black Forest in Swabia."

"And your name?"

The prisoner made no reply; but Ulrich fixed his eyes upon the coat of arms on the knight's armor, looked at him more steadily, and a strange smile hovered around his lips as he approached him, saying in an altered tone: "You think the Navarrete will demand from Count von Frohlinger a ransom as large as his fields and forests?"

"You know me?"

"Perhaps so, Count Lips."

"By Heavens!"

"Ah, ha, you went from the monastery to the field."

"From the monastery? How do you know that, sir?"

"We are old acquaintances, Count Lips. Look me in the eyes."

The other gazed keenly at the Eletto, shook his head, and said: "You have not seemed a total stranger to me from the first; but I never was in Spain."

"But I have been in Swabia, and at that time you did me a kindness. Would your ransom be large enough to cover the cost of a broken church window?"

The count opened his eyes in amazement and a bright smile flashed over his face as, clapping his hands, he exclaimed with sincere delight:

"You, you--you are Ulrich! I'll be damned, if I'm mistaken! But who the devil would discover a child of the Black Forest in the Spanish Eletto?"

"That I am one, must remain a secret between us for the present," exclaimed Ulrich, extending his hand to the count. "Keep silence, and you will be free--the window will cover the ransom!"

"Holy Virgin! If all the windows in the monastery were as dear, the monks might grow fat!" cried the count. "A Swabian heart remains half Swabian, even when it beats under a Spanish doublet. Its luck, Turk's luck, that I followed Floyon;--and your old father, Adam? And Ruth--what a pleasure!"

"You ought to know....my father is dead, died long, long ago!" said Ulrich, lowering his eyes.

"Dead!" exclaimed the other. "And long ago? I saw him at the anvil three weeks since."

"My father? At the anvil? And Ruth?...." stammered Ulrich, gazing at the other with a pallid, questioning face.

"They are alive, certainly they are alive! I met him again in Antwerp. No one else can make you such armor. The devil is in it, if you hav'nt heard of the Swabian armorer."

"The Swabian--the Swabian--is he my father?"

"Your own father. How long ago is it? Thirteen years, for I was then sixteen. That was the last time I saw him, and yet I recognized him at the first glance. True, I shall never forget the hour, when the dumb woman drew the arrow from the Jew's breast. The scene I witnessed that day in the forest still rises before my eyes, as if it were happening now."

"He lives, they did not kill him!" exclaimed the Eletto, now first beginning to rejoice over the surprising news. "Lips, man--Philipp! I have found my mother again, and now my father too. Wait, wait! I'll speak to the lieutenant, he must take my place, and you and I will ride to Lier; there you will tell me the whole story. Holy Virgin! thanks, a thousand thanks! I shall see my father again, my father!"

It was past midnight, but the schoolmates were still sitting over their wine in a private room in the Lion at Lier. The Eletto had not grown weary of questioning, and Count Philipp willingly answered.

Ulrich now knew what death the doctor had met, and that his father had gone to Antwerp and lived there as an armorer for twelve years. The Jew's dumb wife had died of grief on the journey, but Ruth was living with the old man and kept house for him. Navarrete had often heard the Swabian and his work praised, and wore a corselet from his workshop.

The count could tell him a great deal about Ruth. He acknowledged that he had not sought Adam the Swabian for weapons, but on account of his beautiful daughter. The girl was slender as a fir-tree! And her face! once seen could never be forgotten. So might have looked the beautiful Judith, who slew Holophernes, or Queen Zenobia, or chaste Lucretia of Rome! She was now past twenty and in the bloom of her beauty, but cold as glass; and though she liked him on account of his old friendship for

Ulrich and the affair in the forest, he was only permitted to look at, not touch her. She would rejoice when she heard that Ulrich was still alive, and what he had become. And the smith, the smith! Nay, he would not go home now, but back to Antwerp to be Ulrich's messenger! But now he too would like to relate his own experiences.

He did so, but in a rapid, superficial way, for the Eletto constantly reverted to old days and his father. Every person whom they had both known was enquired for.

Old Count Frohlinger was still alive, but suffered a great deal from gout and the capricious young wife he had married in his old age. Hangemarx had grown melancholy and, after all, ended his life by the rope, though by his own hand. Dark-skinned Xaver had entered the priesthood and was living in Rome in high esteem, as a member of a Spanish order. The abbot still presided over the monastery and had a great deal of time for his studies; for the school had been broken up and, as part of the property of the monastery had been confiscated, the number of monks had diminished. The magistrate had been falsely accused of embezzling minors' money, remained in prison for a year and, after his liberation, died of a liver complaint.

Morning was dawning when the friends separated. Count Philipp undertook to tell Ruth that Ulrich had found his mother again. She was to persuade the smith to forgive his wife, with whose praises her son's lips were overflowing.

At his departure Philipp tried to induce the Eletto to change his course betimes, for he was following a dangerous path; but Ulrich laughed in his face, exclaiming: "You know I have found the right word, and shall use it to the end. You were born to power in a small way; I have won mine myself, and shall not rest until I am permitted to exercise it on a great scale, nay, the grandest. If aught on earth affords a taste of heavenly joy, it is power!"

In the camp the Eletto found the troops from Aalst prepared for departure, and as he rode along the road saw in imagination, sometimes his parents, his parents in a new and happy union, sometimes Ruth in the full splendor of her majestic beauty. He remembered how proudly he had watched his father and mother, when they went to church together on Sunday, how he had carried Ruth in his arms on their flight; and now he was to see and experience all this again.

He gave his men only a short rest, for he longed to reach his mother. It was a glorious return home, to bring such tidings! How beautiful and charming he found life; how greatly he praised his destiny!

The sun was setting behind pleasant Aalst as he approached, and the sky looked as if it was strewn with roses.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" he murmured, pointing out to his lieutenant the brilliant hues in the western horizon.

A messenger hastened on in advance, the thunder of artillery and fanfare of music greeted the victors, as they marched through the gate. Ulrich sprang from his horse in front of the guildhall and was received by the captain, who had commanded during his absence.

The Eletto hastily described the course of the brilliant, victorious march, and then asked what had happened.

The captain lowered his eyes in embarrassment, saying, in a low tone: "Nothing of great importance; but day before yesterday a wicked deed was committed, which will vex you. The woman you love, the camp sibyl...."

"Who? What? What do you mean?"

"She went to Zorrillo, and he--you must not be startled--he stabbed her."

Ulrich staggered back, repeating, in a hollow tone "Stabbed!" Then seizing the other by the shoulder, he shrieked: "Stabbed! That means murdered-killed!"

"He thrust his dagger into her heart, she must have died as quickly as if struck by lightning. Then Zorrillo went away, God knows where. Who could suspect, that the quiet man...."

"You let him escape, helped the murderer get off, you dogs!" raved the wretched man. "We will speak of this again. Where is she, where is her body?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders, saying, in a soothing tone: "Calm yourself, Navarrete! We too grieve for the sibyl; many in the camp will miss her. As for Zorrillo, he had the password, and could go through the gate at any hour. The body is still lying in his quarters."

"Indeed!" faltered the Eletto. Then calming himself, he said, mournfully: "I wish to see her."

The captain walked silently by his side and opened the murderer's dwelling.

There, on a bed of pine-shavings, in a rude coffin made of rough planks, lay the woman who had given him birth, deserted him, and yet who so tenderly loved him. A poor soldier's wife, to whom she had been kind, was watching beside the corpse, at whose head a singly brand burned with a smoky, yellow light. The little white dog had found its way to her, and was snuffing the floor, still red with its mistress's blood.

Ulrich snatched the brand from the bracket, and threw the light on the dead woman's face. His tear-dimmed eyes sought his mother's features, but only rested on them a moment--then he shuddered, turned away, and giving the torch to his companion, said, softly: "Cover her head."

The soldier's wife spread her coarse apron over the face, which-had smiled so sweetly: but Ulrich threw himself on his knees beside the

coffin, buried his face, and remained in this attitude for many minutes.

At last he slowly rose, rubbed his eyes as if waking from some confused dream, drew himself up proudly, and scanned the place with searching eyes.

He was the Eletto, and thus men honored the woman who was dear to him!

His mother lay in a wretched pauper's coffin, a ragged camp-follower watched beside her--no candles burned at her head, no priest prayed for the salvation of her soul!

