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*Title:* The Sublime Jester

*Date of first publication:* 1924

*Author:* Ezra Selig Brudno (1877-1954)

*Date first posted:* June 2, 2018

*Date last updated:* June 2, 2018

Faded Page eBook #20180603

This ebook was produced by: Al Haines, Jen Haines & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

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“THE FUGITIVE”

“THE LITTLE CONSCRIPT”

“ONE OF US”

“THE TETHER”

“THE JUGGLERS”

# THE SUBLIME JESTER

*“Calm is my soul, and clear,  
like the mountains in the morning.  
But they think me cold,  
and a mocker with terrible  
jests.”*

—ALSO *SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA*

*By*

EZRA BRUDNO

New York  
NICHOLAS L. BROWN  
1924

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## PART ONE: A POET IN THE MAKING

- Chapter One: The Heritage
- ” Two: Hedwiga
- ” Three: The Judengasse
- ” Four: A Nightingale in a Crow’s Nest
- ” Five: Hilda
- ” Six: Eugenie

## PART TWO: A FIGHTER IN THE MAKING

- Chapter One: The Salon
- ” Two: Miriam
- ” Three: The March to Calvary
- ” Four: Vagabondage

## PART THREE: A CYNIC IN THE MAKING

- Chapter One: A Happy Exile
- ” Two: Marguerite
- ” Three: The Jest of the Gods

## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

*In creating Albert Zorn, the central figure in this romance, I have followed the life and career of Heinrich Heine. I have chosen him not only because he singularly typifies the poet with the "Weltschmerz" in his heart, nor because his was an arresting personality, but because he is preeminently the symbol of the spirit of his age and his people—the symbol of the spirit of all ages and all peoples. For, whenever and wherever a Samson arises, the smug, hypocritical, pharasaical Philistines are ever ready to fetter him and put out his eyes—and often there is a Delilah to betray him.*

E. B.

PART ONE

# A POET IN THE MAKING



# THE HERITAGE.

## I.

**T**RIVIAL as the incident was, Albert Zorn often recalled it in later years and mused upon it even at an age when man no longer cherishes memories of early boyhood. How could he forget it? At the time it was momentous, overshadowing all else.

On his way to school that memorable morning he rambled dreamily through the narrow streets of Gunsdorf, a thousand fantasies in his boyish brain. It seemed as if Alladin's lamp had been rubbed. He was to live in a castle, instead of in the modest quarters back of his father's humble shop on Schmallgasse and wear a velvet coat and lacquered top-boots with silver spurs! What else would his father do with all that money? From what he had gleaned of his parents' conversation they had received word from Amsterdam that a kinsman had died there and left them a fortune running into millions.

He was soon approaching the river near which was located the Franciscan cloister that housed his school. The swiftly flowing stream came tumbling down over rock and boulder and unseen rivulets gurgled mysteriously beneath glacial crusts in shadowy places. For it was at the beginning of April when there were still clinging remnants of the long hoary winter. Albert sauntered slowly, wistfully, his daydreams, stimulated by the sudden expectancy, commingling with the awakened sentiments of spring.

"Good morning, Al—ber'," that imp, Shorty Fritz, welcomed him as he entered the classroom.

Albert's air-castles were rudely shaken and his face grew livid. Fritz had drawled his name in the screechy voice of Hans the ragman, who wandered from door to door every morning, preceded by his donkey, which he coaxed to greater celerity by the mystic cry that sounded like "Al—ber'—Al—ber'", the real meaning of which was only known to Hans and the drudging beast.

Ignoring the tantalizing donkey-call, he walked up to his seat, dropped his books and remained standing moodily, his small bluish eyes narrowed, his long fair hair falling unevenly over his neck and forehead.

"O, Fritz, what's the difference between Balaam's ass and a zebra?" Long Kunz, another classmate, called across the room.

“Balaam’s ass spoke Hebrew and the zebra speaks Zebrew,” returned Fritz with mock gravity.

Albert was still busying himself with his books, swallowing lumps and feigning indifference, but the allusions to his racial extraction pierced him like a dagger. He had heard this witticism before and it had never failed to lacerate his sensitive heart.

“Then what’s the difference between Hanse’s donkey and his namesake, Al—ber’?”

“None that I can see,” was the retort.

Still the victim of these sallies refrained from combat. Though usually not given to curbing his tongue—and his tongue was as sharp as that of any one in the class—he would not bandy words with his arch-enemies this morning. There was hope in the boy’s heart that the forthcoming inheritance would soon liberate him from these surroundings altogether.

Presently Christian Lutz’s tender arm was around his shoulders. Christian was his favorite classmate and always took his part in his encounters with those vexatious youngsters. While Albert was the quicker with his tongue, Christian was more ready with his fist.

“I have heard your father has become a millionaire,” Christian said. “Who’s left him this fortune—your father’s father?”

“Not my father’s father,” laughed Albert, the remembrance of the inheritance at once banishing the momentary bitterness from his heart. “My father’s father had no fortune to leave—he was a poor little Jew, with long whiskers as his only belongings.”

Though uttered in a soft, jocular voice, and only intended for Christian’s ears, it reached those of Fritz.

“Ha—ha!” he tittered. “Did you hear that, boys? Al—ber’s grandfather was a poor little Jew with long whiskers.”

“A poor little Jew with long whiskers!”

“A poor little Jew with long whiskers!”

“A poor little Jew with long whiskers!”

This refrain caught up by Long Kunz was accompanied by intermittent beating of the desks with drum-like regularity.

In a moment the classroom was in a wild uproar. Whistling, catcalls, imitations of braying asses, of squealing pigs, of crowing cocks, of bleating

sheep, of neighing horses filled the air. The boys scampered and jumped and flung inkstands at the blackboard and kicked at the chairs to Fritz's rhythmic tune of "A poor little Jew with long whiskers!"

"Silence!"

It was the intimidating voice of Father Scher.

The youngsters, frightened by the sudden entrance of the schoolmaster, made a dash for their seats and in their mad rush capsized the benches that came down with resounding crashes.

"Order!" shouted the schoolmaster.

Father Scher stood at his desk, his right arm raised menacingly, his smooth face crimson with rage, his eyes fairly popping out of their sockets, his saucer-like skull-cap shoved to the back of his shaven head.

Ominous silence, terror in every countenance.

The priest's eyes shifted from side to side, taking in the overturned benches, the scattered text-books, the ink-bespattered blackboard.

"Who started this?"

No answer. The black-robed instructor took a step forward.

"Who started this?"

Restive shuffling of feet was the only response.

"I'll flay the hide off everyone of you if you don't tell me at once who started this disorder," the angered teacher cried.

"Al—ber! Al—ber!" Hanse's voice came from outside. It sounded like a voice in a deep forest. An irrepressible snicker ran through the room.

"Who did this—who did this?"

Scher was moving along the aisle, searching guilt in every countenance. Reaching Albert he halted and glowered at him. There was still mist in the boy's eyes and his lips were twitching.

"So it's you, is it? You know what to expect and are whimpering ahead of time, hey? You are always the source of all mischief in the class." His steady eyes were peering at the boy's agitated face. Then he added, "Now if you didn't start this, who did?"

The insinuation increased the bitterness in the boy's heart. He was biting the lining of his lip to hold his tears in check, but not a sound escaped him.

“Won’t you answer me?” The master’s voice was threatening.

Much as he hated Long Kunz and Shorty Fritz his pride forbade him to betray them.

Silently, grimly, the infuriated priest turned around and walked back toward the blackboard, the swishing of his cassock striking against his heels registering his measured, determined step. To the right of the blackboard stood a large, heavy, gnarled yellowish stick, an ever present warning to the class. Gripping the rattan firmly in his hand the priest faced about and retraced his steps, presently standing in front of Albert.

“Well, Albert?”

The instructor’s stormy blue eyes were riveted upon the boy and the heavy cane was suspended in the air.

Albert only tightened his lips more firmly.

“Speak!”

Scher’s voice trembled with wrath.

A scarcely perceptible smile appeared on the lower part of the boy’s face, which however did not escape the tantalized master.

Bang!

The stick came down with a crashing blow, but as Albert quickly turned aside it struck the table nearby and broke.

Baffled by defeat Father Scher grew more angered and swung the broken end of the cane up and down blindly, striking at his victim until he was exhausted, panting audibly.

Brandishing the fragment in his hand for a final blow, he missed his aim and his body swung around, sending his skull-cap to the floor. As he stooped to pick up his headgear—his shaven crown exposed to the gaze of the irreverent youngsters—the awed tension vanished and derisive laughter broke loose. In spite of his pain Albert’s jeering voice sounded louder than all the rest. His little eyes snapped diabolic mockery in his glittering pupils. From the rear of the room came the mimicking of a grunting sucking pig.

Confused and out of breath, Scher turned from side to side and his rolling eyes finally focused upon the grimacing face of that ragamuffin, Long Kunz.

“Take this!” the master aspirated and gave the boy a sharp cut. Kunz emitted a shriek that rang throughout the cloister.

“I didn’t do anything,” he wailed, scratching the smarting spot on his left shoulder—“it was he that started all the trouble.”

“Who is he?” demanded the instructor.

He brandished the cane, but without letting it fall on Kunz.

“Who is he?” he repeated.

“Al—ber’ ” Kunz mischievously piped up, drying his tears.

“So it is you—hey? I thought it couldn’t be anyone else.”

He turned upon Albert anew, the scorn of vengeance in his metallic voice.

“He said his grandfather was a little Jew with long whiskers and made everybody laugh,” added Kunz, seeking to curry the teacher’s favor.

“Hold your tongue!” Scher silenced the informer.

Then, again turning upon Albert, he grabbed him by his coat collar and dragged him to the corner of the room, showering blows as he pulled the boy after him.

“I only said this in jest to Christian and they began on me,” Albert cried defiantly and broke away from the priest.

The master walked back to his desk, breathing hard and muttering unintelligible syllables.

“Attention!” he presently called and rapped for order.

His blanched face, his piercing eyes, the skull-cap set awry on his shaven crown, the lead-edged ruler in his hand, made the class realize that he was no longer to be trifled with. There had been strange rumors about the ferocity of the master, so when he gave the order to fall in line for divine service every pupil had his left foot forward ready to march.

Albert was the last in line. For although his mother had had him excused from religious exercises, he always joined the class in the morning prayers. Not that he prayed or participated in the singing of hymns, but he loved the ceremonies of the cloister. There was something in the smell pervading the old stone walls, in the reverberating tones of the organ, in the soft light sifting in through the stained glass windows, in the statuary and effigies—everything about the monastic church filled him with mystery and with an indefinable sensuousness that, while it repelled him, caught his fancy and stirred in his soul a longing he was unable to fathom. The sound and color and scent and mystery of the church aroused in him the same emotion he felt when reading about Greek gods and goddesses. The chimes of the bells, the rich colors of the

clergy's robes at high mass, the pealing organ and the melodies of the choir—everything connected with the Franciscan cloister was so different from his father's church, which seemed so colorless and held nothing to stir his imagination.

But no sooner did the chapel services commence than his mind began to wander. The prayers were meaningless to him even at that early age. The Catholic liturgy was distasteful to him. For boy that he was—scarcely more than eleven—he had already reasoned on matters of faith, and he had heard at home many a discussion about Voltaire and Rousseau, and of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, which was then debated in every house of culture.

That morning more than on other mornings his brain was tortured by a thousand cross-currents. So many ideas crowded in upon his wearied brain that no single one was clear. They were all in confusion. The inheritance, his classmates' insults, the flogging—they all seemed fast scudding clouds.

On his way out of school, Albert lagged behind under the high arches of the cloister, rancor in his breast. Tears of mortification were in his eyes.

He soon found himself before the tall image of the Christ which stood on a high pedestal under these arches. It was carved of wood, the face hideously distorted, the head hanging limply like a wilted sunflower, and a smear of blood between the projecting ribs was intended as a realistic touch. The morning sun, slanting under the vaults, fell upon the nails driven through the palms and feet and enhanced the ghastly figure. An unwelcome thought shot through the boy's brain. No, no, he could not believe it; he could not believe what Father Scher had told the class about the Crucified. No, it could not be true. His people could not have stabbed the man who wore the crown of thorns and driven nails through his hand and feet. He knew his father and mother, who were most tender-hearted, and his grandfather, Doctor Hollmann, and his Uncle Joseph, both of whom had laid their lives down in their efforts to save the people in the last plague.

"They are lying—they are lying," he muttered under his breath, almost sobbing—"all of them are lying—the priest and his books and Kunz and Fritz. Only the likes of them could mock and spit and torment and then put the blame upon others—"

He suddenly halted. He remembered the Hebrew school, which he attended after the hours at the cloister.

"*Pokad—pokadto—pokadli—*" he began to mumble the conjugation of the Hebrew verb he was then learning. Foreign as the language was to him he learned it much more easily than "the language of the dead Romans", or even

with greater facility than “the language of the Gods”, as he was wont to call Greek.

The Hebrew school was in a narrow alley back of Schmallgasse. It was a small square chamber which served as a school room by day and as a living room for the teacher and his family at night. It had been recently whitewashed—Passover was coming—and the Mizrach (a picture of Jerusalem with the Wailing Wall in the foreground) hung conspicuously upon the wall facing east—a tawny, fly-specked patch on a background of bluish white. Save for a long rectangular table flanked by unpainted wooden benches, and the teacher’s stool at the head of it, the room was bare.

Although he often mimicked the long bearded teacher, there was gladness in Albert’s heart, a gladness accompanied by a feeling of peace and security, as he wended his way to this school. No one mocked him here, no one imitated the ragman’s donkey-call. Here his very name gave him added distinction. Here he was a little prince, whom everybody loved and whose every flippant remark was carried from mouth to mouth, accompanied by convulsive laughter.

When he entered the Hebrew school the class was chanting the Shir H’Shirim, that exquisite lyric poem known as the Song of Songs. For it was Friday, when the class sang the Song of Solomon in the quaint, traditional melody of the Babylonians. The teacher, at the head of the table, was swaying his body from side to side, leading his class in his strangely tuneful sing-song.

Albert slid into his seat and joined in the chanting, though he perceived the furtive glances of his classmates, denoting even greater respects than ever. For they had all heard of the rumored inheritance.

“‘Look not upon me because I am black,’” they sang lustily from the Hebrew text. “‘Because the sun hath looked upon me; my mother’s children were angry with me and made me keeper of the vineyard, but my own vineyard I have not kept.’”

While his lips were lisping the liquid syllables of the poetical allegory his mind wandered to the sunny land of Canaan, the cradle of his people.

A pause followed; the teacher emitted a soft “oi” and soon proceeded with the next chapter.

“‘I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley,’” the class struck up in lively sing-song, “‘As the lily is among the thorns so is my love among the daughters . . . Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am lovesick. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.’”

His flitting fancy was not following the words, but the pictures they conjured up in his brain. He was catching his breath, his spirits were astir. There was languor in his being. His sorrows were gone, the enchanting Song of Solomon caught his soul in its dulcet waves and rocked him into a trance  
...

## II.

The evening proved still more exciting for Albert. He remained seated with rapt attention, listening to the talk of his elders. For relatives had dropped in—Uncle Salomon and Aunt Braunelle and Aunt Hanna—and all talked enthusiastically. His father, David, however, did most of the talking. There was something of the gambler's optimism in David Zorn. It did not take much to make him over-sanguine. Pacing up and down the room, he ran his fingers through his well-trimmed blond beard, and from time to time paused to take a mouthful of Assmanshauser, his favorite vintage, of which he had opened a bottle in celebration of the great event.

The father's feverish speech stirred the boy's volatile imagination. Albert became restless and, unobserved, left the house for the Marktplatz, where he hoped to find a few loitering friends.

But the large square was deserted; not a single youngster in front of the town-hall, not a pedestrian in sight. Even the squeaky-voiced vendor of apple tarts had left his post in front of the bronze statue in the centre of the Marktplatz. There was quiet everywhere, the quietness of a town occupied by the enemy. For this was during the period when Gunsdorf was occupied by Napoleon's troops.

Albert made his way back through one of the dark streets and as he turned a corner caught the sound of quick footsteps back of him. But before he had time to think he was struck with a fishing rod, and above the clatter of his fleeing assailant came the donkey-call in Shorty Fritz's familiar voice—"Al—ber'! Al—ber'!"

Albert wandered back home, a great pain in his head. As he walked past St. Andrew's church, the pallor of the moon resting upon the Jesuit saints in the shadowy niches, he turned his eyes away with a sense of dread. There was venom in his heart. Somehow he blamed those sculptured saints for his present sufferings. Strange feelings possessed him. Melancholy enveloped his whole being. What if his father should bring back millions from Amsterdam? Every Fritz and every Kunz would still run after him and call: "Al—ber'".



He entered his home stealthily as if he feared his mother might hear his very thoughts, and when he retired he lay in bed, a prey to strange fantasies. Soon, however, his roving thoughts, like twilight merging into night, turned into a web of dreams . . .

The world was coming to an end. God was standing in a garden of colorful flowers placed in the midst of waving wheat-fields, the marble bust of the broken Grecian goddess in his grandfather's garden glistening in the sun. Then God rolled up the nodding flowers and waving grain stalks as one rolls up a carpet and, after placing them in a huge wagon, lifted up a great heap of apple blossoms and honeysuckle and piled them, too, into the van.

"Yes, all this goes to Amsterdam," God was saying to Albert's father, who was gathering armsful of golden leaves and loading them into the large vehicle.

Then Uncle Salomon climbed a high ladder—it was the same ladder the sexton climbed to trim the candles in the great chandelier—and took the sun out of the sky. For a moment he held it in the hollow of his hands, as the sexton often did when filling the large lamp with oil, while Johann Traub, the tailor, who stood nearby, donned a white shroud.

It sounded strange to hear Johann speak Hebrew, for Albert knew the tailor was dead and he had only spoken German, and he wondered if all dead people spoke Hebrew. But then Uncle Salomon began to climb down the ladder, with the sun under his arm, and it grew darker and darker—and only a few stars, suspended from the sky by rainbow-colored ribbons, were emitting bits of flashing light, and presently the gorgeous ribbons broke and the stars dropped like live sparks flying out of a chimney on a winter night . . .

"Everything packed?"

It was the voice of God, who was now seated on the box of the colossal van, and lashing the fiery steeds, the van disappeared in a cloud of silvery dust, leaving Albert behind in darkness and in tears. He peered into space, but could see nothing—nothing but an endless stretch of darkness. Finally he began to move aimlessly and wandered and wandered until he reached a freshly dug grave. Leb, the grave-digger, with spade in hand, was in the grave, digging deeper and deeper and singing merrily: "Everybody is dead—everybody is dead!" he hummed in his Westphalian dialect. Then he turned around and said, "Shove him in."

There was no one else around but himself. Albert wondered to whom the grave-digger was speaking. Presently he noticed a very aged woman, a toothless hag. She stepped forward, holding the head of a man in her apron.

Harry shuddered at the sight of the decapitated head and wanted to flee, but could not move. He stood paralyzed. He wanted to cry but his voice was gone. Then the toothless hag flung the head into the grave, gave a fiendish, blood-curdling laugh, and jumped in after it and began to dance. She danced as he had often seen drunken peasants dance—shaking her head from side to side and moving her legs wearily.

“Now I must run—they are coming,” the grave-digger exclaimed and suddenly vanished.

Albert trembled in every limb. He was again alone, with nothing but the open grave before him. The darkness around him seemed impenetrable. He could not see an inch away. Only strange voices of invisible men reached his ears, with the sound of autumn leaves in his ears. Then flashes of lightning came and revealed to him a line of men, in single file, coming through a gap in a ruined wall. He could not see the men’s faces but they wore little crucifixes over their breasts and swayed ornamental containers of frankincense such as he had seen in the Franciscan cloister. The next moment a strange light appeared and he saw himself surrounded by black robed priests, with mitres on their heads, and one of them gave him a sharp cut with a fishing rod and jeered. “Your inheritance!—your inheritance!”

“What’s the matter, Albert?—You gave such a shriek.”

He opened his eyes and beheld his mother at the foot of his bed.

“I had a dreadful dream—” he muttered.

“Always your dreams,” the mother said, smiling affectionately, as she walked out of the room.

### III.

Weeks of tantalizing suspense followed. The letters that arrived from his father stirred Albert’s imagination. They seemed to come from distant lands, far, far away. And the letters were full of adventurous episodes: of nights spent in forests because of a broken axle, of weary tramps because of the horse’s bleeding leg, of halts at the frontier, and of numerous other perilous mishaps. “But,” as the optimistic David Zorn put it, “the road to success is always paved with rough stones.” His letter from Amsterdam was encouraging. No, he could not tell the extent of the estate, but it was huge. The tone of his succeeding letters, however, soon grew less and less reassuring, hinting at intervening difficulties, and he finally announced that he would return home without the

millions as the matter was necessarily complicated and he could carry on the rest of the negotiations through correspondence.

His father's return without riches was a stunning blow to the youth. It meant renewed drudgery and further contact with Father Scher and Kunz and Fritz. True, his father had not yet abandoned hope—he never did abandon hope—but Albert realized there were no prospects for a castle—at least not for the present and no immediate relief from the Franciscan school! Everything was the same as of old; no change, no excitement, nothing but the same monotonous business of irregular verbs, meaningless characters that stood for figures, the same blackboard and alongside of it another yellow stick in place of the broken one with whose every projecting knot and gnarl Albert was so familiar. It was a disheartening scene to see his father alight from the post chaise without a single bag of gold!

A few moments later came the great disappointment, the final blow. Like the glad tidings, it came in the form of a letter from Holland one rainy day in August. The humble shop in Schmallgasse was deserted save for David who, as usual, was thoughtfully turning the leaves of his ledger and jotting down some figures on the margin of a page. Zorn was everlastingly balancing the book, and the more he balanced them the less they balanced in his favor.

One of the saddest scenes of Albert's early life took place on the afternoon following his father's departure for Hamburg, to get financial assistance from his brother, Leopold Zorn, a banker.

The mother was alone in the little shop, alone with her thoughts. She was not thinking of her husband's reverses nor was she brooding over her own deprivations. She was wondering what would become of Albert, what would become of his promising gifts. For while she frequently complained of his idleness and of his perverseness she was confident that talent lay slumbering in the boy's being. True, she had other children but her heart and hopes were centered upon her first-born. No matter what might become of the others, nothing must stand in Albert's way.

A new idea struck her and the thought of it sent a gleam of sunshine to her dark eyes. She had a pearl necklace of great value and diamond earrings that might fetch a handsome price; at least sufficient to see her son through *Gymnasium* and the University. If she could not make a banker of him, which was her cherished ambition, let him be a scholar.

But the next moment she remembered her husband. Adornment was his life. He had often remonstrated against her aversion for wearing jewels.

After a space she saw a way out. Ludwig Grimm, the money-lender at the

Marktplatz, would advance her a considerable amount on her necklace. In order to spare her husband's feelings she would not tell him of this until business had improved when she could redeem her valuables. No one need know of this—not a soul—and she was sure Grimm would tell no one.

Albert came into the shop as his mother was about to leave on her secret errand. The boy's eyes were downcast, there was pallor in his cheeks. For he, too, had done his share of brooding since the last ray of hope of the heritage was gone.

“Mother,” he said abruptly, “I'll take no more private lessons. I—”

“Albert!”

She had hired a music teacher to teach him the violin, and her present ejaculation was the sudden outlet of her accumulated grief.

For a brief moment Albert weakened, his mother's evident unhappiness checked his flow of words, but he soon gained courage.

“Mother, dear, I'll be no burden to you,” he burst out. “I know—I understand—I won't let you spend your last *groschen* on me—”

“Albert!” she cried, reproach and grief mingled in her tone. “You won't break your mother's heart. Since when have my children become a burden to me?”

“But, mother dearest,” the boy begged, tears in his eyes, “I am old enough to be apprenticed—”

“And give up all hope?—Albert!”

The mere intimation of surrender—giving up the chance of becoming a great man, a scholar if not a banker—cut her to the very heart.

The boy trembled perceptibly. His mother had touched a vibrating chord in his being. For every thought of his, every dream and fancy, was of the future. And he was confident of the future; even more confident than his mother; for every prophetic little Samuel hears the voice of God before it reaches the ears of the blind Eli, though he may not at first recognize the voice that calls him.

“Don't worry, Albert dearest,” the mother sobbed, sunshine through her tears, “the war will soon be over, business will improve, and you will not be handicapped for want of money.”

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Late that afternoon, in the dimmest twilight, she locked the shop on Schmallgasse, walked down the narrow street, and turned into the Marktplatz,

an air of stealth in her movements. Frequently she glanced this way and that, like a hunted criminal, and hugged a little packet to her breast. When she reached Ludwig Grimm's pawnshop she halted, hesitated a moment, took a step backwards, halted again, and then, with a sudden lurch forward, darted up the three stone steps that led to Grimm's and opened the door with a resolute jerk. . . . .

# THE LORELEI.

## I.

**N**EARLY four years had passed in the life of the dreamy youth. They had been turbulent, epoch-making years, years full of anguish and unabated fear. Napoleon's armies had swept South as far as the Mediterranean and beyond, had also pushed their way East as far as the ancient capital of Russia, the whole world breathlessly awaiting the ultimate fate of the conqueror. For mingled with the fear of the invader was the conviction that no matter how heroic, he must meet with defeat in the end. When would the end come? The vanquished nations had hoped against hope, but finally beheld a sign from Heaven in the devouring flames of Moscow. A lull followed, the lull before an impending storm. Spring had arrived, and with it came the nervous tension of prolonged suspense. Foreboding was in the air. The very elements foretold a terrific struggle. Westphalia and all of northern Germany was visited by devastating storms. On clear nights the superstitious saw in the heavens blood-red stars in the shape of besoms with long handles—the unerring omen of bloody battles! Everybody was certain that a gripping conflict between God and the devil was at hand, but no one knew on which side was God and on which the devil.

But what did it all matter to Albert Zorn? Nero fiddled while Rome was burning; Goethe rhymed sweet lyrics and made love to Christiane Vulpius while the enemy was at the gates of Weimar; on the very day that the Battle of Jena was fought, Schlegel, the savant of Jena, unconcernedly dispatched a manuscript to his publisher.

Albert was only thinking of his hero, the Emperor. Tears were in the boy's eyes as he listened to the reports of the Emperor's flight from the Russian steppes, mortification in his soul as he looked upon the foot-weary, wan, hollow-eyed, bedraggled forms of the straggling grenadiers, making their way home from the snowfields of Smolensk. However, even the stirring news of lost battles, the flying rumors of approaching clashes, the roar of death-dealing cannon, were to him mere tales of adventure romantically told. Spring had come, the sun was shining brilliantly, perfume was in the air, flowers were unfolding treasures of gold and silver and dazzling rubies, the buds were revealing depositories of emerald and opal and ermine, the nightingales were singing of love and passion and death—adolescence's holy trinity—and the

banks of the Rhine were re-echoing the mystic legends of bygone days.

He had even failed to note the difference between his father's brown coat with a sheen of genteel shabbiness and his own clothes of good quality and latest mode, and the disparity between his mother's frocks, antedating the French occupation, and those of his sister in the fashion of the day.

His mind was occupied with other thoughts. He was aloof and alone. He never had many friends but always had at least one devoted comrade, who accompanied him on his rambles through the woods on the outskirts of the city or lay with him outstretched on the grassy bank of the Rhine and listened to his exuberant speeches. Christian Lutz was still his trusted friend. Christian was to Albert what Jonathan was to that poetical shepherd boy, David. Perhaps the Psalmist's love for the son of King Saul was likewise strengthened by the latter's willingness to listen. Albert poured into Christian's ears all his secret hopes and tormenting despair. Not infrequently the hopes and despair came almost at once. In the midst of an outpouring of his poetic fervor despair would seize him. One day he read a glowing account of Byron in a German periodical. The author of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" was only in the early twenties and he, Albert, was already sixteen and had done nothing! Consumed with burning envy he tossed on the grass in utter misery, tears rolling down his pale cheeks. He called himself a vain coxcomb, a braggart without a spark of talent. But presently his loyal friend began to contradict his self-accusations. Christian reminded him of the drama in verse he was planning, and after all one was not so very old at sixteen. Albert remained quiet for a space, listening to his friend's comforting, pulling blades of grass by the roots and absently tearing them into tiny bits. And finally he burst out impetuously, "I know, Christian, I know I'll be a great poet—I'll write better than Wilhelm Müller, better than—" Becoming conscious of his boasting he checked himself and, producing a few sheets from his breast pocket, began to read the verses he had penned the evening before. And Christian was such an encouraging listener! His enthusiasm was boundless. "Albert, these verses are as beautiful as any of Uhland's!" he exclaimed.

Albert blushed scarlet. He had thought that himself but dared not utter such blasphemy. For to Albert at this stage of his life, Uhland was the highest of all high. It was as if some second rate god of antiquity boasted of a mightiness surpassing that of Zeus.

In moods like these he would steal out of the house, his visored cap over his eyes, and wander aimlessly through the maze of crooked, narrow streets, driven by irresistible impulses, until he would find himself on the bank of his beloved river. Here there were a thousand objects to dissipate his gloom. The

gently flowing stream, the floating boats, the changing tints of the sky, the little wildflowers turning their pretty faces up to him like coquettish young maidens. And the ruins of the castle on the bank of the Rhine abounded in mystery. He often paused, pensively listening to the moaning and sighing of the wind-driven waves against those ruins with a secret awe creeping into his being. Was that the rustling of her silk dress—the dress of the “headless princess”, of whom his nurse had told him in his childhood? But the headless princess only came out of the ruins on moonlight nights! Perhaps they were the stealthy footsteps of the fair young shepherd, looking longingly at the battlements in hope of catching a glimpse of his beloved princess!

His eyes opened, and circles seemed to go round and round—circles of fanciful colors like those he had often seen when pressing his eyes against his pillows—and there was a strange surging in his blood, tumult in his head. His heart filled with a thousand longings, a thousand yearnings, yearnings and longings indefinite, inarticulate. He was only conscious of an aching restlessness, of an irritating strife within him . . .

Throwing himself upon the grassy bank, he would lie listlessly for a time, blankly staring at the sky, only half-conscious of chirping birds around him. Gradually, slowly, strands of thought would begin to come—desultory, fugitive, disconnected fibres of thought, like flying gossamer.

Sometimes other ambitions stirred his being. His mother had often spoken of a military career for him. His mind would skip to Napoleon, the hero he had worshipped ever since he could remember. He would see himself in the role of a warrior, mounted upon a spirited little white horse, as he had once seen Napoleon. His vivid imagination would behold the battlefields, littered with bleeding men and horses, the cry of agony in his ears . . .

No, no, not that! He could not bear the sight of blood, the shriek of pain. He could not be a great warrior.

Again his fancy drifted. He recalled “The Life and Adventures of the Ingenious Knight, Don Quixote de la Mancha,” which he had read and reread with such delight. He would like to be a warrior without being obliged to shed blood, a hero like Don Quixote. Presently the stories of Quixote became fused with those he had heard of his great-uncle, Nathan Hollmann, of whose travels and adventures his aunts had told him so many grotesque tales and whose writings he had discovered in a dusty chest in his grandfather’s attic. Like his great-uncle he would also be dressed in an Asiatic costume and smoke a long Turkish pipe and speak Arabic and travel all over “the seven seas” and through Morocco and Spain and the deserts of Egypt and make a pilgrimage to the Holy City and perhaps, like him, see a vision on Mount Moriah! From the



fantastic image of his great-uncle to a Sheik of the Bedouins was but a step. He visualized himself traveling with long trains of caravans and robber bands, scouring the dense forests of Arabia for victims (when Albert's imagination took flight it disregarded geography). The notion of a robber chief appealed to him. The romantic scenes from "Die Räuber" haunted him. Of course, he would not really rob people—he could not think of taking anything away from anybody—but he would lead the robber bands through the immense woods and—and in chorus—sing beautiful songs, the echoes resounding through hill and dale . . .

Lying thus, his fancy at large, the arabesque tales about his great-uncle eventually merged into those of the knight errant. Cervantes and Don Quixote and his great-uncle became one and the same person, and he himself, for the moment, was the reincarnation of them all. He wished he could go away—far, far away—to Morocco, to Turkey, to the "dense forests" of Arabia, and perchance be thrown into an underground dungeon, penetrated only by the stray rays of the sun, mildew smells everywhere, with clanking chains and great keys turning in rusty locks, with big fat mice—beautiful, snow-white mice—darting back and forth, the turbulent waters of a surrounding moat lapping against the prison walls darkened with age. His imaginary confinement in the dungeon, however, did not interfere with his adventurous travels. His imprisonment was simultaneous with his roving with caravans of camels and donkeys and dromedaries, and elephants whose tusks glistened in the blazing sun of the Orient . . .

## II.

His constant day-dreaming and the feeding of his imagination on poetry and romance cost Albert much misery at the end of every semester. He invariably failed in all studies except literature and philosophy.

On his arrival home one afternoon he found Father Schumacher engaged in a serious conversation with his mother. Father Schumacher was a picturesque figure, prematurely gray with a fine head set upon broad shoulders and a pair of brown eyes that twinkled mirthfully. There was something in his shrewd eyes that seemed to say, "I know all the meanness and frailties of human nature, I know this earthly planet is no paradise, but we are here and must make the best of it." He was loved by all regardless of creed. After the French had conquered the city and reopened the Lyceum, he was named rector. The new ruler knew that Father Schumacher could be trusted in spite of his German allegiance. He was very learned and familiar with all the philosophies—from

Socrates to Kant—which he taught at the Lyceum without, however, interfering with his loyalty to Rome.

The friendship between the former priest and Bessie Zorn ran back to the time she was a little girl, when he was a classmate of her brother, Joseph, and was almost a daily visitor at her father's home. Since her father's death and her marriage to David, Father Schumacher was a frequent visitor at the Zorn home, and of late Albert had been an added attraction. The rector was very fond of the boy and often gave the mother encouragement when her enthusiasm waned.

Albert was about to enter the living-room, where his mother and the visitor were seated, when he overheard his mother saying, "Indeed, he is quite a problem. If I could only keep him away from poetry and French novels I could knock his poetic nonsense out of his head."

"I've let him attend my class in philosophy," the rector struck in. "Perhaps that will put some reason into his head."

"Yes, that might turn him into a Kantian," laughed the mother, "and I don't know which is worse, a befogged Kantian or a beggarly rhymester." After the briefest pause she added, "I am going to get him a special tutor for mathematics. He doesn't seem to grasp any scientific subject—I'd like him to study banking."

"You'll never make a banker of that boy," he replied. "He isn't cut out for a mercantile career and you'll but waste your efforts. Why don't you give him to the Church? I might be able to be of good service to you in that direction. I know quite a few dignitaries in Rome."

"I don't think a priest's robe would be becoming to Albert's style of beauty," she said laughingly.

"Ah, you haven't seen how chic the abbes in Rome wear their garb," he returned in a tone of levity.

"No, I am afraid this is out of the question."

"It's better to give him to Rome than to Greece," the former priest pressed his point symbolically. "It was the Church that saved the Italian masters from idolatry. Don't you think it would have been far better for Voltaire, and mankind, if he had been won by the Church? I know Albert, he needs the Church. He might carve for himself a glorious career in Rome!"

"Personally I'd have him anything rather than a rhymester," the mother burst out passionately, without concealing her horror at such a prospect.

“But with the present unrest what else is left for a gifted young man?” proceeded the Jesuit. Then he added in a lower voice, “One day we are Prussian, the next French, and we may be Russian some day, God only knows. And while you know how free I am from prejudice, the boy’s faith will be in his way. I hear that the Jews in Berlin have almost exhausted the holy water of the baptismal font there.” He laughed indulgently as he referred to the great number of conversions in the Prussian capital.

“No one knows better than you,” she presently said, “that you can’t make a good Christian of a good Jew. The most you can do is to turn a bad Jew into a worse Christian.”

They both laughed amicably.

“Honestly, I don’t believe Albert has a religious sense,” she added a moment later. “Nothing is too sacred for him to make fun of.”

“That’s only the boy’s sense of humor,” he contradicted her. “He has more religion than you think. Sentiments of any kind are impossible without a religious sense, and Albert is full of sentiment—”

Albert’s entrance interrupted further conversation. Bowing, he walked up to Father Schumacher and kissed his extended soft white hand.

The rector’s eyes now rested upon the boy’s face with renewed interest. He was still thinking of his suggestion to the mother. Albert’s narrowed eyes registered acute sensitiveness. The mother’s eyes also fell upon her son as if she, too, had noticed the peculiar expression on his countenance for the first time.

“What a pity he was not born a Catholic,” muttered the former priest as Albert bowed out of the room.

When the rector was gone the mother took her son in hand. She did not scold him—she never scolded him—she only tried to reason with him.

“Albert, dearest, what will become of you?” she pleaded.

He said nothing. He stood like an accused at the bar of justice, guilt in his heart.

“How can you ever amount to anything unless you pass your examinations—especially in mathematics?” she proceeded.

The unshed tears in the mother’s eyes overflowed. His eyes, too, began to fill. He was not grieved because he had failed in mathematics but it pained him to have his mother worried. He was silent. He had no words of justification.

Soon his chin began to quiver, his lips to twitch, and his eyelashes trembled.

“Father’s business is going from bad to worse,” she resumed in a kind, though plaintive, tone, “and what can one do without money? Everybody thinks we are well-to-do, but we have hardly anything. If it weren’t for Uncle Leopold we would have been on the point of starvation long before this.”

Still not a word from Albert. Only hot tears burned his tender eyelids.

Suddenly, without a word, he flung his arms around his mother and kissed her tear-stained cheeks. Indeed, henceforth he would apply himself to mathematics and would study hard, day and night.

But before long he had again fallen from grace, despite his steadfast efforts to please his mother. This realization did not dawn upon him until toward the close of the following term. With a heart filled with contrition he reviewed the past. Alas! he had spent most of his time on poetry and novels and mythology but had scarcely given more than fleeting glances to his other studies.

Conscious of guilt he sought to justify himself to himself. With such an indulgent audience he had no difficulty in purging himself of all wrong. What difference did it really make to him whether  $a$  plus  $b$  equaled  $x$  or sixteen? What was it to him that the sum of the interior angles of a polygon equaled two right angles, taken as many times, less two, as the figures had sides? Of what concern to him was the expedition of Cyrus the Younger against his brother Artaxerxes thousands of years ago when a greater expedition of a greater hero had so recently ended disastrously! Why tax his brain with the Greek aorist and the Latin grammar and the stilted speeches of Clearches? Ah, if he could only become a great man without being compelled to learn these things!

But his mother had impressed upon him again and again that the road to greatness lay through a labyrinth of angles and equations and logarithms, with impediments consisting of irregular verbs of decayed Romans, of dead Greeks, and of Hebrews who would not die!

### III.

Sex, however, had not yet played a definite part in his existence. Once when declaiming “Der Taucher” at a school celebration his roving eye caught sight of the pretty daughter of a well known official in the audience and he was so affected by her beauty that speech left him. The teacher, back on the speaker’s platform, endeavored to prompt him, thinking he had forgotten the lines, but to no purpose. Albert’s eyes were riveted upon that beautiful vision

and he could not proceed. Now and then he had received other jolts of passion—the convulsive jolts of adolescence—but he had brooded over them for short periods, cherished them for a while, and finally dismissed them from his mind.

Thus several years had passed full of intermittent flitting fancies, emotions that were meaningless to him.

One day a sudden change took place in him. Something had happened that was fixed in his mind. He was conscious of sentiments and feelings that were of the same nature that he had experienced before and yet were different. Prior to this he could not define the strange longings of his being, now they spoke to him in unmistakable terms; the voice was tumultuous; he could not shut it out.

He was passing the Witch's hut, which stood at the end of the town, close by the Rhine. No one called her by her real name, Graettel, but only by the name of the Witch. She gave potions to lovelorn maidens and exorcised evil spirits from unclean bodies.

He suddenly stopped. For a bare second he imagined a mermaid had leaped to the shore. Surely no mermaid had finer golden hair shimmering with iridescent colors!

Filled with a sense of mystery, strangely mingled with slumbering memories of the past, he took a step nearer the straw-thatched hovel but at the sound of his footsteps the skein of golden hair was lifted as if by an invisible hand and presently he beheld a pair of great dark eyes peering at him. Again he thought it an optic illusion, but the sweet murmurs of the Rhine were in his ears, a thousand legends of the ruins of castles in his brain, the mermaids of folklore in his memory; a forest singer was balancing himself on a bough of the large elm in front of the hut, singing a melody of his own. Then a peal of laughter—the musical laughter of a sweet girlish voice—and the apparition vanished.

Albert was breathing fast, his whole frame aquiver. The next moment he took a step forward and remained standing at the open door. A glance within revealed no change since he had visited here with his nurse in his childhood, and there was but little change without.

He stood at the threshold and peered inside with increased curiosity, seeing no one. It seemed empty save for an unpainted table and a few backless chairs—the same as of old.

A warbling song—a folksong he used to hear in his childhood—reached his ears. It was sung in a minor key, and that in suppressed tones. Soon the melody ceased and the great dark eyes peeped out of the opening of a partition,

the body hidden from view.

“Hedwiga!” he cried and stepped inside.

A barefooted girl emerged, her head bent sideways, running a comb through her long reddish golden tresses. She continued combing her hair unconcernedly, a bewitching smile in her eyes.

“Hedwiga, how you have grown!” Albert cried gleefully, staring at her tall, slender form, her thin skirt clinging to her legs “like the wet drapery of a statue.”

Gathering her golden mane in her left hand she tossed it back and, pulling a hair pin from between her lips, fastened it close to the roots, the ends hanging loosely down over her shoulders.

“You have grown, too,” she presently said, looking at him with her large candid eyes. Then she added, “I am already sixteen, going on seventeen.”

“So am I sixteen,” he caught his breath, thrilled at the thought of being the same age as she. “Do you remember me?”

“You are Zippel’s boy (Zippel had been his nurse)—of course, I remember you. Don’t you remember how we used to play in the yard while Aunt Graettel and Zippel talked and talked and talked—”

“And do you remember how we used to play ‘Lost in the woods’?” he reminded her, “and Zippel and your Aunt couldn’t find us, and we lay hidden under the old broken boat, laughing and watching your Aunt and Zippel through the cracks as they ran around and wrung their hands?”

They both laughed merrily. At every stage of life the preceding stage is childhood, reminiscent of things to laugh at.

“Where have you been?” he soon asked her, settling down astride a backless chair.

“With my grandfather near Freiburg—we lived near the Schwarzwald—but he died and then grandma died and then I had nobody but Aunt Graettel—she is my great-aunt—and she brought me here.”

She heaved a sigh, sadness coming over her face.

“Why didn’t you go to your mother?” he asked naively.

“I have no mother—I have no father either—they had died before I was two—my father was killed by the thieves.—”

She was finishing her toilet as she spoke, having donned a flaming red

blouse, and halted for a moment absently, staring blankly in front of her.

“Was your father a headman, too?”

She nodded, the sadness of her face deepening, and catching her breath she said, “My father was a headman and his father and my grandfather’s father, also my mother’s father. Aunt Graettel is my grandfather’s sister.”

Albert gave an involuntary shudder. Zippel had told him so many gruesome tales about headmen. They were all cursed and must cut off men’s heads whether they wanted to or not. Nobody associated with headmen or their children and, like a race apart, lived isolated and intermarried only among themselves.

“Are you going to be here long?” he asked.

She was hooking her blouse, which fastened on the side, and her eyes were downcast, following her nimble fingers.

“I have no other place to go to,” she presently replied. “And I am glad my grandma died so I could come here.”

Albert again shuddered. He was not glad his grandmother had died.

“Did she beat you?”

“No, she didn’t beat me—I wouldn’t let anyone beat me—.” She turned her eyes fiercely upon him as if he had threatened her. “But it was with, those three old hags at their distaffs, drinking and quarreling all the time—from morning till night—oh, I am glad they are all dead!”

“Your Aunt Graettel is good to you, isn’t she?” Albert’s voice was sympathetic. He was glad Hedwiga was no more with those drinking witches.

“She is very good to me. She is usually in town all day, and when she gets back she always brings me something nice. And I sit on the bank, down the slope, and watch the skiffs go by, and when nobody is around I go swimming on the edge of the river—.”

Albert held his breath. In his imagination he followed her down the slope and watched the skiffs go by and went swimming with her. He raised his eyes to her and blushed scarlet. A flitting thought had sent a quiver through his frame. She was now seated on a stool close to him. He had become conscious of her bare feet and of her white throat and slender shoulders. He wished to say something but his mouth was dry and his throat was parched. He was swallowing lumps.

Hedwiga glanced at him and, as if divining his thoughts, also blushed. To

hide her passing thought she emitted a little laugh.

They were both silent for a moment and self-conscious. Then he raised his eyes and stared at her boldly. She gave him a quick glance and began to laugh again. Rising from his chair he wished to stretch out his hand and touch her face—the tip of her slightly upturned nose and the curving red of her lips.

He was soon standing at the door, going yet wishing he could stay. She, too, was standing, her head a trifle inclined to one side.

“How tall you are!” he stammered.

This was not what he wished to say, but he mentally scanned her from head to foot and the words leaped to his lips uninvited.

“I am not much taller than you,” she said.

And stepping up close to him she placed her shoulder against his.

What was it he felt at the contact with her shoulder? He recalled the sensation again and again on his way home. It was as if the smooth little hand of a babe were passing and repassing that spot; he experienced a sensation of yielding to caresses; and yet this very sensuousness had made him speechless. It occurred to him later that he had not bidden her goodbye as they parted.

## IV.

Albert's mind was like a sponge thrown into water, absorbing while seemingly inactive. Subconsciously he was studying every face, no matter how often he had seen it; every object, however commonplace, aroused his curiosity.

When he left Hedwiga his mind was a blank. He walked on blindly, seemingly thoughtful but really thinking of nothing. He was conscious of joy tempered by timidity—but without thinking of anything in particular.

Nearing his home he began to think of her more specifically. She was a living image. The image grew in vividness. His eyes almost closed now—his eyelids had come together automatically—and all objects disappeared save her form. Her slender figure and that clinging, draping skirt around her legs; her loose hair of dazzling tints—red and gold mixed with ochre—and those wonderful eyes of her—they looked at him so piteously and yet so proudly. He was breathing fast, a warm glow was on his face, his full lips parted. For the moment his mouth seemed strikingly feminine—the mouth of a young woman alive to stirring passion.



No, he was not conscious of sex; at least, not of the sex-consciousness he had often experienced. Its rude call was absent. He could not define the difference, but the strange desires he had felt at the sight of the barefooted peasant girls working in the fields were wanting. All that he desired at present was to go back to that hut—to the home of the Witch so full of dread and mystery—and just sit and look at Hedwiga.

He told no one of his visit to the Free House, as the Witch's hovel was called. He did not even make mention of this to his sister, the keeper of all his secrets, nor even to Christian, but he thought of Hedwiga every minute.

After much day-dreaming Albert took a stroll in the direction of the Witch's house. He had not yet definitely decided to pay her another call, but was sauntering aimlessly on the road leading to the Witch's house. Before long he found himself perilously near the hut. He first caught sight of the elm tree. It was the same hour of the day he had chanced by the first time. Without the calculation of the maturer lover he vaguely hoped that he would again find her alone—perhaps again drying her hair in the sun. His heart beat loudly as he approached the little yard, covered with weeds and grass. The blistered front door was shut.

He mounted the steps and paused on the slab at the threshold, trembling. It was a hot afternoon, without a sound in the air. The old elm tree with the overhanging branches and parched leaves seemed like an old horse left standing unsheltered in the blazing sun. The Rhine flowed noiselessly on, with broad folds of gray reflecting the patches of cloud in the sky.

He felt certain that no one was in the hut, yet he knocked on the door boldly. It gave him pleasure to knock on that door. Every rap sounded in his ears as if he were voicing Hedwiga's name loudly.

Suddenly the door opened and fear seized him. He did not know why sudden fear had taken possession of him. Before him stood Hedwiga in the same clinging skirt, ragged at the hem, the same flaming red blouse reaching to her waist, her hair falling over her shoulders in long tresses. She appeared to him like the West Indian quadroon he had once seen. He forgot to greet her and only mumbled that it was a hot day.

She held the door open without saying a word. Unlike at their former meeting she now seemed confused and her confusion was mingled with timidity. The scorching heat was reflected in the iris of her eyes.

Without invitation he went in and sat down in the same backless chair.

"I keep the door closed because that keeps the heat out of the house," she

said as she closed the door.

He was conscious of isolation, of aloneness with her. She was knitting, and settling on her stool she continued to work, her eyes downcast.

“Why do you knit such heavy woolen stockings in the summer?” he asked, watching the nimble movements of her long fingers, the frequent jerks of her elbows, and the intermittent clicks of the needles.

“Why do squirrels store nuts in the summer?” she answered with a counterquestion, and gave a little metallic laugh.

Suddenly she raised her eyes and looked at him for a bare second, her lashes quivering, a faint blush on her cheeks.

He held his breath. The impulse he had felt the first time—the impulse to touch the tip of her nose and the curving red of her lips—came upon him overwhelmingly; her knees, outlined through her thin skirt, tempted him. His eyes soon fell upon the hook where the skirt was fastened at the waist. An impulse seized him to touch that, too. There seemed something endearing about that hook.

He spent an awkward hour and called himself an idiot as he wended his way home that afternoon. She was kindly enough to have manifested a desire to have him stay longer, but he had suddenly risen and left.

As soon as he was out of the hut he wished to go back, and wondered what had made him depart so abruptly, yet even as he wondered he pressed on resolutely toward home.

“I thought your eyes were blue, but they are only green,” she had remarked. A few minutes before she had said something about the smallness of his eyes and the frailty of his body. He thought there was a touch of mockery in her voice as she said that. And the idea of asking him whether he liked songs!

He did not pity her any longer. On the former occasion she had appeared humble, almost obsequious; today he scented pride. On his return home he determined to dismiss her from his mind.

## V.

He might have dismissed Hedwiga from his mind had not a kindhearted gossip carried the report of his visit to his parents. Father and Mother held council. They had not been much concerned about their son’s religious belief,

but the mother's eye was ever vigilant as to his morals.

"You had better talk to him," David Zorn said. "He must stop these visits. You can never tell what they might lead to at his tender age."

Mrs. Zorn spent a troublesome night over this. She was alarmed but she did not wish to seem too antagonistic. She knew the effect of antagonism upon her impetuous, high-strung son. So she broached the subject with seeming levity, with playfulness almost.

"But you know, Albert dear, a headman's daughter is no company for Doctor Hollman's grandson," she urged persuasively.

"The girl isn't to blame because her father was a headman," he returned. "Why should she bear the sins of her fathers?"

The longer his mother argued the more reasons he found against her arguments. It was unjust to make the poor girl an outcast because her father had been an executioner, he insisted.

When he left his mother his heart was full of pity for the poor outcast. He brooded over her unfortunate position. He could not dismiss her image from his mind—the slender frame draped by that clinging skirt! His imagination lent color to the misery of the child of the accursed. He visualized her past. He saw her in the Black Forest surrounded by those old, toothless hags, drinking and quarreling and whirring their spinning wheels. He saw her ragged garments, her little bare feet curled under her, her unkempt golden hair, her beautiful eyes. The picture of her as a child was blended with that of the present day Hedwiga.

In his cogitation he soon found himself fighting for a principle. He did not listen to the throbbing of his boyish heart, to the seething of the blood of youth, which were propelling him toward the Free House with a power of their own. He persuaded himself that it was his keen sense of justice that forced him to defy his mother's wishes.

It was summer time, the thrushes were singing, the roses were in bloom, the call of flocks was heard over plain and meadow, the sunlight rested on hill and dale; it was summer and the morning dew of love was on Albert's cheeks.

He called at the Witch's again and again; and the more often he came the more natural it seemed to be with her. The constraint had soon worn off and they were children again—boy and girl. When Aunt Graettel was at home he talked to her, and she told him many weird tales of her husband and his coterie of headmen.

“That sword cut off more than a hundred heads,” she pointed to a large, shining sabre standing in a corner.

Albert shuddered at the sight of the bloody weapon.

“My husband could always tell beforehand when he would be called upon to perform his work,” the Witch added proudly. “When the sword quivered and emitted a strange sound my husband knew some thief’s head was to come off.”

But most of the time he found Hedwiga alone and he soon discovered that she could sing beautiful songs of loving knights and beloved princesses and shepherds on the hills.

While the cannons were roaring at Waterloo and crushing the armies of the Emperor he worshipped, Albert Zorn was seated in the little hut on the Rhine, listening to Hedwiga’s melodies; and intoxicated with love rushed to translate his sentiments into sweet rhymes.

Thus the summer passed, and winter came. He had left the Lyceum and was now attending the Realschule. His mother was steadfast in her resolution to make a banker of him. She saw great possibilities in the financial world as soon as the terms of peace were definitely settled. For Napoleon had already been decisively beaten and the rulers of the other nations were holding a momentous conference.

One afternoon he found Hedwiga in a strange mood. It was midwinter, the river asleep under blankets of the softest down, the long arms of the large elm tree covered with the whitest fleece, and inside the hut the cozy, stuffy warmth of a low ceiling, crackling logs in an open oven and flames wrapped in dense smoke, rolling into the flue with a roaring glare. Hedwiga was seated opposite the fire, her left elbow on her knee, her chin in the open palm of her hand, her cheeks and eyes aglow, warbling a weird song.

Albert was silent. He had had a strange dream about her the night before and her present preoccupation reminded him of the dream. He thought he had seen her before in precisely the same environments and in the same pose. His imagination often played him pranks of this sort.

With eyes narrowed, he watched the light in her eyes, the contour of her cheeks, the shadowy white of her throat and the slight movement of her breasts. Yes, he knew the song she was humming. Zippel used to sing it to him in his childhood.

Hedwiga’s eyes closed and her red lips trembled. Then silence; no sound save that of the roaring fire.

*“Ich will küssen—”* he chimed in, finishing the stanza.

He paused and looked yearningly at her red lips, which were slightly parted against the dazzling white of her teeth.

Hedwiga opened her great dark eyes, turned them upon him teasingly, and suddenly jumped up from her low seat; and dashing across the room seized the shining sword—the sword that had cut off a hundred heads—and brandishing it in the air whirled around and sang again of the Great Otilje and his shining sword, pointing the deadly weapon at his breast every time she faced him.

“Hedwiga!”

But her wild song drowned his whispered murmurs. There was provoking defiance in her roguish eyes, almost a trace of malevolence in her face as she came close to him, barely touching him, and then swung away in her mad dance with the glittering blade.

“Hedwiga!”

But she would not pause. She continued whirling around and warbling this odd song. Once or twice he tried to seize her as she brushed past him, but she gracefully evaded him. He finally leaped from his seat and flung his arms around her.

“Don’t—take care!—” she cried, panting, holding the sword in front of her.

But he clung to her recklessly and, the sword having dropped from her hand, pressed his lips against her feverish mouth.

She turned her head this way and that to escape his kisses, gurgling laughter in her throat, but was overpowered by his impetuosity, gradually yielding, listlessly turning her face to his, her parted burning lips seeking his . . .

Entwined they sat, the fire of their beings leaping into a common flame. Soon tears overflowed her eyes—she did not know why she was crying but in her heart was dread mingled with inexpressible joy—and presently his tears streamed down his pale cheeks.

A strand of her hair loosened and touched his face. He begged for this lock of hair. He swore he would carry it to his dying day—“Yes, to my dying day,” he repeated again and again.

A new light appeared in her eyes, and suddenly freeing herself she cut the golden lock with the fallen blade.

He took it from her and kissed it tenderly and murmured reverently, "Until the last beat of my heart—."

## VI.

He left her that day with a feeling that this was all a dream, a bewitching dream. When he returned home he flung his arms around his sister and laughed and cried and uttered a babble of foolish words. He muttered rhythmic verses that sprang to his lips. At last he understood love. He had made the great discovery.

His sister shared his ecstasy without knowing the cause. She knew Albert was sentimental. She had often seen him act madly when reciting his songs to her. This was her secret. That her brother had other secrets was unknown to her.

Having exhausted the exuberance of his feelings upon his sister he rushed out of the house in quest of Christian Lutz. He felt that with Christian he could talk more freely.

He did not tell Christian at once of Hedwiga but talked of love and death. He was just raving as Christian had often heard him rave about flowers and the Rhine. He recited a ballad he had composed about an imaginary maiden with golden locks and lips as red as rubies and a face as blessedly sweet as the lily and the roses. He knew Hedwiga's hair was red, and only golden when the sun rested upon it, but he would not think of red hair—it was always golden. Besides, it did not sound so well—"Ihr rotes Haar"—No, it would not do; it would not ring as well as "*Ihr goldenes Haar*". Besides, the only color that was really beautiful was golden; and the ever docile, acquiescing Christian concurred in this. A short time before, when Albert discussed a Spanish Donna, who was to figure in his great tragedy, and had gone into raptures about the lustre of bluish-black hair, Christian had just as readily, and wholeheartedly, admitted that raven hair was the most beautiful in the world.

While Albert did not at first mention the name of his beloved, he talked so much of golden hair, of a small mouth with red curving lips, of a slender figure and clinging garments, of features more nobly chiseled than those of Niobe's daughters, of a certain hut on the bank of the Rhine—the quaintest hut in the world—of innocent children who must suffer for their father's sins, and of a thousand other things that Christian could not help but recognize the identity of the goddess his friend was worshipping; and when finally, in a moment of great secrecy, Albert whispered her lovely name—the loveliest name in

creation and the most melodious—Christian feigned such great surprise that Albert felt flattered at the word picture he had given of her.

Mrs. Zorn had been watching the progress of her son's infatuation with anxious, yet amused, vigilance. She had always regarded romanticism as mere froth, easily dissipated by the strong currents of reason. When her husband told her again and again of the repeated rumors that had reached him she only smiled. What was the calf-love of a youth of sixteen? Besides, though she had drifted from the creed of her forefathers, the centuries of segregation, the self-discipline, the enforced chastity of her people had not only subdued but almost eradicated the romantic instinct from her heart. The Ghetto had eaten itself into the very flesh of the Jewish woman of those days and seared her passions. Hemmed in as if a cordon had been thrown around her, all self-expression denied, her intense romantic love, like a rushing current dammed on one side, turned into another course and spent itself on filial devotion, conjugal affection, domestic tenderness. Persecution, like the fire that purifies gold and also brings forth dross, often ennobles the soul even while it degrades the body.

Towards the end of that winter, however, Mrs. Zorn began to realize that something had to be done to end her son's foolish infatuation. Albert was neglecting his studies more than ever and had become more subject to nervous headaches, walked too much, brooded too much, and took to reading poetry more assiduously. She began to fear her dream of making a banker of him might not be realized. Her husband had suggested that he be apprenticed to a banker in Frankfort, a friend of his.

The next day she broached the subject rather abruptly. She meant to impress upon Albert the folly of his ways.

“Albert, I have something of the gravest importance to say to you.”

She paused. She wished to prepare him for the solemn occasion. There was no one in the house. She had purposely timed the interview so that she could speak to him alone.

“What is it, mother?”

“I hate to speak of it, but I wonder if you appreciate at what sacrifice your father has kept you at school—”. Whenever she wished to impress him she always spoke of his father, never of herself. “He has denied you nothing—has given you a good home, good clothes—while he denied himself almost everything.”

She turned her eyes away. Albert drooped his head, tears appearing in his

eyes. Her evident sorrow pained him.

“I’ll be glad to quit school and go to work,” he said promptly. “I don’t want to be a burden to you.”

“No, you don’t understand me, Albert. No good parents ever find their children burdensome. These burdens are pleasures—. I wouldn’t speak of this if you—if you—”

She faltered. She could not find fitting words to clothe her present thoughts. She wished to reprimand him without hurting his feelings.

He threw his arms around his mother’s neck, hot tears streaming down his cheeks.

“I’ll go to work, mother dear—I’ll learn a trade—I’ll do anything to lighten your burdens.” He kissed her hysterically.

“It’s not that. We don’t mind that in the least. The war is over and father will resume business. But we have decided to apprentice you to a banker in Frankfort. He is a good friend of father’s and will give you every opportunity of learning the business.”

She paused, slyly watching the expression on his face. She feared his temper—all the Zorns had such violent tempers!

“I should love to go to Frankfort,” he cried joyfully.

The mother heaved a sigh of relief.

## VII.

The prospect of the journey to Frankfort filled Albert with boyish glee. He was not thinking of his career—he did not clearly think of anything—he was happy because of the prospective change in his life. He had often heard his father tell of his visits to that beautiful city—the “*Weltstadt*”, his father had called it—the city where kings were once crowned and where his king, the great Goethe, was born—of the wonderful Fair, of the Roemer, of the Zeil. Albert had never seen a large city and was restive with anticipation.

He was in high spirits. His mother had never seen him so animated, so boyishly happy. He romped and danced and sang like a joyous child. His excitement was so great that he could neither read nor write nor talk coherently. He paced up and down the house, rambled through the streets, restless with eagerness.



In the meanwhile the winter was drawing to a close. Hedwiga, alone in that overheated hovel, sat knitting and brooding and thinking of Albert. He was the first ray of sunshine in her desolate life. He had often spoken to her of things she did not understand but that made him even more alluring. Only at rare moments she caught flashes, like that of meeting clouds, and then darkness again. She had heard her aunt prattle about love which had always been meaningless to her. But Albert's sweet amorous words she understood. When she looked at his half-closed eyes, at his dishevelled hair, at his sensitive lips, she became more restless—she often quivered—and craved his touch, and yet when his hands came in contact with her arms she trembled with shrinking fear—shrinking and yet yielding. After he had kissed her that afternoon, in the warm dusk of the hut, her fear was gone. She longed for his arrival, to be seized in his arms, to have his lips against hers. Even in his absence her lips quivered as she thought of him and her eyes closed. He had a peculiar way of placing the tips of his sensitive fingers upon her shoulders, barely touching them, as if he were fingering the strings of a violin, and gazing into her face pensively, almost mysteriously, and then letting his fingers glide over her thinly covered arms—sending a delicious shiver through her whole being—and slowly, creepingly, letting them slide until they reached her wrists, then her hands, then her moist fingers, which almost involuntarily, helplessly became entwined with his, her eyes staring blindly, upward, at his face. No one could whisper such sweet little secrets in her memory. The tears that often sprang to her eyes were never bitter; she felt happier when they came.

Her aunt had of late been alarmed about her. She seemed to have grown thinner, with a peculiar flush in her cheeks. When Aunt Graettel at first made some veiled reference to her health, she laughed merrily and said she had never felt as well as now. One day Aunt Graettel overheard a stifled cough and told her niece that it might be best to have that Zorn boy stop his visits and she forthwith prepared a concoction of herbs. Hedwiga shoved the tonic away with a fierceness the Witch had never suspected in her and said if Albert stopped coming she would throw herself into the river.

But Albert's joy at the approach of his journey was so great that he failed to notice the peculiar lustre in the girl's eyes. He was bubbling over with delight. Did she not think it was wonderful? He was going to the *Weltstadt*, where there were theatres and picture galleries and a great library and cafés and grand boulevards and—and he stopped for want of words. Did she not think it was wonderful?

“And there are so many pretty girls in Frankfort?” she returned, with a sad smile and a strange glitter in her eyes.

No, he swore he was not thinking of girls. Besides, no one was as pretty as his Lorelei, his Hedwiga.

“You are not crying?”

He shrank back half a step and looked puzzled.

No, she was not crying. She wiped her tears away and was smiling. And presently he was reading a poem he had written the other night. He recited the verses—they were meant for her . . .

No, no, she did not wish to cry, but her tears flowed against her will. He stowed the verses away and was consoling her. Wouldn't it be wonderful when he came back after he had seen the world! His arms were stealing around her, her lips yielded so willingly, her tears flowed so freely! Tears beget tears, and soon his emotions stirred. He did not know why, but his tears flowed, too, mingling with hers and, with heart beating against heart, the fires of youth blazed in one conflagration—*Dann schlagen zusammen die Flammen!*

She was soon sobbing as if her heart would break.

“Why do you cry?” he asked.

She did not know why she was sobbing. There was really no occasion for grief. Was he not going to Frankfort to see the world—the great, wonderful world?

“Just think, *liebste!* No more dry text books, no more mathematics, no more stupid lessons in accounting, no more school! Just think of freedom all day and all night, and I shall be able to read and read and read and walk and walk through the boulevards and write—Oh, Hedwiga!” He pressed her to his breast with frantic ecstasy. “I'll write wonderful tragedies and songs and I will —”

Words failed to express all his hopes and plans and desires. He was dizzy from the flood of thoughts that rushed upon him.

She was sobbing no longer. Her hands limply in her lap, her tear-stained face composed, her shoulders relaxed and stooped forward, she stared blankly in front of her, looking without seeing, her great eyes wide open and full of heart-rending sadness.

“Will you write to me?”

“Will I write to you? As often as the post will carry my letters. I'll tell you all about the wonderful things in Frankfort. By the way, father said the streets in Frankfort are lighted at night—light enough to read—rows of great lanterns

in the streets! Wouldn't you like to see Frankfort?"

A sob was her only reply.

"But you will come to Frankfort. I'll be in the banking business there, and I will send for you, sweetheart mine."

## VIII.

Soon the winter was gone. Men and women came to the sun's aid with hatchet and pick-axe, hacking and chopping and chipping the frozen mass, glittering diamonds flying in the air and catching the genial rays of the early spring sun. There was joy in every heart and even greater joy in Albert's breast. As soon as all the ice was gone and the road dried his father was to take him to Frankfort. His heart thrilled at the sound of the running waters, washing away the last traces of the hoary winter. He helped clear away the ice in the shadowy part of the yard which the sunbeams could not reach. He desired to hasten the arrival of spring, the day on which he could start on the great journey.

On the evening before his departure he and Christian took their last stroll. It was early in the evening, a young moon in the sky, the scents of spring in the air, from afar the rumbling sound of the awakening Rhine, and the gurgling of running waters. Two shadows, so clearly outlined on the ground, preceded them like bodyguards; one was taller than the other. The streets were dark save for the moonlight and the occasional glimmer from a window.

Albert's voice, like the running waters, never ceased. He was talking of Frankfort, of his journey, of his future. While he knew he was to be apprenticed to a banker, the duties of such apprenticeship were not clear in his mind. He made the duties fit his dreams.

They had now reached the river, which had spread, as it always did at this time of the year, and had risen higher, and was flowing with increased speed. There was a glow like a milky-way along the midstream where the moonbeams rested lightly upon the rippling waters.

Albert halted his speech and his step. The river claimed his attention. He was not far from the cloister where the stream chattered noisily among the rocks and purred like a cat further down where there was a very narrow, low waterfall, descending like a huge corkscrew. For the moment Albert forgot everything, even Frankfort. The vast shadow of the Franciscan monastery, the moonlight above it, the rushing river, the earth-and-water scent in the air—

they all overwhelmed him. It all found expression in a contraction of his eyelids and in an exultant cry of “Ah! Christian!”

His husky cry echoed in Christian’s heart. Albert was going far, far away—Frankfort seemed to Christian at an endless distance and the memories of their close friendship crowded in upon him. His association with Albert had made the boyish years so wonderful. Hardly a day but he had walked and talked with Albert, and listened to his strange chatter; and when they were alone Albert was full of mirth and pranks and laughter. Albert had such a peculiar way of making fun of people. And every book he read he discussed with Christian, though at times Christian could scarcely follow his comrade.

“Ah, Albert!” he echoed and rested his hand upon his friend’s arm.

There were tears in Christian’s eyes.

They remained standing silently for a moment, silhouetted in the moonlight against the vast shadow of the cloister. Then with a simultaneous impulse they were clasped in each other’s arms.

“Will you remember me when you become a great man?”

“Ah! Christian! Can I ever forget you!”

“Albert!”

“Christian!”

## IX.

At last the eventful morning arrived. Albert had not slept a wink the night before. Too many tumultuous thoughts had kept him awake. He had called on Hedwiga the day before and her tears filled him with anguish. So he spent wakeful hours in composing a poem on the pain of parting and felt relieved.

Today everything was forgotten. For in front of the house stood a vehicle, bedded with hay, and two horses with fodder-bags over their heads, and inside the house his mother was packing his father’s large folding leather valise, and his sister and his little brothers, were watching with inquisitive, curious eyes. Albert was too restive to watch the packing. From time to time he stepped to the window and stole a peep at the horses outside, a strange joy in his heart, and walked back with his hands in the pockets of his new coat.

“Mama is crying,” piped up his little brother who stood close to his mother and followed her every move and insisted upon helping her, carrying a shirt

from a chair nearby. Albert turned his head and glanced at his mother; she was brushing something from her cheek. His father was in the shop, making a few entries in his ledger and giving another look at his balance.

Soon Uncle Salomon arrived, and Aunt Braunelle and Aunt Hanna and Father Schumacher, with his long pipe in one hand and his silver-headed cane in the other.

“I hope you’ll become another Rothschild,” Schumacher said as he clasped the youth’s hand, an irrepressible smile on his fine face.

Mrs. Zorn overheard this and became more intent on forcing some handkerchiefs into the corner of the traveling bag; there was a touch of obstinacy around her mouth as she smoothed the bulging packet of linen.

The hour had come. Albert was seated in the hooded coach by the side of his father, the coachman on the box, a long whip in his hand. Mrs. Zorn rushed up to embrace her son once more. His sister reminded him to write to her all about the Roemer and the Zeil, and his little brother called to his father to remind him of the whistle “with three holes” he had promised. David Zorn murmured something, the coachman snapped his whip, and the coach started off with a rattle and clatter over the cobblestones.

Then everything moved before Albert’s eyes. Schmallgasse, the Marktplatz, the big bronze statue of Jan Wilhelm, the Great Elector, the Franciscan cloister, the domes of the churches, the Hofgarten—like a flowing river, everything seemed to move before him and away from him . . .

The vehicle lurched and they turned into the main road. Albert stuck out his head to catch a last glimpse of the disappearing town. The road ran along elevated ground and he saw in the distance only a mass of crowded red roofs and a few rising towers against the sunny sky. There was nothing clear in his mind; nothing but confusion. For he was already beginning to feel lonesome, his life-associations falling away like crumbling walls. His father was silent, absent-mindedly stroking his blond beard and clearing his throat from time to time.

The Rhine Road was finally struck. It followed the bank of the river and was only a short distance from the shore. The horses snorted and quickened their steps unbidden by the driver, the dull thump-thump of their hoofs on the sandy ground was music to Albert’s ears. Wafts of fresh air—the cool, moist air of spring—came from the winding river; a bird was twittering in the branches of a nearby willow; a calf was lowing afar off unseen; a tethered colt galloped in a circle; expanses of green and brown flew before his eyes; and the sky was pale blue with endless bars of gray scarcely discernible and blended

with the more colorful texture around them. Now and then glimpses of the Rhine came into view through the clumps of vines, and Albert was dimly conscious of links between himself and Gunsdorf. The farther away he traveled from his native place the more endearing it became and the less alluring the city of his destination.

Presently his erstwhile enthusiasm for Frankfort was gone. He did not even think of it. He thought of nothing. He only felt a peculiar sensation in his heart, a sensation akin to pain, a feeling of loneliness possessed him. Unconsciously he moved closer to his father, who was now dozing. He felt dreadfully alone, and soon well-defined memories of Gunsdorf began to make inroads into his mind. His sister, his mother, Christian, Hedwiga. His mind was now centered upon Hedwiga. He let his head rest against the truss of hay back of him. His eyes closed. There was a strange longing in his heart. He stretched his hand and imagined he was touching the back of her neck, feeling her shudder as his fingers played with the soft down close to her ears. His lips moved as if he were tasting a savory dish. He sensed the sweet fragrance of her lips. . .

He turned quickly to the right. A girl's voice was calling "Goodbye." For a bare second he was deluded into believing it was Hedwiga's voice. But when he craned his neck and peeped outside he beheld a farmhouse, a fence, an open wicker gate, a barefooted girl with a thin skirt fluttering in the air, a few strands of flaxen hair flying; a hand shading smiling eyes. By her side was a little boy waving his hand. . .

He leaned back and watched the stretches of field with a keener zest and listened languorously to the steady trot-trot of the horses, to the jingle of the harness. Everything was moving and there was a low hum in his ears and he felt the warmth of the covers around him and a strange vagueness before him  
...

# THE JUDENGASSE.

## I.

“WHO is there?”

Albert rubbed his eyes. The voice sounded as if it were coming through a tunnel, muffled yet rumbling. There were other noises in his ears, stamping and pounding and shuffling of feet. And there was darkness around him, the darkness of black night.

“A traveler,” called another voice.

This voice was familiar to him. He remembered the voice of Bandy-legged Schultz—the name by which the coachman was best known in Gunsdorf—and that brought to his mind the memory of his departure from his native town, the long tedious journey, the stops at various taverns. He felt weary and every muscle ached. He wished he were at the end of the journey. And what dreams he had had since he left Schmallgasse!

“*Verdamnte Juden!* You are too late. The gates are closed.”

A shudder ran through the lad’s frame. He was now sure he was dreaming and buried his face into the cushion in the corner of the coach.

“Here, Schultz!”

It was his father who was speaking. He saw through half-closed eyes his father handing the coachman a silver coin. The driver jumped off the box and approached a high wall in front of him. Albert could not make out what the barrier was except that it was high and it cast a great black shadow, revealing in the foreground a little house, and beyond it a gleam of the moon, half hidden, as if balancing itself on the high wall.

Schultz knocked on the pane of a tiny window. He used the silver coin as a knocker. Then silence—ominous silence. Albert felt that his father was holding his breath and he, too, caught his breath and sensed the mystery around him.

“The lazy louts are asleep,” the coachman murmured.

David Zorn passed his hand over his head and emitted a grim grunt.

The coachman knocked again with the silver coin.

“Open the door—a traveler wants admittance!” he bellowed angrily.

There was a stirring inside the little house and a thud as of one rolling off a bench.

“The devil take the Jews! *Tausend Donner Sakrament!* They don’t give a fellow a moment’s rest even on Easter Eve!”

A gruff voice was heard within, a clatter of a bolt—of a heavy iron hasp—the clanking of chains—the grating of a key in a lock, the creaking of hinges, two tall gates swinging open slowly, and Albert beheld a bit of sky above the horses’ heads. The sky appeared narrow and high, as if seen from a deep trench.

A short, heavy-set man, with a mustache the color of dry sand and the stiffness of bristle, appeared at the opening; between the swinging gates. He held a lantern in his hand, the yellow glare of the tallow candle inside fell grotesquely over his patched jerkin and saffron-colored hose.

Schultz put the silver coin into the hand of the man with the lantern.

The man put the money into his pocket and mumbled, “Don’t you know any better than to come so long after the gates closed!”

He was stretching his arms and yawning. His jaws opened and closed sleepily as he spoke.

“We are coming a long way,” the driver explained. “Couldn’t figure on the exact hour.”

“How many Jews have you?”

“Just one.”

The guard walked up to the wagon, raised his lantern, and strained his eyes.

“Huh! What do you call this, a suckling?” pointing at Albert, who stared around him in bewilderment.

“He is the gentleman’s son,” explained the coachman.