Grief was raging madly in his breast, now indignation joined this gloomy guest; giving vent to his passionate emotion, Ulrich wildly exclaimed:

"Look here, captain! This corpse, this woman--proclaim it to every one --the sibyl was my mother yes, yes, my own mother! I demand respect for her, the same respect that is shown myself! Must I compel men to render her fitting honor? Here, bring torches. Prepare the catafalque in St. Martin's church, and place it before the altar! Put candles around it, as many as can be found! It is still early! Lieutenant! I am glad you are there! Rouse the cathedral priests and go to the bishop. I command a solemn requiem for my mother! Everything is to be arranged precisely as it was at the funeral of the Duchess of Aerschot! Let trumpets give the signal for assembling. Order the bells to be rung! In an hour all must be ready at St. Martin's cathedral! Bring torches here, I say! Have I the right to command--yes or no? A large oak coffin was standing at the joiner's close by. Bring it here, here; I need a better death-couch for my mother. You poor, dear woman, how you loved flowers, and no one has brought you even one! Captain Ortis, I have issued my commands! Everything must be done, when I return;--Lieutenant, you have your orders!"

He rushed from the death-chamber to the sitting-room in his own house, and hastily tore stalks and blossoms from the plants. The maid-servants watched him timidly, and he harshly ordered them to collect what he had gathered and take them to the house of death.

His orders were obeyed, and when he next appeared at Zorrillo's quarters, the soldiers, who had assembled there in throngs, parted to make way for him.

He beckoned to them, and while he went from one to another, saying: "The sibyl was my mother--Zorrillo has murdered my mother," the coffin was borne into the house.

In the vestibule, he leaned his head against the wall, moaning and sighing, until Florette was laid in her last bed, and a soldier put his hand on his shoulder. Then Ulrich strewed flowers over the corpse, and the joiner came to nail up the coffin. The blows of the hammer actually hurt him, it seemed as if each one fell upon his own heart.

The funeral procession passed through the ranks of soldiers, who filled

the street. Several officers came to meet it, and Captain Ortis, approaching close to the Eletto, said: "The bishop refuses the catafalque and the solemn requiem you requested. Your mother died in sin, without the sacrament. He will grant as many masses for the repose of her soul as you desire, but such high honors...."

"He refuses them to us?"

"Not to us, to the sibyl."

"She was my mother, your Eletto's mother. To the cathedral, forward!"

"It is closed, and will remain so to-day, for the bishop...."

"Then burst the doors! We'll show them who has the power here."

"Are you out of your senses? The Holy Church!"

"Forward, I say! Let him who is no cowardly wight, follow me!"

Ulrich drew the commander's baton from his belt and rushed forward, as if he were leading a storming-party; but Ortis cried: "We will not fight against St. Martin!" and a murmur of applause greeted him.

Ulrich checked his pace, and gnashing his teeth, exclaimed: "Will not? Will not?" Then gazing around the circle of comrades, who surrounded him on all sides, he asked: "Has no one courage to help me to my rights? Ortis, de Vega, Diego, will you follow me, yes or no?"

"No, not against the Church!"

"Then I command you," shouted the Eletto, furiously. "Obey, Lieutenant de Vega, forward with your company, and burst the cathedral doors."

But no one obeyed, and Ortis ordered: "Back, every man of you! Saint Martin is my patron saint; let all who value their souls refuse to attack the church and defend it with me."

The blood rushed to Ulrich's brain, and incapable of longer self-control, he threw his baton into the ranks of the mutineers, shrieking: "I hurl it at your feet; whoever picks it up can keep it!"

The soldiers hesitated; but Ortis repeated his "Back!" Other officers gave the same order, and their men obeyed. The street grew empty, and the Eletto's mother was only followed by a few of her son's friends; no priest led the procession. In the cemetery Ulrich threw three handfuls of earth into the open grave, then with drooping head returned home.

How dreary, how desolate the bright, flower-decked room seemed now, for the first time the Eletto felt really deserted. No tears came to relieve his grief, for the insult offered him that day aroused his wrath, and he cherished it as if it were a consolation.

He had thrown power aside with the staff of command. Power! It too was potter's trash, which a stone might shatter, a flower in full bloom, whose leaves drop apart if touched by the finger! It was no noble metal, only yellow mica!

The knocker on the door never stopped rapping. One officer after another came to soothe him, but he would not even admit his lieutenant.

He rejoiced over his hasty deed. Fortune, he thought, cannot be escaped, art cannot be thrown aside; fame may be trampled under foot, yet still pursue us.

Power has this advantage over all three, it can be flung off like a worn-out doublet. Let it fly! Had he owed it the happiness of the last few weeks? No, no! He would have been happy with his mother in a poor, plain house, without the office of Eletto, without flowers, horses or servants. It was to her, not to power, that he was indebted for every blissful hour, and now that she had gone, how desolate was the void in his heart!

Suddenly the recollection of his father and Ruth illuminated his misery like a sunbeam. The game of Eletto was now over, he would go to Antwerp the next day.

Why had fate snatched his mother from him just now, why did it deny him the happiness of seeing his parents united? His father--she had sorely wronged him, but for what will not death atone? He must take him some remembrance of her, and went to her room to look through her chest. But it no longer stood in the old place--the owner of the house, a rich matron, who had been compelled to occupy an attic-room, while strangers were quartered in her residence, had taken charge of the pale orphan and the boxes after Florette's death.

The good Netherland dame provided for the adopted child and the property of her enemy, the man whose soldiers had pillaged her brothers and cousins. The death of the woman below had moved her deeply, for the wonderful charm of Florette's manner had won her also.

Towards midnight Ulrich took the lamp and went upstairs. He had long since forgotten to spare others, by denying himself a wish.

The knocking at the door and the passing to and fro in the entry had kept Frau Geel awake. When she heard the Eletto's heavy step, she sprang up from her spinning-wheel in alarm, and the maid-servant, half roused from sleep, threw herself on her knees.

"Frau Geel!" called a voice outside.

She recognized Navarrete's tones, opened the door, and asked what he desired.

"It was his mother," thought the old lady as he threw clothes, linen and

many a trifle on the floor. "It was his mother. Perhaps he wants her rosary or prayer book. He is her son! They looked like a happy couple when they were together. A wild soldier, but he isn't a wicked man yet."

While he searched she held the light for him, shaking her head over the disorder among the articles where he rummaged.

Ulrich had now reached the bottom of the chest. Here he found a valuable necklace, booty which Zorrillo had given his companion for use in case of need. This should be Ruth's. Close beside it lay a small package, tied with rose-pink ribbon, containing a tiny infant's shirt, a gay doll, and a slender gold circlet; her wedding-ring! The date showed that it had been given to her by his father, and the shirt and doll were mementos of him, her darling--of himself.

He gazed at them, changing them from one hand to the other, till suddenly his heart overflowed, and without heeding Frau Geel, who was watching him, he wept softly, exclaiming: "Mother, dear mother!"

A light hand touched his shoulder, and a woman's kind voice said: "Poor fellow, poor fellow! Yes, she was a dear little thing, and a mother, a mother--that is enough!"

The Eletto nodded assent with tearful eyes, and when she again gently repeated in a tone of sincere sympathy, her "poor fellow!" it sounded sweeter, than the loudest homage that had ever been offered to his fame and power.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The next morning while Ulrich was packing his luggage, assisted by his servant, the sound of drums and fifes, bursts of military music and loud cheers were heard in the street, and going to the window, he saw the whole body of mutineers drawn up in the best order.

The companies stood in close ranks before his house, impetuous shouts and bursts of music made the windows rattle, and now the officers pressed into his room, holding out their swords, vowing fealty unto death, and entreating him to remain their commander.

He now perceived, that power cannot be thrown aside like a worthless thing. His tortured heart was stirred with deep emotion, and the drooping wings of ambition unfolded with fresh energy. He reproached, raged, but yielded; and when Ortis on his knees, offered him the commander's baton, he accepted it.

Ulrich was again Eletto, but this need not prevent his seeing his father and Ruth once more, so he declared that he would retain his office, but should be obliged to ride to Antwerp that day, secretly inform the officers of the conspiracy against the city, and the necessity of

negotiating with the commandant, that their share of the rich prize might not be lost.