“You didn’t bring his cradle along—Huh! When a Jew reaches the age of twelve he is just as much of one for poll tax as he will be at seventy-five. We call it two Jews—huh! One Jew, he says! You can’t fool me!”

“How much is it?” Zorn opened his purse, the guard holding the lantern to help him see the contents.

“One Jew one *Thaler*, two Jews two *Thalers*—simple arithmetic,”



snickered the guard.

Zorn paid the price in silence.

“How about a few *Pfennige* for *Trinkgeld*—what do you say? I could have kept you waiting here all night. And tomorrow is Easter.”

Zorn handed him a few more coins and cleared his throat as if something was choking him.

Schultz led the horses by the bridles a few steps. There was another guardhouse inside the gates.

“Dovidle, stick your nose out—a couple of Jews for Easter,” the guard called in a piping, mimicking, sneering voice, and pounded on the casement.

A door opened and out came a little man.

The little man greeted Zorn kindly, extending his hand. “You must have come a great distance or you would have known better than to come so late.”

“Since when have they re-established the Ghetto?” asked Zorn tremblingly.

“As soon as they chased the French out,” replied Dovidle in a saddened, low voice. “Yes, they have hemmed us in again;” the little man sighed. “They are at their old tricks again, fleecing and torturing our poor people. Oh, God, will there ever be an end?”

Albert trembled in every limb, a piercing pain shot through his head. He had read of the miserable Ghettos, which were abolished as soon as Napoleon’s troops occupied the Rhenish provinces, but he had never thought of himself as belonging to a segregated people. He had long forgotten the taunts of Long Kunz and Shorty Fritz. In his native city he had never thought, and was never reminded, of his ancestry. His parents’ indifference to creed had made him almost forget it himself.

The driver soon mounted the box, clacked his tongue, and moved on.

They proceeded slowly through a long, narrow street—it seemed to Albert interminably long and exceedingly narrow—the buildings on either side high and close together. It was dark—depressingly dark—with an occasional candle light peeping through a window. Not infrequently there was the sound of footsteps which was quickly drowned by the heavier tread of the horses. A door opened now and then—dabs of yellow against a black curtain—a slam, and silence again . . .

## II.

Although warned not to wander alone through the streets outside the Judengasse, Albert's curiosity got the better of him. No sooner was his father gone to see the banker, to whom Albert was to be apprenticed, than the boy left the tavern. He followed the long stream of people toward the gate at the end of the Judengasse. There were three gates in the enclosure, but this gate led to the Wollgraben, beyond which was the Fair.

He rambled aimlessly staring around him. He was proceeding along the banks of the Main, which was thronged with a thousand noisy traders, small vessels of antiquated design slowly moving to the accompaniment of the quaint cries of the steersmen. The tumult was deafening. Porters with high loads on their heads crying at the jostling crowd to make way; trundling bales, chests, caskets: yells of warning for the passersby to stand back: quarreling, half-naked boatmen; scolding red-coated officials, leaping from vessel to vessel on their tours of inspection: rattling of chains, plunging of anchors . . .

Presently he stood before the Roemer, the old Senate house, from which gaudy streamers were flying, its high gables bedecked with shields and banners; all around laughing, guffawing, merry-making. For today Frankfort was celebrating its independence once more, its independence from the enemy.

Carried along with the jubilant throng he soon paused at the sight of a curious procession. Mountebanks blowing trumpets, jugglers performing deft tricks, fencing masters displaying their agility in mock duels, a band marching and drumming and fifing, followed by girls clad in fantastic colors—yellow and black and green astride long sticks in the fashion of children playing horse, wiggling their high hips and heavy legs in the manner of Spanish dancers. Then came a column of bareheaded, barefooted chanting monks, wax tapers in the hands of some, while others carried effigies and tall banners on which were painted bearded apostles and smooth shaven saints, and great silver crucifixes against a background of jet black drapery . . .

Suddenly there was a hush. The chanting of the monks ceased; the shrill voices of the dancing girls died in the distance; the noises of the merry-makers halted. Not a sound—nothing but the soft swinging of censers. Hark! a silver bell tinkled. Instantly all were on their knees with bowed heads.

Fear possessed Albert. Though accustomed to Catholic ceremonies from childhood he would not kneel. And without looking to the right or left he hurried back as fast as his legs could carry him to the high walls of the Judengasse.

In youth experiences produce impressions, at a maturer age they generate thought. Albert's mind had the peculiarity of both, youth and maturity. Impressions and thoughts came to him almost simultaneously.

The humiliation of his present surroundings made him shrink with a sensitiveness he could not define. He had thought the Ghetto belonged to the dark ages. He did not yet realize that there was but a step between the Dark Ages and any Age. The bitterness of his soul crowded out every other thought, every other feeling. The jubilee he had witnessed was to him the rejoicing of the sporting Philistines around the chained Samson.

On his return to the tavern he threw himself upon his bed, his hands clasped under his head, his face toward the ceiling, tortured by a thousand conflicting thoughts. The back of his head was burning, and there was a pain in his eyes, the harbinger of one of his nervous headaches.

He tossed and turned. He felt as if the ceiling were coming down on him, as if the walls were pressing together, the very air seemed suffocating. Incoherently the morning scenes flitted through his mind—white robed priests—white—the symbol of truth and purity—the crucifix moulded of silver against a black background—another symbol—the images of saints, their eyes turned heavenward—Ah, that was too much for the impulsive, poetic youth, who never had to search for the truth, to whom truth came flying. He was writhing with pain, the mortifying pain of helplessness. No, he was not helpless, he was saying to himself. Socrates was not helpless; Spinoza was not helpless; Lessing was not helpless. Every one must carry his torch as well as his cross. Yes, he would make his torch flare so that it would dispel the darkness around him. A strange ambition seized him. He did not want to be a poet. He did not want to be a money changer. He wanted to be a warrior to help mankind free itself from its own enslavement. Nor did he crave earthly pleasures. For the moment he was an old man satiated with the pleasures and pains of life. Then came over him the sweeping melancholy of blossoming youth. The heavens opened before him and he caught a glimpse of eternity. Yes, he might fight—live and fight for the truth.

How strong the sun was shining in his eyes! Its rays were coming through a window opposite his bed. He turned his face to the wall, away from the light. Patches of pink and yellow and purple floated before his eyes in the shape of lotus flowers, and around them large golden wheels revolved, emitting diamond sparks, with the sound of a waterfall in his ears . . . No, it was not the sound of rushing water. It was a musical sound . . .

He soon recognized the tune. It was Allegri's Miserere . . . and the light of an oblique column of sun dust was in his eyes . . . He turned and noticed the

strong sunlight falling upon the wooden image of the Christ—the wooden image that stood under those arches in the Franciscan cloister. It was the same figure, the same bleeding Christ with a broad gash between the ribs, the same smear of blood. The figure was nodding its head—it was beckoning to him—but he could not budge. The figure then began to move toward him, and the palms, instead of nailed to the cross, were unfastened and turned heavenward, and the head, instead of drooping, was thrown back, with derisive laughter on the sorrowful face—Yes, the figure was laughing, a strange, mocking laugh that made him shudder, and the laughter blended weirdly with the dying notes of the Miserere—

“Are you asleep, Albert?”

His father’s voice seemed to come from a great distance.

“No, I haven’t slept—I am just resting—” Albert mumbled and rose to a sitting posture.

“Herr Rindskopf assured me there is a great opportunity for you in his bank,” Zorn was saying cheerfully. “And he is a fine man to work for, Rindskopf is.”

Albert listened to his father as if in a dream, as if only remotely interested in the subject.

## IV.

The following day was Friday, the busiest in the Judengasse. Zorn had made all arrangements with Rindskopf, but owing to the Sabbath he was obliged to remain here until Sunday. And this was the Sabbath of Sabbaths. It was the Saturday before the Passover—Shabbos H’godol—the Great Sabbath. Albert welcomed his father’s suggestion to accompany him to the synagogue that evening. Everything about him seemed so strange and quaint.

It was beginning to grow dusk when father and son started for the house of worship. The air was cool and refreshing, and the sinking sun was behind the high walls of the quarter. All men, and some women, were on their way to the courtyard which enclosed the House of God. The erstwhile grimacing faces, on which was written abject misery, were now serene, carefree, spiritual—

“In der Dämmerungstunde, plötzlich,  
Weicht der Zauber und der Hund  
Wird aufs neu ein menschlich Wesen—”

Some walked hurriedly, as if belated, others strolled in pairs, leisurely, exchanging a few words of week day interest, but peace, almost unearthly peace, everywhere. The long Judengasse was quiet, with an air of restful melancholy about it, the melancholy and rest of a plaintive song sung in a minor key. Not a horse stirred, not the creak of a wheel; the voice of traffic was hushed. Nothing but footsteps of those wending their way to prayers. Here and there one caught a glimpse of a table in a courtyard, its legs upward like a horse on its back, and other articles of household furniture, cleansed and scoured and left to dry and air until the morning before the holiday, when everything must be clean and free from every crumb of leavened bread.

Albert had never seen such a large house of prayer. It was hundreds of years old, and within its lofty walls many a tear had been shed—nay, rivulets had flowed from Israel's eyes—and sometimes not unmixed with blood. For this synagogue had housed those who fled from massacres, from flames, from swords. Barricaded behind the tall doors, maidens sought shelter from ravishers, children from untimely death, old women from slaughter. Thrice this House of God had been defiled by Preachers of Brotherly Love; thrice the torch of fanaticism had scorched its portals. Like a man bent in sorrow, this edifice betrayed the scars of persecution. The Old Synagogue of Frankfort looked solemn, sad, awe-inspiring.

Albert felt the solemnity and the sadness of the old house of worship. It was vast and lofty. Many brass chandeliers with scores of wax candles were suspended from the high arched ceiling, snapping and flickering every time the great door swung open. Rows of high desks, made specially for repose of the prayer books, filled the front part, while the rear was devoid of all obstruction and reserved as standing room for the poor who held no pews. The nearer the row to the wall facing East the higher the rank of its occupants. For the Judengasse was never democratic. Its spirit was aristocratic. All had their ranks, and one could classify them according to the rows of the pews. In the very rear were the humblest—the water-carriers, the cobblers, the blacksmiths, the tailors—then came the small traders, and gradually the guilds rose higher and higher until they reached the row against the Wall facing East, where the dignitaries sat, the learned and the rich.

Zorn and his son were the guests of the dignitary whose pew was next to that of the Rabbi, a zealot, the descendant of a long line of rabbis.

Albert looked around with unconcealed bewilderment. For although he had scoffed at, and mimicked, the gestures of the zealots and mocked at their dogma and forms, he was now conscious of reverence. Even the Rabbi's curly locks, dangling over his ears, his untrimmed beard, his long silk gabardine, his

knickerbockers and white stockings, the mitre-like black fur cap on his head, his broad white linen collar—none of these provoked mockery in the youth. The figure before him conjured a Velasquez he had once seen in Prince Joachim’s gallery in his native town. He only saw in the visage before him the pure white skin shining through the scanty youthful beard, spirituality in the large pupils of his grayish blue eyes. While the prayers had not yet begun, the Rabbi, his face turned to the wall, was lost in devotion, swaying his body rapturously—sighing and praying and snapping his fingers in divine forgetfulness.

A resounding blow upon the altar was a signal for silence. All murmurs hushed. An irrepressible cough here and there accentuated the sudden stillness.

*“Lecho Daudi likras Kallo,”* the cantor in his lyric tenor trolled the first verse of a symbolic hymn composed by Salomo Alkabiz many centuries ago. After the manner of the Song of Songs, the Sabbath is compared to a Princess, with whom Israel is enamoured and whom he is wooing.

The rabbi, his face still turned to the wall, breathed every syllable as if he were in a trance, rolled his eyes heavenward in sublime ecstasy, spread his arms as if opening them for his beloved, a new light shining upon his countenance, glowing with the ardor of a lover, as he softly murmured,

*“Lecho daudi likras Kallo,  
Pnei Shabbos Nekablo.”*

Friday evening is the hour of betrothal of the Princess Sabbath to her lover Israel, but the Judengasse sighed even as it chanted this ditty.

Now the whole assemblage swayed like a forest in a storm—one could hear the sighing of the trees—responding with renewed ecstasy—

*“Lecho daudi likras Kallo,  
Pnei Shabbos Nekablo;”*

and the sweet tenor picked up the refrain in the next quatrain and melted with song.

Albert did not join in the services, though his father held the prayer book before him. His eyes wandered. The flickering cathedral candles in front of the singing cantor cast a strange glamor over his bearded face and over his blue-black and white-striped robe; the dazzling gold and silver threads in the brocade curtain over the ark shimmered in the scintillating light of the *Ner-Tomid*.

Albert soon found himself in the midst of the great stream leaving the synagogue. The stream moved exceedingly slow. When one leaves the House of God one must not make God feel that he runs away from Him, just as one must hurry on the way to the synagogue in order to show anxiety to get to His presence. The ancient worshippers of Jehovah knew every whim and caprice of their Lord. They knew His appetite for the fat of lamb and veal and His relish for oil and frankincense—the rising smoke of all offerings was perfume to His nostrils. So, eager to please their Maker, they sauntered through the Judengasse with deliberate ease—there was pronounced luxurious relaxation in their movements—in pairs, in threes, in small groups, preceded by their children, moving shadows on the moon-lit ground. Albert walked along musing. There was mockery and reverence in his heart; the reverence and mockery were blended, as he caught snatches of conversation from the throng.

## V.

For a brief period Albert was blind to all else save the romantic beauty of his environment. He did not even brood over the humiliation of being segregated. All Frankfort was then composed of segregated groups—hostile camps—towns within towns, fortresses within fortresses, every period of the distant past, clear back to the feudal days, indelibly stamped upon the inhabitants. His imagination was aglow with romance. Indeed the theme for a poem, a heroic poem—a poem to vie with the *Odyssey*—was born in his fantastic brain. In this epic he would tell the glorious story of Israel in the same manner as Virgil had told of Augustus and of the Romans. His hero was to be a descendant of Don Abarbanel, from the branch of David, and a fugitive from the Spanish Inquisition. Yes, he visualised his hero—he was a young man with greenish blue eyes and light brown hair, with poetic aspirations, and the heroine—

But with the beginning of his apprenticeship the subject lost all glamor for him. He found the banking business disappointing and the Judengasse disheartening. He had imagined a bank was—well, he did not clearly know what a bank was like except that money flowed from it like milk and honey in the promised land, and with money one could buy so many beautiful things. For aside from thought and feeling Albert was still childishly unpractical.

Rindskopf's bank was a sombre room with a dingy little chamber in the rear, in which stood a large iron box and was fastened with three locks.

He had soon become dreadfully lonesome and homesick for Gunsdorf—the

Gunsdorf he had been so glad to leave only a few weeks before. He longed for Schmallgasse, for the Marktplatz, for the Hofgarten, for Father Rhine, for Hedwiga. He had never known how much he loved his native town. How had he ever wished to depart from it, he asked himself again and again in his loneliness. He had already seen the house where Goethe was born, had again visited the Roemer and the Zeil and Sachsenhausen, and found nothing new any longer.

All his thoughts again turned to Hedwiga. He had despatched two letters of glowing passion and tenderness but had received no answer. So he stayed up late at night, writing heart-rending verses about a maiden with golden hair, who chanted as she sewed a shroud for her lover . . .

The banker had put Albert to copying letters and filling in draft blanks and the youth found the task irksome. At the end of the second week his work was done so mechanically and with such eloquent distaste that his employer, seated at his writing desk a short distance away shook his head and murmured, "*Der Junge hat kein Talent zum Geschaef.*"

No, the young man had no talent for business. Adolf Rindskopf would have sent him away but David Zorn was his friend and he must endure his friend's son a little longer. Besides, Albert wrote a very neat hand, with a flourish which Adolf secretly envied. When he wrote to Berlin—*die Kaiserstadt*—he was anxious to make an impression on his correspondent. Yes, Albert's penmanship was beautiful.

But one day while Albert was seated at the long table copying a letter and thinking of other things, the postman came in. Albert looked up eagerly. Although he had already given up hope of hearing from Hedwiga, the postman revived his anxiety. But no letter for him. So he watched Rindskopf from the corner of his eye. He loved to watch Rindskopf open his mail. Rindskopf approached this task as a gourmand attacks a palatable dish. His eyes dilated, his bulky stolid body stirred restlessly in his chair, his lips twitched, avidity in every gesture. Then he took the large ivory paper-cutter in one hand, and with the other tapped the edge of the envelope against his desk and, raising it on a level with his eyes, screwed one eye almost tight as he fixed the other at the upper end, which he held against the light, and ripped it open with the utmost care for fear of touching the contents.

"*Tausend Donner Sakrament!*" Adolf suddenly exclaimed and jumped up from the chair, with the enclosure of the envelope in his hand.

Albert poised his pen, an amused smile on his boyish countenance.

Rindskopf's face was flushed, his mustache twitched, his paw-like hands



trembled.

“*Ach, du lieber Gott!*” he called upon the Almighty to witness his distress, and rushed up to Albert.

“You’ll bring ruination on me—what? Where is your head—what do you —”

He was so enraged that coherent speech would not come.

Albert’s face changed color. He paled a trifle and was terrified.

“This is a fine piece of business,” Rindskopf soon regained his voice —“What did you do with that bill of exchange?”

This strange demand puzzled poor Albert. He stared fretfully at his employer.

“What did you do with that bill of exchange I gave you the other day to forward to Berlin?” Rindskopf repeated, panting.

“—I—I enclosed it in the letter—as you told me—” Albert stammered.

Adolf’s eyes were dancing over the letter in his hand. Presently he was reading its contents aloud. “ ‘My dear Herr Rindskopf:

“ ‘In Frankfort, the birthplace of Goethe, love-songs may be called bills of exchange, but in our prosaic city of Berlin we mean precisely what we say. We have tried to cash the enclosed but without success; perhaps you can do better with it in your home town—’ ”

Rindskopf had caught the facetious tone of the letter and burst out in enraged laughter.

“Fine business I call this!” he cried as he continued reading the ironic reply, accentuating every syllable, contempt in his voice: “ ‘We are therefore returning your amorous ditty, much as we appreciate your romantic sentiments, and beg to send us instead a plain, matter-of-fact bill of exchange.’ ”

Adolf was beside himself. He called Albert a good-for-nothing, cursed the day he had let the boy enter the bank, swore that his wife had warned him against taking Zorn’s son into his house.

He then raised the returned enclosure to his eyes and began to read—

The money-changer was shaking with scornful laughter as he read on.

Albert was quivering, tears rushed to his eyes. It was not the mistake that vexed him but Rindskopf’s mocking voice. These verses were intended for the

envelope addressed to Hedwiga!

Albert leaped forward and snatched the verses from Adolf's hand.

"Where is my bill of exchange?" shouted Adolf.

Albert was not interested in the bill of exchange. His heavenly lyrics had been defiled! Their recital by Rindskopf was a piercing dagger in his heart.

"You are nothing but an ignorant boor!" Albert shouted back, striking a pose of sublime impudence. "What is your miserable bill of exchange compared with my poem—huh! Your *Thalers*! You ought to feel honored that you, an ignoramus, have a poet in your employ!"

Rindskopf shrank back, stunned. Such insolence from his apprentice!

Before Adolf recovered his wits Albert had put on his hat and with a look of unspeakable contempt strutted out of the place.

## VI.

Albert's conduct was a severe blow to his parents. Rindskopf had written to the elder Zorn and described the disgraceful scene to its minutest detail. "I could see from the very first day," wrote Rindskopf, "that your son has no bent for business, but on your account I had endured him as long as I possibly could."

The father made a hurried trip to Frankfort and tried to reason with Albert. He told him of the deplorable state of his finances and that further schooling was out of the question; and there was nothing for him to do at home.

The father had another friend in Frankfort, Veitel Scheps, who was a wholesale grocer and an importer of fruits from Italy. Veitel was willing to give the young man a chance to learn his trade.

Veitel was a little man, nothing but skin and bones, with a grizzly little beard, the end of which he was in the habit of chewing wistfully. Veitel seemed always absent-minded. There was a strange light in his big brown eyes. He was nearly sixty, but there was the fire of youth in his eyes. He received his friend's son kindly and assigned to him the easiest work in his warehouse. He also housed him in his own home, and his wife, being childless, bestowed on Albert maternal tenderness.

For a short time everything went well. Albert liked Veitel and his place of business. The warehouse was sunless, filled with bales of dried fruits, casks of

wine, boxes of oranges and lemons and dates, permeated with the pleasant odors of figs and raisins and the delicacies of the Italian soil. Albert's task was to take down the numbers of the shipments and the quantities that came in and went out.

He loved to lose himself in the rear of the large storehouse, where there were narrow passages stacked with boxes and sacks and crates of wafting fragrance. The scents were inspiring. He had just read Goethe's "*Briefe aus Italien*" and visualized the graphic descriptions of the great master. At times he would move listlessly through those darkened passages, conjuring visions of the land "*wo die Citronen blühen.*"

Meandering through these fruit-smelling passages he often imagined himself under the blue skies of Italy. A spear of sunshine stealing in through the crack of a dust-covered window pane enhanced the illusion. That was the glorious light of Italian skies shining upon the sun-baked lanes of Capri. It was not the creaking of the ungreased wheels of Franz's wheelbarrow—Franz was the peasant lad trundling heavy-laden boxes—that he heard but the twittering of birds in the green foliage of Sorrento. A horse was neighing outside. Albert's breast heaved with sensuous joy. For to his ears it was the braying of a donkey clambering up the narrow cliff road to Salerno.

"Albert!—Albert!" someone was calling, but he only heard the distant echoes from his wonderland. Leaning against a column of casks he paused and wrote verses that had been running through his head for days—

"Albert—Albert Zorn!"

The voice became impatient, irritable, anger in the tone. It was the voice of Veitel.

"Franz is waiting for the numbers!" he cried.

Albert tried hard to remember on which errand he had been sent.

Presently the agitated Veitel was before him. The wagon was outside and had to be loaded for the boat sailing for Coblenz and Albert stood there, staring at him like an idiot!

Veitel took a step back. The young man must have lost his wits. His wife had told him the boy had been acting queerly, always as if in dreamland.

For a moment Veitel was baffled. Perhaps he ought to run back for help. One could not tell what a maniac might do! The wife of a friend of his had been stabbed by a maid servant under similar circumstances, he recalled. She, too, had acted queerly—the maid servant had been melancholy—and suddenly,

while she was peeling potatoes, she stabbed her mistress with her paring knife!

“Are you not feeling well, Albert?” Veitel’s tone was now soft, sympathetic, cautious.

He was moving back step by step, coaxing the young maniac to follow him. As soon as he emerged into the open Veitel gained courage.

“Where is the list?” he pleaded.

Albert shuddered. He could not free his mind from the illusion. He was still under the blue skies of Italy.

“Where are the numbers?” Veitel demanded.

“The numbers—what numbers?” Albert’s voice was somnolent. “Just a moment!”

He had not finished writing the last two verses and was afraid they might escape his memory, so while Veitel scolded he put the sheet of paper against a box nearby and scribbled the end of his ballad. He then looked up with clearer vision in his eyes.

“Didn’t you take the numbers down for the Coblenz shipment? Franz is waiting for them.”

“O, yes, the numbers;” and he rushed back to execute the order, Veitel staring at large.

“No, the boy has no talent for business,” Veitel confirmed Rindskopf’s opinion, and wrote a lengthy letter to his friend David Zorn.

This time the father made no trip to Frankfort. Instead he sent Albert money for the homeward journey.

## VII.

He returned home downhearted. He felt the cheerlessness of his homecoming. The very excessive tenderness of his mother, the over-affectionate embrace of his sister, accentuated his failure. He felt the kindness accorded the afflicted, the solace given to people in trouble. And although there was defiance in his bearing he felt keenly the disappointment on the faces of his family.

Nobody spoke of his future. Even his father—always full of plans—only cleared his throat, passed his hand lightly over his fine beard, and murmured

“We’ll see”, whenever his wife broached the subject.

So Albert drifted. In his present state of mental confusion he postponed calling on Hedwiga from day to day. He stayed at home and read, walked the streets and mused, lay stretched on the river bank and pondered all sorts of things. He also spent much time writing, chiefly verses, which he clandestinely sent to editors who would not have them.

He wandered about the streets, along the river bank, like a liberated prisoner. No, he was not thinking of the Judengasse, of its tragedy, of its quaint traditions; he would not sing of the glory, and the tragedy, of Israel. He was emancipated, a true son of the Rhineland. He would sing of the shattered ruins on the banks of the Rhine peopled with golden legends, of beautiful Hedwiga, of fair Katherine, of pretty Gertrude. No, no, he was no descendant of Miram and David, he was no compatriot of Isaiah and Yehudah H’Levi, no fellow-sufferer of the dwellers of the Ghetto. The cradle of his forefathers had stood in Greece, her Gods were his Gods, the great unconquered world his world. And it was summer again. The sun was cooling its burning rays in the liquid silver of the gently flowing Rhine, a thousand echoes shouted greetings from the vine-clad shores, the mossy boulders called and beckoned to him to lie down and dream of things eternal!

All his slumbering romantic sentiments reawakened and with them came his longing for Hedwiga, his Lorelei.

On the morning he went to see her the sun was blazing in the skies and the road was dusty. His heart was pounding with joy as he left the narrow little streets of the town and struck out in the road that led to the Free House. No serious thought intruded upon his mind at present; he was carefree. The image of the slender girl with the golden locks was dancing before his eyes. He strode along jauntily, joyously, expectantly. The hut loomed up in the distance. He first caught sight of the large elm tree, and there was a fluttering in his breast.

Hedwiga! He saw her clinging skirt, her great black eyes, her bare feet, her beautiful throat.

What was this? A cart at the door! The two little windows of the hut wide open, and likewise the door; people moving about inside—a hearse! It must be the Witch. There was a pang of sorrow in his heart, but then she was old, and the old must die.

He entered the hut. Only three old women and a man; the women with hanging heads stood round a wooden box and the man held a board in his hands.

Where was Hedwiga?

The man waved the board in the direction of the box.

The morning sun cast a strange pallor over the dead face in the coffin. Albert trembled from head to foot and a flood of tears rolled down his wan cheeks.

The man looked at the youth without sadness. The three women, too, glanced at him puzzled.

Yes, the Witch had died two weeks before and now her niece was dead. They did not know what the girl died of—how could anyone tell what a person died of! The soul left the body and all was ended. There was a grimacing smile on the face of the woman who answered Albert's questions. Maybe it was the evil spirits—who could tell?

He bent over the coffin for some silent moments. He stared blankly at the white shroud, at the waxen face, at the closed eyes . . .

Then the man and the three women carried the coffin to the cart outside, and the cart started and moved away slowly, the wheels creaking, crunching the clods of the dry mud . . .

# A NIGHTINGALE IN A CROW'S NEST.

## I.

*“Es küsst sich so süsse der Busen der Zweiten  
Als kaum sich der Busen der Ersten geküsst.”*

Goethe.

WHAT youth, what poetic youth, could not say this with equal truth if he would, had he the candor of the great bard of Weimar? Albert Zorn had more than candor; the public was his priest to whom he confessed more than he sinned. He never concealed the fact that to him woman was an antidote to woman. And love was such a wonderful inspiration for melodious verses! At times he could not tell which he loved most, the melodious verses or the woman who inspired them.

Had he already forgotten Hedwiga with that waxen face and white shroud? Indeed not; he sang of her in the most tragic refrains and dedicated to her memory a dream picture—*ein Traumbild*—and when he read it over and over, again and again, his heart almost broke and burning tears bedewed his flushed cheeks. But even as he wept for Hedwiga he yearned for some other pretty maiden to take her place in his heart.

He had changed considerably during this listless year. He had grown taller, his hair was longer and fell unevenly over his coat collar, and his sparkling eyes were even more narrowed, as if to hide from the people around him how much he could see; there was also something indefinable about the deep corners of his large mouth that seemed provoking. He carried a cane and brandished it dreamily as he strolled through the lime-tree lane in the Hofgarten, where there were always pretty girls in gay colors “like bright tulips planted along the flowery paths.”

The year seemed interminably long. Without school attendance, without any definite hours allotted to study or work, without any occupation, he was fancy free. He read whatever books suited his taste and gave expression to whatever ideas flitted through his brains. And after the ecstasy of composition would come despair, the despair that must come to the artist striving after perfection of expression, when he would regard his songs and dream-pictures as mere drivel. What would become of him! True, Christian was ever ready with his solace—the greatness of many had remained unrecognized for a time,

he reminded Albert—but that did not console the young poet. Ah, he was a worthless fellow—what would become of him!

Then he would shut himself up in his room, without wishing to see any one. He would be weighed down by his grief, the grief of his conflicting emotions and thoughts. He would reveal himself to himself and hate himself. He had already passed his eighteenth year and nothing had happened. What would become of him?

But what was there for him to do? His father's business was worthless; he did not care for his grandfather's profession, though he had entertained it for a while since Schiller, too, had been a physician; and jurisprudence—well, he had no taste for that. Besides, a university career meant a great expenditure of money and he knew it was beyond his parents' means.

At last the father wrote to his brother, Leopold, and asked for his advice. Leopold told him to send the young man to Hamburg. He would find a place for him.

## II.

Albert arrived in Hamburg on a warm day late in June. He was dusty, hungry, tired. Travel by chaise to Hamburg was very fatiguing. And to add to his discomfiture when he reached his uncle's town he found the shutters closed and the doors boarded, the family having departed for their summer home. Why had not his uncle given him specific instructions how to get to him? He was vexed and stormed at the coachman. A neighbor finally furnished his uncle's business address. Everybody knew the location of Leopold Zorn's bank.

Albert's irritation increased at finding Uncle Leopold away.

"Was I not expected?" he demanded.

The pompous man, whom he addressed, smiled—haughtily, Albert thought—and turned away from him as if he were a tailor's apprentice delivering a garment.

"Aaron, Herr Zorn's nephew is over there," the pompous man called—"that boy with the valise at the door—"

"That boy with the valise at the door!" Albert felt wroth enough to turn around and go back home with the same chaise. Huh! that boy with the valise at the door.



Presently his anger turned to laughter. A short, broad, middle-aged man, with sunken cheeks which were rounded by a growth of a beard streaked with gray, approached him. He seemed to lurch forward, rubbed his right hand against his greenish coat, and extended the usual greetings to him. His was a short, fat little hand, moist and clinging.

“Yes, my child,” he addressed Albert patronizingly, though not unrespectfully, smacking his lips after every few words as if feeling the taste of his utterance—“Yes, my child, your esteemed uncle has given me instructions to look after your wants. Ah, that uncle of yours,—a heart of gold!—yes, my child, pure gold, sifted gold—gold, as the Bible says, that comes from Ophir. God grant that we have a few more the likes of him; yes, my child, pure gold without a speck of dross. ‘Aaron,’ says he to me—‘Aaron Hirsch,’ says he, ‘my nephew will drop in one of these days during my absence and I want you to take good care of him and find him respectable lodgings.’ ‘Herr Banquier,’ says I to him, ‘you need not worry on that score, Aaron Hirsch will take good care of his benefactor’s nephew.’ Indeed, my child, I have just the place for you—yes, sir, just the place—the very best place—in fact. The widow Rodbertus on the Grosse Bleichenstrasse has a room overlooking a garden with two large windows. No back-hall bedroom for the nephew of the great banker, says I to myself.” Aaron laughed unctuously. “And it is not far from here either. Just a step as we say in Hamburg. Let me have the valise—it’s too heavy for you. I can carry it with my little finger.”

Aaron’s speech grew in fluency as they proceeded on the way to Widow Rodbertus, though “his little finger” had soon grown tired and he was forced to rest his valise on the sidewalk now and then.

He plodded on, his speech uninterrupted in spite of the encumbrance.

“You see, I am a trusted clerk in your esteemed uncle’s bank,” he said when they had reached Grosse Bleichenstrasse and, lowering his voice, he added, “but as a side line I sell lottery tickets. S—sh! Your esteemed uncle warned me not to sell any tickets to anyone in his employ or to any of the bank’s customers.”

“There is honor among thieves—hey? Only one robbery at a time,” Albert struck in.

Aaron suddenly let the valise drop to the pavement, and, with his hands at his sides, burst into convulsive laughter.

“That’s a good one—I must tell it to your esteemed uncle.” Then reverting to a more serious tone he said cautiously, “I sold your father the very first lottery ticket he ever purchased—ask him if I tell you a lie. And he came

within three numbers of the Grand Prize. Just think of it—within three numbers! If the man drawing the lottery had just moved his hand a tiny bit further down—just a wee, wee bit—your father would have been the recipient of two hundred thousand marks! And do you think I'd have asked your father for a single *pfennig* for having been his good angel—no, no, not a *pfennig*, not a *groschen*, not even a thank-you! No, my child, not Aaron Hirsch! I wouldn't have asked your good father for a pinch of snuff."

But they were soon inside, Aaron introducing the young man to Widow Rodbertus as the nephew of the "great banker" and Madame Rodbertus to Albert as the kindest soul that ever drew breath.

### III.

When he found himself in his room free from Aaron's chatter he grew sad again, the sadness of disappointment gripped him. Not a word of welcome from his uncle. And that fat pompous man in the bank—he had puffed and sputtered like a porpoise—that man called him a boy!—had not even introduced himself or said a friendly word to him! The thought burned in his brain; his heart was filled with bitterness. He was received like a poor relation—He! Albert Zorn, who was soon to make the world talk of him as they were now talking of Byron! Ah! that haughty man in the bank had looked at him as if he were an errand boy! He, Albert Zorn, with scores of lyrics in his valise and the first draft of a tragedy that would vie with Schiller's "Wallenstein", with "Childe Harold"! That red-faced, pompous man, proud of his purse—a mere money-bag! Huh! "That boy with the valise at the door"!

He paced up and down the room and finally paused before the window overlooking the garden. The garden of Aaron's vision was a little courtyard with a pine tree in the center, encircled by meagre little shrubs. For a moment he stood gazing upon the lonely tree absently. Aside from the few stunted shrubs around it there was not a shade of green in sight. He soon felt a kinship with the tree. It was symbolical—like the fir tree before him he stood alone on the barren heights of the north, wrapt in a white coverlet of ice and snow, and dreaming of a palm tree in distant sunny lands . . .

His disappointment awakened in him crushing melancholy. Lonely and in silent sorrow on the scorching rock precipice! Tears trickled down his cheeks, though he was not conscious of them. Never had he felt so lonesome, so forsaken, the ground under him so barren and cold; and never had his heart so yearned for the warmth of the sun . . .

A door opened somewhere. It sounded loud in the quiet courtyard. The window before him was open and he leaned dreamily forward. He heard the voice of Frau Rodbertus on the threshold, escorting someone to the door. Another voice reached his ears—a silvery voice, the voice of a young girl, with the music of feminine sweetness in it. Sudden joy leaped into his heart. He did not feel so lonesome now. He felt as if a tender hand was soothing his irritated nerves; the sweet murmur of a brooklet was in his ears. He leaned a trifle forward. A young girl, with a green parasol in her hand, was taking a step at a time backwards, and talking to Frau Rodbertus. He found himself studying the girl's face and figure, a strange tingling in his blood. A girl with soft brown eyes—that looked large and dark—black hair and a dainty yet vigorous little body. As she kept retreating he became conscious of the movement of her feet—there was something deliciously sweet, almost rhythmical, about her tripping movements, and about the swaying of her skirt.

“*Au revoir!*” The girl was taking leave of Frau Rodbertus in the soft accent of the French, not in that harsh voice of the German when interspersing French words in their conversation.

“*Au revoir!*”

The portal closed, the door downstairs was slammed. A feeling of delicious cheer in Albert's being. The ground under his feet was no more barren and cold; he no longer thought of his uncle's neglect, of that pompous man in the bank. He was dreaming of sunny lands . . . He again paced up and down the room but with throbbing joy in his heart.

He soon rushed to the little oak table at the window and sat down, as if something was propelling him to quick action. Volatile thoughts played hide and seek with his brain. He leaned back, his sensitive lips parted slightly, as of a person in a fever, his half-closed eyes as if in stupor. “Sweet eyes—blessedly sweet brown eyes,” he murmured. The tips of his delicate fingers moved slowly as if he were caressing a smooth cheek, his heart was pulsating in short, panting beats, and removing a sheet of paper from his breast pocket, as if in a dream, scribbled a line or two, murmured the words over and over, again and again, unearthly bliss stealing over his countenance . . .

#### IV.

Two days later his uncle returned from his summer home. Aaron Hirsch led him to the banker's private office. Bowing and curtsying the unctuous Hirsch explained to his master how punctiliously he had carried out his orders

and what wonderful lodgings he had procured for his nephew.

Leopold Zorn smiled benignly and was very solicitous in his inquiries about Albert's father, his mother, and every one of the children.

The banker was of medium height but, seated, looked tall. He held his head erect, his high collar (cut low in front for the freedom of his longish smooth shaven chin) pressing against his closely cropped side-whiskers, which were once brown but now somewhat faded, with streaks of gray. There was a pleasant twinkle in his eyes, but it was the twinkle of the quick-tempered which can change to flashing fury upon the least provocation.

The uncle studied his nephew as he tried to draw him out in conversation, and felt disappointed. David had given him to understand that Albert was bright but he could detect no brightness in the young man. The boy was more like his father, a ne'er-do-well, passed through the banker's mind; nothing of his mother. Furthermore, he was annoyed at the young man's constant twirling of his walking stick. He felt that this conceited youth was not sufficiently impressed with his uncle's importance. Callers at his private office did not sit with their legs crossed, twirling their canes. The banker's annoyance was growing. He thought best to make the young man understand his place at the outset.

"I shall be glad to find employment for you here," he said with a show of impressiveness and a knot appearing in his left eyebrow, "and if you show the proper spirit and industry you will have a chance to rise. But you must dismiss all nonsense from your mind (David had told him that Albert was fooling his time away on verses). You must give your undivided attention to business if you hope to make anything of yourself; and"—he cleared his throat and turned his eyes aside—"you must show the proper respect for your elders."

Albert listened but was unable to concentrate on what his uncle was saying. Instead, his mind dwelt upon his uncle's physiognomy. He liked the straight nose—rather broad at the bottom—and the well shaped mouth. He also liked his grayish hair parted on the side. The tone of his voice displeased him. There was a ring of haughtiness in it.

The next moment, however, his feeling warmed toward his uncle. Leopold mistook his nephew's preoccupied silence for submission and instantly regretted his harshness. Leopold was quick-tempered but keenly conscious of his failing. Kind hearted to a fault it hurt him to think he was unduly severe with his brother's son. He softened instantly and endeavored to make amends.

"I know you'll like Hamburg. It is a city of great opportunities," he said tenderly.

Albert's face saddened. He realized the opportunities his uncle had in mind had a different meaning from those in his own.

"Don't be so downhearted, Albert." Uncle Leopold's voice was now jovial, kindly, a pleasing smile in his eyes. He touched Albert's knee as if to buoy him up. "Your work here won't be hard. Are you short of money?"

He opened his wallet and handed him several bills.

Leopold touched the silver bell on his secretary and Hirsch appeared.

"Tell Herr Elfenbein to come in," he ordered.

A stout red-faced man, with fleshy eyelids, a long gold watch chain resting on his spherical abdomen, like a sleeping snake on a sunny rock, presently appeared at the door. It was the pompous man Albert saw on the day of his arrival.

"Martin, this is my nephew—David's son—this is Herr Elfenbein, Albert —"

Martin extended a lax hand.

"Albert has had a good education and writes a fine hand," Uncle Leopold added, "and I'll place him in your care. But don't spare the rod." The banker's face was writhing in smiles as he said this and then laughed jovially. "I think Albert needs a little discipline—hey? What do you say, Albert?"

"Don't worry, we won't spare him," returned Elfenbein, smiling.

And indeed Martin Elfenbein did not spare him. Martin was a hard taskmaster and gave orders in a surly voice, devoid of human warmth. Albert began where he had left off at Rindskopf's—copying letters, filling in exchange blanks, and other uncongenial labors.

He grew morose and kept to himself. Even poetry had lost all interest for him. He picked up a volume by Goethe, by Lessing, by Schiller, but their song received no response from his soul. Was his imagination becoming barren? He tried to express his despair but even in this he failed. His mind was a blank. No new thoughts, no fresh sentiments, nothing but stagnation.

One morning his uncle invited him to his country home and at once his slumbering sentiments reawakened. The hope of meeting his cousin Hilda, whose memory he had cherished since she visited Gunsdorf two years ago, changed his depressing gloom to buoyant cheer. His muse had suddenly returned. He was full of song and merriment.

# HILDA.

## I.

THE sight of Hilda seemed to Albert like a dream come true. Instead of the girl of his fancy, however, he was met by a young lady with the poise of one accustomed to drawing room manners. The girl of his memory was an unsophisticated young girl of fifteen. And while she was cordial, her cordiality lacked the intimacy he had hoped for.

His inner chafing made him regard everybody around him with misgiving. With the hypersensitiveness of the dreamer he divined disparagement in the glances of the smartly dressed people around him. He felt himself an outsider, a mere poor relative. He wished to flee, and would have fled but for the presence of his cousin.

But the more friendliness shown him the more restless he became. It was not friendliness he wanted. He craved affection, not merely the formal friendship of a host. And the people about him treated him as a guest, yet differently from the other guests who were visiting the banker at the time. The other guests were a lively group and indulged in dances, games, and amusing pastimes, none of which engaged his interest. His aunt encouraged him and gave him veiled hints about the amenities of society and etiquette, and this exasperated him still more.

So instead of joining the gay circle he would repair to the seashore, a short distance away, and spend hours watching the tide, with tumult in his brain and bitterness in his breast.

One day at sunset he found himself alone on the seashore, a creeping, soothing melancholy stealing over him. There were horizontal bars in the west resembling a rustic fence, one plank of which was jagged and broken, with tatters of gold and silver streaming from it, as if the sun in its flight had forced its way through this barrier, leaving behind fragments of its gorgeous raiment. For a while he sat and gazed with rapture in his heart. He sat crouched like a Japanese Buddha, his eyes screwed up, his elbows upon his knees, his head between his hands.

He yielded to the scene before him sensuously, his whole being immersed in it. He gave himself to the sight and sounds as a voluptuary gives himself to

lust. He was scarcely conscious that he was thinking of Hilda instead of the sunset. He thought she had been paying no attention to him. And yet there was something about her that gave him hope . . .

Footsteps down the poplar lane. His heart beat fast. He knew they were her footsteps; and she was alone. Had she seen him? She turned quickly around and walked back. She walked rapidly with the unsteady gait of fright.

“She hates me,” he murmured to himself. Perhaps? There was again a flutter of hope. He had read a great number of romances and began to reason, as if reason ever helped a lover solve the great problem. But he reasoned both ways with equal conviction. She-loves-me and she-loves-me-not are reached by the same route. He found his place of vantage less enticing. The sunset and the restless sea lacked the romantic interest of a moment before. His mind drifted in other directions. He thought of his uncle, of his aunt, of the guests. Why did he find himself out of joint with people around him? What was there that made him rebellious in their midst? Why did he feel their faults so keenly, so glaringly? Why was he not in sympathy with them? He had felt out of place in Gundsorf, in the Judengasse, and now he was feeling out of place at his uncle’s house. His thoughts, his tastes, his inclinations, his aspirations, were all Hellenic—there was not a vestige of the Hebraic in him, he concluded. He did not yet realize that these vagaries, this very world-weariness—the *Weltschmerz*—was Hebraic, that what he thought emanated from the Acropolis, came from Mount Carmel and from the plains of Sharon.

In the evening he found himself alone in his room, the silence of the summer night around him. He was thought-weary. He had blown out the candle and welcomed the darkness. A nightingale was singing somewhere in the grove. He pushed the window further open. He caught the distant sound of the waves breaking on the cliffs; it was the sweeping sound of contending forces. A fire-fly was flitting around—intermittent pin-pricks in the dark curtain before him. His fatiguing thoughts had fled. His brain was a blank. He was only a child of the senses. Peace gathered within him, the sweet peace of night and of silence. Emotions possessed him—no, not emotions which stir conflict but those that instill a conscious soothing, a slumbering sensuousness. He leaned back in his chair by the window, unseeing, unthinking.

Gradually—in faint outline—the image of Hilda was before him . . .

There had been dancing earlier in the evening and he now saw Hilda waltzing around the room, her firm little feet moving nimbly, a twinkle in her roguish eyes as she flitted by and glanced over her partner’s shoulder toward where he was seated. Confound it, why had he never learned to dance!

He recalled the last time he had made an effort to learn to dance and laughed at himself. He could now hear that little Frenchman count *un, deux, trois—un, deux, trois*. The Frenchman shook his head and told him he had no rhythm in his soul! If he had told him he had no rhythm in his feet he could have forgiven him. Albert was in a rage and the French dancing-master ran for his life, and later told everybody that Herr Zorn was quite mad, quite insane.

Yes, he ought to learn to dance. He must learn the amenities of the young, as Aunt Betty had hinted. In some ways he acted like a middle-aged man—this was what Aunt Betty had said smilingly. Perhaps this was the reason Hilda was acting so peculiarly in his presence, he said to himself; she treated him as if he were middle-aged. He was too agitated to sit still . . .

He jumped up from his seat and walked across the dark room. No, no, he could not be like the others—he could not—those shallow-brained parrots, repeating the same phrases, the same platitudes, the same inane compliments to ladies—he could not bear these smug Philistines! But Hilda——

A bird was singing. Yes, it was the melting notes of the nightingale. He was again seated by the window, thoughtless, a delicious sensuousness filling his whole being, his eyes resting on the shadow of the trees in the light of the stars, the tranquility of the night possessed him . . .

## II.

He arose quite happy the next morning, boyishly happy. He wrote a few verses and felt happier still. Then he read his lines over and the music of his own words made him jubilant. Dissatisfaction with his composition never came to him until the day after; on the same day he was always happy, always pleased with himself——

And his mood seemed contagious. Aunt Betty smiled upon him and Hilda, too, suddenly seemed attentive. She even suggested a walk with him, and on the way through the garden stooped to pluck a rose for him and then plucked another, the stem of which she held between her teeth, the red flower drooping over her chin. He found himself talking to her without timidity, without constraint, and she, too, laughed and recalled little pranks he played on her when she visited Gunsdorf. He reminded her that she had been a little girl then, her hair like a loose skein of silk hanging down her back and even remembered the color of her dress and the ribbon she had worn in her hair. His voice seemed to caress every garment of hers as he dwelt in detail upon her dress in those days and her attire now. She blushed as her eyes met his. She felt as if he



had actually passed his hand over her dress as he contrasted her former short dresses with her present long skirt. He kept at a respectful distance from her but once or twice his sleeve came in contact with her sleeve and he consciously shrank back half a step, and she was strangely conscious of the momentary touch.

He talked freely, bubbling over. He was alone with her, just she and he. He felt for a moment that there was nobody else on earth but the two of them. And they were walking through the narrow paths, high hedges on either side, the sunlight sifting through like the finest silvery powder, birds twittering and chirping everywhere. At times she walked ahead of him—when the path was too narrow for them to walk side by side—the bit of neck between her coiled hair and the collar of her dress a delicious magnet, her elastic yet vigorous step music to his ears. He was deploring the fact that so few people in Hamburg were interested in poetry. She agreed with him and that irritated him without knowing why and he became cynical.

“The people in Hamburg care more for beer and *sauerkraut* than for Lessing and Goethe,” he was saying. “They lack romance—” Then he tossed his head, with a spiteful smile on his lips, and added, “When Cupid darted his arrow at the Hamburg women he struck them in the stomach instead of the heart.”

Hilda walked on in silence. His witticism displeased her. He had made a few slurring remarks about Hamburgers before. They were walking side by side and he noticed the slight change in her face. She did not seem as friendly as before.

“I was not referring to all Hamburgers,” he said in a jesting tone emphasizing the *all*.

He wished to make some allusion to herself but could not. She suddenly seemed so distant. He thought he detected anger in her eyes. Then he attempted playfulness, but that seemed to annoy her still more. Women were a capricious lot, he concluded. He was beginning to understand women, he was persuading himself, without realizing that to understand them was the surest means of being disliked by them.

When they returned to the house they found the family on the veranda. Hilda rushed up to her mother as if she had lost her way and at last found it. He again felt awkward.

He went to his room and finished the poem that he had begun the day before and copied it in a neat hand and again went in search of Hilda. He found her seated on the ground under a tree with a book in her lap.

He approached her without timidity and at first stood by her chatting, then sat down beside her. Albert was a good talker when he had a definite subject but lacked the art of polite social conversation. He was at his best when attacking or praising someone or something. The book in her hand was a peg on which to hang conversation, and he made an attempt to look at it.

“Is the book so bad that you would not have anyone see it?” he teased her as she declined to show it to him.

“No, it’s a good book,”—still holding it behind her as if to prevent him from seizing it.

“By whom was it written?”

She shook her head negatively, a faint smile in her eyes.

“What’s the name?”

Her head again shook from side to side.

“What’s it about?”

“You are too young to know.” She laughed softly, her eyes contracting.

“Let’s talk of something more interesting—Rudolph, for instance.”

(Rudolph was one of the young men of whom Albert was jealous.)

She gave a short mischievous laugh.

He looked at her earnestly. He wondered why she was teasing him about Rudolph. Her mobile features underwent expressions he could not understand. Then he turned to her suddenly, with self-pity in his voice, and said, “Why do you dislike me so much, Hilda?”

And before she had a chance to reply he added petulantly, “Everybody here dislikes me—everybody!”

There was the peevishness of the vexed child in his voice, with a lump of emotion in his throat.

Although he had not clearly thought of this before, no sooner had the words escaped him than he believed them. He felt himself hated by all around him.

Her attitude toward him changed instantly. Leaning forward, with the book replaced in her lap so he could see it was “Herman and Dorothea”, she said, “Oh, Albert, you only imagine things. Mother is very fond of you, and so is father, only they don’t think you apply yourself to business assiduously enough.”

Her beautiful sea-green eyes rested on his face sympathetically. She looked at him as if to convince him she was not merely saying this to soothe him.

“I know, I know, they all think me an idler, a good-for-nothing, a worthless fellow.” His words came precipitately, passionately. “They can’t see any good in anyone unless he is immersed in business—nothing counts but business success. All I hear is money, money, money everywhere!” He raised his hands as if he meant to shut out the sight of money. “It rings in my ears from morning till night—it rings all over Hamburg. It’s deafening—money! Nothing else interests anybody. Neither literature nor music nor art of any sort. Money seems an end in itself. Ah! It’s maddening—maddening! I am made to feel every moment that God created all the beauty in the world—the green trees and the blooming flowers and the foamy waves—and women’s beautiful eyes and their luxuriant hair and their crimson lips (he was looking at her yearningly)—with only one end in the scheme of creation—money! Oh, I am disgusted with everything——.”

“You are morbid, Albert,” she said, looking straight at him and noting the despondency in his dreamy countenance. Then she smiled and added, “You are a Werther without a Charlotte.”

He felt the sting of her remark. To him her flippant retort was full of meaning.

“Even you hate me,” he burst out.

He turned his face away.

“What makes you say such things?” she demanded.

“I can see it. You don’t act toward me as you do toward—” he tossed his head without completing the sentence.

“As I do toward Rudolph,” she finished it for him with a light laugh. Then she gazed at him for a moment and, shaking her head, said, “You silly boy.”

“I don’t blame you—Rudolph is a shrewd business man and I am only a clerk in your father’s bank—”

“So you think I am in love with Rudolph—”

“I know you hate me—”

“Why should I hate you?”

Her sparring with him cheered him even though his face was still sad. He was happy to hear her contradict him. They soon drifted to “Herman and Dorothea” and he began to talk of Goethe. He wished to read her the poem he

had just finished but he wondered if she would divine who had inspired it. He persuaded himself he did not want her to know this. And while he was battling with the idea his hand traveled to his pocket and he withdrew the neatly copied verses.

He watched her face eagerly as her eyes wandered over the sheet. She seemed to be reading every line over and over in order to grasp their meaning.

He had hoped she would make some allusion to the subject described. He had also hoped she might ask him for permission to keep the poem, but not a word. Her eyes only contracted a bit, a faint deepening of color on her cheeks, and she had suddenly again grown distant. He felt as if she had unexpectedly stretched out her arm and forbade him to come near her. He was conscious of the awkwardness of her silence. Her lips were closed tightly as she would not open them for fear a word might drop.

“You think poetry mere drivel, don’t you?” he said as he awkwardly replaced the poem into his pocket.

Her eyelashes rose, a silent look, but without a responsive syllable.

“At least you think *my* poetry is drivel,” he soon added.

There was the faintest smile playing around her lips. Her silence and smile seemed to him a challenge. His dormant pride, his sublime confidence in his powers, suddenly made him boastful. There was fire in his eyes.

“You just wait and I’ll show you all that my poems are no drivel. I’ll make my songs ring throughout the land. Every man, woman, and child shall read them. You may all laugh at me now—and Rudolph may jest about me—but I’ll make them all listen to me some day—”

He looked at her face but could read nothing in it. The next moment he became conscious of his boasting and felt ashamed of his utterances.

“Oh, I am a fool,” he burst out as if talking to himself. “You think me a braggart, don’t you?” He touched her hand and looked beseechingly at her.

She looked at him intently for a bare second.

“I am very unhappy,—I’ve always been unhappy. I am a little child crying for the moon, and the moon is so far, far away and doesn’t even know that a poor child is crying for it.”

There were unshed tears in his eyes.

“Why do you make yourself so unhappy?” she asked and stirred, with a frown on her pretty face.

But he did not answer. He noticed the approach of Uncle Leopold and Aunt Betty.

“Why so serious?” Aunt Betty asked, smiling and at the same time studying Hilda’s face.

“We were discussing poetry,” she answered, rising.

### III.

Albert appeared at dinner and vanished immediately after that. He scarcely spoke a word during the meal. But this was not unusual. Dinner in this household was served with such elaborate ceremony—waiters and butlers and many courses—that the stiffness of it all robbed him of speech. Aunt Betty noticed his glance in Hilda’s direction once or twice but her daughter ignored her cousin entirely. The mother heaved a sigh of relief. She had been unduly alarmed.

What the watchful mother failed to observe was that as they rose from the table and were passing to the adjoining room Albert dashed across to Hilda and mumbled something in a panting voice and left abruptly. She paled but did not turn to see whither he had gone.

She joined her family but after a while chose a secluded place, apparently reading. She turned the pages of her book as if she were perusing them without seeing a word before her. She seemed vexed and perplexed and now and then jerked her head as if shaking off an intruding thought. Finally she walked up to her room and closed the door resolutely as if she had made a decision and given emphatic expression to it. She then threw herself on her bed and lay for a time, staring at the ceiling.

“Seven o’clock near Klopstock’s grave,” she murmured to herself.

Shortly after that she walked down stairs and remained standing in the doorway over the veranda and walked slowly, deliberately, down the broad stone steps, pausing and lingering a while on every step, like a playful child, and looking at her feet as she moved them. When she reached the pebbled path of the winding walk she played with the little stones with the tip of her dainty slipper as if there were not a single thought passing through her mind. Presently she was standing before the marble-walled well in the centre of the garden and looked curiously at the carved figures on the outside as if she had never seen them before. Dimly she remembered that Albert had spoken of them the other day—they were mythological figures and he had explained

them to her. She recalled his face and the manner in which he looked at her as he spoke of the beautiful goddesses of Greece.

She was soon out of sight of the beautiful mansion on the hill, sauntering down the slope that led to the seashore. Along the Elbe was a cliff-walk that led to a promontory on which was the grave of him who sang of The Messiah.

The sun was going down but it was still long before sunset in this northern clime. There was a golden haze in the air, with hoards of mosquitoes and tiny insects in column formation flitting about like a dancing procession. Klopstock's grave was west of the Zorn villa, where the sun was sliding down the curving horizon and making the many-branched linden tree over the tomb look like a burnished bush. There was tumult in her brain and her heart was beating irregularly. A number of times she halted and half-turned, as if she were attempting to twist herself loose from the embrace of some invisible being, but soon again she proceeded on her way.

"I was afraid you wouldn't come," he said as he came running toward her. His teeth were almost chattering, his voice was strained.

"I shouldn't have come—I know I shouldn't," she was saying, scarcely glancing at him.

"Why do you despise me so?—"

He touched her hand which she withdrew quickly and put it back of her like an angered child.

"You don't know how miserable I feel—Hilda—." His voice was plaintive, pleading. "I know you detest me—You don't even care for my poems, the echoes of my heart. Oh, Hilda—just a word—"

"You make me so unhappy," she interrupted him. He thought he saw anger in her eyes.

"I am so sorry if my love makes you unhappy." His voice was now penitent, humble, beseeching. "But I can't help it, Hilda. We don't will love—love wills us. I understand. I am not blaming you—you can't help hating me as I can't help loving you. I am not as dull as you think. I understand—Some girl might love me and I mightn't care for her—"

Her eyes dilated; a pallor crept over her cheeks.

"Is that girl in Hamburg?" There was naiveté in her tone.

"There is no other girl. No one is in love with me. I was only explaining how nature works. One loves and the beloved loves another—"

“I am sure you have a girl in mind. Who is she?”

“I swear to you there is no one—”

“I am sure from the way you said it there is someone—anyhow, you wouldn’t tell me even if there were—”

“I would tell you the truth—I wouldn’t be ashamed to tell you if someone were in love with me. Oh, a long time ago—I was a youngster then.”

“Is she still in love with you?”

He waved his arms in despair.

“Oh, no, she is dead—But I am not thinking of anyone but you—”

“What did the other girl look like? Was she light or dark?”

“Oh, why speak of her—she is dead, I tell you—” he spoke impatiently.

“You must still be thinking of her or you wouldn’t remember her now. I am sure you are in love with her still—was she pretty?”

He was beside himself.

“I tell you she is dead—” There was exasperation in his tone.

“And you mean to tell me you never had a love affair since then?”

She was drawing an 8 on the ground with the tip of her slipper.

“Of course I have never loved anyone as I love you.”

“Then you did love her!”

“I might have had a boyish fancy—I wrote a poem about her—”

“And some day you’ll write a poem about me and all will be ended.”

“Hilda, why do you torture me so?—”

He clasped her hand and kissed it. She withdrew her hand and said he must not do this.

“I know I shouldn’t have come here—I know I shouldn’t—some one might have seen us—”

“And what if they did?”

“Oh, Albert, you don’t understand—”

He was about to seize her hand again but she ran down the path.

## IV.

When Hilda had suddenly left him he remained at Klopstock's grave until the stars appeared. He found the grave symbolic. The grave was the only place for a poet, he mused in despair—yes, a silent grave under a shady tree, the roar of the sea in the distance, the silence of fields around. Ah! the serenity and the beauty of lying still without surging blood, without agitated nerves, wrapt in a white shroud in the bosom of the cool earth, in peace, with no sound save the swaying of the branches and the chance song of a bird! The burden of youth was oppressing him, the presentiments of sorrows to come were in his heart. For the moment he wished he were dead—dead at the feet of the silent poet who had sung so gloriously of the Redeemer. He remained standing before the grave in sad contemplation of his plight. In vain had he consoled himself that Hilda loved him. She was just playing with him, he mused bitterly.

He presently fancied himself dead, stretched on the grass alongside the hillock which held the dust of the great poet, Hilda standing over his corpse and weeping. There was a touch of joy in his fantasy. Hilda weeping over his dead body!

He had no recollection of returning to his room. He was dimly conscious of trying to fall asleep when Klopstock opened the door softly and tripped in. Klopstock was wrapt in a white shroud and his face was of a deathly pallor. His face seemed so feminine, and the eyelashes drooped like Hilda's. Klopstock then waved an arm and exclaimed—

“Seven times the thund'rous strokes had rent the veil,  
When now the voice of God in gentle tone  
Was heard descending: ‘God is love,’ it spoke;  
‘Love, ere the worlds or their inhabitants  
To life were called’——”

Klopstock wept as he recited these immortal lines and his copious tears dropped on Albert's brow and curled into the corners of his mouth. A poet's tears were saltier than those of ordinary mortals, Albert was saying to himself as he felt the taste of the drops. He wondered what Rudolph was doing there. For it was not Klopstock but Rudolph standing at the foot of his bed. Rudolph was pulling Hilda by the arm and she was laughing—everybody was laughing, and the orchestra was playing at the Swiss pavilion on the Jungfernstieg. Strange that instead of the musicians it was the linden tree—the linden tree over Klopstock's grave—that stood in the middle of the musicians' platform. To the right of the tree was an open coffin, the lid lying alongside of it.



Somebody was reading a prayer—he could not tell whether it was in Latin or in Hebrew—yes, it was Aaron Hirsch reading from a prayer book, tears coursing down his bearded face.

“You are dead, Albert Zorn—you are dead—you are dead,” Hirsch was saying. Then he felt himself lifted into the coffin, the coffin was lowered, clods of earth falling upon the lid—thud! thud! thud!—he was choking—he was trying to get his breath . . .

When he awoke he remembered that he was to leave for Hamburg early that morning. Yes, somebody was knocking at his door. He dressed quickly, for he knew his uncle was an impatient man, and rushed downstairs, where he found him pacing up and down the drawingroom, a cigar between his teeth. He seemed angry, and when Albert bade him good morning he grunted. Soon Aunt Betty appeared, and told him to go to the dining-room and have his breakfast as they had already had theirs. The rest of the family had not yet risen.

Aunt Betty was kinder than visual. Before leaving she was very solicitous and kissed him affectionately.

Soon the carriage rolled away along the road lined with poplars, the rising sun shining cheerily, birds carolling merrily, the horses whipping their tails in high spirits . . .

## V.

At present Hamburg seemed to Albert even more prosaic than ever. He felt more lonesome, everybody bored him. As the master hums so do the hirelings sing. Everyone in the bank treated him as if he did not belong there, and the little courtesy he received was perfunctory, and out of respect for his uncle. They had no regard for a young man who wrote poetry and talked philosophy. Aaron Hirsch was the only one who showed him proper respect, but even he looked around as if afraid to be caught talking familiarly with the young idler.

On the day of his return from his uncle’s villa, Aaron clasped his hand and held it rather affectionately for a moment or so.

“I’ll bet you had a wonderful time. Isn’t the villa wonderful! Salomon in all his glory never had a finer palace. And the grounds!” He shrugged his shoulders with an expression of the inexpressible. “It made me think of the Garden of Eden. And that stream running through the woods back of the mansion—It’s just like the river Hiddekel in the Bible! Yes, sir, a veritable

Garden of Eden, with no beguiling serpent to cause trouble in the family—”

Aaron laughed a loud “Hi-hi” and “Ho-ho!” but he presently checked himself, with a serious grimace on his face.

“You don’t seem very happy—” He eyed him scrutinizingly. “Perhaps there was a beguiling serpent after all.” He emitted a forced little laugh.

“There is a beguiling serpent in every Garden of Eden,” replied Albert in a jesting tone.

Hirsch then began to talk of other things.

“I should like to take you to the Reform Temple,” he was saying, “where all the aristocrats go. I? No, I don’t belong there. I am an old-fashioned Jew, and orthodoxy is good enough for the likes of me. And to tell the truth—” he moved closer to Albert and lowered his voice as if he were about to confide a secret—“I don’t care much for this hocus-pocus reform. If I want to pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, I need no groaning organ or chanting choir to carry my prayers to heaven. No, not me. Whenever I visit the Reform synagogue I am reminded of the time the Prussian King was here last winter. There was so much parading and drumming and shooting of cannon in his honor that when he addressed the people no one could hear a word he said. Yes, my child, I am an old-fashioned Jew. I love my Hebrew prayers with all their trimmings as I love my *Chalet* cooked in the old way—I prefer it to the best *Rost-Braten* prepared by your uncle’s chef. When I want to pray I wrap myself in my *talis* and pray. I don’t care for the Protestant hymns Judaized. I prefer a heart-to-heart talk with my God in the language we both understand—God and I—and no elocutionary nonsense. I mean no offense, God forbid—no, no, I know my place and mean no criticism of my betters. Your esteemed uncle belongs to the Reformers, and I get my bread and butter from him. Indeed, I do not mean to criticize my superiors, but when I get to the Temple I get the shivers, so help me God! There is no warmth in it. Doctor Kley, the preacher, is afraid to make a gesture with his arms for fear he might be mistaken for a Jew—” Hirsch bleated long and juicily—“and the congregation sit as if they are afraid to stir and awaken God from His slumber. A hearty prayer for me! The God of Israel never cared for Hamburg manners.”

“Why don’t you try and convert my uncle?” Albert goaded him on.

“I convert your uncle? There are too many conversions already; and far be it from me—a common, everyday man—to proselyte. Aaron Hirsch knows when to talk and when to hold his tongue.”

“Why not turn Christian and be done with it?” asked Albert, hiding an

inner chuckle.

Aaron placed the index finger at his elongated nose and, glancing at the young man sideways, his head slightly inclined to one side, said, "Christianity, my child, is no better than Judaism. There is Catholicism for instance—I went into a Catholic church the other day and the sadness of it all and the flickering of candles and the smell of incense made me feel that God had just died and had not been embalmed soon enough. No, no, my child, a living, cheerful God for Aaron Hirsch!"

"How about the Protestant religion?"

"That's a little better, I own. I visited the Old Protestant Church only last year. No crosses, no effigies, no incense, no smell of the dead—honestly, if they left Jesus out of their ritual I might be tempted to let the Protestants join our synagogue."

Albert found Hirsch stimulating. As in the case of books Albert did not find Hirsch valuable for his own sake but for his jabber that aroused new thoughts in his brain.

After business hours he could not remain in his room and yet would accept no invitations to call upon those who desired to show him hospitality. He often left his room in self-defense against Frau Rodbertus' monologues. She was tall and flat, her hair parted in the middle, a gown sweeping to the floor and only betraying the tips of her slippers. Her face was always in repose, her lips pouting, as if she were ready to be painted at any moment. She habitually had her hands clasped in front of her, even when standing, and when in action (she never stopped talking) she slightly moved her head from side to side with the coquetry of a young girl on her first introduction to a presentable young man. Albert had no difficulties in finding out that the pretty girl he saw at her house on the day of his arrival was the daughter of a French emigré, a relation of hers.

Although, as directed by his uncle, Aaron volunteered to show him the city, Albert preferred to make his own discoveries. He tramped the streets, dropped into cafés, studied the people about him and when bed-time came was exhausted and irritated. There was no variety of types here to arouse his lively imagination. Big, rotund men with red faces, and insipid flaxen haired youths with expressionless eyes and duel scars; stout, dull women, and flighty girls who flaunted their sex in the face of every passerby on the Jungfernstieg.

He would return to his room overwhelmed by a feeling of sordidness. No new thoughts, no fresh sentiments, nothing but stagnation. He was in despair. He feared the poet in him had suddenly died. An alarming thought raced

through his brain one evening. Was the ambition of his youth a vain dream? He picked up a volume of Goethe, of Lessing, of Klopstock, but they received no response from his soul; they did not thrill him; their beauty was meaningless to him; their imageries evoked no visions in his mind. A terrible fear possessed him. Was he becoming sterile? Was his imagination barren? He tried to express his present despair but even that failed him. His mind was a blank. He felt like a singer who suddenly finds his voice failing. He had not yet learned that beauty often springs from sorrow, that despair often begets ecstasy.

## VI.

As time went on he felt more lonesome, more isolated, more bored. He was invited to places but he found the people uninteresting. He was only enlarging his gallery of faces. They were all discussing the same subjects, repeating the same gossip, rehashing the same anecdotes. He was young, imaginative, and craved novelty; and he was too young to know that in his day, no different from the day of the King Solomon, there was nothing new under the sun. He had yet to learn that whatever new there is in life is in one's own mind and that there are but few people in any generation who have mind enough to see it.

And what seemed to others complicated was so simple to him. People blabbed about religion, fought over theology, hated each other because of sect, as if these were vital principles of life while to him they were mere playthings, playthings for children. He could not grasp what the struggle was about. Though considered irreligious he loved the Bible and loved God as Spinoza had loved Him, as all people of real intellect loved Him. No other book was as precious to him as the Bible—he had read it over and over and was still reading it with refreshing joy, and its poetry, its allegories, its legends, its fables and parables, and its inundating beauty captivated his soul—but he found nothing mysterious in it except the mystery there was in all things beautiful. To him who sees clearly all things are simple. What were the Jesuits and the Lutherans and the Mendelsohnians and the Talmudists and the Kantians and the Fichteans—what were they all fighting over? Did any one really believe that God created the universe in six days? he asked himself time and again. Did any sane person earnestly claim the serpent myth to have been a real fact? Did any one earnestly believe the hundreds of allegories scattered throughout the Great Book to be actual happenings? Did any one believe in the historical parts in the Bible any more than in Persian or Grecian myths? Did any one entertain faith in the immaculate conception? Of course, he knew the

ignorant and superstitious believed in fetishes, but he could not fully comprehend that the so-called enlightened sincerely believed in all these. He looked into his own mind and believed he understood all minds. He judged all minds by his own. At times, in his wanderings through the streets, brandishing his cane and smiling cynically, he said to himself that either he was an imbecile and did not possess the ordinary faculties of a human being or the world was peopled with idiots. There could be no compromise between the two; either he saw clearly or the millions of struggling bigots saw the truth. With the sublime self-assurance of youth he knew he was right and laughed pitifully at the erring souls around him. Yes, he understood Voltaire. Who would not laugh at the sight of an army of children dressed up in clothes of grown men and women? Who would not scoff at the prattling babes imitating the language of their elders? The children must have some things to play with or to fight over, he mused. Religion or War? Since the sound of cannon had ceased, the children of men now engaged with other playthings. When everything else fails religion supplies the demand for a universal plaything. War and Religion—he almost preferred the former. The ugly spectacle of Hamburg's factionalism disgusted him. And whenever strife is ripe—he beheld all history at a glance—after every great war, after every economic upheaval, after every revolution, people turned against his race. He now understood why his people were called chosen.

His thoughts soon turned to Greece as one tired of a long winter in the north turns to the sunny south. Greece of old was the sunshine in his dreary existence. He could not understand the petty strife of the theology of his day but he grasped the meaning of Old Greece. The one was sordid prose, the other idyllic poetry. Prose must speak in exact terms, poetry may be fantastic. He yearned for deities rising from ocean waves, for a god on Olympus, for goddesses with harps and rainbows and vessels of nectar. The gods of Hamburg savoured of incense and garlic.

Hilda was to him what the deities were to the Old Greeks, an object of adoration. She was his Venus, a composite of all things beautiful, his illusion. In his present state she was the only drop of sweetness in his bitter cup. All his innate beauty-worship, and all his vision, was centered upon her. What attributes were not hers his fancy supplied. And the more hopeless his romantic fancy had become the more he craved her love—he loved to run after the retreating horizon. At times he would become vexed and swear that he would love her no more. Twice he had sent her poems and she had not even acknowledged them, yet he would send her another poem. It was a sweet lyric, the offspring of pure ecstasy. It had leaped into being like a bud bursting into bloom. For days he had hummed it to himself—stroked the petals—and finally

dispatched it to her. He wanted her to know his great sorrow. He was sure she would understand him now. But like its predecessors, it remained unacknowledged and unanswered.

A few days later on his return from the midday meal, Aaron Hirsch came up to him, his perspiring face basking in a sunny smile. "I suppose you have dined with the family today."

His voice was ingratiating. Albert looked puzzled.

"Were you not invited? Your esteemed aunt was here and your lovely cousin, Fräulein Hilda, and, I heard your esteemed uncle say they were going to have a little family dinner."

Aaron clasped his little beard as if he were shaking hands with a dear friend as he proceeded, "Perhaps I should not have told you this, but you know it hurts me—yes, it hurts me to see you unappreciated. Of course, I did not dare say all there was on my mind but one day I said to your esteemed uncle—'Herr Banquier', says I, 'that nephew of yours will yet do you great honor', says I—these are the very words I said. I hate to flatter you but I told him a thing or two about you that did you no harm, for I know there are others—I'll mention no names—there are others who whisper other things in your esteemed uncle's ear." And with a hushing movement of his hand he added, "You know the saying, 'An ox has a long tongue but cannot speak.' One must guard his bread and butter—I have a wife and seven children!" With a finger at his lips he made a helpless grimace.

Albert's face clouded. He did not discuss his personal affairs with Aaron, though he often encouraged the little man's monologues. Aaron appealed to his sense of humor. His expressions, his gestures, his comments, were mirth-provoking. Today he made no rejoinder. He wanted Hirsch to leave him alone. His aunt and Hilda visited the bank and had not taken the trouble to see him—Hilda, to whom he had sent his finest lyrics only a few days ago!

He rose from his work and, without saying a word to anyone, left the bank. He overheard Mr. Elfenbein mumble something about his idleness but he did not care. A thousand needles were pricking at the base of his brain. He could not stand still. With cane in hand he sauntered along the Jungfernstieg, listlessly watched the swans in the Alster basin, and finally landed in the Swiss Pavilion, Hamburg's most festive café.

## VII.

When he next visited his uncle's summer home and met Hilda he sought in vain for a trace of self-consciousness in her countenance. She received him as cordially and as calmly as Aunt Betty. She inquired about his progress at the bank, whether he had made friends at Hamburg, quite indifferently. She smilingly "hoped" that his impressions of "the vulgar Hamburgers"—a phrase he had used—had changed. He scented a challenge in this remark and rushed to prove the assertion.

The conversation was soon interrupted. Aunt Betty joined them. And she usually managed to be around whenever Albert talked to Hilda.

One afternoon he spied Hilda alone.

He had been wandering around from ennui. He was almost sorry that he had come here. He found life here as monotonous as in Hamburg; at times even more so. There was here too much enforced etiquette and formality to suit his independent spirit. Here he was not himself. His uncle, his aunt, the guests—this time there were a few dignitaries, officials and such—everyone was so proper, the talk was so stereotyped, that he found himself in a state of boredom. Hilda was the only person to relieve the monotony, but she seemed hedged about on all sides. Boldly he made for where she was seated.

He felt that she knew of his approach, but she gave no sign, except that she appeared more absent minded than usual.

"Why do you avoid me, Hilda?" he begged. He did not realize that unto the lover that begs nothing shall be given.

"It's best that I should."

She was looking away from him. She was seated as if posing, her left elbow on her knee.

"Hilda, don't my verses mean anything to you?"

"I like your rhymes very much—I have often wondered how you could think of all those rhymes—"

He was beside himself. So that was all his verses meant to her. They were well rhymed! They were mere beads strung on a string—not even a rosary!

"Why did you not write to me?—why didn't you at least acknowledge the receipt of my poems?" There was a cry of humiliation in his voice.

She was silent for a moment. She knitted her brows as if studying how to put her thoughts into words. Then her face darkened; animation suddenly leaped into her sea-green eyes.

“And I have thought of you every moment,” he continued in a plaintive, reproachful tone, “and dreamed of you—and day-dreamed of you—” There was a spiteful smile around his lips as he added, “In my day-dreaming you could not shun me—you couldn’t push me away. You see, there is some advantage in being an imaginative poet even though you despise him—”

The color was rising in her face, her breast heaved. His words were like the suggestive passages in the novels she was forbidden to read but which she had read clandestinely.