What many had suspected and hoped was now to become reality. Their Eletto was no idle man! When Navarrete appeared at noon in front of the troops with his own work, the standard, in his hand, he was received with shouts of joy, and no one murmured, though many recognized in the Madonna's countenance the features of the murdered sibyl.

Two days later Ulrich, full of eager expectation, rode into Antwerp, carrying in his portmanteau the mementos he had taken from his mother's chest, while in imagination he beheld his father's face, the smithy at Richtberg, the green forest, the mountains of his home, the Costas' house, and his little playfellow. Would he really be permitted to lean on his father's broad breast once more?

And Ruth, Ruth! Did she still care for him, had Philipp described her correctly?

He went to the count without delay, and found him at home. Philipp received him cordially, yet with evident timidity and embarrassment. Ulrich too was grave, for he had to inform his companion of his mother's death.

"So that is settled," said the count. "Your father is a gnarled old tree, a real obstinate Swabian. It's not his way to forgive and forget."

"And did he know that my mother was so near to him, that she was in Aalst."

"All, all!"

"He will forgive the dead. Surely, surely he will, if I beseech him, when we are united, if I tell him...."

"Poor fellow! You think all this is so easy.--It is long since I have had so hard a task, yet I must speak plainly. He will have nothing to do with you, either."

"Nothing to do with me?" cried Ulrich.

"Is he out of his senses? What sin have I committed, what does he...."

"He knows that you are Navarrete, the Eletto of Herenthals, the conqueror of Aalst, and therefore...."

"Therefore?"

"Why of course. You see, Ulrich, when a man becomes famous like you, he is known for a long distance, everything he does makes a great hue and cry, and echo repeats it in every alley."

"To my honor before God and man."

"Before God? Perhaps so; certainly before the Spaniards. As for me --I was with the squadron myself, I call you a brave soldier; but--no offence--you have behaved ill in this country. The Netherlanders are human beings too."

"They are rebels, recreant heretics."

"Take care, or you will revile your own father. His faith has been shaken. A preacher, whom he met on his flight here, in some tavern, led him astray by inducing him to read the bible. Many things the Church condemns are sacred to him. He thinks the Netherlanders a free, noble nation. Your King Philip he considers a tyrant, oppressor, and ruthless destroyer. You who have served him and Alba--are in his eyes; but I will not wound you...."

"What are we, I will hear."

"No, no, it would do no good. In short, to Adam the Spanish army is a bloody pest, nothing more."

"There never were braver soldiers."

"Very true; but every defeat, all the blood you have shed, has angered him and this nation, and wrath, which daily receives fresh food and to which men become accustomed, at last turns to hate. All great crimes committed in this war are associated with Alba's name, many smaller ones with yours, and so your father...."

"Then we will teach him a better opinion! I return to him an honest soldier, the commander of thousands of men! To see him once more, only to see him! A son remains a son! I learned that from my mother. We were rivals and enemies, when I met her! And then, then--alas, that is all over! Now I wish to find in my father what I have lost; will you go to the smithy with me?"

"No, Ulrich, no. I have said everything to your father that can be urged in your defence, but he is so devoured with rage...."

"Santiago!" exclaimed the Eletto, bursting into sudden fury, "I need no advocate! If the old man knows what share I have taken in this war, so much the better. I'll fill up the gaps myself. I have been wherever the fight raged hottest! 'Sdeath! that is my pride! I am no longer a boy and have fought my way through life without father or mother. What I am, I have made myself, and can defend with honor, even to the old man. He carries heavy guns, I know; but I am not accustomed to shoot with feather balls!"

"Ulrich, Ulrich! He is an old man, and your father!"

"I will remember that, as soon as he calls me his son."

One of the count's servants showed Ulrich the way to the smith's house.

Adam had entirely given up the business of horseshoeing, for nothing was to be seen in the ground floor of the high, narrow house, except the large door, and a window on each side. Behind the closed one at the right were several pieces of armor, beautifully embossed, and some artistically-wrought iron articles. The left-hand one was partly open, granting entrance to the autumn sunshine. Ulrich dismissed the servant, took the mementos of his mother in his hand, and listened to the hammer-strokes, that echoed from within.

The familiar sound recalled pleasant memories of his childhood and cooled his hot blood. Count Philipp was right. His father was an old man, and entitled to demand respect from his son. He must endure from him what he would tolerate from no one else. Nay, he again felt that it was a great happiness to be near the beloved one, from whom he had so long been parted; whatever separated him from his old father, must surely vanish into nothing, as soon as they looked into each other's eyes.

What a master in his trade, his father still was! No one else would have found it so easy to forge the steel coat of mail with the Medusa head in the centre. He was not working alone here as he did at Richtberg; for Ulrich heard more than one hammer striking iron in the workshop.

Before touching the knocker, he looked into the open window.

A woman's tall figure was standing at the desk. Her back was turned, and he saw only the round outline of the head, the long black braids, the plain dress, bordered with velvet, and the lace in the neck. An elderly man in the costume of a merchant was just holding out his hand in farewell, and he heard him say: "You've bought too cheap again, far too cheap, Jungfer Ruth."

"Just a fair price," she answered quietly. "You will have a good profit, and we can afford to pay it. I shall expect the iron day after to-morrow."

"It will be delivered before noon. Master Adam has a treasure in you, dear Jungfer. If my son were alive, I know where he would seek a wife. Wilhelm Ykens has told me of his troubles; he is a skilful goldsmith. Why do you give the poor fellow no hope? Consider! You are past twenty, and every year it grows harder to say yes to a lover."

"Nothing suits me better, than to stay with father," she answered gaily. "He can't do without me, you know, nor I without him. I have no dislike to Wilhelm, but it seems very easy to live without him. Farewell, Father Keulitz."

Ulrich withdrew from the window, until the merchant had vanished down a side street; then he again glanced into the narrow room. Ruth was now seated at the desk, but instead of looking over the open account book, her eyes were gazing dreamily into vacancy, and the Eletto now saw her beautiful, calm, noble face. He did not disturb her, for it seemed as if he could never weary of comparing her features with the fadeless image

his memory had treasured during all the vicissitudes of life.

Never, not even in Italy, had he beheld a nobler countenance. Philipp was right. There was something royal in her bearing. This was the wife of his dreams, the proud woman, with whom the Eletto desired to share power and grandeur. And he had already held her once in his arms! It seemed as if it were only yesterday. His heart throbbed higher and higher. As she now rose and thoughtfully approached the window, he could no longer contain himself, and exclaimed in a low tone: "Ruth, Ruth! Do you know me, girl? It is I--Ulrich!"

She shrank back, putting out her hands with a repellent gesture; but only for a moment. Then, struggling to maintain her composure, she joyously uttered his name, and as he rushed into the room, cried "Ulrich!" "Ulrich!" and no longer able to control her feelings, suffered him to clasp her to his heart.

She had daily expected him with ardent longing, yet secret dread: for he was the fierce Eletto, the commander of the insurgents, the bloody foe of the brave nation she loved. But at sight of his face all, all was forgotten, and she felt nothing but the bliss of being reunited to him whom she had never, never forgotten, the joy of seeing, feeling that he loved her.

His heart too was overflowing with passionate delight. Faltering tender words, he drew her head to his breast, then raised it to press his mouth to her pure lips. But her intoxication of joy passed away--and before he could prevent it, she had escaped from his arms, saying sternly: "Not that, not that.... Many a crime lies between us and you."

"No, no!" he eagerly exclaimed. "Are you not near me? Your heart and mine have belonged to each other since that day in the snow. If my father is angry because I serve other masters than his, you, yes you, must reconcile us again. I could stay in Aalst no longer."

"With the mutineers?" she asked sadly. "Ulrich, Ulrich, that you should return to us thus!"

He again seized her hand, and when she tried to withdraw it, only smiled, saying with the confidence of a man, who is sure of his cause:

"Cast aside this foolish reserve. To-morrow you will freely give me, not only one hand, but both. I am not so bad as you think. The fortune of war flung me under the Spanish flag, and 'whose bread I eat, his song I sing,' says the soldier. What would you have? I served with honor, and have done some doughty deeds; let that content you."

This angered Ruth, who resolutely exclaimed:

"No, a thousand times no! You are the Eletto of Aalst, the pillager of cities, and this cannot be swept aside as easily as the dust from the floor. I.... I am only a feeble girl;--but father, he will never give his hand to the blood-stained man in Spanish garb! I know him, I know

it."

Ulrich's breath came quicker; but he repressed the angry emotion and replied, first reproachfully, then beseechingly:

"You are the old man's echo. What does he know of military honor and warlike fame; but you, Ruth, must understand me. Do you still remember our sport with the "word," the great word that accomplished everything? I have found it; and you shall enjoy with me what it procures. First help me appease my father; I shall succeed, if you aid me. It will doubtless be a hard task. He could not bring himself to forgive his poor wife--Count Philipp says so;--but now! You see, Ruth, my mother died a few days ago; she was a dear, loving woman and might have deserved a better fate.

"I am alone again now, and long for love--so ardently, so sincerely, more than I can tell you. Where shall I find it, if not with you and my own father? You have always cared for me; you betray it, and after all you know I am not a bad man, do you not? Be content with my love and take me to my father, yourself. Help me persuade him to listen to me. I have something here which you can give him from me; you will see that it will soften his heart!"

"Then give it to me," replied Ruth, "but whatever it may be--believe me, Ulrich, so long as you command the Spanish mutineers, he will remain hard, hard as his own iron!"

"Spaniards! Mutineers! Nonsense! Whoever wishes to love, can love; the rest may be settled afterwards. You don't know how high my heart throbs, now that I am near you, now that I see and hear you. You are my good angel and must remain so, now look here. This is my mother's legacy. This little shirt I once wore, when I was a tiny thing, the gay doll was my plaything, and this gold hoop is the wedding-ring my father gave his bride at the altar--she kept all these things to the last, and carried them like holy relics from land to land, from camp to camp. Will you take these mementos to him?"

She nodded silently.

"Now comes the best thing. Have you ever seen more beautiful workmanship? You must wear this necklace, Ruth, as my first gift."

He held up the costly ornament, but she shrank back, asking bitterly

"Captured booty?"

"In honorable war," he answered, proudly, approaching to fasten the jewels round her neck with his own hands; but she pushed him back, snatched the ornament, and hurled it on the floor, exclaiming angrily:

"I loathe the stolen thing. Pick it up. It may suit the camp-followers."

This destroyed his self-control, and seizing both her arms in an iron grasp, he muttered through his clenched teeth:

"That is an insult to my mother; take it back." But Ruth heard and saw nothing; full of indignation she only felt that violence was being done her, and vainly struggled against the irresistible strength, which held her fast.

Meantime the door had opened wide, but neither noticed it until a man's deep voice loudly and wrathfully exclaimed:

"Back, you scoundrel! Come here, Ruth. This is the way the assassin greets his family; begone, begone! you disgrace of my house!"

Adam had uttered the words, and now drew the hammer from the belt of his leather apron.

Ulrich gazed mutely into his face. There stood his father, strong, gigantic, as he had looked thirteen years before. His head was a little bowed, his beard longer and whiter, his eyebrows were more bushy and his expression had grown more gloomy; otherwise he was wholly unchanged in every feature.

The son's eyes rested on the smith as if spellbound. It seemed as if some malicious fate had drawn him into a snare.

He could say nothing except, "father, father," and the smith found no other answer than the harsh "begone!"

Ruth approached the armorer, clung to his side, and pleaded:

"Hear him, don't send him away so; he is your child, and if anger just now overpowered him...."

"Spanish custom--to abuse women!" cried Adam. "I have no son Navarrete, or whatever the murderous monster calls himself. I am a burgher, and have no son, who struts about in the stolen clothes of noblemen; as to this man and his assassins, I hate them, hate them all. Your foot defiles my house. Out with you, knave, or I will use my hammer."

Ulrich again exclaimed, "father, father!" Then, regaining his self-control by a violent effort, he gasped:

"Father, I came to you in good will, in love. I am an honest soldier and if any one but you--'Sdeath--if any other had dared to offer me this...."

"Murder the dog, you would have said," interrupted the smith. "We know the Spanish blessing: a sandre, a carne!--[Blood, murder.]--Thanks for your forbearance. There is the door. Another word, and I can restrain myself no longer."

Ruth had clung firmly to the smith, and motioned Ulrich to go. The Eletto groaned aloud, struck his forehead with his clenched fist, and

rushed into the open air.

As soon as Adam was alone with Ruth she caught his hand, exclaiming beseechingly:

"Father, father, he is your own son! Love your enemies, the Saviour commanded; and you...."

"And I hate him," said the smith, curtly and resolutely. "Did he hurt you?"

"Your hate hurts me ten times as much! You judge without examining; yes, father, you do! When he assaulted me, he was in the right. He thought I had insulted his mother."

Adam shrugged his shoulders, and she continued "The poor woman is dead. Ulrich brought you yonder ring; she never parted with it."

The armorer started, seized the golden hoop, looked for the date inside, and when he had found it, clasped the ring in his hands and pressed them silently to his temples. He stood in this attitude a short time, then let his arms fall, and said softly:

"The dead must be forgiven...."

"And the living, father? You have punished him terribly, and he is not a wicked man, no, indeed he is not! If he comes back again, father?"

"My apprentices shall show the Spanish mutineer the door," cried the old man in a harsh, stern tone; "to the burgher's repentant son my house will be always open."

Meantime the Eletto wandered from one street to another. He felt bewildered, disgraced.

It was not grief--no quiet heartache that disturbed--but a confused blending of wrath and sorrow. He did not wish to appear before the friend of his youth, and even avoided Hans Eitelfritz, who came towards him. He was blind to the gay, joyous bustle of the capital; life seemed grey and hollow. His intention of communicating with the commandant of the citadel remained unexecuted; for he thought of nothing but his father's anger, of Ruth, his own shame and misery.

He could not leave so.

His father must, yes, he must hear him, and when it grew dusk, he again sought the house to which he belonged, and from which he had been so cruelly expelled.

The door was locked. In reply to his knock, a man's unfamiliar voice asked who he was, and what he wanted.

He asked to speak with Adam, and called himself Ulrich.

After waiting a long time he heard a door torn open, and the smith angrily exclaim:

"To your spinning-wheel! Whoever clings to him so long as he wears the Spanish dress, means evil to him as well as to me."

"But hear him! You must hear him, father!" cried Ruth.

The door closed, heavy steps approached the door of the house; it opened, and again Adam confronted his son.

"What do you want?" he asked harshly.

"To speak to you, to tell you that you did wrong to insult me unheard."

"Are you still the Eletto? Answer!"

"I am!"

"And intend to remain so?"

"Que como--puede ser--" faltered Ulrich, who confused by the question, had strayed into the language in which he had been long accustomed to think. But scarcely had the smith distinguished the foreign words, when fresh anger seized him.

"Then go to perdition with your Spaniards!" was the furious answer.

The door slammed so that the house shook, and by degrees the smith's heavy tread died away in the vestibule.

"All over, all over!" murmured the rejected son. Then calming himself, he clenched his fist and muttered through his set teeth: "There shall be no lack of ruin; whoever it befalls, can bear it."

While walking through the streets and across the squares, he devised plan after plan, imagining what must come. Sword in hand he would burst the old man's door, and the only booty he asked for himself should be Ruth, for whom he longed, who in spite of everything loved him, who had belonged to him from her childhood.

The next morning he negotiated cleverly and boldly with the commandant of the Spanish forces in the citadel. The fate of the city was sealed! and when he again crossed the great square and saw the city-hall with its proud, gable-crowned central building, and the shops in the lower floor crammed with wares, he laughed savagely.

Hans Eitelfritz had seen him in the distance, and shouted:

"A pretty little house, three stories high. And how the broad windows, between the pillars in the side wings, glitter!"

Then he lowered his voice, for the square was swarming with men, carts and horses, and continued:

"Look closer and choose your quarters. Come with me! I'll show you where the best things we need can be found. Haven't we bled often enough for the pepper-sacks? Now it will be our turn to fleece them. The castles here, with the gingerbread work on the gables, are the guildhalls. There is gold enough in each one, to make the company rich. Now this way! Directly behind the city-hall lies the Zucker Canal. There live stiff-necked people, who dine off of silver every day. Notice the street!"