“You must not say these things to me,” she presently said, catching her breath, her cheeks burning.

“Why shouldn’t I? I love you. I do not care who knows it. I lie awake in the darkness of my room visualizing your presence close to me. You can’t forbid my loving you—”

There were unshed tears in his half-closed eyes. There were tears in his voice. It was his vision, his words of despair, that brought the tears.

“How can you talk this way, Albert.”

Her voice was soft, caressing; there was tenderness—a soothing tenderness—in the manner she pronounced his name. “You know, it is—” she paused as if she could not utter what was in her mind—“You know it’s impossible—”

“Why impossible?” His voice changed quickly and he spoke rapidly, impulsively. “Impossible because I am a poor poet, because I have no gold to offer you, because—” He checked himself.

She was pensively silent, which gave him hope. On their way to the house she seemed more solicitous about the things that interested him.

That evening Aunt Betty was more demonstrative in her hospitality to him. She prevailed upon him to stay a few days longer, and he saw in this, too, a hopeful sign. He saw connection between her attitude and his talk with Hilda.

He spent a hilarious evening. He was his old self again, the loveable, witty boy whom the family had met in Gunsdorf a few years ago. Before he went to bed he wrote letters home. One to his mother, telling her of the wonderful time he was having at Uncle Leopold’s villa, and begging her to thank Aunt Betty for her many kindnesses to him; another to his sister, in which he guardedly told her of Hilda’s beauty and loveliness; and still another to his devoted friend, Christian Lutz. To him he poured out his whole heart. He told him of his great passion for Hilda, of the unmistakable signs of reciprocity, of his great happiness.



“Tell it not in Gath,” he wound up his letter in Biblical phraseology, “I am in love—madly in love. As the lily is among the thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters of Hamburg. Her lips are like a thread of scarlet and her neck—no, it is not like the tower David builded for an armory; it is white and firm; neither long nor short, a slender pedestal for the prettiest Grecian head. I charge you, ye son of Gundsorf, by the roses of Sharon, by the lilies of the valley, that ye stir not my love till she pleases. Christian, dear, I feel like a drunken god intoxicated with the elixir of love, bidding all the angels of the heavenly choir to join me in singing ‘Hallelujah’. Hamburg does not seem as sordid as it did at first. If my present spirit continues I may even learn to love the sons of Hammonia. But don’t grow jealous. I shall never stop loving my Christian. You were my first love.”

“Yes, my good Christian, I feel like a good natured, maudlin sot, bursting with song. I should like to fling my arms around everybody’s neck and shower kisses upon every one in sight. I should like to hug the whole universe and bedew it with my tears of joy. For I have good reason to believe Hilda loves me.”

## VIII.

He left more than elated. Unlike on the occasion of his first visit Hilda now treated him with manifest kindness. On the morning of his departure she let him kiss her hand without protest and he gazed into her calm clear eyes without embarrassment.

On his way back to the city he recalled every little incident, raked up every triviality—symptoms of her love, he called them—and with all the inductions and deductions of logic adduced conclusively that Hilda was as much in love with him as he was with her.

There was a mishap on the way. An axle broke and delayed the homeward journey several hours. The accident did not disturb him. He rather welcomed it. He was alone and while the driver went to the nearest village to get the axle repaired Albert stretched himself at the edge of a field of ripening grain and watched the colorful patches in the sky. In spots the clouds seemed piled upon one another, a heap of them, with protruding ends trimmed with saffron and jade, and some were like huge rugged castles, with many turrets. Soon his eyes were fixed upon one to the left. It was a long stretch of watery green with a number of peaks and lower down there appeared to be a row of windows. Yes, it looked like his uncle’s villa. In the foreground was the broad terrace, back of

it the long doors and French windows, and farther back, higher up, was the roof. The last window to the right belonged to Hilda's room. He gazed upon it intently and was conscious of a peculiar pleasurable feeling. And there, farther down, near the horizon was a cloud in the shape of the marble well, with sphinxes engraved on the side, and those streaks of light were like the poplars along the path leading to the beach. For a moment he was superstitious. That was a sign from heaven. He saw good omens in everything about him. A lark was rising, trilling short, sweet notes in his flight toward the clouds. The lark was himself.

Two young peasant women were walking past him with scythes and sickles slung over their shoulders. They were barefooted, bareheaded, with short skirts of unbleached linen and loose shirts that looked like, blouses. They glanced at him lying on his back, then looked at each other, and burst out laughing. The older one said something to the younger of the two who answered with a resounding slap on the older one's back, and they both roared with laughter once more. He was conjuring up the image of Hilda when the last peal of laughter broke the spell. He looked around. The peasant girls halted in the adjoining field for work.

Soon they began to sing a peasant love song. Albert sat up and could see their movements through the ripe grain stalks in front of him—their coarse sunburnt faces, their naked feet with their splaying toes—their sickles making rhythmical music as they swished against the falling grain. He was vexed with himself for watching them—for permitting his thoughts to dwell upon them. He felt it a sacrilege to think of them and Hilda at the same time. Presently Hilda's image faded, the clouds in the sky were nothing but meaningless vapor, and the blood in his heart was surging rapidly. He shuddered. He could not take his eyes off the stooped peasant girl, the younger one, who was only a hundred yards away from him. Ugly thoughts raced through his brain. Strange appetites stirred within him. He would dismiss them but he could not. She was singing a love song; and presently the other joined in. They were singing a peasant harvest song, laughing at the same time—

*“Bäuerlein, Bauerlein, tick! tick! tack!  
Ei, wie ist denn der Geschmack  
Von dem Korn und von dem Kern,  
Dass ich's unterscheiden lern’?  
Bäuerlein, Bauerlein, spricht und lacht,  
Finklein nimm dich nur in acht,  
Dass ich, wenn ich dresch' und klopf'  
Dich nicht treff, auf deinen Kopf!”*

It was the younger of the two that was singing in a mimicking voice, the older one humming after her. The younger one was a girl of about seventeen—the same age as Hilda—but was sturdier, her neck was like “the tower of David builded for an armory,” her squinting eyes full of mischief.

He would not lie to himself; a power more overwhelming was drawing him to that peasant girl with the sickle, every movement of hers was another tug at his passions . . .

He rose to his feet and stretched himself. The sun was hot and the air was dry and the peasant girl—she had just straightened a bit, with the sickle in hand, brushing a few strands of hair from her face, and was about to bend down again when she caught his eye. She glanced at him slyly with her squinting eyes. Her companion was now at the other end of the field working industriously. Albert looked at her boldly, the blood in his heart pumping furiously . . .

The driver with the axle appeared in the distance. Albert shrank a step, trembling in every limb. He again threw himself on the ground. He would not be caught by the driver looking at the reaper. An undefinable shyness seized him. Lying on his belly, his head slightly raised, he was awaiting the approaching driver. He soon heard his footsteps in the distance—slow, deliberate steps coming nearer. The footsteps suddenly halted. Albert saw the driver near the reaper. He heard voices, low voices, of the driver and the girl.

“I’ll cut you—look out. I’ll cut you.”

It was the girl’s voice he heard. Albert peered through the stalks of grain, he saw without being seen, his blood rushing to his head. He heard a chuckle, the sickle dropped from her hand. She feigned to cry for help but in a voice he could scarcely hear; the other reaper worked steadily on at the other end of the field. The driver and the peasant girl were now hidden in the tall grain . . .

The driver soon returned to his horses, grazing by the wayside. He was a stocky man in the early thirties, with a red face and a forehead bloodlessly white from the pressure of his cap. His face was now of a deeper red, his eyes seemed bloodshot, and he was panting.

He busied himself with the cart.

“Oh, but she is strong,” he said, half to himself. Albert was watching the driver adjust the axle.

“Who is she?” asked Albert.

“Do I know? From the neighborhood!”

He emitted a little laugh and proceeded with his work.

Presently he and the driver were in the cart, the wheels creaking, the horses plodding along the road.

The peasant girl waved her sickle, the driver waved his whip, the horse started off at a livelier trot in a cloud of dust.

Albert leaned back in his seat, lost in thought. He was puzzled. He knew the driver had a wife and five children, yet passing a girl he had never seen before and desiring her he made her his without courting, without brooding, without dreaming and musing, without being troubled about the scheme of things. They loved, they hated, they killed (if their king told them to) and begot others like themselves.

He looked at the driver as if he had beheld him for the first time. The peasant's face was now calm, its natural red, his bluish eyes had cleared; they were no longer bloodshot; he was looking blankly in front of him, with whip in hand, was looking over the horse's head. He had evidently forgotten about the reaper. She was no more to him than the field of rye in which she worked, no more than the bread he had eaten that morning, the glass of beer he had drunk the day before.

Albert's heart was filled with envy, envy of the peasant. He envied him because he was so unlike himself, always thinking, always speculating on what was right and what was wrong. Albert wondered if he could make a peasant of himself and stop thinking and brooding. His thoughts drifted, he thought of Elfenbein, of Rudolph, of the chattering Hirsch and of scores of other men and women he knew. None of them were like the driver, and he could not be like any of them either. He thought of his uncle—a shrewd banker, a charitable man, a noble soul—no, he could not be like him either. He thought of his own father—kind and weak and listless—no, he was different. A flock of migrating birds were over his head—a path of black dots against the blue sky; a cow by the wayside stretched her broad neck, parted her jaws, and emitted a hoarse “moo—oo!” The woods in the distance answered “Moo—oo!”; the horse clinked his hoofs against a chance stone in the sandy road . . .

Without knowing why, Albert's heart was filled with sadness. He sighed audibly. He was depressed because he was unlike anybody and because he knew he could not be like anybody else. God had made him different, had made him a misfit, a round peg in a square hole. His thoughts wandered. No, he did not wish to be like anybody else. Yet he was vexed. He felt dreadfully alone. Had he not been afraid of the driver's ridicule he would have wept aloud—because—because he was unlike anyone and did not want to be like anyone

else. If only Hilda had loved him! It suddenly flashed upon his mind that she did not love him.

## IX.

But the next week he was again hopeful, even confident, of Hilda's love. He had written to her and she had answered him. Rejoicing!

His hopes were rising quickly. If only he could make her appreciate his poems! He felt that she disliked his verses. She did not seem to understand that the poems he had shown her were inspired by her and were meant for her eyes alone.

One day he felt the fateful moment had come. He was again at his uncle's villa. It was early October, the family was preparing to leave for their city home. It was a gloomy day, gray clouds in the sky, winds chasing withered leaves against tree trunks and fences. Yet there was joy in his heart. Hilda had praised one of his poems. He hung upon her words as if they had emanated from the lips of the greatest critic.

"If you only knew how many more beautiful poems you could inspire me to write," he was saying enthusiastically, with plaintive begging in his voice.

"How?"

She said this absently, between two numbers of embroidery stitches she was counting.

"By promising that you'll marry me some day."

She seemed caught unawares. She dropped a few stitches and seemed annoyed.

Her head moved from side to side without looking up. She seemed very busy with her needle.

"Can't you even give me hope—in the distant future?"

The color in her cheek was rising.

"You mustn't think of me, Albert," she said, without raising her eyes. "It's impossible." The last few words were spoken under her breath, scarcely audible.

Silence. He did not plead, he made no attempt at persuasion. There was the finality of death in her tone.

He returned to the city in a state of utter hopelessness. Conquest was denied everywhere.

He imputed to her a thousand motives for rejecting him; he blamed his uncle; he saw his aunt at the bottom of it. His sorrow deepened as the days passed. He sat in his room and brooded and then wandered through the streets like a restless vagrant. He was telling himself he would never survive this blow, and out of his poignant pain and the anguish of his soul sprang verses of despair.

His agony had become unendurable. Nothing mattered now. He did not care whether he pleased his uncle; he did not care whether he stayed at the bank or was dismissed. His sorrow was unbearable. He had to talk, to some one about it. He finally unbosomed himself to his friend, Christian. It was nearly midnight, his tallow candle sputtering.

## X.

Having finished the letter he left his room. He meant to take a stroll, as he often did late at night when despair seized him.

On his way out, Frau Rodbertus greeted him cheerily, "*Guten Abend.*"

"*Guten Abend,*" he returned sulkily, and was about to pass her.

"*Bon soir,*" another voice called.

He paused. He recognized the voice of Eugenie Chauraux, the girl of whom he had caught a glimpse on the first day of his arrival here. He had since met her a number of times. She was a frequent visitor at Frau Rodbertus'. He had often admired her luminous brown eyes and black hair and her beautiful hands. Her hands particularly attracted him. They were not small but owing to her long fingers they seemed like small palm leaves, and they appeared peculiarly soothing when shaking hands with her; in spite of her warm clasp her hand was cooling.

Eugenie always talked French to him. She had told him she was glad to find one who spoke her native tongue so well and that she detested the French spoken by most Germans. Albert was not averse to flattery. He had often remained chatting with her while the sly widow would steal out of the room and leave "the children" alone. Frau Rodbertus was childless and was very fond of Eugenie. She was also fond of her lodger. She mothered him, and he liked to be mothered. She would frequently scold him for his peevishness in a gentle, motherly tone and would cater to his whims. At times he would act

towards her as if she were his mother. If his handkerchiefs were not easily found in the proper place, or when he forgot to send his linen to the washerwoman, or if an expected letter had not come, he would storm like a spoiled child as if Frau Rodbertus were to blame, and she would laugh or scold him with maternal good nature.

She was sentimental, and when she learned that Albert wrote poetry she became even more solicitous and obliging. She had the tenderness and delicacy of a French woman. Her voice was soft, almost soothing, and when she would pucker her lips and turn upon him her large dark eyes he would at once become docile. And while he had determined to keep his poetic aspirations to himself—he had been warned by his uncle that publicity of this fact might hurt him in his standing as a young business man—he frequently forgot his resolution and spoke of his *Lieder* to her. He even recited some of them to her. He had found in her an enthusiastic audience, almost as enthusiastic as Christian. And though he had abjured her not to divulge his secret he knew that she had spoken of his verses to Eugenie. The girl never made mention of it but he felt that she knew.

“*Bon soir, Mademoiselle,*” he said to Eugenie and was about to proceed.

Eugenie’s face was turned upwards, the candle light through the open door catching the light of her eyes. Albert hesitated in his step.

“It’s too hot to walk, Herr Zorn” said Frau Rodbertus.

“Just for a stroll and then to bed.”

“It’s too early for bed,” Frau Rodbertus said laughingly.

Eugenie’s eyes were upon him.

Albert sat down on the threshold next to Eugenie.

After a space Frau Rodbertus asked Eugenie to play something.

“It’s terribly hot, and too late,” pleaded Eugenie.

“It is never too hot nor too late for music,” coaxed Frau Rodbertus.

When Albert joined in the request, Eugenie rose promptly and in rising supported her palm against Albert’s knee. He was pleasantly conscious of the contact of her hand. As he rose to follow her into the house his erstwhile loneliness was robbed of its sadness. Without analyzing himself he felt the genial warmth of these two as contrasted to the frigid kindness of his relatives. The former were human, stripped of all artifice, the latter formal, studied, cultivated.

Albert had no trained ear for music but his knowledge of melody, like all knowledge that came to him, was intuitive. And although his preference for music was limited to vocal and the violin—the staccato-like notes of the piano never appealed to him—he had a keen appreciation of all music.

Eugenie played with feeling, her slender body swaying with the rhythm of the music, casting a shadow in the room which was brightened by only one candle. Albert found himself making mental notes of everything about her. Her body swayed with the pliancy of a sapling. The irregular features of her face blended into a harmony of their own. Her fine eyebrows sloped at the ends abruptly like Japanese eyes, her nose rather narrow which made it seem longer than it was, and the middle of her upper lip protruded like a half opened bud. When she opened her mouth it was the upper lip that rose with a sudden jerk upward, disclosing longish white teeth. Her laughter—for her faintest smile was a musical laugh—was confined to her eyes; sparks of sunshine danced in the iris.

He soon forgot all about his vexing thoughts. He had no thoughts. Seated indolently, with eyes almost closed, he yielded to the pleasure of the moment. He was half-dreaming, the music but vague, distant echoes in his ears. And Eugenie played selection after selection, without being urged, without even being asked. She seemed eager to play, to go on with the galloping of her emotions, like a frightened horse that goes tearing wildly through the streets. She never turned her eyes either way but sat bent over the keys, breathing fast as she played.

Frau Rodbertus, her arms folded, watched the girl's glowing cheeks. She understood Eugenie. She had not yet forgotten her own youth, and those heavenly moments when one's blood courses like sparkling Burgundy. She sat in the shadow, sat and sighed softly as she remembered those blissful moments of her own life, never, never to come back. No, she was not envious. The profligate liberality of the drunkard was in her heart. She soon tiptoed out of the room and into the courtyard, unnoticed by either Eugenie or Albert, and when the last note had died away, she breathed softly, her very being in suspense.

Eugenie at last rose from the piano and stretched her arms as if she were alone in the room: She barely looked in Albert's direction.

“You play beautifully,” he murmured.

She remained standing in the darkened part of the room, beyond the circle of the dim candle-light, her fingers clasped in front of her, without moving.

He made another remark but that, too, remained unanswered. A few more



silent moments. Neither moved. Albert was watching her silhouette, astir with semi-conscious feelings.

She soon passed him silently, her dress barely brushing his clothes. He rose and followed her in silence. Frau Rodbertus was not outside. The little courtyard was deserted—nothing but the lonely pine-tree in the centre casting an almost invisible shadow in the darkness. Not a sound anywhere. A voice from the street accentuated the stillness of the enclosed courtyard.

Eugenie re-seated herself on the door-step and Albert followed her example as if he were mimicking her. They heard footsteps inside the house, through the open door,—the soft, pattering, slippared footsteps of Frau Rodbertus—and soon the glimmer of the candle-light was gone.

Albert became more conscious of Eugenie's nearness, of the torpid heat, of the intense darkness. Presently his eyes penetrated the darkness and he saw the outline of Eugenie's face, loose strands of her hair breaking the curved lines. They sat for a few moments like bashful children brought together for the first time and left alone.

"It's getting late—I must go home," she soon said and rose abruptly.

He became conscious of his heart-beats. He did not rise. Something checked his voice.

She went into the house and he heard her calling "Good night" to Frau Rodbertus, who answered that she was coming down to accompany her home.

Albert jumped up and said he would see her home. Eugenie rushed up the stairs and some words were exchanged between her and Frau Rodbertus and she soon came down and accepted his proffered escort.

They walked through the courtyard gate silently. He wished to touch her arm, to help her across the step of the portal, but he was keenly conscious of diffidence and barely touched her elbow, quickly letting it go.

He grew more loquacious after they had covered some distance. He was telling her how much he admired the French and that he had loved them from his early childhood.

"My father hates the Germans," said she with a nervous laugh. "He would like to go back to France but mother died last year and he has many debts in the city. As soon as he pays his obligations we'll go back home."

Albert insisted that one must hate no one.

"But you can't love everybody."

He agreed that one could not love everybody.

They were now passing through a main thoroughfare, encountering more pedestrians.

“*Guten Abend, Herr Zorn,*” a cordial voice addressed Albert.

He turned and saw little Aaron Hirsch, accompanied by his lean little wife. Aaron was walking in front, his hands behind, letting his gnarled cane drag over the sidewalk, his wife lagging half a step behind.

On his return home Albert made no light. He liked the darkness. His headache was gone, his bitterness departed, but he was sleepless. Eugenie’s presence had filled him with a pacifying joy. Something had stimulated him without irritation.

He soon found himself comparing Eugenie with Hilda and the difference in the atmosphere of their respective presences. Hilda was German, German to the core in spite of her Semitic blood. Her keen sense of caste, her haughty manner because of her father’s wealth, her materialistic outlook upon life, her lack of self-abandon—all the well-defined traits of the wealthy German, were easily discernible in her. Albert felt all this as he contemplated his beloved, and yet he was drawn to her. But her attraction for him was tantalizing, and made him restive, while that of Eugenie was free from this. Eugenie’s presence filled him with a pacifying joy, without irritation; it made him conscious of her charm without combative influences. He vaguely wondered if a man could love two women at the same time. Why not? One could love two children with the same devotion at the same time. And then one unexpectedly comes across an exotic flower—with the perfume and color of the tropics—and yet loves none the less the rose and the lily. If one loves the rose is there any reason why he could not at the same time love the lily? As he prepared to retire a fugitive memory flitted across his brain. Eugenie had said something about blue eyes. He was conscious of disappointment. For while his eyes appeared blue they were really greenish. He wondered if Eugenie was equally fond of greenish eyes.

When he was in bed, lapsing into sleep, Eugenie’s face was before him, and he remembered her laugh. Hilda never laughed so freely, so wholeheartedly; there was always restraint in her laughter as there was restraint felt in everything about her. He thought of warbling of a canary, the voice flowing joyously into the air. And he also liked the dancing sunshine in her eyes when she laughed. Every time her upper lip rose he felt a strong desire to kiss her on the mouth. And that hand of hers—those long, soft, cool, yet clinging, fingers! His last semi-conscious thought was of those clinging fingers . . .

## XI.

“That was a pretty girl you walked with last evening,” Aaron Hirsch remarked, and, rolling his large gray eyes, emitted a cackle, “It takes a poet to know what is what—hey?”

This magpie repeated the same remark to Albert’s “esteemed uncle.” He only phrased it a little differently.

“Your esteemed nephew is rapidly learning the ways of Hamburg,” Aaron said to the banker, with a cringing, ingratiating laugh. “If you had seen him stroll along Beckerstrasse with a brunette on his arm you would have imagined him a born Hamburger.”

Leopold Zorn grew angry and sent Aaron about his business. A few minutes later he called him back.

“I meant no harm, Herr Banquier,” Aaron was making obsequious apologies. “May the Lord so help me, I meant no offense to your esteemed nephew. Far be it from me to even hint at any offense to the most remote relative of my benefactor. No, indeed. The girl he walked with was no hussy on the Jungfernstieg. She is a most respectable girl. That she is, Herr Banquier; I happen to know her father. I sold him a lottery ticket last year and he won fifty marks at the first drawing. A very honorable man is M’sieu Charaux—a relative of the widow Rodbertus—a very fine woman with whom your esteemed nephew is lodging. Indeed, the girl is a real lady—what people in your high social station would call a *Mademoiselle*. You need have no fear about your esteemed nephew—no, indeed; I keep my eye on him all the time. Blood certainly will tell. He is a well-behaved young man—a chip off the old block, as the saying goes.”

Admonishing Aaron not to discuss his nephew, the banker told him to keep his eye on the young man.

“That I will, sir,” Hirsch assured his patron.

## XII.

Opening the door of his lodging a few days later Albert noticed Eugenie talking with Frau Rodbertus. They were in the little parlor. He wondered what they were always talking about, this young girl and that middle aged woman. He wished to walk past them, up the stairs, to his room, but the parlor door was

open and he could not pass unnoticed. Besides, he was lonesome and liked to talk to them—to Eugenie. There was something about her that always caused his lonesomeness to disappear. With her he felt at home. She made him forget Hilda.

Eugenie was seated close to Frau Rodbertus, leaning affectionately against the older woman, the candle light flickering on a table close by.

They soon laughingly began to talk of love. Albert called it a malady, which, he declared, was in some cases incurable. The widow laughed indulgently, with the tolerance of older people for the sweet nonsense of the young. Eugenie's eyes were serious and she vouchsafed no comment.

Frau Rodbertus was to have escorted Eugenie home but Albert would not hear of it.

He took Eugenie's arm carelessly, without any timidity, without even feeling the tremor of her arm as he touched it. Eugenie was silent as they walked through the dark quiet streets. Presently her hand touched his, and he clasped it, feeling the fingers moist and cool, and he playfully straightened her fingers one by one without resistance from her. Her fingers were slender and soft, and he was conscious of a strong desire to carry them to his lips.

She did not permit him to take her all the way home. "You know my father is very strict and would be horrified if he knew I allowed you to walk home with me in the evening."

They stopped a few doors from her house. She lived in a dark narrow street devoid of street lamps.

"You are so sympathetic," he was saying to her, referring to her attitude rather than her words. She had extended her hand to him but he was in no haste to part. He could see her eyes in the dark. They were fixed upon his face sympathetically, and they were so close to each other.

Suddenly—he never could recall how it came about—his hands began to creep along her arms—they crept slowly, barely touching her sleeves, from the wrists upward—until the tips of his sensitive fingers felt the contact of her slender shoulders—he felt their smooth roundness, the yielding softness of the velvet garment over them—and then his arms entwined her. When their lips met she caught her breath with an involuntary little gasp—half sob, half cry, and clung to him grippingly for a moment but soon rested in his arms, scarcely breathing, with the stillness of death. For a bare second he was frightened. He could not hear her breathe.

"Eugenie," he whispered. He now held her at arm's length and peered into

her face, but it was so dark that he could only see her dilated eyes. She was just staring at him, mystified at the first kiss from a man's lips. "Eugenie," he whispered again, but he only heard her catching her breath in response. He bent forward and kissed her moist slender fingers and bade her good night. Her fingers clung to him as they parted, almost drawing him back. "Good night," he repeated. Her reply was no louder than her breathing.

They parted.

He walked away a few steps, turned around, and halted. He saw a shadow moving toward her house. When he saw the door open he walked away as fast as his legs could carry him, as if he were speeding away from a scene of crime. He also entered his room stealthily. And when in bed he tried to understand what had happened. It all seemed like a dream. He tried to persuade himself it was a dream. He was in love with Hilda. He was sure Hilda was the only one he loved. Then his mind recalled the scene of the reapers. Was he like the driver, that beast-like peasant? He sighed. He found himself pitying Eugenie—that sweet, gentle, trusting Eugenie—and despising himself. He hated himself. His eyelids were soon wet with tears, an unbearable pain in his breast. The thought of Eugenie wrung his heart; it gnawed at his brain. Albert was easily given to tears, and they now flowed freely. He wept for Eugenie. She was so pure, so beautiful, so tender, so sympathetic, and he treated her as if—as if she were a reaper in the fields!

What was pounding in his ears so clamorously? The dashing waves by the sea . . . the driver was kissing Hilda . . . What surprised him was that the sight did not shock him and he looked on and laughed; he was not even jealous; there was no resentment in his heart. He laughed and told Frau Rodbertus not to mind it—Frau Rodbertus, in her long gown and slippers, was seated in his lap and calling him sweetheart, and he was married to the widow . . . As he was trying to recall when he had married her Hilda and Eugenie came in, arm in arm. But how they were dressed! Barefooted, with short skirts of unbleached linen and loose blouses, like the reapers; and then Uncle Leopold—it was Uncle Leopold but he wore a beard like Aaron Hirsch—rushed in and waved a stick at him—the stick looked like an axle . . .

He stirred and said to himself he did not know why he could not fall asleep, then stirred again, opened his eyes and beheld day-light. He leaned out of bed, reached for his watch on a chair close by, and jumped out. He had overslept.

### XIII.

Eugenie's image persisted in intruding upon him. In fact, he found himself thinking more of Eugenie than of Hilda; there was more tenderness in his heart when thinking of Eugenie than when thinking of Hilda. And every time he glanced at that omnipresent Aaron Hirsch—Aaron Hirsch had again seen him with Eugenie—he thought of Eugenie. Aaron had said nothing to him about her but he could read something in his rolling, roguish eyes. While copying entries into the ledger he did it mechanically, his mind wandering in other regions. He was visualizing those sweet moments with Eugenie in the dark street and experiencing the sensation over again.

A few days later Albert was summoned to his uncle's private room. Albert was in a grave mood because of the return of a few poems which he had sent to an editor at Munich.

He found Uncle Leopold at his secretary, austere and domineering.

"Take a seat." He said this in a commanding tone.

Albert sat down, feeling the worthlessness of life more keenly.

"I have something of the gravest importance to say to you," Uncle Leopold commenced, his eyes averted. He then paused.

Albert caught his breath and waited.

"It's about your general conduct," he snapped. "They tell me awful things about you."

"I'll try to be careful about my work in the bank," Albert said contritely. For the moment Albert's pride was gone. His pride would always sink with the rejection of his manuscripts.

"I don't care so much about your work," the banker said with an irritable wave of his hand. "These mistakes can be corrected. It's your life mistakes. No one but yourself can correct those."

The banker again paused. Albert looked at his uncle puzzled. He could not fathom the cause of the present complaint.

"You have been seen in bad company," the banker resumed in a more serious tone. "The nephew of Leopold Zorn must not be seen running around with dissolute women."

"Uncle Leopold—that's not true—it's a base falsehood—I have kept company with no bad women—" he burst out indignantly, tears springing to his eyes. "Some one has been slandering me. I spend all my evenings reading and writing, save for a stroll now and then—someone has been lying to you."

“No, the source of this information is quite reliable,” the banker continued in a milder tone, the tears in his nephew’s eyes instantly softening his feelings. “You were seen on Bleicherstrasse with a girl of questionable character.”

“That’s false, Uncle Leopold . . . utterly false . . .” tears stifled his speech.

He then remembered Eugenie and felt he had to defend her honor.

“I have never associated with any women here except with one of the purest souls I have ever known—as pure as my own mother—as pure as my sister—as pure—” He was about to add Hilda’s name but checked himself.

“One cannot be too discriminating,” Uncle Leopold said in a conciliatory tone, as if willing to let bygones be bygones, “but you must be more careful in the future. The walls have ears and the streets a thousand eyes. The nephew of Leopold Zorn must avoid all suspicion.”

“And the uncle of Albert Zorn ought not to lend ear to malicious tongues,” flared up the nephew, rising from his seat indignantly.

The false accusation and the insinuation against Eugenie’s character brought back his innate pride. His unshakable confidence in himself returned. There was insolence on the young man’s face.

Uncle Leopold caught the sudden change in his nephew’s face and smiled. He resented Albert’s impudent manner, but at the same time admired the young man’s fearlessness. He remembered the letter his wife had received from Albert in which he thanked her for her hospitality. Aunt Betty had expressed great admiration for the style of his language.

When the interview was over the banker rose from his seat and escorted Albert out of the door, his hand resting kindly on the young man’s shoulder.

# EUGENIE.

## I.

**D**REARY months followed. Aside from the great disappointment the climate contributed to his misery. The damp autumn, the cold early winter days, the northern winds were not to his taste. He was a child of sunshine, not a child of the mild sunshine of the Acropolis, as he thought he was, but of the burning rays baking the plains of Jehosophat, and the scorching heat of Jericho. Protest though he might, he was a child of Canaan. And everything around him was bleak and cold and dismal, and his heart was burning with a fire of its own, the blood in his veins seething tumultuously. He wrote much to give expression to his turbulent thoughts, walked much to dissipate his restlessness, and people called him an idler, a *Gassenjunge*! He did not care. He shunned people. He only wished to be a spectator of the passing show of life, and when the procession provoked laughter in him he laughed with the tears rolling down his cheeks. For there was pity in his laughter, but those around him only heard the laughter with no ear for the pitiful undertone.

Albert always hated Prussianism—he had learned to hate it in his childhood—and Prussianism was the spirit of Hamburg of that day. Brought up in a Rhenish town under French occupation it was inevitable that a boy with such keen sensibilities should perceive the difference between Prussian ponderousness and vulgarity and French sprightliness and delicacy. His present environment brought back to him his earlier perceptions.

Albert found himself pondering on Goethe and Lessing. In Goethe he saw the Spinoza of poetry. He understood what Herder meant when he said, “I wish that Goethe would for once take some other Latin book in hand besides that of Spinoza.”

The more he pondered on Goethe and Lessing and Spinoza the more he revolted against the Philistinism of his environment His unrequited love added bitterness. He saw the faults of the people around him with the eyes of an enemy.

And there was hatred all around him. Lessing’s preachments against hatred had made no impression upon his people. Indeed, they had erected monuments to his memory but went on hating more than ever. They wanted none of



Lessing's tolerance, none of the Pantheistic harmony of Goethe. They wanted strife. Not the strife that begets liberty—liberty of mind and body—but the strife that begets religious bigotry. Albert wanted to continue, and combine, the noble work of Lessing and Goethe. He wanted to teach his countrymen the truth of Lessing and the harmony of Goethe, but he was as yet too young to know that the reward for such efforts are loose stones during one's life and stones cemented into the shape of a monument when loose stones can no longer do any harm.

He found himself like a nightingale in a crow's nest. Every time he began to sing the crows caw-cawed; and the masses have always understood the caw-caw better than the song of the nightingale.

He was no philosopher content with metaphysical speculations. He was no Spinoza to be content to grind lenses and subsist on a penny's worth of Dutch bread and raisins. Unlike the philosopher's passion for abstract truth, truth was meaningless to Albert unless it colored human life. His asceticism was not that of the monk wilfully denying himself the pleasures of the body but rather that of the pleasure-seeking maiden who silently broods in her chamber because she was left out of a festivity. The world to him was a playground, and he wished to do part of the playing.

Of late he had tried to get his first poems published in book form but the publishers could see no merit in them. The verses were too simple to strike the publishers as extraordinary; and though Goethe had given them a lesson in simplicity the Germans were still too bombastic to appreciate any writing unless tumid. Albert felt that as soon as his poems were published the world would be at his feet. He had been to see a publisher who was specializing in books that provoked the censor, but as yet there was nothing in Albert's poems to provoke any one except a lovesick maiden.

One day he decided to have his poems published at any cost, and show his uncle—and Hilda—that he was no mere clerk. But where could he get the money? He only received a salary sufficient for his board and lodgings. Besides, he did not know how to economize. He soon thought of the lottery, the living hope, and the despair, of his father's existence. Perhaps he might win—somebody won at every drawing! One night he dreamt that he played the lottery and won. He thought this a good omen and the following morning gambled away his last *Pfennig*.

## II.

Eager to have some of his poems published, and finding no publisher to risk his imprint, he sent a few verses to *Hamburg's Waechter*, a newly founded periodical, whose secret aim was Jew-baiting.

The editor of this journal, one Karl Trummer, was one of those pen-patriots who abound in every land in times of great strife and who sell their pens to the highest bidder. After every war there is a feeling present that the bloodshed was useless, and every faction blames the other. In spite of Hegel's saying that the only thing man learns from history is that he learns nothing from history, certain pen-patriots have learned that laying the blame at the door of one class satisfies all other classes—the same class that bore the brunt when wells were poisoned, when the Black Plague raged, when famine swept the land, when reason dethroned the idols of antiquity. The Jew has always been an atoning scapegoat.

Little thinking of the policy of this journal—thinking only of having some of his verses appear in print—and though concealing his identity under an ingenious pseudonym, the authorship of these ballads was soon learned, and Albert found himself more disliked than ever. He was regarded with contempt by the Jews and with indifference by his non-Jewish friends. And in order to make him feel the sting of their hatred the Jews belittled his talents. That *Gassenjunge* a poet! they sneered. His language was so simple that a child —“even a maid servant”—could understand it! How, really, could one be a poet who could be understood by everybody?

Embittered he isolated himself altogether. He was in his room night after night, reading, writing, thinking. He paid no attention to Dame Gossip and her wagging tongue. Too many thoughts crowded his brain, too many conflicting opinions. For he read books on all sorts of subjects—poetry, philosophy, theology, tales, legends—and he never read passively. He either praised or condemned. And the books he read not only imparted to him the knowledge of the authors but, like narcotics, stimulated the intuitive knowledge within him.

When he casually did meet people he voiced his convictions too freely. He was still of an age when impressions were easily made and for the time they seemed indelible. He was impetuous, ardent, argumentative. He was witty and people liked to listen to him even though they hated him for his utterances. And when his convictions changed—as the convictions of liberal minds and those of sincere purpose must change—he gave frank expression to these changes. People called him fickle and thought him flippant, failing to realize the struggles of a soul in its efforts to adjust itself. He was likewise vacillating in his literary attempts. Before he fully developed one poetic theme another rushed upon him and he halted the latter for still another.

His presence in the bank had finally become a source of annoyance. Martin Elfenbein could hardly contain himself. In spite of frequent warnings Albert came and went whenever he pleased. Yet, no one dared discharge him.

At last the inevitable happened. He was advised that his services were no longer needed in the bank. No one was happier than Albert. He was glad to be rid of this place, no matter what the outcome might be.

But before long Uncle Leopold had established his nephew in a new business. Albert was conscious of his importance when he beheld the sign:

ALBERT ZORN  
KOMMISSIONGESCHAEFT

He was now a full fledged merchant, and he could come and go as he pleased without being eyed by that hateful Martin Elfenbein. And he did not owe a *Pfennig* for his stock of goods. His quick-tempered but generous uncle, after reprimanding him for his past transgressions, had filled up the shop with cloth wares and told him everything was his providing he attended to business and managed to replenish the shelves with the money taken in.

The novelty of the thing stimulated his energies for a while. Besides, the odor of the bolts of new cloth, the color of the chintzes, the haggling of the customers amused him. At first everything amused him and appealed to his sense of humor. The manners and faces of the agents who came to sell goods, the people who came to purchase, were an inexhaustible source of fun to him. Human faces and figures always suggested to him various species of animals or grotesque subjects. In one he saw the face of an airedale, in another that of a rabbit, a bulldog, a calf, or some ludicrous physiognomy. The forms of other customers seemed to him to resemble numerical figures. As a result there was a never-dying smile on his face and something akin to mockery in his perpetually narrowed eyes. At times, however, he would forget his merchandise and indulge in conversation foreign to his business. All sorts of news was afloat in the air in those days—strange rumors from France, from Austria, from England and scores of new movements in Germany—and Albert gave free reign to his tongue. He made comments, coined epigrams, gave expression to cynical remarks, which were repeated in the Pavilions and, expatiated upon, were carried to his uncle.

Leopold Zorn had ordered Aaron Hirsch to keep his eye on his incorrigible nephew and make reports of the young man's conduct, and while endeavoring to shield Albert, Aaron had "a wife and seven children" and had to do his duty.