Then he led him back to the square, and continued "The streets here all lead to the quay. Do you know it? Have you seen the warehouses? Filled to the very roof! The malmsey, dry canary and Indian allspice, might transform the Scheldt and Baltic Sea into a huge vat of hippocras."

Ulrich followed his guide from street to street. Wherever he looked, he saw vast wealth in barns and magazines; in houses, palaces and churches.

Hans Eitelfritz stopped before a jeweller's shop, saying:

"Look here! I particularly admire these things, these toys: the little dog, the sled, the lady with the hoopskirt, all these things are pure silver. When the pillage begins, I shall grasp these and take them to my sister's little children in Colln; they will be delighted, and if it should ever be necessary, their mother can sell them."

What a throng crowded the most aristocratic streets! English, Spanish, Italian and Hanseatic merchants tried to outdo the Netherland traders in magnificent clothes and golden ornaments. Ulrich saw them all assembled in the Gothic exchange on the Mere, the handsomest square in the city. There they stood in the vast open hall, on the checkered marble floor, not by hundreds, but by thousands, dealing in goods which came from all quarters of the globe--from the most distant lands. Their offers and bids mingled in a noise audible at a long distance, which was borne across the square like the echo of ocean surges.

Sums were discussed, which even the winged imagination of the lansquenet could scarcely grasp. This city was a remarkable treasure, a thousand-fold richer booty than had been garnered from the Ottoman treasure-ship on the sea at Lepanto.

Here was the fortune the Eletto needed, to build the palace in which he intended to place Ruth. To whom else would fall the lion's share of the enormous prize!

His future happiness was to arise from the destruction of this proud city, stifling in its gold.

These were ambitious brilliant plans, but he devised them with gloomy eyes, in a darkened mind. He intended to win by force what was denied him, so long as the power belonged to him.

There could be no lack of flames and carnage; but that was part of his trade, as shavings belong to flames, hammer-strokes to smiths.

Count Philipp had no suspicion of the assault, was not permitted to suspect anything. He attributed Ulrich's agitated manner to the rejection he had encountered in his father's house, and when he took leave of him on his departure to Swabia, talked kindly with his former schoolmate and advised him to leave the Spanish flag and try once more to be reconciled to the old man.

Before the Eletto quitted the city, he gave Hans Eitelfritz, whose regiment had secretly joined the mutiny, letters of safeguard for his family and the artist, Moor.

He had not forgotten the latter, but well-founded timidity withheld him from appearing before the honored man, while cherishing the gloomy thoughts that now filled his soul.

In Aalst the mutineers received him with eager joy, harsh and repellent as he appeared, they cheerfully obeyed him; for he could hold out to them a prospect, which lured a bright smile to the bearded lips of the grimmest warrior.

If power was the word, he scarcely understood how to use it aright, for wholly absorbed in himself, he led a joyless life of dissatisfied longing and gloomy reverie.

It seemed to him as if he had lost one half of himself, and needed Ruth to become the whole man. Hours grew to days, days to weeks, and not until Roda's messenger appeared from the citadel in Antwerp to summon him to action, did he revive and regain his old vivacity.

CHAPTER XXX.

On the twentieth of October Maastricht fell into the Spaniards' hands, and was cruelly pillaged. The garrison of Antwerp rose and began to make common cause with the friends of the mutineers in the citadel.

Foreign merchants fled from the imperilled city. Governor Champagny saw his own person and the cause of order seriously threatened by the despots in the fortress, which dominated the town. A Netherland army, composed principally of Walloons, under the command of the incapable Marquis Havre, the reckless de Heze and other nobles appeared before the capital, to prevent the worst.

Champagny feared that the German regiments would feel insulted and scent treason, if he admitted the government troops--but the majority of the lansquenets were already in league with the insurgents, the danger hourly

increased, everywhere loyalty wavered, the citizens urgently pressed the matter, and the gates were opened to the Netherlanders.

Count Oberstein, the German commander of the lansquenets, who while intoxicated had pledged himself to make common cause with the mutineers in the citadel, remembered his duty and remained faithful to the end. The regiment in which Hans Eitelfritz served, and the other companies of lansquenets, had succumbed to the temptation, and only waited the signal for revolt. The inhabitants felt just like a man, who keeps powder and firebrands in the cellar, or a traveller, who recognizes robbers and murderers in his own escort.

Champagny called upon the citizens to help themselves, and used their labor in throwing up a wall of defence in the open part of the city, which was most dangerously threatened by the citadel. Among the men and women who voluntarily flocked to the work by thousands, were Adam, the smith, his apprentices, and Ruth. The former, with his journeymen, wielded the spade under the direction of a skilful engineer, the girl, with other women, braided gabions from willow-rods.

She had lived through sorrowful days. Self-reproach, for having by her hasty fit of temper caused the father's outburst of anger to his son, constantly tortured her.

She had learned to hate the Spaniards as bitterly as Adam; she knew that Ulrich was following a wicked, criminal course, yet she loved him, his image had been treasured from childhood, unassailed and unsullied, in the most sacred depths of her heart. He was all in all to her, the one person destined for her, the man to whom she belonged as the eye does to the face, the heart to the breast.

She believed in his love, and when she strove to condemn and forget him, it seemed as if she were alienating, rejecting the best part of-herself.

A thousand voices told her that she lived in his soul, as much as he did in hers, that his existence without her must be barren and imperfect. She did not ask when and how, she only prayed that she might become his, expecting it as confidently as light in the morning, spring after winter. Nothing appeared so irrefutable as this faith; it was the belief of her loving soul. Then, when the inevitable had happened they would be one in their aspirations for virtue, and the son could no longer close his heart against the father, nor the father shut his against the son.

The child's vivid imagination was still alive in the maiden. Every leisure hour she had thought of her lost playfellow, every day she had talked to his father about him, asking whether he would rather see him return as a famous artist, a skilful smith, or commander of a splendid ship.

Handsome, strong, superior to other men, he had always appeared. Now she found him following evil courses, on the path to ruin; yet even here he was peerless among his comrades; whatever stain rested upon him, he certainly was not base and mean.

As a child, she always had transformed him into a splendid fairy-prince, but she now divested him of all magnificence, seeing him attired in plain burgher dress, appear humbly before his father and stand beside him at the forge. She dreamed that she was by his side, and before her stood the table she covered with food for him, and the water she gave him after his work. She heard the house shake under the mighty blows of his hammer, and in imagination beheld him lay his curly head in her lap, and say he had found love and peace with her.

The cannonade from the citadel stopped the citizens' work. Open hostilities had begun.

On the morning of November 4th, under the cover of a thick fog, the treacherous Spaniards, commanded by Romero, Vargas and Valdez entered the fortress. The citizens, among them Adam, learned this fact with rage and terror, but the mutineers of Aalst had not yet collie.

"He is keeping them back," Ruth had said the day before. "Antwerp, our home, is sacred to him!"

The cannon roared, culverins crashed, muskets and arquebuses rattled; the boding notes of the alarm-bells and the fierce shouts of soldiers and citizens hurrying to battle mingled with the deafening thunder of the artillery.

Every hand seized a weapon, every shop was closed; hearts stood still with fear, or throbbed wildly with rage and emotion. Ruth remained calm. She detained the smith in the house, repeating her former words: "The men from Aalst are not coming; he is keeping diem back." Just at that moment the young apprentice, whose parents lived on the Scheldt, rushed with dishevelled hair into the workshop, gasping:

"The men from Aalst are here. They crossed in peatboats and a galley. They wear green twigs in their helmets, and the Eletto is marching in the van, bearing the standard. I saw them; terrible--horrible--sheathed in iron from top to toe."

He said no more, for Adam, with a savage imprecation, interrupted him, seized his huge hammer, and rushed out of the house.

Ruth staggered back into the workshop.

Adam hurried straight to the rampart. Here stood six thousand Walloons, to defend the half-finished wall, and behind them large bodies of armed citizens.

"The men from Aalst have come!" echoed from lip to lip.

Curses, wails of grief, yells of savage fury, blended with the thunder of the artillery and the ringing of the alarm bells.

A fugitive now dashed from the counterscarp towards the Walloons,

shouting:

"They are here, they are here! The blood-hound, Navarrete, is leading them. They will neither eat nor drink, they say, till they dine in Paradise or Antwerp. Hark, hark! there they are!"

And they were there, coming nearer and nearer; foremost of all marched the Eletto, holding the standard in his upraised hand.

Behind him, from a thousand bearded lips, echoed furious, greedy, terrible cries; "Santiago, Espana, a sangre, a carne, a fuego, a saco!" --[St. Jago; Spain, blood, murder, fire, pillage]--but Navarrete was silent, striding onward, erect and haughty, as if he were proof against the bullets, that whistled around him on all sides. Consciousness of power and the fierce joy of battle sparkled in his eyes. Woe betide him, who received a blow from the two-handed sword the Eletto still held over his shoulder, now with his left hand.

Adam stood with upraised hammer beside the front ranks of the Walloons! his eyes rested as if spellbound on his approaching son and the standard in his hand. The face of the guilty woman, who had defrauded him of the happiness of his life, gazed at him from the banner. He knew not whether he was awake, or the sport of some bewildering dream.

Now, now his glance met the Eletto's, and unable to restrain himself longer, he raised his hammer and tried to rush forward, but the Walloons forced him back.

Yes, yes, he hated his own child, and trembling with rage, burning to rush upon him, he saw the Eletto spring on the lowest projection of the wall, to climb up. For a short time he was concealed from his eyes, then he saw the top of the standard, then the banner itself, and now his son stood on the highest part of the rampart, shouting: "Espana, Espana!"

At this moment, with a deafening din, a hundred arquebuses were discharged close beside the smith, a dense cloud of smoke darkened the air, and when the wind dispersed it, Adam no longer beheld the standard. It lay on the ground; beside it the Eletto, with his face turned upward, mute and motionless.

The father groaned aloud and closed his eyes; when he opened them, hundreds of iron-mailed mutineers had scaled the rampart. Beneath their feet lay his bleeding child.

Corpse after corpse sank on the stone wall beside the fallen man, but the iron wedge of the Spaniards pressed farther and farther forward.

"Espana, a sangre, a carne!"

Now they had reached the Walloons, steel clashed against steel, but only for a moment, then the defenders of the city wavered, the furious wedge entered their ranks, they parted, yielded, and with loud shrieks took to flight. The Spanish swords raged among them, and overpowered by the

general terror, the officers followed the example of the soldiers, the flying army, like a resistless torrent, carrying everything with it, even the smith.

An unparalleled massacre began. Adam seeing a frantic horde rush into the houses, remembered Ruth, and half mad with terror hastened back to the smithy, where he told those left behind what he had witnessed. Then, arming himself and his journeymen with weapons forged by his own hand, he hurried out with them to renew the fight.

Hours elapsed; the noise, the firing, the ringing of the alarm bells still continued; smoke and the smell of fire penetrated through the doors and windows.

Evening came, and the richest, most flourishing commercial capital in the world was here a heap of ashes, there a ruin, everywhere a plundered treasury.

Once the occupants of the smith's shop heard a band of murderers raging and shouting outside of the smithy; but they passed by, and all day long no others entered the quiet street, which was inhabited only by workers in metal.

Ruth and old Rahel had remained behind, under the protection of the brave foreman. Adam had told them to fly to the cellar, if any uproar arose outside the door. Ruth wore a dagger, determined in the worst extremity to turn it against her own breast. What did she care for life, since Ulrich had perished!

Old Rahel, an aged dame of eighty, paced restlessly, with bowed figure, through the large room, saying compassionately, whenever her eyes met the girl's: "Ulrich, our Ulrich!" then, straightening herself and looking upward. She no longer knew what had happened a few hours before, yet her memory faithfully retained the incidents that occurred many years previous. The maidservant, a native of Antwerp, had rushed home to her parents when the tumult began.

As the day drew towards a close, the panes were less frequently shaken by the thunder of the artillery, the noise in the streets diminished, but the house became more and more filled with suffocating smoke.

Night came, the lamp was lighted, the women started at every new sound, but anxiety for Adam now overpowered every other feeling in Ruth's mind. Just then the door opened, and the smith's deep voice called in the vestibule: "It is I! Don't be frightened, it is I!"

He had gone out with five journeymen: he returned with two. The others lay slain in the streets, and with them Count Oberstein's soldiers, the only ones who had stoutly resisted the Spanish mutineers and their allies to the last man.

Adam had swung his hammer on the Mere and by the Zucker Canal among the citizens, who fought desperately for the property and lives of their

families;--but all was vain. Vargas's troopers had stifled even the last breath of resistance.

The streets ran blood, corpses lay in heaps before the doors and on the pavement--among them the bodies of the Margrave of Antwerp, Verreyck, Burgomaster van der Mere, and many senators and nobles. Conflagration after conflagration crimsoned the heavens, the superb city-hall was blazing, and from a thousand windows echoed the screams of the assailed, plundered, bleeding citizens, women and children.

The smith hastily ate a few mouthfuls to restore his strength, then raised his head, saying: "No one has touched our house. The door and shutters of neighbor Ykens' are shattered."

"A miracle!" cried old Rahel, raising her staff. "The generation of vipers scent richer booty than iron at the silversmith's."

Just at that moment the knocker sounded. Adam started up, put on his coat of mail again, motioned to his journeymen and went to the door.

Rahel shrieked loudly: "To the cellar, Ruth. Oh, God, oh, God, have mercy upon us! Quick--where's my shawl?--They are attacking us!--Come, come! Oh, I am caught, I can go no farther!"

Mortal terror had seized the old woman; she did not want to die. To the girl death was welcome, and she did not stir.

Voices were now audible in the vestibule, but they sounded neither noisy nor threatening; yet Rahel shrieked in despair as a lansquenet, fully armed, entered the workshop with the armorer.

Hans Eitelfritz had come to look for Ulrich's father. In his arms lay the dog Lelaps, which, bleeding from the wound made by a bullet, that grazed its neck, nestled trembling against its master.

Bowing courteously to Ruth, the soldier said:

"Take pity on this poor creature, fair maiden, and wash its wound with a little wine. It deserves it. I could tell you such tales of its cleverness! It came from distant India, where a pirate.... But you shall hear the story some other time. Thanks, thanks! As to your son, Meister, it's a thousand pities about him. He was a splendid fellow, and we were like two brothers. He himself gave me the safeguard for you and the artist, Moor. I fastened them on the doors with my own hands, as soon as the fray began. My swordbearer got the paste, and now may the writing stick there as an honorable memento till the end of the world. Navarrete was a faithful fellow, who never forgot his friends! How much good that does Lelaps! See, see! He is licking your hands, that means, 'I thank you.'"

While Ruth had been washing the dog's wound, and the lansquenet talked of Ulrich, her tearful eyes met the father's.

"They say he cut down twenty-one Walloons before he fell," continued Hans.

"No, sir," interrupted Adam. "I saw him. He was shot before he raised his guilty sword."

"Ah, ah!--but it happened on the rampart."

"They rushed over him to the assault."

"And there he still lies; not a soul has cared for the dead and wounded."

The girl started, and laid the dog in the old man's lap, exclaiming:

"Suppose Ulrich should be alive! Perhaps he was not mortally wounded, perhaps...."

"Yes, everything is possible," interrupted the lansquenet. "I could tell you things.... for instance, there was a countryman of mine whom, when we were in Africa, a Moorish Pacha struck....no lies now....perhaps! In earnest; it might happen that Ulrich....wait.... at midnight I shall keep guard on the rampart with my company, then I'll look...."

"We, we will seek him!" cried Ruth, seizing the smith's arm.

"I will," replied the smith; "you must stay here."

"No, father, I will go with you."

The lansquenet also shook his head, saying "Jungfer, Jungfer, you don't know what a day this is. Thank Our Heavenly Father that you have hitherto escaped so well. The fierce lion has tasted blood. You are a pretty child, and if they should see you to-day...."

"No matter," interrupted the girl. "I know what I am asking. You will take me with you, father! Do so, if you love me! I will find him, if any one can!"

"Oh, sir, sir, you look kind and friendly! You have the guard. Escort us; let me seek Ulrich. I shall find him, I know; I must seek him--I must."