Aaron's reports were not encouraging. Not infrequently when Aaron called

he found no one at the shop, the door unlocked, the proprietor away at the Swiss Pavilion. Aaron played pranks upon Albert and carried off numerous articles, which were undetected by the owner, until their return by the sly Hirsch.

What Albert could not understand was the unsolvable riddle at the end of six months; he had neither money nor merchandise and no one owed him anything! He put the problem up to Aaron but instead of explaining the situation Aaron laughed until tears rolled down his bearded cheeks.

“It’s a great mystery,” Albert said with mock gravity. “Perhaps a Kabbalist might be able to bring Elisha back to life, and the prophet, who could fill barrels of oil from an empty jug, might stretch a yard of velveteen into a thousand bolts.”

When laughter subsided Albert produced a few sheets from his breast pocket and read a few of his latest verses.

“Ah! if I could put these on the shelves!” he sighed.

### III.

As most people in sorrow and affliction turn to prayer Albert turned to love. He could be without friends, he could endure mental anguish, but he could not bear life without love.

Of late many things had troubled him. His father was making preparations to leave Gunsdorf and his mother’s letters lacked the usual ring of cheer. His sister, too, seemed weary of the life in her native town and frankly hinted that she would welcome a change. He had gradually become estranged from Uncle Leopold’s house and from the class of people that visited there and shunned all other associations, save the dilettantes in the Swiss Pavilions who sat all day drinking beer and talking grandiloquently of art and literature. But before long he tired of these, too. He fathomed their depth. He was lonely and craved affection, and his thoughts turned to Eugenie. He had not seen her for some time, as her father had moved to a farm about five miles from Hamburg, and her visits at Frau Rodbertus’ were rare. He now yearned for Eugenie and reproached himself for his neglect of her in the past. He knew Eugenie had loved him and wondered if she still loved him.

One summer day he took a stroll on the road between Winterlude and Ohlsdorf. He was going to find her and yet sauntered along the road as if he were just walking aimlessly for the sheer pleasure of movement. It was a warm

day and the road was white with dust. A dog barked. Albert turned around and saw a large dog harnessed to a small cart, barking as he pulled his load. Alongside the cart, on which stood a large empty milk can, was a girl, with a kerchief overhead arranged in the shape of a hood. The girl turned around when the dog began to bark, glanced in Albert's direction, and proceeded on her way. The next moment she turned in his direction again and he saw a pair of large brown eyes under the hood-like kerchief. His heart fluttered, noisy crickets chattered in a nearby field. A bird called from a clump of bushes not far off. The muffled beats of flails came from a barn close to the roadside. The girl did not turn her head but plodded on alongside the little cart. Soon the road forked off to the left and the girl turned her head again toward him.

"Eugenie," he called.

The dog emitted a loud, hollow bark and the empty can rattled against the sides of the little cart.

The girl hesitated, paused, and turned around, the dog hurrying ahead of her toward the farmhouse.

"Eugenie!"

Albert's voice was jubilant, ringing with surprise, as if the meeting was wholly accidental.

With a quick movement of her left hand she jerked off the handkerchief, facing him with dilated eyes in which was a strange light.

She did not extend her hand to him.

"Frau Rodbertus had told me you were on a farm," he broke the silence, intimating that it was not chance that had brought him here.

A softer light stole over her face, her protruding lip curled upward, disclosing her longish white teeth.

"I haven't seen Frau Rodbertus in months," Eugenie said, standing before him with her arms hanging on either side of her, the kerchief in her left hand.

Albert studied her a moment. The freedom of bygone days was gone. He felt constraint and sensed her constraint.

The dog had reached the gate of the farmhouse and stopped, barking, his head turned in the direction of Eugenie.

"You see, he is scolding me for lagging behind," she said, indulging in a spontaneous smile.

"He is scolding you for your failure to offer hospitality to the weary

wayfarer,” Albert answered in kind.

They both laughed.

“All wayfarers, weary or otherwise, are welcome at our house,” she said, turning into the passage that led to the farmhouse.

When they reached the house, Eugenie’s father, with rake in hand, was cleaning up the rubbish in front of the house. He was a little man, with a round face, a small tuft of hair under his lower lip, and a soft look in his round eyes such as only Frenchmen possess. He halted and glanced up suspiciously at the young man who followed his daughter into the yard. M. Chauraux was suspicious of all Germans, in spite of his sojourn there for many years.

Eugenic introduced Albert to her father, who acknowledged the introduction grudgingly. He showed only such cordiality as his native manners and politeness compelled, mumbling a few words in broken German.

“The gentleman speaks French, papa,” Eugenie struck in cheerfully, “and he loves the Emperor as much as you do.”

The Frenchman’s eyes turned with a bright flicker and, forgetting that he had just shaken hands with the stranger, clasped his hand once more. Then a mist appeared in the little man’s eyes and he sighed, muttering under his breath, “The Emperor!”

“No one loves the Emperor more than I do,” returned Albert.

“Have you ever seen him?” There was ecstasy on the Frenchman’s face.

“I see him now—I see him all the time—” cried Albert with boyish rapture. “I see him seated on a small white horse, holding the reins in one hand and gently stroking the horse’s neck with the other, riding slowly along the linden-flanked lane of the Hofgarten in my native town—Ah, the Emperor!” Mist also appeared in Albert’s eyes.

Saddened silence. Two speechless individuals with drooping heads. The Emperor was a captive on a barren island far removed from his worshippers.

Eugenie did not think of the Emperor. She was too happy to think of anything save of the cordiality between her father and Albert. Her father was very strict and never permitted her to form any friendship with young men. When the “time” would come he would find the proper “parti” for her, was his way of thinking. And he guarded jealously the most trivial flirtation on her part. He knew nothing of what had passed between his daughter and this young man beyond the fact that he was a lodger whom his daughter had once met at his relative’s home and that he happened to meet Eugenie on a chance stroll in

this vicinity.

It was about two o'clock and Albert was invited to have a meal with them. There were very few words exchanged between Albert and Eugenie. All the talk was between her father and Albert—about the Emperor.

M. Chauraux did not mind his daughter's accompanying the young man for a little distance. They had had a bottle of Burgundy between them and the young man admired the Emperor. The Frenchman had become quite loquacious and invited Albert to come again—any time whenever he could spare an hour from his business. Who could tell? The young man talked so well, seemed so prosperous, and loved the Emperor so much!—Who could tell? He might be a proper *parti*.

M. Chauraux's regard for Albert increased when, several days later, the young man read to him a poem about Napoleon. The Frenchman did not quite grasp the verses in German but when Albert gave him the substance of it in French and then read the original to him, with unshed tears in his eyes, he even understood the German.

The young poet declaimed his verses with passionate abandon, music in his voice, tears in his eyes. The eyes of M. Chauraux, too, were clouded, the tuft of hair under his lower lip quivered, and he shook his head and sighed and murmured "*Mein Kaiser, mein Kaiser gefangen!*"

M. Chauraux wiped a tear away. Who could tell? This young man, though not French, certainly loved the Emperor, and was evidently not averse to Eugenie—yes, he might be a proper *parti* for Eugenie.

One day, when Eugenie came into the house, having escorted Albert down the road, her father was seated at the table—there was only one table and one room which served as dining and living room—his arms resting upon it, as was his wont; his bushy eyebrows frowning as if he were working on a hard puzzle; his eyes staring in front; his short, stubby fingers drumming absently upon the table. He glanced at his daughter and noticed the expression of exultation on her face.

"A talented young man, hein?" said the father, without removing his arms from the table, and looking directly at her.

"Yes, he is," Eugenie replied demurely, as was becoming a virtuous girl when her father makes reference to a young man.

"Very talented—very," he repeated and turned in the direction of the window to his left. "Not a bad sort."

Eugenie was silent and began busying herself with some household duties.

“*Mein Kaiser, mein Kaiser gefangen!*” hummed M. Chauraux, nodding his head sorrowfully and lightly tapping the table with the tips of his fingers.

“He might make a good husband for some nice girl,” the father said apropos of nothing a little later.

Eugenie was scouring a copper kettle and her head lowered as she applied herself to the utensil with more determination, without making any comment.

A girl should not be too frivolous, mused M. Chauraux, but still Eugenie ought not to be that bashful. She could at least encourage the young man, he said to himself, and take a little interest in him when he comes to the house. So far the conversations in the house were invariably carried on between the men, and always about the Emperor.

“You are past eighteen, my child,” he presently addressed his daughter, “and if the right young man would come along I should like to see you married.”

He rose from the table and came close to her. Eugenie, her face reddening, did not raise her eyes.

“You like Monsieur Zorn—hein?”

The scouring sound was the only reply.

M. Chauraux was puzzled. He could not quite reconcile her blushes with her silence. She never did care for the German young men, he said to himself.

“He is so different from the other Germans,” the father pursued the same object, flattering himself on his ingenious probing.

“Yes, he is different.”

M. Chauraux walked out of the house in a reflective mood. When a girl thinks a young man different from other young men she might be in love with him. Yes, he might be a good *parti*.

## IV.

Weeks passed on, happy weeks for Albert. His stock was dwindling, so was his money, but what did he care? M. Chauraux made no objections to his frequent visits at the farm and at intervals Eugenie, on the pretext of visiting her relative, came to the city and met Albert. Eugenie, too, was happy. They



were now avowed lovers, and nothing else mattered. The fact that her love was clandestine added zest to her passion. For while her father approved of Albert as a suitor properly chaperoned by himself, she realized what would happen if he learned of their intimacy in his absence. And when Albert and Eugenie were alone they never discussed the future. The present was enough for them.

But Albert's happiness never did continue long.

One day Aaron Hirsch—the faithful Aaron—entered the private office of his master, with a woe-begone expression on his countenance and emitted a half-stifled sigh.

“Herr Banquier,” he addressed the banker, with a wave of his hands, “something must be done before it's too late—I mean about your esteemed nephew. I have kept my eye on him as I was bidden but now I am obliged to bring to you a matter of grave importance.”

“What is the young scamp up to now?”

“A young scamp he is not, Herr Banquier.” Aaron gave a soft laugh and rubbed his hands obsequiously. “But a young man is a young man and his mind naturally turns to girls as the sunflower turns to the sun.” He emitted a cackle and wiped his lips with the palm of his right hand.

“What is it?” Mr. Zorn was impatient.

“It's still the matter I spoke to you about some time ago. The Frenchman's daughter. Well, Herr Banquier, a young man is a young man and a girl is a girl—a—you see—a—it might be too late—” He gave a helpless shrug of his shoulders.

“Does her father know of this?”

“This is what I have come to tell you, Herr Banquier. The other day I drove down to Monsieur Chauraux' farm on the pretext of selling him a lottery ticket and incidentally pumped him about his daughter's relations with your worthy nephew. He thinks the young man is going to marry his daughter—”

“Why didn't you tell him Albert is living on my charity?” burst out Leopold Zorn.

“Yes, Herr Banquier, I did hint to him that the young man has nothing beyond that his philanthropic uncle sees fit to give him. Perhaps I should have alluded to the difference in their religions.” Aaron looked up at his master inquiringly.

“Religion or no religion, the scamp has no intention of marrying her. Go

and tell him that.”

“I hope it’s not too late.”

“Then don’t stand jabbering here. Go over at once and see the Frenchman again.”

“Yes, Herr Banquier, I know where I can get a vehicle and can go at once—I hope it’s not too late—I saw him with her at the Swiss Pavilion yesterday—Yes, Herr Banquier, I can get a vehicle around the corner and go at once,” Aaron repeated as he humbly bowed out of the banker’s presence.

A few days later Albert approached the farmhouse with bouncing joy in his heart. He had told Eugenie at their last rendezvous in the city what time he would get to the farm and she was to meet him at a little grove about half a mile from the house. Eugenie was still feigning bashfulness in her father’s presence.

It was early autumn, heaps of dead leaves in the grove. Albert pondered at her absence. On other occasions he had found her standing near a silver birch waiting for him or concealed in a clump of underbrush playing hide and seek with him. He loved those tantalizing moments, running this way and that, punctuated by her silver laughter, and when he would catch her, panting and out of breath, he would clasp her in his arms and kiss her throat and lips and hair. The partly denuded trees now disclosed her absence at a glance. He stood still and waited. Then he stepped out in the open and looked down the road but she was not in sight. His eagerness made him nervous. She had never failed in their appointments. When he had approached the grove blissful expectancy was in his breast, and the disappointment was doubly provoking. Then fear possessed him. She might be ill.

After a space he strode toward her home. It was a one-story, straw-thatched cottage, and as he entered the little yard he looked at once at the door and at the two little windows on either side. No one seemed around.

Albert rapped on the door. He heard a voice within. It was M. Chauraux’s voice; his voice in anger.

He rapped again.

Silence.

Albert’s heart throbbed with misgivings.

Again he knocked.

The door soon opened with a rapid movement, M. Chauraux on the

threshold with a forbidding look in his round brown eyes.

Albert greeted him with his usual cordiality but with a fast-beating heart.

M. Chauraux's eyes moved from side to side, the tuft under his lower lip projecting ominously.

"Is—is Mademoiselle Eugenia unwell?" Albert stammered.

M. Chauraux stepped forward and closed the door behind him.

"I can't allow you to see Eugenie any more," said the irate father brusquely.

"But——"

"I want no arguments," M. Chauraux resumed harshly. "And no letters—they won't be delivered to her—no more clandestine rendezvous—you hear? I have had enough trouble with the police and want no controversy with your banker uncle."

And without further explanation he entered the house and slammed the door.

Albert walked away, and reaching the gate turned around and looked at the window but he only saw the reflection of the gray autumn sky in the panes. He turned into the road and walked slowly back, with measured steps, striking with his cane at the wilted leaves on the ground and at the little stones by the wayside. Was there ever an Adam who was not driven out of the Garden of Eden on some pretext or other, Albert mused bitterly. What was his alleged sin? He could not tell, he could not divine. What had suddenly turned M. Chauraux against him? Albert could not account. He did not doubt Eugenie's love. When he reached the grove he paused. Every tree, every grassy spot was full of sweet memories. He sighed. Sweet memories belong to old age, they are the white mile-stones long passed and glistening in the distance. For the moment he felt aged, an unfortunate Atlas, with the world of sorrows on his back——

*"Ich Unglücksel'ger Atlas! eine Welt,  
Die ganze Welt der Schmerzen, muss ich tragen."*

Yes, he felt as if the whole world of sorrows was on his back, bearing the unbearable, with a mortifying pain in his heart. He had insisted upon either eternal bliss or endless misery—no compromise—and since eternal bliss was denied him misery was the only alternative. He settled upon a tree stump nearby lost in brooding reflections. He felt the weight of life heavily upon him,

it was crushing him. He could not think of life without the sweetness of love, and that seemed to have been taken away from him for ever. All events seem final to youth.

Time was passing. He could not tear himself away from this place, from where he could see the straw-thatched roof in the midst of a cluster of leafless trees. He could see the path daily trodden by her feet, the underbrush that touched her skirt. How could he go on living without the lustre of her eyes, without the clinging contact of her hands, without the sweet warmth of her breath?

Before he realized darkness had come and the moon and stars appeared. He had never seen the lights of heaven look down so sadly. Were they, too, lovelorn?

With sudden determination he rose and walked back to the farmhouse, nothing definite in his mind. The gate was ajar and there was no light in the house, the pallor of the moon falling upon the window-panes. The window to the left was her window, a few feet away from her bed. Here he stood, gazing lovingly upward. He rose on his tip-toes and his face was on a level with the bottom pane. He gently tapped on the glass but no one stirred within.

“Eugenie,” he murmured, “Eugenie!”

No one appeared at the window, no one but the moonlight over his shoulder.

He removed his diamond ring—his mother’s heirloom—and scratched on the pane before him, “*Moi je n’existe que pour vous aimer.*”

He paused, a sad smile on his face, and turned to the road.

A peasant was driving by. Albert asked for a lift. “Hop in,” said the peasant hospitably, “I am going all the way to the city.”

An hour later Albert was on the Jungfernstieg. The lane was crowded with promenaders, the moon seemed to shine more cheerily here, the stars twinkled brighter. With his head lifted there was abandon in his gait. Girls walked past him with luring glances but he only smiled and walked on. Presently he was in front of the Apollo Hall, ablaze with a thousand candles, astir with a thousand voices. The Apollo was a gay place. The blowing of trumpets reached his ears, the rattling of drums, the sounds that stir the blood of youth. His steps halted.

“Do come in for old times’ sake!”

Some one had arrested his arm.

And from the Apollo came the blowing of trumpets, the rattling of drums, the sounds that stir the blood of youth . . .

## V.

Winter had come and gone. A bleak day in March. Wind, sleet, a drab sky.

In a little shop in Beckerstrasse, in Hamburg, a young man, with pale cheeks and light brown hair and narrowed eyes, was seated before a little table heaped with bills, invoices, and dunning letters. Some of these reminders of indebtedness, were unfolded before him, others were on a spindle, and still others were unopened. Why open letters when one knows their contents? With hands stuck in his trousers' pockets, his legs extended under the table, the pale young man looked forlorn. He seemed at once reckless and bewildered, sorrowful and carefree. There was mist in his eyes. The postman had just handed him a letter from his father. Not a line from his mother. "How did it all happen?"—was the import of his father's letter. How did it all happen? Figures had always been the bane of Albert's existence and to answer this question one must deal with figures. A bitter smile suddenly appeared on his sensitive lips, and his eyes narrowed still more—mere fine lines of indefinable color. How did it all happen? A memory from his school days flitted across his brain and his smile was bitter no longer. "When you grow up," his mathematics teacher had told him, "you'll have to have some one else to count your money for you, or you won't have any." And striking him with a lead-edged ruler the teacher had made the announcement emphatic.

The young man threw his head back and laughed as he remembered the incident. Soon he forgot his father's letter and that vexing question, forgot the bills and invoices, and his mind lingered upon his early school days. He had always hated those school days, but now there was a yearning in his heart for the teachers and text-books and for—yes, even for the lead-edged ruler and gnarled stick. What if some stupid monk had struck him with a ruler or cane? Those were happy days, when one was not worried about paying bills and about letters that demanded how it had happened! He sighed deeply and stretched his arms yawningly upward. "Those were happy days," he repeated to himself.

His eyes dropped upon his father's letters before him. He became irritable and vexed. He had thrashed it out with his uncle and now his father had started all over again. "What will become of you, Albert?" his father had added. "You are already in your twenty-second year and have failed in everything—in

everything. You have not only brought ruin upon yourself but also upon your poor old father. For I am getting old, Albert, and instead of my supporting you, you should take care of me. And at my age I am now obliged to leave here and start over again at some other town. I can read between the lines of your uncle's letter that your conduct in other respects has not been irreproachable."

He pushed the letter away from himself. He was growing angry with his father, with his mother, with his uncle. Why had they pressed business upon him? They had known he had no taste for business. What right had they now to complain?

He rose from his seat and paced the floor. He did not blame himself any longer.

He locked the door. With the door locked he felt secure from disturbers. Then, taking out a few sheets from his breast pocket began to scan an uncompleted poem. Presently he replaced the sheets, uninvited thoughts intruded upon him. His erstwhile cynical look faded. His eyes closed and he heaved a sigh. The thought of his family moving away from Gunsdorf pained him. His family had lived in Gunsdorf all their lives, and now they must move to a little village. He blamed Nature for all their misery. Who knows, he mused, Kant may be right. There was no guiding Providence. How could there be with so many rascals inheriting the earth? What a stupid world to believe in a guiding Providence! Or was Providence stupid?——

The door rattled, the lock was tormented, but he hated to turn around to see who the disturber was. Everything around him was so misguided, he mused.

"Open the door!"

It was the voice of that magpie, Aaron Hirsch. He was fond of Aaron and jumped up to open the door.

"You can't do business with the door locked," laughed Aaron.

"Just as much as with the door open," Albert replied in a challenging voice.

Aaron laughed good naturedly, unbuttoning his coat, heaved a long drawn sigh, and asked, "How is business?"

"An ingenious question? Oh, business is wonderful—simply wonderful—can't you see? I have sold every bit of my stock——"

Aaron laughed.

"What's the good word from Uncle Leopold?——"

"I am coming on no mission from him," Aaron rejoined, shrugging his

shoulders as if the mere thought of it was foreign to him.

“Aaron Hirsch, for this falsehood you’ll have to fast two Mondays and two Thursdays, and at that I am sure on the Day of Judgment, when you’ll begin to tell all the good deeds you had done in this world, a seraph will rush in, clapping his wings, and will halt your entering through the gates of heaven because you had lied to a poor innocent earthly poet.”

“You are too good to hold this against me,” laughed Aaron.

“No, I won’t. No sooner will that denouncing seraph have spoken when I will gallop in on a fiery steed and say, ‘Lord of Hosts, poor Aaron only lied because he wished to preserve a wife and seven children from starvation.’ Whereupon the Lord of Hosts will brush the seraph aside and say, ‘Let him in. It’s no sin to lie for one’s wife and seven children,’ and will praise you before the sun, the moon and all the shining stars, and will appoint you an angel of the First Grade, with the right to wear wings of the color of the Swiss Guards.”

Aaron “hi-hi’d,” and “ha-ha’d” and “ho-ho’d” and ended with a shriek of uncontrollable laughter.

“If you’ll permit me to light my pipe,” Hirsch said a moment later, as he stuck the bowl of his pipe into the mouth of his leather pouch, “I’ll tell you the truth, though I have given my word to your uncle not to tell you this. But remember, your uncle must not know that I told you or——”

“I understand, your wife and seven children——”

“Well, sir,” continued Hirsch, “your esteemed uncle has instructed me to find out the exact amount of your indebtedness and how much you owe for your board and lodging. And he wants you to come and see him tomorrow before noon—but not a word of what I told you about paying your debts.”

## VI.

Hirsch soon left and Albert was again alone. He dreaded the meeting with his uncle. If he could only check himself and let his uncle’s storm blow over, but he insisted upon arguing, trying to convince his uncle that he, Albert, and not the banker, was right. A gleam of hope appeared on the horizon. Uncle Leopold had hinted at paying him a stipend if he would go to the university of Bonn or Goettingen and continue his studies.

What studies? What profession would suit him? His first thought was of medicine, the career of his grandfather and of his Uncle Joseph, but he hated

medicine. Besides, Albert was not blind to his shortcomings. An exact science was not for him. Anatomy, *Materia Medica*, Physiology, Chemistry—his head began to ache at the very thought of committing formulas and definitions to memory. What other profession was open to him? He smiled as he recalled Father Schumacher's advice to his mother. Yes, student life in Rome appealed to him. The robe of the priest might even be becoming to him. He visualized himself in the black robe of the priesthood and a humorous smile spread over his countenance. He had read the "Decameron" and had also heard not a few delectable yarns about priests. And he recalled the pretty face of a nun with downcast demure eyes. And the blue skies of Italy and the dark skinned maidens of Tuscany—many fantasies leaped into his brain, alluring fantasies. The priesthood seemed to him an ideal career for a poet. He always loved mythology, and, after all, he continued in the same musing vein, Catholicism was the new mythology. The Immaculate Conception, the Virgin, the Man God, the Crucifixion, the Altar, the Incense—mythology of another age. What difference did it make whether God is one, Three or a Million? The Children of Men must have toys to play with, and one is as good as another. Toys never last long. The children play with them a while, destroy them, and cry for more toys, which, in turn, are broken and replaced by others. The Persians found amusement in one kind of toy, the Jews in another, the Greeks in still another, and then the Romans, and so on until the end of time. Conversion? Albert laughed as this term passed through his mind. It had always been so odious to the Jews, and was also odious to him, but now he laughed at the thought of it.

The day drew to a close. He rose, put on his hat and topcoat, locked the shop, and walked aimlessly along the streets, still musing and thinking. His thoughts were soon arrested by the procession of *Judenhetzers* singing an obscene song. His idle musing stopped.

All thoughts fled from his mind. He felt as if some one had suddenly gripped at his heart and wrung every drop of blood from it. And he, too, moved along, the very poignant pain propelling him onward. People in the procession saw him but no one took him for one of the Chosen. His blond hair and proud bearing saved him from personal molestation.

The following morning found Albert in bed, suffering from a painful headache, needles pricking at the base of his brain. The good Frau Rodbertus applied compresses to his head and attended him with maternal tenderness.

"Too much reading and writing, Herr Zorn," she spoke solicitously and passed her hand soothingly over his disheveled hair and feverish brow.

"*Nein, liebe Frau Rodbertus, zu viel Christliche Liebe*, (too much Christian love)," he murmured, a strange smile stealing over his wan features.



Frau Rodbertus smiled, too. She took him literally and, waving an admonishing finger at him with scolding playfulness said, “The girls will be your ruination if you don’t take better care of yourself.”

## VII.

Later in the day he penned the following letter to Christian:

“My dear Christian:

“It seems I never write to you unless I am either in the seventh heaven or in the depths of hell. However, just now I may be only in purgatory. Who knows? But today I am angry, cross, furious; my wits are in mourning; the wings of my fancy are clipped. I am a blind Samson in the midst of jeering Philistines, with no pillars to pull down on my enemies. I have wound up my *immense* business, or rather it has wound me up. Please don’t laugh. I have risen in the world. Very few have achieved the state of bankruptcy at my time of life. It’s quite a distinction, you must own. Well, you always did prophesy greatness for me. But my good uncle has paid all my obligations so my fame as a bankrupt won’t be of long duration.

“What a life I have led the past twelve months? God and Satan strove for my soul and in the conflict tore it to shreds. My inner life has been continuous brooding over the depths of the world of dreams, my outer life wild, cynical, dissolute, hateful. Yes, *amice*, at last I understand heaven and hell—with special emphasis on the latter. I am sure when I die I shall be appointed chief guide in hell, for I am familiar with every road and byway of the subterranean region, and could teach Dante a thing or two. Of course, my good Christian will have no occasion to meet me in Gehenna. I am sure Saint Peter will open the gates of heaven for you at the first glimpse of your benevolent countenance, but, then, I will interrupt the saintly doorkeeper and ask permission to show you *my* dominion first. Who can tell, you may be just in time to see Lilith and her bevy of sporting witches go bathing in the Styx, and I give you my word you shall not be hurried.

“But I do have good news for you. I shall soon leave for Cuxhaven, where the doctors assure me the sea baths will restore my health, which has not been of the best. And the thought of leaving this hateful city already makes me feel refreshed. I detest this place and the people—everybody, everybody. I am sick at heart. You can readily understand my state of feelings that aside from my own grief—the grief of my many dismal failures—my blood is boiling within me at the memory of an ugly spectacle I witnessed the other night. It is too

painful to speak of it; the iron has entered my soul; everything within me has turned to gall. The ‘Baptised traders’ here have launched a fierce attack against the *Un-Baptised*. The irony of it! The pot calls the kettle black. Those hideous cowards! You know me well enough that I am no more blind to the shortcomings of the Jews than any Christian, but when I see those selfish, cruel monsters revive the barbarism of the Middle Ages my heart cries in anguish. Those barbarians! In one breath they boast that they surpass the English in commerce, the French in art, the Greeks in philosophy, the Romans in warfare, and in the very next breath clamor that unless the progress of the Jews is checked the Teuton will be exterminated! Those miserable cowards! Twenty millions of these superior beings afraid of a handful of Jews! It would be laughable were it not so tragic! But I can’t speak of it, I can’t think of it—

“But wait, the day of reckoning will come. Before they have shaved my locks and put my eyes out I will tie firebrands to the tails of these foxes—you remember the story of Samson and the Philistines?—Yes, I will smite them hip and thigh, but not with the jawbone of an ass; a goose quill is my weapon.

“Did I say I was unhappy? I am to leave this cursed city, which holds for me nothing but the bitterest memories. So I will go to Bonn.

“O, what a comedy life is!—But enough!  
From the depths I call to Thee, Oh, Lord!

Albert”

## VIII.

A mid-April day, rather warm for the season. The sunbeams were playing around the slender spire of the Petriurthm at Hamburg, with sparkling flashes at the bluish surfaces of the calm waters of the Alster.

At the curb before one of the houses on Grosse Bleichenstrasse stood a blinking horse, harnessed to a cart, a driver fidgeting with whip and reins. Soon the portal of the courtyard opened and from it emerged a strapped black leather valise, then a little squatty man, then a slender young man of medium height with small greenish eyes and light brown hair, carrying a cane and an umbrella in one hand and in the other a small bundle.

The older man placed the valise in the cart, the younger one threw in the bundle, umbrella and cane; the two clasped hands.

There was a mist in the prominent eyes of the older man. There was a faint smile on the large mouth of the younger, a smile pregnant with sadness.

“Goodbye, *mein lieber Herr Zorn*,” murmured the older man.

There was emotion in his voice, tenderness in his tone, sorrow on his face.

“Adieu,” muttered the young man; an involuntary sigh escaped his lips.

Their hands remained clasped.

“I hope success will meet you wherever you turn,” the older resumed affectionately. “I hope your enemies will have no occasion to rejoice——”

A smile again appeared on the young man’s pale face, a cynical smile that only touched the iris of his eyes and the corners of his mouth.

“Don’t worry, *lieber Hirsch*. *Sie werden noch von mir hören!*” (You will hear from me yet!)

A sympathetic pressure of their hands and they both smiled.

The young man jumped into the vehicle, the driver slightly rose in his seat and clacked his tongue, the horses moved.

“Goodbye,” the man called from the curb.

“Goodbye,” called back the young man from the moving cart and waved his hand . . .

PART TWO

# A FIGHTER IN THE MAKING

# THE SALON.

## I.

SOME cities are like affected women. In their desire to appear original, without possessing any originality, they ape the mannerism of one, the gait of another, the gestures of a third, striking poses not their own.

While Paris, for example, has always been her natural self, with her vices and virtues, her elegance and tawdriness, her brilliance and superficial glitter, which spring from her native appetites; while London, likewise, is always herself, as is Vienna and Munich and Venice and Florence and Rome; Berlin, of all great cities, has never been her real self. With the subtle artifices of the poseur she has always imitated her envied rivals and at the same time ridiculed those whose manners she simulated. Her lurking jealousy has always decided her model. It is a safe prophecy that within a decade Berlin will pattern her life after New York and will at the same time raise her voice in derision against the materialism of the great American Metropolis.

Berlin a century ago, no different from Berlin of today, had broad avenues, beautiful public gardens, spacious boulevards, gaudy palaces, luxurious homes, busy restaurants, noisy cafés, all immaculately kept with the orderliness of an army on parade, and with a palpable newness that made one feel that the city and all her gardens, avenues, boulevards, palaces, were laid out by cord and line, chiefly after the design of an individual, without the least indication of the character or ideas of the inhabitants.

During the Napoleonic wars, especially after Blücher's hospitality in the British capital, Berlin had become London-mad and copied her life openly, but no sooner was the treaty of Paris concluded, and Napoleon's threatening shadow was definitely removed, than Berlin struck her former pose. She again wished to vie with her hated rival, Paris. *Salons* were formed, art circles sprang into being, the Prussian began to scoff in Voltairean style, simulated French wit, and presented plays of flagrant immorality which to the Berliner seemed quite Parisian.

Superficial imitation, however, frequently brings about changes of a deeper nature. With the adoption of foreign fashions came foreign ideas. The spirit of revolt which had been smouldering in Paris—soon to break out in roaring flames—had also permeated the *Kaiserstadt*. French ideals had sifted in and

Young Germany was awaking.

But whenever, and wherever, people fight for freedom the brave and the strong perish that the cowardly and the weak may live. Officialdom is ever ready to forgive the offenses of the truckler. At this period, however, even the weaklings sought an outlet for their aroused feelings—in polemics that did not disturb the Prussian officials. Religion, philosophy, romanticism, were safe substitutes. At no epoch in the history of Germany did the land abound in so many cults and sects as during the last two decades of the reign of that weak and good-natured king, Frederic William the Third. There were the Kantians, who discarded all miracles and regarded Christianity as a mere philosophic doctrine; the Hegelians, who were pantheistic yet clung to the romantic life story of Jesus; the followers of Schleiermacher, who swung between Pantheism and Rationalism, without touching either; and then there were the unadulterated romanticists, who followed—without clear understanding—Fichte, Schlegel and Schelling.

The vortex of all great discussions was the salon of Rahel Varnhagen von Ense. Her house at No. 20 Friedrichstrasse was the Mecca of all people of note and her “at home” was sought with eagerness. Not to have known Rahel reflected upon one’s intellectual standing. And Karl August Varnhagen von Ense was modest enough not to resent being known as Rahel’s husband. His admiration for his wife’s personality equalled his great love for her.

Rahel was as enigmatic and as paradoxical as the race from which she sprang. With her, as with her race, the unexpected happened. The daughter of a wealthy merchant and bearing the name of Rachel Levin at a period when a Jewish name was the greatest social handicap in Berlin, she had risen to a secure place in society. Princes courted her, artists sought her counsel, men of letters craved her opinion. No less a personage than Wolfgang von Goethe, at the very zenith of his fame, sent in his card. Unlike her social rival, Henrietta Herz, it was not physical beauty nor fascinating coquetry that helped her win her position in society. Rather plain looking, save for her brilliant black eyes, and small of stature, she possessed that indefinable charm which is even more attractive than beauty; and although she had already reached her fiftieth year her slender figure gave her a girlish appearance.

With the tact of a clever hostess she engaged one guest in conversation while her ears caught the drift of the talk of another.

“Rahel has discovered a new poetic genius,” her husband was saying.

His smile was not that of banter but rather of triumph. There was pride in his small featured countenance.

A little man, with a large head and an ugly sharp face, was laughing blandly, as an echo to von Ense's remark.

"I see you are sceptical about new poetic geniuses, Pastor Schleiermacher," resumed von Ense.

"No," said the little man, still laughing, "but I thought that with Herr von Goethe still alive Frau Varnhagen would admit of no other poetic genius."

Rahel, who was giving her attention to one of Hegel's discourses—Hegel was always delivering discourses, even in drawingrooms—caught the gist of Schleiermacher's ironic remark and her smiling eyes seemed to say, "Wait until Professor Hegel gets through with his monologue and you shall get your deserts."

However, the opportunity had not yet come. Professor Hegel was still laboring to complete his sentence in his strong Swabian accent, speaking haltingly, with jerking gestures, and, swaying his body awkwardly, he continued:

"As I was saying, when I think a thought, for instance, I am not thinking my own thought but only part of the universal thought of all human intelligence, and while the thought strikes me as my own it is only the thought of the universe I am thinking, and when I think of God, or rather of the absolute, the idea of the consciousness of one, I am only thinking as part of the whole which is God—in other words, my consciousness of this thought and the opposite of this very thought are one and the same thing, both being the same consciousness of an integral whole——"

Rahel welcomed the guests while giving part of her mind to Hegel, who was laboring through the labyrinth of his thoughts, seeking a way out. Fortunately Hegel minded no intrusions nor interruptions, and with his shoulders stooped, his prematurely aged, wrinkled countenance undergoing the visible contortions of a twitching pair, proceeded:

"In other words, though directed *an sich*, concerning and pertaining to one's self as an incomplete and imperfect existence—such thought, as I have clearly demonstrated, is different and yet identical, all forming complementary parts of a whole, as segments make up a circle, and yet without a circle there can be no segments——"

"Clearly so," struck in the hostess.

"Yes, Pastor Schleiermacher," she turned her keen eyes upon the little savant, "I have discovered a new poetic genius. Venus may shine even though the greater lustre is that of Jupiter."

She wished him to know that she had overheard his pleasantly about the bard of Weimar.

“Who is this new genius—a Berliner?”

Several other faces turned upon the hostess.

“No, a recent arrival. He hails originally from the Rhineland but he has just come from Goettingen, a student of Jurisprudence——”

“With no past?”

“All future,” laughed Rahel. “Yes, he has something pelled from Goettingen——”

“Then there is indeed hope for him,” struck in Gubitz, editor of the “*Gesellschafter*.”

“I expect him here this evening,” Rahel soon added seriously. “He has real talent. He promised to bring a few of his poems and I may induce him to read them to us.”

When Rahel praised the most critical paused to consider. She had been the first to proclaim Goethe’s supremacy when to the literary world at large he was still “only one of the poets.”

Soon Albert was announced and every one divined that he was the object of Rahel’s admiration. Even Hegel, who was still elucidating his trend of thought, raised his eyes to get a glimpse of the newcomer.

Dressed in a velvet frock coat and frilled shirt, with lace falling over his white, beautifully shaped hands, with a broad laid-down collar, he looked taller than he actually was. In his face was boyishness with something indefinable about the deep corners of his mouth that already spoke of world-weariness, and the peculiar twinkle in his narrowed eyes accentuated the suggestion of cynicism.

Rahel, with the *savoir faire* of the hostess of a celebrated salon, made a special effort to put the young man at his ease. She realized that in spite of his innate pride—the pride she well understood—the gathering of so many notables, so many years his seniors, embarrassed him. She meant to be his patroness. Inwardly she was already proud of him. She was not displeased with the manner in which he met the brilliant assemblage. She could see he was not over-modest but she was enough of a student of human nature to know that while true genius may understand its own limitations it is never humble enough to reveal them to others. Again, she was pleased because he did not betray his Semitic lineage. She had not yet outlived her secret wish to



obliterate her racial past, though in her heart of hearts—deeper than she permitted herself to penetrate—she was proud that he was of her race.

She kept close to him all evening, eagerly watching over him lest he might make some *faux pas* and put himself in a wrong light before the critical audience. She was conscious of his youth and of his readiness of speech, and knew the prejudice of elders against a talkative young man, no matter how scintillating. For after a momentary constraint Albert joined in the conversation with his wonted recklessness and offered opinions that might be construed as presumptive in a man of his age. And she was particularly glad that he had made a favorable impression upon Gublitz. The editor was not as pedantic as most of the coterie and possessed enough of cynicism himself to appreciate the young poet's bitter tongue. She was counting on the editor of the "*Gesellschafter*" to be of service to her protégé.