The girl's cheeks were glowing; for before her she saw her playfellow, her lover, gasping for breath, with staring eyes, her name upon his dying lips.

Adam sadly shook his head, but Hans Eitelfritz was touched by the girl's eager longing to help the man who was dear to him, so he hastily taxed his inventive brain, saying:

"Perhaps it might be risked....listen to me, Meister! You won't be particularly safe in the streets, yourself, and could hardly reach the rampart without me. I shall lose precious time; but you are his father, and this girl--is she his sister?--No?--So much the better for him, if he

lives! It isn't an easy matter, but it can be done. Yonder good dame will take care of Lelaps for me. Poor dog! That feels good, doesn't it? Well then....I can be here again at midnight. Have you a handcart in the house?"

For coal and iron."

"That will answer. Let the woman make a kettle of soup, and if you have a few hams...."

"There are four in the store-room," cried Ruth.

"Take some bread, a few jugs of wine, and a keg of beer, too, and then follow me quietly. I have the password, my servant will accompany me, and I'll make the Spaniards believe you belong to us, and are bringing my men their supper. Blacken your pretty face a little, my dear girl, wrap yourself up well, and if we find Ulrich we will put him in the empty cart, and I will accompany you home again. Take yonder spicesack, and if we find the poor fellow, dead or alive, hide him with it. The sack was intended for other things, but I shall be well content with this booty. Take care of these silver toys. What pretty things they are! How the little horse rears, and see the bird in the cage! Don't look so fierce, Meister! In catching fish we must be content even with smelts; if I hadn't taken these, others would have done so; they are for my sister's children, and there is something else hidden here in my doublet; it shall help me to pass my leisure hours. One man's meat is another man's poison."

When Hans Eitelfritz returned at midnight, the cart with the food and liquor was ready. Adam's warnings were unavailing. Ruth resolutely insisted upon accompanying him, and he well knew what urged her to risk safety and life as freely as he did himself.

Old Rahel had done her best to conceal Ruth's beauty.

The dangerous nocturnal pilgrimage began.

The smith pulled the cart, and Ruth pushed, Hans Eitelfritz, with his sword-bearer, walking by her side. From time to time Spanish soldiers met and accosted them; but Hans skilfully satisfied their curiosity and dispelled their suspicions.

Pillage and murder had not yet ceased, and Ruth saw, heard, and mistrusted scenes of horror, that congealed her blood. But she bore up until they reached the rampart.

Here Eitelfritz was among his own men.

He delivered the meat and drink to them, told them to take it out of the cart, and invited them to fall to boldly. Then, seizing a lantern, he guided Ruth and the smith, who drew the light cart after them, through the intense darkness of the November night to the rampart.

Hans Eitelfritz lighted the way, and all three searched. Corpse lay beside corpse. Wherever Ruth set her foot, it touched some fallen soldier. Dread, horror and loathing threatened to deprive her of consciousness; but the ardent longing, the one last hope of her soul sustained her, steeled her energy, sharpened her sight.

They had reached the centre of the rampart, when she saw in the distance a tall figure stretched at full length.

That, yes, that was he!

Snatching the lantern from the lansquenet's hand, she rushed to the prostrate form, threw herself on her knees beside it, and cast the light upon the face.

What had she seen?

Why did the shriek she uttered sound so agonized? The men were approaching, but Ruth knew that there was something else to be done, besides weeping and wailing.

She pressed her ear close to the mailed breast to listen, and when she heard no breath, hurriedly unfastened the clasps and buckles that confined the armor.

The cuirass fell rattling on the ground, and now--no, there was no deception, the wounded man's chest rose under her ear, she heard the faint throbbing of his heart, the feeble flutter of a gasping breath.

Bursting into loud, convulsive weeping, she raised his head and pressed it to her bosom.

"He is dead; I thought so!" said the lansquenet, and Adam sank on his knees before his wounded son. But Ruth's sobs now changed to low, joyous, musical laughter, which echoed in her voice as she exclaimed: "Ulrich breathes, he lives! Oh, God! oh, God! how we thank Thee!"

Then--was she deceived, could it be? She heard the inflexible man beside her sob, saw him bend over Ulrich, listen to the beating of his heart, and press his bearded lips first to his temples, then on the hand he had so harshly rejected.

Hans Eitelfritz warned them to hasten, carried the senseless man, with Adam's assistance, to the cart, and half an hour later the dangerously wounded, outcast son was lying in the most comfortable bed in the best room in his father's house. His couch was in the upper story; down in the kitchen old Rahel was moving about the hearth, preparing her "good salve" herself. While thus engaged she often chuckled aloud, murmuring "Ulrich," and while mixing and stirring the mixture could not keep her old feet still; it almost seemed as if she wanted to dance.

Hans Eitelfritz promised Adam to tell no one what had become of his son, and then returned to his men. The next morning the mutineers from Aalst

sought their fallen leader; but he had disappeared, and the legend now became wide-spread among them, that the Prince of Evil had carried Navarrete to his own abode. The dog Lelaps died of his wound, and scarcely a week after the pillage of flourishing Antwerp by the "Spanish Furies," Hans Eitelfritz's regiment was ordered to Ghent. He came with drooping head to the smithy, to take his leave. He had sold his costly booty, and, like so many other pillagers, gambled away the stolen property at the exchange. Nothing was left him of the great day in Antwerp, except the silver toys for his sister's children in Colln on the Spree.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The fire in the smithy was extinguished, no hammer fell on the anvil; for the wounded man lay in a burning fever; every loud noise disturbed him. Adam had noticed this himself, and gave no time to his work, for he had to assist in nursing his son, when it was necessary to raise his heavy body, and to relieve Ruth, when, after long night-watches, her vigorous strength was exhausted.

The old man saw that the girl's bands were more deft than his own toil-hardened ones, and let her take the principal charge-but the hours when she was resting in her room were the dearest to him, for then he was alone with Ulrich, could read his countenance undisturbed and rejoice in gazing at every feature, which reminded him of his child's boyhood and of Flora.

He often pressed his bearded lips to the invalid's burning forehead or limp hand, and when the physician with an anxious face had left the house, he knelt beside Ulrich's couch, buried his forehead among the pillows, and fervently prayed the Heavenly Father, to spare his child and take in exchange his own life and all that he possessed.

He often thought the end had come, and gave himself up without resistance to his grief; Ruth, on the contrary, never lost hope, not even in the darkest hours. God had not let her find Ulrich, merely to take him from her again. The end of danger was to her the beginning of deliverance. When he recognized her the first time, she already saw him, leaning on her shoulder, walk through the room; when he could raise himself, she thought him cured.

Her heart was overflowing with joy, yet her mind remained watchful and thoughtful during the long, toilsome nursing. She did not forget the smallest trifle, for before she undertook anything she saw in her mind every detail involved, as if it were already completed. Ulrich took no food which she had not prepared with her own hand, no drink which she had not herself brought from the cellar or the well. She perceived in advance what disturbed him, what pleased him, what he needed. If she opened or closed the curtain, she gave or withheld no more light than was

agreeable to him; if she arranged the pillows behind him, she placed them neither too high nor too low, and bound up his wounds with a gentle yet firm hand, like an experienced physician. Whatever he felt--pain or comfort--she experienced with him.

By degrees the fever vanished; consciousness returned, his pain lessened, he could move himself again, and began to feel stronger. At first he did not know where he was; then he recognized Ruth, and then his father.

How still, how dusky, how clean everything that surrounded him was! Delightful repose stole over him, pleasant weariness soothed every stormy emotion of his heart. Whenever he opened his eyes, tender, anxious glances met him. Even when the pain returned he enjoyed peaceful, consoling mental happiness. Ruth felt this also, and regarded it as a peerless reward.

When she entered the sick-room with fresh linen, and the odor of lavender her dead mother had liked floated softly to him from the clean sheets, he thought his boyhood had returned, and with it the wise, friendly doctor's house. Elizabeth, the shady pine-woods of his home, its murmuring brooks and luxuriant meadows, again rose before his mind; he saw Ruth and himself listening to the birds, picking berries, gathering flowers, and beseeching beautiful gifts from the "word." His father appeared even more kind, affectionate, and careful than in those days. The man became the boy again, and all his former good traits of character now sprang up freshly under the bright light and vivifying dew of love.

He received Ruth's unwearied attentions with ardent gratitude, and when he gazed into her faithful eyes, when her hand touched him, her soft, deep voice penetrated the depths of his soul, an unexampled sense of happiness filled his breast.

Everything, from the least to the greatest, embraced his soul with the arms of love. It seemed as if the ardent yearning of his heart extended far beyond the earth, and rose to God, who fills the universe with His infinite paternal love. His every breath, Ulrich thought, must henceforth be a prayer, a prayer of gratitude to Him, who is love itself, the Love, through and in which he lived.

He had sought love, to enjoy its gifts; now he was glad to make sacrifices for its sake. He saw how Ruth's beautiful face saddened when he was suffering, and with manly strength of will concealed inexpressible agony under a grateful smile. He feigned sleep, to permit her and his father to rest, and when tortured by feverish restlessness, lay still to give his beloved nurses pleasure and repay their solicitude. Love urged him to goodness, gave him strength for all that is good. His convalescence advanced and, when he was permitted to leave his bed, his father was the first one to support him through the room and down the steps into the court-yard. He often felt with quiet emotion the old man stroke the hand that rested on his arm, and when, exhausted, he returned to the sick-room, he sank with a grateful heart into his comfortable seat, casting a look of pleasure at the flowers, which Ruth had taken from her chamber window and placed on the table beside him.

His family now knew what he had endured and experienced, and the smith found a kind, soothing word for all that, a few months before, he had considered criminal and unpardonable.

During such a conversation, Ulrich once exclaimed "War! You know not how it bears one along with it; it is a game whose stake is life. That of others is of as little value as your own; to do your worst to every one, is the watchword; but now--every thing has grown so calm in my soul, and I have a horror of the turmoil in the field. I was talking with Ruth yesterday about her father, and she reminded me of his favorite saying, which I had forgotten long ago. Do you know what it is? 'Do unto others, as ye would that others should do unto you.' I have not been cruel, and never drew the sword out of pleasure in slaying; but now I grieve for having brought woe to so many!

"What things were done in Haarlem! If you had moved there instead of to Antwerp, and you and Ruth....I dare not think of it! Memories of those days torture me in many a sleepless hour, and there is much that fills me with bitter remorse. But I am permitted to live, and it seems as if I were new-born, and henceforth existence and doing good must be synonymous to me. You were right to be angry...."

"That is all forgiven and forgotten," interrupted the smith in a resonant voice, pressing his son's fingers with his hard right hand.

These words affected the convalescent like a strengthening potion, and when the hammers again moved in the smithy, Ulrich was no longer satisfied with his idle life, and began with Ruth to look forward to and discuss the future.

The words: 'fortune,' 'fame,' 'power,'" he said once, "have deceived me; but art! You don't know, Ruth, what art is! It does not bestow everything, but a great deal, a great deal. Meister Moor was indeed a teacher! I am too old to begin at the beginning once more. If it were not for that...."

"Well, Ulrich?"

"I should like to try painting again."

The girl exhorted him to take courage, and told his father of their conversation. The smith put on his Sunday clothes and went to the artist's house. The latter was in Brussels, but was expected home soon.

From this time, every third day, Adam donned his best clothes, which he disliked to wear, and went to the artist's; but always in vain.

In the month of February the invalid was playing chess with Ruth,-- she had learned the game from the smith and Ulrich from her,--when Adam entered the room, saying: "when the game is over, I wish to speak to you, my son."

The young girl had the advantage, but instantly pushed the pieces together and left the two alone.

She well knew what was passing in the father's mind, for the day before he had brought all sorts of artist's materials, and told her to arrange the little gable-room, with the large window facing towards the north, and put the easel and colors there. They had only smiled at each other, but they had long since learned to understand each other, even without words.

"What is it?" asked Ulrich in surprise.

The smith then told him what he had provided and arranged, adding: "the picture on the standard--you say you painted it yourself."

"Yes, father."

"It was your mother, exactly as she looked when.... She did not treat either of us rightly--but she!--the Christian must forgive;--and as she was your mother--why--I should like.... perhaps it is not possible; but if you could paint her picture, not as a Madonna, only as she looked when a young wife...."

"I can, I will!" cried Ulrich, in joyous excitement. "Take me upstairs, is the canvas ready?"

"In the frame, firmly in the frame! I am an old man, and you see, child, I remember how wonderfully sweet your mother was; but I can never succeed in recalling just how she looked then. I have tried, tried thousands and thousands of times; at--Richtberg, here, everywhere--deep as was my wrath!"

"You shall see her again surely--surely!" interrupted Ulrich. "I see her before me, and what I see in my mind, I can paint!"

The work was commenced the very same day. Ulrich now succeeded wonderfully, and lavished on the portrait all the wealth of love, with which his heart was filled.

Never had he guided the brush so joyously; in painting this picture he only wished to give, to give--give his beloved father the best he could accomplish, so he succeeded.

The young wife, attired in a burgher dress, stood with her bewitching eyes and a melancholy, half-tender, half-mournful smile on her lips.

Adam was not permitted to enter the studio again until the portrait was completed. When Ulrich at last unveiled the picture, the old man--unable longer to control himself--burst into loud sobs and fell upon his son's breast. It seemed to Adam that the pretty creature in the golden frame--far from needing his forgiveness--was entitled to his gratitude for many blissful hours.

Soon after, Adam found Moor at home, and a few hours later took Ulrich to him. It was a happy and a quiet meeting, which was soon followed by a second interview in the smith's house.

Moor gazed long and searchingly at Ulrich's work. When he had examined it sufficiently, he held out his hand to his pupil, saying warmly:

"I always said so; you are an artist! From to-morrow we will work together again, daily, and you will win more glorious victories with the brush than with the sword."

Ulrich's cheeks glowed with happiness and pride.

Ruth had never before seen him look so, and as she gazed joyfully into his eyes, he held out his hands to her, exclaiming: "An artist, an artist again! Oh, would that I had always remained one! Now I lack only one thing more--yourself!"

She rushed to his embrace, exclaiming joyously "Yours, yours! I have always been so, and always shall be, to-day, to-morrow, unto death, forever and ever!"

"Yes, yes," he answered gravely. "Our hearts are one and ever will be, nothing can separate them; but your fate shall not be linked to mine till, Moor himself calls me a master. Love imposes no condition--I am yours and you are mine--but I impose the trial on myself, and this time I know it will be passed."

A new spirit animated the pupil. He rushed to his work with tireless energy, and even the hardest task became easy, when he thought of the prize he sought. At the end of a year, Moor ceased to instruct him, and Ruth became the wife of Meister Ulrich Schwab.

The famous artist-guild of Antwerp soon proudly numbered him among them, and even at the present day his pictures are highly esteemed by connoisseurs, though they are attributed to other painters, for he never signed his name to his works.

Of the four words, which illumined his life-path as guiding-stars, he had learned to value fame and power least; fortune and art remained faithful to him, but as the earth does not shine by its own might, but receives its light from the sun, so they obtained brilliancy, charm and endearing power through love.

The fierce Eletto, whose sword raged in war, following the teachings of his noble Master, became a truly Christian philanthropist.

Many have gazed with quiet delight at the magnificent picture, which represents a beautiful mother, with a bright, intelligent face, leading her three blooming children towards a pleasant old man, who holds out his arms to them. The old man is Adam, the mother Ruth, the children are the armorer's grandchildren; Ulrich Schwab was the artist.

Meister Moor died soon after Ulrich's marriage, and a few years after, Sophonisba di Moncada came to Antwerp to seek the grave of him she had loved. She knew from the dead man that he had met his dear Madrid pupil, and her first visit was to the latter.

After looking at his works, she exclaimed:

"The word! Do you remember, Meister? I told you then, that you had found the right one. You are greatly altered, and it is a pity that you have lost your flowing locks; but you look like a happy man, and to what do you owe it? To the word, the only right word: 'Art!'"

He let her finish the sentence, then answered gravely "There is still a loftier word, noble lady! Whoever owns it--is rich indeed. He will no longer wander--seek in doubt.

"And this is?" she asked incredulously, with a smile of superior knowledge.

"I have found it," he answered firmly. "It is 'Love.'"

Sophonisba bent her head, saying softly and sadly: "yes, yes--love."

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