Though she urged him to read a few of his poems she was pleased when Albert declined, and she was still more gratified when he handed her a packet for her personal perusal.

## II.

Albert left Rahel's salon elated. Rahel was a revelation to him. In the past two years he had met learned Professors at Bonn and Goettingen, and had met a few charming women, but had as yet never met a person of either sex that combined the erudition of pedants with the ease engendered by good social breeding.

What particularly drew him towards her was her naturalness; her freedom of sham, her uncompromising truthfulness. And what was rarest of all, she was innocent of all prejudices. She could sympathize with those whose opinions were diametrically opposed to her own. Inner suffering is very often the most effective instructor of tolerance. The only thing she despised and for which she showed no sympathy, was correct mediocrity—Philistinism. At last Albert Zorn had found a kindred spirit.

His experiences of the past two years had prepared him for this friendship. He had read a great deal, thought profoundly, and suffered no little since he left Hamburg. Embittered by his unrequited love he had fled from the *Schacherstadt* as from a nightmare, and at first found Bonn very much to his liking. Not only was the atmosphere of learning alluring after the sordid commercialism of Hamburg, but the town on the Rhine, with its picturesque surrounding, reawakened in him the sentiments of his boyhood. And here, too,

was the friend of his boyhood, Christian Lutz, also another old classmate. Indeed, at first it seemed like old times. He was again sauntering along the banks of his beloved river, dreaming fanciful dreams; he persuaded himself that he had obliterated the rankling memories of that hateful city, the cradle of his great sorrows.

And though already twenty-two he flung himself into the college life with boyish ardor. He became a member of the *Burschenschaft*, joined the Round Table of a young literary coterie, and participated in the students' pastimes, such as fencing and dueling, and only refrained from smoking and drinking because of his precarious health. Save for his narrowed dreamy eyes and peculiar restlessness, he appeared as a typical "*flotter Bursch*". He wore a black coat, a red cap, and across his breast shone the colors of the *Burschenschaft*, a band of black, red and gold.

The *Burschenschaft* was more than a mere student fraternity, with *camaraderie* as its objective. It claimed idealistic aims. Its leaders spoke of a United Germany, they prattled of Neo-Hellenism—the Neo-Hellenism of Goethe and Winckelmann—they orated about Romanticism—"Die Welt wird Traum, der Traum wird Welt."——

But much as they indulged in fine speeches their real aims were visionary—*Schwärmerei*—rather than practical. It was only the Prussian Government that took them seriously. The assassination of Kotzebue by a fanatic student had aroused the authorities to drastic action. Students had been expelled, professors incarcerated, the members of the *Burschenschaft* were under police surveillance. And the open antagonism of the Government fanned the smouldering embers of revolt in the breasts of the young dreamers who despised Prussian tyranny.

Albert joined the *Burschenschaft* at this critical moment, and brought to it all the zeal of a new convert. Hitherto he had given but little thought to political strife, his being had been immersed in romantic sentiments of the heart, but in this league he beheld the means to a great end. To him the *Burschenschaft* stood for the contending force against Prussianism. And when one night the students marched to the Kreuzberg, back of the town, where by the glow of flaming torches and bonfires they voiced their undying loyalty to the great cause, Albert Zorn was one of the most fervid. It was his first taste of action. His, innate love of liberty flared up and took the place of his erstwhile sentimentality.

Through the carelessness of a fellow student, who had written a report of this torch parade to an editor, the authorities learned of this march and at once cited the offenders to appear before the *Universitätsrichter* (college judge). In

the protocol it was charged that not only was the *Burschenschaft* greeted with “*Lebe hoch!*” but a seditious speech was made which ended with the following ominous words: “Brothers, a great burden rests upon our shoulders. We must free the oppressed Fatherland!” And out of the 216 members of the *Burschenschaft* only Albert Zorn and three others were singled out for chastisement. True, he was not severely punished but the accusation and the proceeding of the trial were enough to deepen his hatred for Prussian rule, and to dampen his ardor for Bonn. Moreover, this unexpected jolt brought clarity to his vision. His temporary illusion was gone. He saw the futility of the *Burschenschaft*; its members had not displayed such courage at the trial as to arouse his admiration. He saw in their endeavors nothing but sound and empty phrases. He had mistaken the boyish circle for a manly organization.

In addition to his disillusionments came the crushing disappointments as regards Christian Lutz. Albert was grieved at the change in his boyhood friend. The son of a Prussian official, he began to reveal his inner self. The leopard could not change his spots. Instead of the buoyant youngster that he had been in former years, Christian was now a stolid young man and frowned upon all liberal views. Albert felt that Christian was regarding him with the eyes of a Prussian official, for which function he was preparing himself. And Christian had also lost interest in literature. He regarded Albert’s poetic flights as mere child’s play, unbecoming a serious minded student.

At the end of the second semester Albert again found himself alone and aloof, walking, brooding, planning, sick at heart. Everybody and everything had suddenly changed, only he was the same, the same dreamer, dreaming of things that were not coming true.

Discouraged he left Bonn and went to Goettingen. However, it did not take him long to realize the fallacy of the change. Instead of the picturesque scenery of the former town the environments of Goettingen were commonplace and instead of the romantic spirit of the Bonn University the air in this “learned nest” was charged with pedantry; everybody was bent on “grinding”, with scholarship as its shibboleth. And what was more irritating to the democratic son of the Rhineland was the predominant element of the Hannoverian *Junker* aristocracy; the superciliousness and the boorishness of these tyrannical fledglings goaded him on to voicing his contempt for the whole breed. Always outspoken, always blunt, always showing his likes and dislikes too plainly, he made no secret of his opinions. As a result he had quickly gained a reputation for wit but at the expense of popularity. The historian Sartorius, one of Albert’s professors at Goettingen and an ardent admirer of his talents, lauded the young poet’s verses which were shown him, but added, “*Indessen, man*

wird Sie nicht lieben.” No, they neither loved his songs nor himself at Goettingen.

Before long he was again called before the *Universitätsrichter*. A charge was lodged against him that he had challenged one of the students, a nobleman, to a duel, against the rules of the University. He admitted the charge and justified his act because his opponent had questioned his veracity. But the college judge would not recognize such a defense.

So after a summer of study and foot-journeys with a knapsack on his back he came to Berlin.

### III.

Berlin thrilled him at first. Keen observer though he was, he mistook her superficial dazzle for a deeper brilliancy. He was still looking at the world with the eyes of a rustic. The opera, the galleries, the fine avenues, the gay cafés, the *salons*—everything about him engaged his interest and furnished food for his vivid imagination. Furthermore, though still a law student, he was received in society as a promising young poet and as such many doors of distinguished men and women were open to him.

At last the fates were kind to him, he thought. His health had improved, he had a circle of friends and admirers, he was writing new poems, getting old ones published, had finished a poetical drama, and had hopes of seeing it presented on the stage. And Rahel’s house had become his second home. He did not wait for her “at home” but came and went as he pleased. She read and criticised every line he wrote, and her severest censure never hurt his feelings. Very frequently her husband was also invited to pass critical judgment on Zorn’s verses. Dinners and teas with brilliant people, late evenings at Lutter and Wegner’s—the café where the young literary talent of Berlin congregated to discuss the latest book, the latest play, the latest musical composition. Conversation was to him like reading: it stimulated his own thoughts. And when he was not reading or arguing he was strolling along *Unter den Linden*, swinging his cane, his eyes narrowed, his chest thrust forward, gathering impressions. When fatigued from walking he dropped in at Café Josty, famed for its *Kaffee mit Sahne*.

To be sure, moments of sorrow were not lacking even in those happy days. His father’s financial condition had grown worse and then came the crushing blow that Hilda was betrothed—that she had preferred an everyday business man to a poet by the grace of God! Besides, he was always short of a few

*Louis d'or* for which he would rob Peter to pay Paul, and he was ever perplexed as to where his money had gone. Uncle Leopold's stipend came punctually on the first of the month, and according to his calculations should see him through till the first of the next, but somehow it never lasted more than a week. Ah, if he could only catch up and start with a clean slate the next month! Every month he would take a vow to be more regular in his habits, more methodical—never, never would he be inveigled into a game of Pharo—but then at the end of the week he found himself with but one *Thaler* in his pocket, with three more weeks before the first of the next month, and he would then hasten to one of his friends to borrow enough to tide him over the difficult period. Then, again there were other sorrows. Albert had collected a number of his poems and wished to publish them in book form but he was still unable to find a publisher. "The bats!" he would mutter under his breath, "I turn the sun upon them and they see it not." Rahel was the only one who saw the light. It was heartbreaking. Byron at his age was already famous and he—"Oh, the blind bats!"

One day a would-be friend came knocking at his door. It was late on a cold January morning and he was still in bed. He had awakened earlier in the morning but a few stray thoughts tormented him so he turned over and tried to forget them in sleep. Fortunately nothing but a headache disturbed his sleep. Grief had the opposite effect on him. The day before had been a very trying one. He had lost a few *Louis d'or* at Pharo, had a quarrel with one of his comrades at Lutter and Wegner's, and had received an unpleasant letter from his parents. So he had stayed up late the night before writing verses on the cruelty of fate.

As he turned in his bed a thought flashed across his brain that eternal sleep was the greatest gift of the gods—Death! No rejected manuscripts, no unrequited love, no debts, no asinine critics, no Hegels and Schleiermachers, no Jews and Christians, no Prussian censors—death surely was bliss, he determined and buried his head in his pillow. He recalled that when he awoke he was in a very pleasant dream, and hoped to pick up the golden threads of that fantastic web. He wondered what had awakened him. It must have been the sounds outside. Friedrichstrasse was becoming noisy, he was saying to himself, and he ought to change his lodgings where his pleasant dreams would not be interrupted. He was trying to bring back the vanished phantom. He sometimes went back to sleep and resumed the dream at the point left off, like a story given in instalments.

Confound that noise outside! Albert was vexed with Friedrichstrasse, with the mob that never respected the sensibilities of a poet, with those clattering

hoofs—why could not such heavy treading beasts have rubber hoofs? Rubber—a Pharo wheel—a girl’s face—the girl was beating a drum—it was deafening . . .

He rose with a sudden start and blasphemous ejaculations.

“Who is there? What do you want?” he demanded in a high pitched voice.

He remembered that he had forgotten to bolt his door, so he shouted again, “Open the door and tell me what you want!”

“A man wants to see you—”

“This early? What does he want? Who is he?”

“I told him you were asleep but he would not leave. He said he must see you; and, besides, he said you had no business to be asleep at eleven o’clock —”

“What business is that of his?” Albert shouted. “Tell the impudent fool I won’t see him—”

The landlady laughed blandly. She knew her lodger, and there was but a step between his uncontrollable wrath and overflowing tenderness.

His features softened. Hegel’s lectures came punctually at two and he did not want to miss that. It was not so much that he wished to hear what the philosopher had to say—Hegel had been repeating the same thing in the past ten lectures—but he loved to watch the Professor’s grotesque movements and the peculiar contortions of his wrinkled face. A classmate next to him was making interesting caricatures of the Professor while he was lecturing.

“Who is this fellow?” Albert asked in a modulated voice. “Has he no name at all?”

“He said he was a genius and was sure you’d appreciate him—and he looks like a genius.”

“You have probably misunderstood him,” laughed Albert. “He must have said he wanted to see the genius. Alright, let him come in.”

The landlady shrugged her shoulders and closed the door.

He was about to throw himself back on his bed when she reappeared, followed by the stranger.

“Look at the damn thing!” the intruder burst out, without a word of introduction. “No publisher would have it. I showed it to the editor of the *“Gesellschaft”* but he only shook his head and said ‘Show it to Albert Zorn.’

So here it is!”

With that he flung a packet of papers on the bed.

Albert reached for the manuscript, then glanced at his visitor.

“So your name is Krebsfleisch?”

“Johann Friedrich Krebsfleisch” the stranger corrected him, with a sullen expression on his high cheekbones and short, receding chin. His brow was like a dome and his eyelids were heavy, with bovine eyes protruding.

“Before long everybody in the land—princes and paupers—will know who Johann Friedrich Krebsfleisch is!” he added. “The world is as yet too stupid to recognize my genius. I was told you might understand me—But you can’t be a poet and have that fine fur coat!”

Krebsfleisch suddenly checked himself, his bulging eyes turned in the direction of an open clothes-closet, where Zorn’s clothes were hanging. He crossed the room and patted the fur as if it were a purring cat.

Albert’s mouth tightened with a humorous smile on his lips. There was a mischievous twinkle in his narrowed eyes. He could not decide whether his visitor was an escaped lunatic or had not recovered from a night’s drinking. He wore a short, tattered coat, baggy patched trousers, and his hairy breast was seen through his unbuttoned shirt. His headgear was a cross between an old-fashioned high silk hat and the present day derby.

“Why don’t you read it?” he presently accosted Albert. “Some day you’d be glad to tell your friends that the great poet Johann Friedrich Krebsfleisch had given you the chance of reading his great epic in manuscript.” Then he added, as if soliloquising, “Every genius is a John the Baptist crying in the wilderness. Years later people wake up and try to catch the echo.”

Albert undid the package and glanced at the title page.

“Since Schiller died no one has produced a tragedy worthy of the name. At last you have one before you,” Krebsfleisch struck in.

“Have you published anything?”

“The idiots can’t see my genius—yet. And the finest quality of my genius is hunger. Yes, I am a genius by the grace of god. No one has ever known hunger in all its stages as I have.”

He moved his jaws, his eyes wandering around the room.

A knock at the door and a maid entered with a tray of steaming coffee and several rolls and butter.

Krebsfleisch stared at the food avidly.

“You must be a millionaire,” he said, sitting down at the foot of the bed. “A fur coat, a warm room, steaming coffee in the morning. Are you a poet or a publisher?”

“Just a poetic genius like yourself,” laughed Albert.

Krebsfleisch looked suspiciously at his host. There was something in Albert’s voice that was always puzzling. One could never tell whether he was jesting or was in earnest.

“You can’t possibly drink all this coffee alone?” said the visitor.

“No, I ordered enough for both of us,” responded Albert seriously. And he removed the cup from the saucer and filled them both to the brim.

“Which would you rather have, the cup or the saucer?” he asked.

Krebsfleisch’s bulging eyes skipped from one to the other, with a peculiar glitter.

“I always drink my coffee from a saucer,” he finally replied, and taking hold of it with both hands carried it to his lips.

“You may have all the bread and butter—I don’t care for any this morning,” Albert said nonchalantly.

Krebsfleisch stared at Zorn incredulously. How was it possible that one did not care for bread and butter! Overlooking the knife he spread the butter on a slice of bread with his finger and began to devour it ravenously.

“That’s how my mother used to spread butter on my bread.” His words were half drowned in the fullness of his mouth!

A moment later he sighed. “Those were happy days in my native village! My mother had a cow and there was always bread and butter and cheese in our house, but she insisted she must make an educated man of me. It serves her right. I have eaten her out of house and all. She inherited silver spoons from her father—her father was a *Beamter*—and I have devoured them all. The ladle goes for this semester’s tuition.”

Albert heaved a sigh. He had devoured his mother’s pearls and his grandfather had consumed a prayer-book with silver clasps during his last term at the medical school. There was now a bond of sympathy between the two. There was mist in Albert’s eyes. He caught his breath but could not speak. His first impulse was to have fun with the queer stranger but instead sympathy filled his heart.



“There is a pair of trousers I don’t need,” Albert said presently. He was too sensitive to make the offer directly.

“Yes, they might fit me,” Krebsfleisch glanced at the pantaloons thrown over a chair by the bed. Then he stood up and measured the length of the legs against his. “Perhaps a little tight around the calves, but they’ll do.”

A few coppers jingled in the trouser-pockets. There was a questioning look in his eyes.

“Yes, the contents goes with the trousers,” said Albert with seeming absentmindedness.

Krebsfleisch at once removed his own tattered trousers unceremoniously and pulled on those offered him.

“Your father must be very rich,” he was saying as he was stretching the waist line to fit his rotundity.

“Very, very rich,” stammered Albert with a sad smile on his face.

“And you never go hungry—not for a single day?”

“No, not for mortal food,” Zorn intoned wistfully.

“The other day,” Krebsfleisch said in a plaintive tone, “I did some copying for a rich idiot who took i a notion into his head that he had a new theory about the universe. He paid me four silver Thalers! Yes, sir, I had four silver Thalers in the hollow of my hand and was on my way to Jagor’s to have a real spread—*Braten* and white bread and a bottle of wine—and invited two friends for the feast. On the way to the restaurant I met a fellow-student and we dropped into Lutter and Wegner’s for a drink. I don’t know how it happened but we both got drunk and when night came the four Thalers were gone. One of the students, who had been invited to the spread, waited for me at Jagor’s until midnight, and then he challenged me—that fool! Must I lose my life in addition to the loss of my four Thalers? I have no more chance of a dinner at Jagor’s,” he ended with an audible sigh. “Rich idiots with new theories do not grow on trees.”

He rose and stretched his arms, with a downward look at his tightly fitting trousers.

“Can you perchance spare a top coat to cover this misfit?”

Yes, Albert had a top coat. It was hanging on a peg in the open closet.

“A fur coat and a top coat! You are not related to the Rothschilds?”

“Just distantly—the same as to the Prophets and to some of the Apostles.”

The jest was lost on Krebsfleisch.

Later in the day Albert hunted up a friend and borrowed five Louis d’or and then went to 20 Friedrichstrasse, where he announced to Frau Varnhagen von Ense that he had discovered a kindred spirit in the form of a starving genius.

## IV.

Months passed. Albert began to tire of Berlin. Every phase of the city’s life, like the pages of a book conned too often, bored him. He yearned for idealism, for truth, and because he could find neither he began to scoff and blaspheme. Here, as elsewhere, sham and falsehood ruled life. Politics, religion, literature, philosophy—a veritable Tower of Babel, where no one understood the other and all were bent on building something colossal, eternal. When he had first arrived here his zeal for so many things was kindled, now it was waning, cooling, dying. He suffered the pain of lost illusions, and that at an age when most people commence to have illusions. Despite his keen mind he had not yet learned that no one can see truth and live—peacefully. And he not only saw the truth but he was unwise enough to shout it from the housetops. He always took the world into his confidence, without realizing that one who gives the world his confidence gets none in return.

The scales were falling off his eyes. The Salon, the literary Bohemians—he saw the sham and sickly sentimentality of it all!

The Salon was but a nest of chattering parrots, where one repeated the phrases and syllogisms dropped by Goethe, by Herder, by Hegel, by Schelling. If these parrots had at least croaked their own tunes!

He was still attending the Round Table at Lutter and Wegner’s on Charlottenstrasse, where the rising young poets were having heated debates on literary topics. Every one of them had his shoulders in readiness for the mantle of the Prophet of Weimar to fall upon him and every one thought everybody else a mere pretender. And when they were most animated, stimulated by drink and smoke, Albert sat in a corner, neither drinking nor smoking, a strange gleam in his narrowed eyes, and from time to time sent a shaft of irony or an arrow of wit through their web of fancy phrases. When he did argue his colleagues scented arrogance in his statements. He had an unfortunate manner of belittling his opponents’ assertions and brushing them aside with a scoffing

jest. They were talking of romanticism as if the period was only beginning while he was speaking of it as if it had ended. They persuaded themselves that dreams were realities while he only wished to clothe the sordidness of life in the garb of romance. When he persisted they could not see the difference.

He was also at variance with them on political issues. They spoke of the radical democracy of Ludwig Börne while he believed in a democracy of Government based on justice, with an aristocracy of achievement in all walks of life. When Krebsfleisch accused Albert of aristocratic tendencies he retorted that he had more respect for an industrious aristocrat than for a coarse, drunken, lazy plebian poet who abused the nobility at Lutter and Wegner's and then went to his lodgings to write a cringing, begging letter to a son of the nobility. Krebsfleisch was silenced but had become Albert's mortal enemy. Without direct accusation Albert had revealed Krebsfleisch to himself. When people told him that Krebsfleisch was slandering him he only smiled and said Krebsfleisch was a genius and geniuses never had any sense of gratitude.

He again found himself almost alone, strolling along *Unter den Linden*, visiting cafés, reading, thinking suffering from headaches, and when in the throes of pain writing love songs. He wrote love songs because he craved love and had it not. When he had no one to love he was dreaming of love.

# MIRIAM.

## I.

**A**T the end of that semester he was seized with a passion for work and decided to stay in Berlin the following summer vacation and devote all his time to the execution of his literary plans. His head was full of literary schemes. He again applied himself to another revision of his poetic drama; dashed off a tragedy; penned more *Lieder*; and also sketched a weird romance with Venice as a background. He had just read Hoffmann's "Die Elixiere des Teufels", and was so influenced by its mystic charm that he was revolving in his brain the plot of a tale with witches and spirits. He meant to take the world by storm and attack it from many angles.

But the fates always interfered with him, not only in his plans, the affairs of the heart but also in his literary pursuits. One day an admirer sought his acquaintance and became a worshipping friend. And he was a friend worth having. He was the sort of person Albert needed. He was a nobleman from Posen, a count with a genuine love for poetry; sympathetic, generous, young, handsome and entertained liberal religious views, though a Catholic by birth. Besides, he was an accomplished musician and had composed music for a few of Albert's songs. Eager for recognition, chafing from the public's neglect, the count's praise was an infusion of new courage. And the more the count praised his verses, the higher he rose in the author's estimation. The count had become the "worthiest of mortals", "a flower of purity", the "embodiment of all that was good and noble".

Albert talked of the count to his friends, to his acquaintances, to strangers, and could not even resist the temptation of utilizing the count's given name in his verses. Impetuous, influenced to love and hate at first sight, the count had won him completely. And what was even more precious in this nobleman, he possessed originality and wit—rare faculties among Albert's ponderous Berlin friends. So when the count invited him to his estate near Gnesen, Albert forgot his resolutions for an industrious summer and accompanied him to Posen.

He found his surroundings there a veritable poet's dream. A palatial villa surrounded by extensive woods, luxuriant gardens, hundreds of acres of fertile fields, with a great forest back of the estate, a water mill, and all that the heart could crave. Nor were coquettish maidens wanting.

One day he met with a real adventure. He was alone, wandering through the narrow filthy streets of Gnesen, the town close by. The little town presented a strange sight to him. It looked medieval. Unpaved, without sidewalks, pulverized mud in the streets, the houses of heavy logs, unpainted, and straw-thatched and black with age, with grotesque looking people in the doorways or seated on earthen stoops extending across the whole front of the house. The peasants wore the national costume of unbleached linen coats without sleeves, with a colored girdle fastened around the waist, and trousers tucked in top-boots.

It was near sunset, the sun was sinking in a mist of gold and indigo and lustrous copper, the cows were returning from pasture through the main street to the resounding pistol-like echoes of the shepherd's long whip and to his exasperating shouts of "Whoa!"

Albert strolled along aimlessly, listening to the unintelligible jabber of the people around him, only now and then catching a word of their jargon.

He soon reached the market-place. It was deserted. Now and then a door opened, and a bar of a raucous song was heard. Then silence. A drunken peasant, lying on his back in the dust near a dram shop, was hiccoughing a love song, but soon his voice was hushed, too. Silence again. The last rays of the dying sun rested like a halo around the head of the Christ upon the tall black crucifix in the centre of the market place. Albert was about to turn in the direction of his host's villa when his attention was arrested by a girl, who emerged from a narrow passageway that branched off the market place. In her hand was a large jug and she was on her way to the Marktbrunnen. He recalled a scene in Mesopotamia, in the city of Nahor. The scene appeared to him as if he had actually seen it in his childhood. It was distant but vivid. He visualized all Biblical scenes. This damsel too, was "very fair to look upon, and she went down to the well." But it was harder to draw the water here than in Mesopotamia of old. The well was very deep and the frame above the ground was of round logs, which were mossy and wet and dripping, and there were puddles of water between the stones around the well. At a straight line from the centre of the well a perpendicular heavy pole was suspended from a long beam high above, and to the bottom of the suspended pole was attached an iron-hooped pail, which one was obliged to lower into the deep well, plunge it into the black looking water, and then with the aid of the balancing beam, bring up the pail.

Albert approached the well as the girl had gripped the pole and began to lower it while the beam above was creaking resistance. He remained standing across the well, looking straight at this Rebekah, but she seemed unconscious

of his presence.

“May I help you?”

A scarcely perceptible frown on her dark face was the only response and the grip on the pole tightened. In Gnesen young men offered no assistance to girls at the well. A deep gurgle from the depths, a frog-like grunt, and soon the pail was balanced on the top log of the well. As she filled her jug and turned to leave her eyes never betrayed the least knowledge that a young man was eagerly watching every move and gesture of hers; only the brown of her cheeks seemed of a deeper warmth and her gait lacked the ease which had marked her steps on her way to the well.

Following at a respectable distance he soon found himself in an uneven, unpaved, open space, to the right of which was an edifice of unmistakable character—the simplicity of structure, the indefinable gloom hovering over it, the long arched windows, told him that this was a house of prayer—and to the left was a row of dingy houses, with high stoops.

The girl cut diagonally across the large courtyard, mounted a high wooden porch, and when she entered the house closed the door with a slam that resounded throughout the square. Albert stood and looked at the two windows for a while. No face appeared at either of them.

He took a step nearer the house which the girl had entered. It was a humble hut, a one-story affair painted by Mother Nature in drab colors with streaks of black rot and dabs of yellow, where the decay was dry and worm-eaten and crumbling powder.

That evening the gay assemblage at the count's lost interest for Albert. His friend teased him about his sudden fit of melancholy and made guesses as to whose darted arrows had pierced the poet's heart. The count was certain it was the flaxen haired Katinka to whom Albert had read his verses earlier in the day; and he rather liked his guest's sudden fit of melancholy. Since he had a lion under his roof he wanted him to roar.

The next day Albert was again at the *Marktbrunnen* but he saw only shambling men and slovenly women come to draw water. He could think of no means of reaching the object of his search. His brain was very active but he had no mind for scheming; neither in real life nor in literary plots. He could only add color to reality, invent he could not.

In his present restlessness he turned to literature. He was planning a descriptive essay on Poland and discussed with his host the status of the peasantry. When he touched upon the condition of the Polish Jews, the count

said, "The Jews of Gnesen count me as their best friend."

He spoke rather tenderly, almost affectionately, of "his Jews".

"You might follow in the footsteps of Casimir the Great and take a Jewish Esther for your wife," jested Albert.

"The Jewish Esther of Gnesen would spurn a Casimir the Great," laughed the Count. "I have carried on flirtations with many a Jewish innkeeper's daughter but Miriam is adamant."

"Who is Miriam?"

"The rabbi's daughter. She is the prettiest and sweetest girl I have ever laid my eyes on."

After a space he added, "By the way, I always pay my respects to the rabbi when I come here in the summer and I should like you to meet him. We have quite a time in understanding each other. He speaks almost no Polish and my German is beyond him, so Miriam often acts as our interpreter."

A few days later the count's carriage stopped before a dilapidated little house near the synagogue. Albert was with the count and his heart beat tumultuously as he recognized the high wooden porch. They were soon knocking at the door.

People in Gnesen did not usually knock on people's doors. They just opened them and walked in.

They knocked again and again without response until the beadle, who happened to pass by, saw the dignitary at the rabbi's door and hurried to the rear of the house, pushed the door open unceremoniously, and burst out, "Miriam, *der Graf!*"

Miriam was bent over a copper pot which she was polishing.

Miriam dropped the pot and, rushing up to her father, exclaimed, "*Der Graf!*"

The rabbi, with a velvet skull-cap on his head, deep creases in his high, broad forehead, was swaying his body and pondering over some knotty problem in the Talmud.

"*Der Graf?*" he asked as if suddenly awakened from a profound sleep. "Quick, fetch me my Sabbath coat."

The next moment the rabbi, arrayed in his long silk Sabbath caftan, with a large round fur cap on his head, stood at the open door, courtesying and welcoming the *Graf*. And while the rigid laws of the Polish Jewry forbade

such familiarity between the opposite sexes Miriam clasped the count's extended hand and also shook hands with his companion. Albert looked fixedly at Miriam but beyond a pretty blush could detect no recognition of their former meeting.

In introducing his friend, the count mentioned the fact that Albert was a poet, but that made no impression upon the rabbi. The rabbi considered it a sin to waste ink and paper on anything save a Biblical or Talmudic treatise or upon songs glorifying the Almighty.

Miriam soon withdrew to the adjoining room, but the door between the rooms was open and Albert stole glances into the next chamber. She was paying no attention to his glances. Her eyes were downcast, though her face was turned toward him. Only once, when Albert used a Hebrew word in addressing her father, did she raise her eyes inquiringly and then dropped them quickly as if she were displeased at something.

Albert expected a sign of cordiality when he informed the rabbi that they were of the same race but instead he felt increased coldness—the hospitality was now only extended to the *Graf*.

When they rose to leave Miriam stepped into the room and bade them goodbye. Albert wondered if she understood that the second meeting was not wholly accidental. He was determined that she should understand this.

## II.

Love teaches subterfuge. The young poet soon found a pretext to pay another visit at the home of the rabbi. He was taking notes for an article on Poland and came to the rabbi for first hand information.

This time the rabbi seemed more cordial. The absence of the count made Albert, too, feel more at ease. They discussed the misery of the Jews in Poland more freely. Besides, Albert quoted a few Biblical verses and that seemed a welcome password. When he repeated some of the eloquent phrases of Zunz on the martyrdom of Israel and spoke with poetic feeling of Jewish antiquity the rabbi's eyes glowed with a strange light and there was a warmth on his bearded countenance.

After the next visit Albert was at his wit's end. He was making rapid progress with the rabbi but not with his daughter. A glance, a blush, a rapid movement of the lashes, but no communication. Jewish daughters in Gnesen did not chat with young men callers. But luck is usually on the side of lovers.



When he called again the rabbi was away.

“I wished to ask your father about something concerning the Jews in Poland,” he was stammering, eyeing with delight the changing tints in her cheeks. “Perhaps I could write to him about it.”

“My father doesn’t read German,” Miriam said, catching her breath as if apologizing for his ignorance.

“Do you?”

“Yes,” and she again caught her breath.

Her mother stood at a respectful distance, pride in her eyes. It was through her tolerance that Miriam had learned to read and write German unbeknown to her father.

Albert’s eyes sparkled. A thought sped through his brain. Producing a slip of paper he wrote: “Like King Saul I came here to look for the asses and found a kingdom. Dare I hope that you might meet me at two o’clock tomorrow afternoon inside the second gate of Dzyalin? Until tomorrow.

Albert Zorn.”

“See if you can read my handwriting,” he said as he handed her the note.

She read it, blushed scarlet, grew confused, and raised her eyelashes with a helpless look on her face. He did not offer to shake hands with her, having become confused himself, and left the house.

### III.

Dzyalin, the count’s estate was half an hour’s walk from the heart of the Gnesen. On Saturdays and summer evenings the gates were open and the town people were allowed to promenade through the wooded paths and the tree-lined winding alleys. The grounds were entered through a narrow portal and after passing the spacious courtyard, around which were located several imposing homes of the manager and his assistants, there was a tall iron gate which led to two broad shaded lanes. The one to the right led to the count’s castle and the one turning left was open to the public. The latter extended over more than a mile, rows of Lombardy poplars on either side, like sentinels on guard, and came to a sudden halt at the dam, which held the streams in check for the water mill. For farther left was a narrow river, beyond which spread the count’s vegetable gardens and grain fields.

Albert was at the designated spot ahead of time, and when he spied her in the distance he ran toward her with an extended hand but she overlooked it and remained standing stock still, pale, shy, trembling. Her cheeks looked almost bloodless for a moment and her eyes, which he had thought were jet black, were of a sapphire blue and devoid of all animation. A dark cashmere shawl, which had covered her head, had slipped to her shoulders, and the tassels at the ends were gathered in her clasped hands, with an expression of stunned fright on her face.

“I was afraid you wouldn’t come,” he mumbled.

She drew a long breath, her hands clinching the tassels in her hands, and a film of mist appeared in her dark-blue eyes.

“Some one might see me,” she muttered in a fretful voice and a frown of agony appeared on her countenance.

They moved back of the row of poplars, where the ground sloped toward the river, screened by shrubs and bushy willows.

He soon made her forget her fears. He began to ask her questions about the people in Gnesen, about herself, but she would not talk about herself. She wanted him to tell her about Berlin, of which she had heard so much. She sighed. She was tired of Gnesen and the people here. There was nothing new in Gnesen. The same gloom day after day, week after week, year after year. Ah, for a glimpse of Berlin!

He made attempts to console her. Her naiveté, her ignorance of the world, her simplicity, her artlessness, her evident truthfulness charmed him. She had never been outside the little town, and she was in her eighteenth year. She entertained strange notions of what a large city was like, and wished she could go to one—she would go anywhere to escape the tedium of Gnesen.

They were now seated in the screening shade of a clump of willows on one side and on the other were the bushy shrubs through which one caught only intermittent glimpses of the flowing stream below. Now and then were heard the quaint songs of the peasant women in the fields—Polish folk songs—the piping of a swineherd in the distance, the barking of a dog, the shrill drilling sound of the locust. He sat on the ground opposite Miriam, listening to her wistfully, catching the enchanting melodies around him, and looking, with narrowed eyes, at the beautiful maiden before him. There was an exhaling purity about her. Sheltered by her mother’s rigorous virtue she was like a soft-colored wild flower surrounded by high woods, never scorched by the burning rays of the sun, never harassed by gusts of cold winds. As he looked at her appealing dark-blue eyes with those exquisite long black eyelashes, her rich

black hair combed straight back from her low, square forehead, and the faintest dimple in her chin, there was a strange sentiment in his heart. He was conscious of a desire to rest his hands upon her bowed head—barely touching it—as did the Jews of old, and murmur a prayer and a blessing that God may guard her sweet purity.

“You ought to be glad to be away from large cities,” he endeavored to cheer her. “Here you have treasures Berlin could never give you.”

He halted. A finch dropped a few sweet notes and sailed away, and then the chattering crickets accentuated the silence around them.

“Ah! you don’t understand—you don’t understand—” she was saying, sadness spreading over her face.

She was playing with the tassels of her cashmere shawl absent-mindedly. She could not explain what he did not understand, for she did not quite fully understand herself beyond the fact that she was weary of Gnesen. Life in Gnesen was a perpetual “You must not.” Being a rabbi’s daughter more things were forbidden her than other girls. And the sudden appearance of this elegantly dressed young man, with his intent eyes upon her, his charming voice and pure German speech, made her conscious of her circumscribed, narrow, drab existence with all its dinginess. Strange feelings had been stirring in her the past year or two but they only made her restless, without revealing to her, her inner desires. Recently she had overheard her mother complain that her father was not active enough to procure a husband for their daughter and the rabbi murmured that “the good Lord would provide.” Miriam trembled at the thought of marriage; a repulsive feeling came over her at the mere mention of it. Marriage in Gnesen meant shaving off her beautiful tresses and exchanging them for the detestable wig; it meant—she shuddered—the drudgery of married life in poverty.

On the day she caught a glimpse of Albert at the well she went home with her heart a-flutter. He was so unlike the young men in Gnesen. She had not thought he belonged to her people but his dreamy, intent look had not escaped her despite her seeming inattentiveness. No one had looked at her in the manner of this stranger.

The evening of their first meeting she remained seated on the steps of the porch, with her elbows on her knees, her pensive face between her hands, musing; at times her breasts heaved, though she knew not why. Her musing was interrupted by the approach of her father and Shloma, the marriage-broker. The two were conversing in a low confidential tone. She knew the topic of their conversation. The day before her father had been telling her mother that

Shloma was proposing a suitable young man for Miriam. He mentioned his name. Miriam trembled. She had never spoken with the young man but she knew him by sight, an ungainly young man. When her father and the marriage-broker came near the porch Miriam went into the house and retired. She spent a troubled night, with a heart full of sorrow, and in the back of her brain was the picture of a young man, slender, handsomely dressed, with light-brown hair, and eyes that made her heart flutter.

When she beheld the stranger in the company of the count her heart stood still for a second and the blood rushed to her face. To Miriam the day of miracles had not yet passed. All her life she had heard of nothing but miracles. Her dreams were not of knights and princes but of the thousands of miracles God had performed for her people.

After Albert and the count had left Miriam threw her cashmere shawl over her head and took a long walk, to the very end of the town. She was not thinking of the stranger. She was not thinking of anything. Only her head was thumping and she was restless.

During Albert's next visit Miriam sat in the adjoining room and drank in every word, every syllable. She loved to listen to his voice, to his pure German, and frequently blushed at the comical attempts of her father to make his patois sound Germanic. She hoped the young man would come again.

Then the miracle happened. The young man called when her father was away and he handed her that note. She cherished the scrap of paper and secretly read it over again and again. She did not hesitate about going to meet him but she trembled with fear. In her innocence the thought that she was running any risk never occurred to her until she had reached the meeting place.

On her departure from their first secret meeting she readily agreed to come the following day. She wanted to hear more of the great city where the streets were paved and lit by lamps at night. She naively asked him what street he lived on and when he told her she asked him to put the address on a piece of paper. Then she made a new discovery; the houses in Berlin were numbered! In Gnesen the houses needed no numbers. One knew the occupants of all the houses and instead of numbers, there were little descriptive signs over the doors, indicating what each owner must furnish in case of fire. The picture of a ladder was above the door of one house, that of an axe over another, and there were sketches—not very graphic—of long hooks and pails and besoms, and, in fact, of all the instruments of the Gnesen fire brigade.

During one of their clandestine meetings Albert remained seated on the ground, his hands around his knee, staring at her as if she were a work of art

which aroused his innermost admiration.

Tears of ecstasy were in his eyes as he continued looking at her in silence.

The past three years Albert had learned considerably about the lure of sex—sensuality was no longer an unsolved mystery to him—but though Miriam drew him toward her with a thousand invisible chains he was conscious of an inner fear—the fear of touching a sacred shrine—whenever he touched her cashmere shawl or passed his hand, ever so lightly, over her sleeves, or when he clasped her hand in parting.

Miriam looked up at him and for a moment let her eyes rest upon his sensitive face. She did not understand the meaning of the mist in his eyes but she was conscious of an overwhelming desire to touch him, to let her hand rest upon his.

This was the first touch of romance in the young girl's life, the first conscious awakening of the mysterious being within her. It was the first tiny opening of the bursting bud, the first petal catching the light of the sun, though its warmth had long before penetrated it. She thought of nothing save the irresistible sweetness of sitting under the willow tree with this young stranger. He seemed a mystery to her, part of the mystery of the great world, of which she knew nothing. The boundaries of her world were the bluish tree tops on the horizon to the left of Gnesen and the dome of the cathedral to the right. And it was midsummer and the Fearful Days—as the group of holidays at the end of summer were symbolically named—were soon at hand. Sadness! sadness! sadness! as if life in Gnesen was not sad enough without fasts, without heart-rending lamentations, without wailing and praying and torturing of the flesh.

“I can't meet you tomorrow,” she said one day as they parted.

“And why not?” he inquired eagerly.

“Don't you know what tomorrow is?”

He shook his head.

A strange expression stole over her face. Her eyes contracted, there was a deep dent between her eyebrows, and she stared at him as if sudden fear possessed her.

“So it is not true,” she muttered in a husky voice, “that you are a Jew.”

Albert threw his head back and laughed.

“Too much of a Jew, Miriam—too much of one to be left in peace.” The sunny smile now vanished from his eyes, the deep corners of his mouth

drooped and twitched, the wing of melancholy brushed his flushed cheeks. "Why do you doubt it?" He again made an attempt at smiling.

"You couldn't be a Jew without knowing that tomorrow is a Jewish holiday!"

He looked puzzled at her. He did not observe Jewish holidays.

However, she soon yielded and promised to come.

The next day they were seated in their secluded place, Albert reciting a song he had written the night before. He told her that if he had not met her the song would not have been written.

There were tears in his eyes; he uttered the last verse in a whisper almost, and then silence. The day was hot, without the slightest breeze; nothing stirred, not even the drooping feather-like boughs of the willow overhead.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps behind them arrested their attention. A tall, red-bearded, round-faced man was staring at them as if frightened by an apparition. He was Getzel the Beadle.

Miriam leaped up and like a frightened deer, sped through the bushes before Albert had fully realized what had happened.

He waited but she did not return. He called at the same place the next day and the next but she did not appear. Each new love was a first love to him, only it lashed his soul with greater fury. Ah! the shades of the past, they were nothing more than a memory to him now. The wilted flower of yesterday is always forgotten when the perfume of the living one is wafted into our nostrils. No one was like Miriam. There never was any other woman as sweet as Miriam. His whole being yearned for her. Hedwiga, Hilda, Eugenie—they were all fancies—but Miriam—everything swam before his feverish eyes as he thought of her. Nothing in life mattered any more—nothing! He tried to see her at her home—to tell her parents of his love for their daughter, but the rabbi, like Eugenie's father, shut the door in his face.

He suddenly awoke from his poet's dream. He saw nothing but abject misery around him. He could no longer share in his host's gayety.

## IV.

He curtailed his visit and returned to Berlin heavy of heart, saddened beyond endurance. His short-lived romance intensified his bitterness against the rulers of Poland. He hurried to Rahel. He knew no one would understand

his present woe as well as that all-wise woman. She was not only his literary critic but also his priestess, to whom he confessed everything. And with that sage smile on her refined intellectual features she knew how to console, how to tender sympathy, and listened with genuine concern.

He buried himself in work again but he could not forget his love for Miriam and with it came the depressing memory of Poland. All his innate slumbering passions for justice, for liberty, were aroused to a white heat. Unlike Balaam of old, he had gone to Poland to bless and returned cursing. Why should he care for personal friendships? Why think of selfish advantage? Why consider what a hypocritical society might call poor manners? Like the seers of old he was bidden to speak, and he seized his pen and told the truth as he saw it regardless of all consequences.

This essay was the first gun that he fired in the liberation of the *Junker*-ridden people. For his caustic utterances not only revealed the tyranny of the Polish nobles but also silhouetted the hideous forms of the *Junkers*; the censor who had pruned away every trace of humor from the article, unwittingly failed to strike out a sentence fraught with danger.

His first political pronouncement proved a veritable boomerang. It was too daring, too pointed, too truthful. He learned that even in letters, no less than in the drawingroom, truth must be masked, if not altogether suppressed. His acquaintances of rank looked at him askance, his Polish friend and patron shunned him, Prussian officials took notice of him. Even Rahel, herself a passionate lover of truth and no friend of *Junkerdom*, advised caution. And when she tried to give him the wisdom of her experience, he only grew peevish and said he was no diplomat and did not wish to be one, and that truth was to be his only guide in life.

He found himself at odds with everybody. He had anticipated applause but instead met with hostility and condemnation.

His cultured Jewish friends, too, took offense at this essay. In speaking of the pitiful conditions of his co-racials in Poland he spoke disparagingly of the elegantly dressed Berliners. He had ironically made a comparison between the exterior of the ungainly Polish Jew, with a heart beating for freedom, and the elegant Berliner, whose head was filled with the silly romanticism of the period, with nothing but vanity in his heart.

One winter evening as he was brooding over his sad plight his landlady informed him that some one wanted to see him.

“I don’t want to see anybody—leave me alone!” he finally cried irritably.

“I’ve tried to send her away but she insists on seeing you—she has come all the way from Poland to see you,” came the landlady’s voice through the closed door.

He jumped up from his bed. He could not even guess who this intruder might be but the word Poland was magic to him, and it was a “she”! Perhaps it was an admirer from that fateful land. The hope of an admirer stirred romance in his soul. He wondered which of his scattered songs had found an echo in the heart of a Polish admirer. Yes, he was becoming famous! The stray children of his brain were traveling far. He opened the door with a flush of joy on his face.

He rushed downstairs to the sitting-room, dimly lighted by a tallow candle. By the door stood a slender girl shivering with cold. He took a step closer to her.

“Miriam!” he cried.

She rushed up to him, tears welling in her luminous dark-blue eyes.

“How did you get here?”

His joy and confusion were bewildering.

“I had your address so I came here,” she murmured in the tone of a helpless child.

He made her sit down and tell him how she had happened to leave Gnesen.

The Beadle had told her father about her and also communicated the scandal to the rest of the community. A committee called on her father and urged that she be sent away from town lest the other girls might be contaminated. The father had almost yielded when his wife prevailed upon him to allow the disgraced daughter to remain at home. But there was no more chance of getting Miriam married. Who would have her now? Life had become unbearable for the poor girl. However, the resourceful marriage-broker had soon found a way out of the dilemma. He knew of a young man, a drover’s son, in a village nearby, who was willing to have Miriam in spite of the stigma. When Miriam was told of the match she seemed indifferent. But two days after the betrothal—it was on a Saturday morning when her parents were at services—Miriam went to her mother’s bed, lifted the heavy feather-bed, and removed from underneath a little packet which contained the family savings for her dowry and trousseau, and unobserved made her way out of town. After many



days of travel by foot and by coach, she reached her destination, clutching in her hand the address that Albert had scribbled on a piece of paper.

“And at last I’m near you,” she said with a heaving sigh as she concluded her simple narrative, her eyes turning appealingly upon her perplexed lover.

Albert at once thought of Rahel. He must go to her and place his predicament before her. He was helpless.

Rahel was not only helpful but magnanimous. She received Miriam into her home, clothed her in dresses that were then in vogue, and shared the thrill of romance. Though she had often bandied Albert about his peculiar notions of feminine beauty she was forced to admit that Miriam was adorable. In her Berlin attire no one would have taken her for a native of Gnesen. Her innate modesty, her truthfulness, her sweet temper, her want of city mannerisms, fascinated the woman of the world surfeited with the artifices of society.

At first even Frau Varnhagen, with all her bitter experiences of her younger days, did not think of the consequences of the present situation. She only thought of the poor girl’s plight, of the poet’s love, of the sweet romance acted before her eyes. To her it was an idyll of rare charm.

But before long the sordid facts stared her in the face. When she spoke of this to the lover he saw no problem in it at all.

“Why, I love her as I’ve never loved anybody in the world,” he burst out impulsively.

Rahel, leaning back in her *fauteil*, her hand thoughtfully raised to her temple, looked enviously at the dreamy youth. She caught the rapture of his soul. To love, and be loved, like this!

“But, my dear Zorn, what good will come of her indefinite stay here—to what end?”

“Why, I’ll marry her, of course, I’ll marry her,” he spoke impulsively.

Frau Varnhagen leaned forward and smiled indulgently. She wondered if he ever would grow up. He was already twenty-five and in many ways a mere child.

“One needs money to support a wife—love alone is not enough.” She paused. She would not intimate that he was living on the charity of his uncle and that he was heavily in debt to many of his friends. Then she added, “It’ll be several years before either your pen or your jurisprudence will crystallize into *Louis d’ors*. What will become of this beautiful flower in the meantime—what will become of Miriam?”

But while Frau Varnhagen was attempting to put reason into the poet's mind she directed the course of the fates more successfully. She called the count and counselled with him. Shortly thereafter, the rabbi came to Berlin and the count interceded between father and daughter; and before Albert was aware Miriam had disappeared.

Poor Albert Zorn! What were *Werther's Leiden* compared with his? Werther had only sorrows of love to bear, but he, indeed, like another Atlas, was bending under the weight of a whole globe of sorrows. The *Weltschmerz* was gnawing at his heart. The furies of a thousand storms were lashing him at once. Disappointment everywhere! No appreciative public, no one would look at his poetic drama, at his tragedy; his essay on Poland had only provoked his enemies without a word of praise from his friends; and his love-dream—the sweetest dream of life—shattered. And, then, the *Judenhetze* was corroding his heart. Like Frau Varnhagen, he wished to dismiss the memory of his birth but he could not. Rahel was a philosopher, not a poet, her life was dominated by willpower, but he was only mere gossamer driven by the cruel winds. He could reason even more clearly than Rahel, but reason did not calm his sensitive nerves, did not quiet his raging blood.

He had grown weary of Berlin. He wanted to flee. Everybody here reminded him of his unbearable sorrows. He was weary of Prussia and Prussianism and wished he could leave the land of his birth. Like one suffering from defective lungs, he blamed the air for his hard breathing. The present air was stifling him. He had intimated to his uncle that he wished to leave Germany and go to England or America or France but Uncle Leopold would not listen to such a proposition. Uncle Leopold felt that since he was paying the fiddler it was his privilege to dictate the dances. The banker felt that jurisprudence was the only hope for his incorrigible nephew.

However, he decided to leave Berlin. Here he could not give his undivided attention to his studies because of many diversions. He realized that while he was a law student he was giving too much time to Hegel's lectures on philosophy and to the reading of *belles lettres*. He would never complete his law course that way. Yes, he must return to that "scholarly hole" of Goettingen, though he shuddered as he remembered that college town.

He left Berlin with no regrets in his heart.

# THE MARCH TO CALVARY.

## I.

**E**VEN the wisest often fail to realize that one cannot escape one's shadow. Albert Zorn imagined that ennui was in Berlin but it was only in his own soul.

He found Goettingen as depressing as before. The college town was covered with snow, the students seemed grim and serious, the professors cold, and he found but few of his old friends. He arrived here as a prodigal son, misgivings in his heart. He recalled the *Abschiedskarten* he had sent to the members of the faculty a few years before, after his suspension. He now realized that the mockery, witty as it might have been, that those *Abschiedskarten* contained had not endeared him to his old instructors. And the students seemed so sulky. Prussian tyranny had conquered and killed every manifestation of free speech. The *Burschenschaft* and the *Turngemeinde*—the two most significant fraternities—were but names. The students not only feared their own utterances but even the unguarded speech of their friends. And they had not forgotten Albert's unguarded tongue.

But while the dullness of the place depressed him he welcomed the quiet of his lodging house on the Rothenstrasse. He gave himself to the study of the law, and "corpus juris" was his "pillow". He had no difficulty in hushing the muse's voice, for the muse sang not. For a time he passed a prosaic existence, and while he frequently shuddered at the thought he again wondered if his light had not burned out. His verses scarcely stirred in him more than memories. And when he made attempts at writing he was conscious of the effort, of the lack of spontaneity, and dropped it. Was he a Samson with his locks shorn? He stirred and often went to the Rathskeller to drown his sorrow, but unable to bear drink he turned to the library.

Soon March drew to an end, the winter was gone, the thawing season began. Everything within him was thawing, too. His blood suddenly began to course warmer; there was agitation in his breast; his nerves seemed on fire. A chance acquaintanceship had inspired him to write a few lyric stanzas. He laughed like a mocking satan. Indeed his light had not yet burned out! It had just commenced to burn and would soon redden the sky with its rising flames. Let his enemies in Berlin and Hamburg sneer! What did he care? He had

nothing but contempt for the multitude anyhow. They should see! He flung the law books aside and took up an unfinished poem. Byron's recent death stimulated his energies. Byron was the only man to whom he felt a close kinship, and the poet's death affected him deeply. He must take Byron's place; he would be Germany's Byron.

Spurred by these thoughts and feelings his dullness fled; his imagination was again volatile; his tongue was once more caustic. He was again seen in the beer cellars, arguing, jesting, making sport in his whimsical manner. The students again gathered around him and goaded him on to saying bitter things about their professors, their pedantic colleagues, the Prussian officials. He had the gift of caricature in words. He became his old self again. He was the very life of all student affairs, and at their frequent duels he was either a second or umpire. He was a Byron with a vengeance. He once more took up fencing and fought a duel or two.

Ah! they should see—his enemies at Berlin and Hamburg. They might call him a Jew, but what of that? He became heroic. Race pride swelled in his breast. He was of the race “of which Gods are kneaded”, of the race that needed no apologies, even in his day. Who was there in Germany to take the place of the great who had passed? The Teuton gods were dead! Lessing was gone, so was Schiller, and Goethe, like King David in his old age, “got no heat”; this old Jupiter was no more hurling thunderbolts; his arm was even too feeble to fling pebbles. Who were to take the places of these gods? A number of *Schmetterlinge*—mere butterflies—waving their colorful wings in the sunshine and hovering around the blossoming shrubs, with an old bumble bee here and there, without sting, without honey, buzzing around a rosebush. Yes, who were to take the place of the dead heroes? Who was to take Goethe's place? His blood warmed at the thought. The mantle of this great bard must fall on his own shoulders. Nay more, he would undo many of the things the great Romanticist had done. He would be to his generation what Goethe had been to his. Indeed, he would even go farther than Goethe. Goethe was self-centered, content with his own pleasure, playing with the beautiful thoughts as a juggler plays with balls, but he would give his life and genius to Germany. Goethe never loved the Germans, he mused, but he would liberate the Teutonic mind from its self-imposed imprisonment. Ay, indeed, he would wield a weapon mightier than the sword in the cause of liberty! Let his enemies rave

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But with Albert Zorn there was even less than a step from the sublime to the ridiculous. The next moment he laughed at his own heroics. He understood the heroics of those that smarted under the whips of injustice. The irony of his

own situation struck him forcibly. He was humorous and great enough to laugh at himself. Did he not feel a secret pride when his admirers told him that there was not a trace of the Semite in his face; that his nose, though longish, was Grecian? No, Albert could not deceive himself. He saw the tragi-comedy of it all. To be heroic in one's thoughts was one thing and to be heroic in one's actions quite a different matter.

But here at Goettingen his fellow-students never reminded him of his birth, and even the professors had accepted the prodigal son rather graciously. And he had a circle of admirers among the literary guild. To be sure, there was petty jealousy among them, but they did not disturb him. Talent must expect jealousy, he reflected soothingly; only the feeble and the dead arouse no jealousy.

Indeed, Albert was now his true self. He pursued his studies regularly, read much, and, as a diversion, made love to a pretty damsel or argued heatedly with a few of his fellow-students. The problems that occupied his mind while at Berlin troubled him no longer. When summer vacation came, instead of spending it with his parents, he took journeys on foot, with a knapsack on his back, through the Hartz Mountains, visiting Halle and Jena and Gotha and Eisenach, and making mental notes of the beautiful scenery around him and of the people with whom he came in contact. He also paid a visit to Goethe, and found, to his astonishment, that this Jupiter "understood German"—though he was prompted to address the god in Greek—so in his confusion he told him that the plums on the way from Jena to Weimar were very, very delicious . . .

## II.

After the summer vacation he returned to Goettingen refreshed and encouraged. On his pilgrimage he had learned that while he was still unknown, many of his songs were gaining popularity. In one of the taverns a pretty waitress hummed one of his love songs.

Everything now moved so smoothly; the professors were so kind to him, the dean of the Faculty had invited him to his home and expressed admiration for his ballads—he had compared them to Goethe's—and the old inner struggles had left him entirely. In a friendly talk the Dean had hinted that there was a great future for him if—the learned gentleman was kind and sensitive and hesitated—"if"—he stammered again.

"If I were not a Jew," Albert came to the rescue, an ironic smile on his face.

“Yes,” the kindly man intoned. “You see,” he continued, “sooner or later all these disabilities will disappear but in the meanwhile your—your nominal faith is in the way.” He knew Albert’s faith was but nominal.

Albert dwelt on this remark but rather objectively. He only thought subjectively when he suffered deeply. Of late nothing stirred his depths. He followed the lectures of the Goettingen Solons, made merry with the students, was praised for his wit and his verses, and wrote but little; in fact, he had written almost nothing in the past nine months.

And then a letter came from Uncle Leopold with a bill of exchange for his support. The letter irritated him even though the money enclosed afforded him immediate relief. There was something between the lines of his uncle’s letter that intimated that a young man who passed his twenty-seventh year should be self-sustaining. This letter was the first real cause of irritation in months. He had heard that his uncle gave away tens of thousands of *Thalers* to charity and he begrudged his poor nephew a few marks! Yes, he must rid himself of his uncle’s bounty—and rid himself at any cost.

He grew morose and thoughtful and applied himself at once to his studies preparatory for his Doctor’s degree and to the writing of a series of travel sketches. He burned the candle at both ends. He would show his rich uncle that he could get along without him. He felt particularly hopeful because he had received a nattering letter from the Minister of Justice in Bavaria, who was also a poet. The fates had turned their bright faces upon him. Like Goethe he would obtain a government position, and thus made independent, would pursue the muses. His brain was feverish, his whole being on fire. He felt the approach of a severe headache—from studying and thinking and writing—but he did not care. His dreams were coming true, and the fire of the gods burned luminously. He felt inspired as he penned his sketches. Never before had writing come to him so spontaneously, so free from effort. Again and again the hint dropped by the Dean recurred to him. It no longer offended him nor did the memory of it arouse antagonism within him. Why suffer because of mere formalism? What was it but formalism to him? His faith was only nominal, as the Dean had put it. In what respect was he a Jew? vaguely passed through his mind. He was more Greek than Jew. Certainly the Jewish faith had no tangible meaning to him. Nothing but dogmatism! Why should this meaningless dogmatism stand between him and independence?

One day he woke with a sudden determination. He must not hesitate any longer. He could hope for no assistance from his parents—his mother’s letter a few days before had made that plain enough—and he could not bear the humiliation of further dependence upon his uncle. He was irritable that

morning but that was because of his ceaseless work the past few months. He was nervous from too much thinking. No, he must not let this thing trouble him any longer. He laughed grimly to himself. He would change his religion—change non-belief in one for non-belief in another! He laughed but not without bitterness. The next moment the humor of it awakened curiosity. He was to be baptised! He had already talked to a clergyman about his conversion, and noticed with amusement the glow on the good clergyman's face—the glow on the face of an angler at sensing a nibble. Albert thought of this and laughed to himself. The clergyman suggested a new name for the newly born child—John Baptist Zorn! Albert stood before the open window in his room, looking dreamily in front of him——

It was morning, the sun was shining gloriously upon the Wender Tower, serious-faced students on their way to lectures, a woman with an armful of provisions for breakfast, two flaxen-haired children playing horse, and he was going to have his name changed that day! There was a flutter in his heart and he laughed nervously. The comedy of life struck him forcibly—all life was but a jest of the gods, and he himself was one of the jesters! “John Baptist Zorn!” he murmured to himself, and laughed hysterically. Tears appeared in his eyes. Oh, God, what a comedy life was!

He started to carry out his resolution but suddenly paused. He blushed in the privacy of his room. No, he would not go through this farce. No, no, he could not be false to himself. He did not care for the opinion of others—why should he care for the opinion of the imbeciles to whom not religion but theology mattered, to whom religion was not the consciousness of the glory of the universe and its Creator, but mere heathen ceremonies?—Indeed, it was not the opinion of the masses but he feared his inner self. No, he would not go through with this contemptible farce.

He sat down on his bed, a throbbing at his temples. He was fatigued, a pain in his head, weary of life. He heaved a sigh. His eyes rested on his clothes. They were shabby. His uncle's stipend had not been sufficient to afford him new clothes and allow him the elegance to which he had been accustomed. Besides, he was so impractical and never did know how his money slipped from between his fingers. In a month the degree of Doctor of Laws was to be conferred upon him. To what purpose?

To what purpose had he spent so much valuable time on the dry study of the law? It had a definite meaning for the other students, his friends at the university. Many of them would at once obtain government appointments—there was one awaiting his friend Christian Lutz; another friend, a poet, had already procured a lucrative appointment—and others would follow their

careers as lawyers—they all would use their vocations as a means of subsistence in this complex system of civilized life. But of what use would it be to him? A bitter laugh escaped him. In a month he would be addressed as Doctor Zorn! A title would be conferred on him—to what purpose? He was a Jew and under the Prussian law could not hold office, nor could he practice his profession. Ah, the irony of it! He was still in Egypt under the Pharaohs. Straw was not given him and the tale of bricks had to be delivered!

He jumped out of his bed, stretched his arms, and gnashed his teeth. Jest for jest! Let the foolish angler have his catch!



# VAGABONDAGE.

## I.

**T**HE greatest jest in life is that but few see the jest, and these few find it at their own expense.

Albert left the Lutheran clergyman stunned. The ceremony of the baptism, the seriousness of the God-fearing clergyman—these were all a dream but vaguely remembered. Sincerity always found an echo in his heart, no matter how much he differed from the other's convictions, and the evident conscientiousness of the pious pastor who had performed the ceremony impressed him. It impressed him as if he had witnessed the conversion of a person other than himself. He viewed things from so many different angles that the same object often assumed different shapes, depending upon his mood at the time he viewed it. His mind, like concave and convex mirrors, at times, reflected odd shapes. One moment he was calm and accepted the baptism as a definite change in his views of life, the next he cowered before his perfidy; and then, again, he laughed at the whole thing as if it were a *Kinderspiel*. He wished he could always regard it so. He felt more at peace with himself when the baptism appeared as a mere boyish prank. After all, the sublime and the ridiculous are but viewpoints.

However, he walked through the Wender Gate with a sneaking feeling in his heart. He returned to his lodgings shamefaced. The deed was done; the faltering of years had culminated into action. There was no going back. No matter what he might do or think nothing could undo this act.

Was it really such an important step? He shuddered. He tried to persuade himself that it was but a triviality, a matter of no moment, a mere empty ceremony, but there was a flutter in his heart, a fine perspiration on his pensive countenance. Why should he not have done it? He asked himself almost angrily, as if refuting an accusation. Was he not a German like other Germans? And he always did admire Luther. It was really most fitting that a liberal minded man like himself should follow in the footsteps of the great Luther. He dwelt upon the noble virtues of the great reformer with a keen sense of satisfaction. He visualized the mental struggles of the champions of religious freedom. He felt that he was helping the Man of Worms nail the edict upon the church doors. And he certainly had no reason to regret the affiliation with the

great Son of Galilee. He drew a breath of defiance. The lives of all great men were the stories of revolt.

He was mentally fatigued and wished he could stop thinking. One of his nervous headaches was coming on. He must not torture his brain any longer. He must give himself to his studies. In about three weeks he must deliver a discourse on jurisprudence in order to obtain his coveted degree. Jurisprudence!—that accursed study, that pseudo-scientific jugglery, that system of Roman casuistry!—why had he spent three of his fairest, most blooming years on subjects so repugnant to him? One link of thought brought another, an endless chain. If he had not studied law he would not have bent his knee to the cross. He was a martyr yesterday, today a villainous coward! *Gestern noch ein Held gewesen—Ist man heute schon ein Schurke!*

O, the misery of involuntary thoughts forcing an entrance into one's brain! He was tired of the whole business. He wanted to laugh, to jest, to invoke his sense of humor. His sense of humor had always been such an outlet for his feelings. He could always laugh away the most serious things in life. And this was not even serious—how the clergyman had rolled his eyes as he offered a prayer for the newborn soul of the convert—some day he would give a humorous description of it in a poem—no, he would describe it in a novel. What was he thinking of? O, yes, the clergyman's solemnity. For a moment this struck him ludicrously and he burst into laughter. But enough—enough! His head was splitting, a thousand needles were pricking back of his eyeballs, and he was weary, weary unto death. He must stop thinking. He must . . . The whole thing was not worth thinking about . . .

In order to banish these torturing thoughts he began to think of his friend Gustav Moses in Berlin. The thought of Moses always had a soothing effect on him—that great soul! Moses was a sanctuary, a holy shrine, in whose presence all things and beings were pure. Though he was no expounder of new theories, no source of new philosophies, Moses always brought Spinoza to Albert's mind. There was something of that great philosopher's simplicity and goodness and purity in Moses. He must write to him and unbosom himself to his precious friend. Moses would understand. Moses understood so many things most people did not comprehend. Yet when he sat down with a quill in his hand sudden shame overwhelmed him. Why was he ashamed? Why should he not discuss this fully with Moses? He had committed many follies and had never hesitated to speak of them to Moses. Besides, Moses, too, had just gone through this ceremony. But to his friend it was an ideal—the conversion of all the Jews as a means of helping humanity—but to himself—no, Albert could not deceive himself. He had not knelt to the cross because of an ideal. He had

done it for the same reason that thousands of others had done it, for the same reason that Edward Gans had done it. Oh!—a groan escaped his breast. Only the day before he had written a scathing denunciation of those cowards who were deserting the sinking ship. And now he himself had done it!

He began to write. He forced all other thoughts away.

“Dear Gustav:

“Will I ever grow up? I am still half a child, with all the reflections of maturity mirroring in my being—manhood, old age, godliness, caprice, profligacy, and what not. And just like a child I can’t make up my mind whether to laugh or cry; I can cry and laugh at the same time. O, Gustav, I can’t make up my mind whether I am a lion or a monkey in this great menagerie: I roar one moment and chatter foolishly and wag my tail the next.

“I sat down to write you a long letter, covering many, many sheets full of profound thoughts and instructive wisdom, with many notations on the Book of Life, but I have just returned from a comic play which was so funny that I can not yet check my laughter and can not put myself into a serious frame of mind. There was a clown in the play—dressed like a clown, acting like a clown, and while he was going through his manoeuvres burning tears were coursing down his painted cheeks. I was the clown in the play. So look for no logic in the acts of a clown.

“I love you—Forget everything else.

Albert.”

## II.

Ah! he would not acknowledge that he had made a mistake. He sought to justify his act. Not to others but to himself. Since his conversion, life had run smoother for him, he said to himself when he had obtained his degree. The Dean had spoken eloquently of his poetry as he presented the degree to him, and the other members of the faculty overlooked much of his ignorance of legal lore. No one knew better than he that the least of his knowledge was the knowledge of the law, and he felt a deep sense of gratitude for the faculty’s leniency. He felt confident that the worst was over. He would settle down as a government official, or a professor at some university, or at least as a lawyer, and live a well-regulated life, without the aid of his uncle. Yes, he would marry, too. He was about twenty-eight years old and ought not to fritter his life away.

But he would not permit himself to think of his conversion. The exertions which preceded his private and public discourses anent the taking of his degree, his assiduous study of an uncongenial subject, his inner conflicts, fatigued him almost beyond endurance. He looked at his reflection in a mirror and felt even more exhausted. He could see fatigue in every line in his face. There were rings under his eyes; his cheeks had thinned; there was a roving restlessness in his eyes. In his present state he was not fit for literary work though he was bent on completing his book which he had commenced.

There was no question of hard work at present. His nerves were shattered and his headaches were becoming more and more painful. So he wrote to Uncle Leopold, and the generous man, hopeful that his scapegrace nephew would at last settle down, dispatched him a liberal allowance by return mail for a vacation, not without a veiled admonition, however, not to squander the money "on other things."

He went at once to Nordernay for sea baths and followed the orders of his physician to think of nothing. He also indulged in some pastimes. Among the sea bathers there were a number of attractive young women who had read a few of his songs, and their flattery was not displeasing to him. Though he knew his weakness, he easily yielded to flattery.

Soon his headaches disappeared, healthier color came to his cheeks, frivolous thoughts were again sporting in his brain. Nor was he averse to the furtive glances of strangers as he walked restlessly up and down the beach, dreaming of strange legends that the tossing waves conjured up in his fancy. He felt the thrill of fame, the tumultuous waves making divine music in his ears. And sauntering along the shore in the twilight—the level dunes behind him, before him the seeming endless raging ocean—with all its mystery and tragic beauty, the huge dome of the heavens above him, his imagination took flight and soared to ethereal heights. Noble thoughts filled his brain, compassionate sentiments crowded his breast, and he made resolutions! He would give his life for humanity and, in giving it, would melt the hearts of men with song.

On the shore were sharpshooters aiming at sea-gulls in their flight. He did not enjoy this pastime. His ancestors were no hunters; rather they were of the hunted. His blood revolted at firing at the harmless, innocent creatures.

He recalled his boyhood days when he chanced upon a group of urchins who had brought down a nest from the top branches of a tree by well-aimed missiles. He emptied all his pocket money into the fists of the urchins to bribe them to liberate the featherless baby birds. He knew that the enemies of his ancestors had called them cowards because they could not bear the shedding of

blood. His mind wandered. A shot was fired, a sea-gull dropped, a shout of admiration from the onlookers on the shore. Perhaps the fallen bird was a mother of poor little gulls still unfledged, lying in their sandy nests and waiting for their mother to bring them food. No, he would not give his life to this sort of achievement—killing was not in his blood! Rather would he devote his life to helping people live, live in greater freedom, physical and spiritual.

His mind drifted, and his thoughts soon brought him to dwell on Christian Lutz's life and his own. He had just run into Christian, who was here on his honeymoon. To a certain point their lives had run parallel. First at the Franciscan school, at the Lyceum, at Goettingen, at Berlin and—there it stopped. Christian was now married, with a government position affording him a livelihood, while he—Albert—was nowhere. Always promises—one friend had promised him to intercede with one of the influential men in Berlin to get him a position with the government—but there were nothing but promises in sight. He really did not know himself what would best suit him. He liked the idea of a professorship. He had many ideas about literature and philosophy and felt that he could teach something to the young at the university. But then a government position—a magistrate or judge—would likewise please him. He loved the Germans even though he detested the Prussian government—he always felt that individually the Germans possessed noble virtues, but collectively they were Prussian—and he felt that as a magistrate, or in any capacity as a public official, he could deal out justice tempered with kindness. But so far only promises . . .

### III.

Still waiting for the promises to be fulfilled he returned to his parents for a while, made a short stop at Berlin, and went again to Hamburg in the early winter. Every time he returned to Hamburg it was with mingled feelings of regret and expectancy. This time he hoped that the Hamburgers would appreciate him. He was no longer Leopold Zorn's nephew but Doctor Zorn and a poet of repute. Even his enemies admitted that he had genius for lyric verse. And he had just made arrangements to have his first book of travel published, and the publisher had said he might consider the publication of a collection of his scattered songs that had appeared in various periodicals. True, the publisher had promised no pay for the poems but Albert felt confident that it would bring him renown; and the Hamburgers would no longer regard him as a mere idler. This time he meant to be dignified. He would enter in no controversies with his critics.

Before long, however, he realized that it was useless for him to settle down there. Uncle Leopold had made this clear to him at a stormy meeting between the two. But he had no other place to go to.

He found himself a veritable Ishmael—his hand against every man and every man’s against him. His political views were now well defined and he dipped his pen in gall and continued writing. He would write a second volume of his travels and avenge himself on his enemies, little understanding that the fruit of vengeance is never love. What corroded his heart most was the dawning knowledge that he had made a blunder that could never be rectified; that all the waters of the Jordan and of the North Sea could not wash away the few drops sprinkled upon him by the Lutheran Clergyman. Yet he would not acknowledge that it was a blunder. Peevishly he said to himself that he was glad he was separated from the people who had never befriended him, who had never given him the least encouragement.

More strife, more bitterness, more vexation of soul! Could he ever live in peace! The world had let Goethe sing in peace, and Goethe was as creedless as he. The world knew that Goethe was a pagan and he made no secret of it. Why was he, Albert Zorn, persecuted on every side? His book was well received—and was favorably compared with that of the great Goethe; his songs were being hummed from Leipzig to Hamburg; his wit was on every tongue, his enemies squirmed under his ironic fire; his heart was beating with love for every creature that lived; and yet why were the snakes hissing from every ambush? The Jesuits had at last found in him a target for all their poisonous arrows—as if he had been the first man in Germany to utter liberal views! Ah, the injustice of it all! They had chosen him for their target though he had always cherished a romantic love for the Church of Rome; they hunted him only because he was more vulnerable, because he was born a Jew!

His blood was on fire. And he had crawled on his knees to the Cross! Was he to cower and let them heap hot cinders upon his head because he was related to the Prophets? No, not he; the Jews had bowed their heads to their tormentors long enough. He was no long-bearded Isaac swaying over the Talmud, with an “oi” under his breath; no Rothschild in his counting house, with Kings as pawns! He was a poet, sweet melody in his heart; a critic of life and manners, a mighty instrument in his hand—they shall have thrust for thrust, stab for stab. He would seek for no mercy, he would not whine for justice, he would fight for his rights.

But his boasting was only to conceal the rankling in his breast. His poetry or his prose had not been attacked, but his person. No, he was not ashamed of his lineage—had he been devoid of a sense of humor he would have even

bragged of it—but after he had knelt at the font, after he had gone more than half way to eradicate all differences between himself and the Teutons, to be called a Jew! The iron entered his soul! He swept all admonition aside, he would not listen to the counsel of his friends. He was sharpening his arrows and dipping them in poison. His enemies had miscalculated. They thought he could only write love songs. He would make the dogs yelp before the expiring convulsion came! If Teutonia resorted to calling names his ancestors had once pitched their tents by the river Jordan, where calling names was an art.

Yet he hated the conflict. Why must they poison the honey in his heart? Why must they force the sting? He wanted to flee from Germany—flee from Germany and sing instead of “caw-caw” with the rest of the crows at home.

## IV.

In moments of revolt Albert always thought of leaving his fatherland forever, but then his love for the land that gave him birth would return—his innate fondness of the people about him would possess him, the memories of his childhood on the banks of the Rhine would hold him with chains of steel. He saw every fault in his compatriots, but the faults seemed so glaring to him, and stirred him so deeply, because he loved the people. But what people ever learned that it is its critics, not its flatterers, who love it most sincerely?

He now found himself torn by a thousand conflicts. The censor was most annoying—one could hardly give expression to one’s thoughts—and disobedience meant damp prisons; the officials were arrogant; and the land was full of Cant, Cult, and Culture. One could hardly breathe for want of free air in Germany. In order to divert the people from the tyranny of the nobles and Prussian officialdom the government encouraged orthodoxy on one hand and heterodoxy on the other. “Let the children play hard and forget other foolishness”, has always been the motto of tyrannical governments. Hegelism, Schlegelism, Schellingism, anti-Semitism—in short, anything to engage the public mind and coerce it into submission to the tyrant’s will.

Albert thirsted for freedom. True, his biting irony often escaped the scrutinising eye of the stupid censor—his thoughts emanated properly censored from his brain, he jested—but he craved a moment’s respite. For a time he had again retired to Hamburg and buried himself in work. More songs, the publication of another book, planning new themes, pondering new subjects, ever yearning for love.

One day he received a call to edit a political journal. He was thrilled. He

wished to awaken Young Germany; Old Germany, he realized, was hopeless. He meant to speak freely, come what might. He wished to enroll himself among the warriors for the liberation of humanity. On his arrival in Munich he was made to feel that his renown was growing; that, in fact, he was already famous. His name was known, his songs were on everyone's lips, his epigrams were frequently quoted. He had learned with a keen sense of pleasure that while his first two books had made him many enemies they had also enlarged his circle of admirers.

He felt that the time was ripe for the emancipation of the German mind. Every great mind miscalculates the minds of the people about him. He either underestimates or overestimates them; or rather he underestimates some of its qualities and overestimates others. Albert was no exception to this rule. While he was convinced that when "asses wish to abuse one another they call each other men" he attributed to the masses—stupider than asses—an intelligence and vision equal to his own. He jumped at the conclusion that the masses would get his viewpoint once it was presented to them. And because his clarity of vision enabled him to see the sham, superstition, and hypocrisy of the prevalent fetishes that passed for creeds, and of the tyrannies that passed for government, he imagined that others would see these great evils as soon as they were revealed to them.

The reception accorded his books deceived him. He mistook the people's laughter for applause. He failed to see that only a handful understood him and sympathized with him. Only the chosen few understood that when one dips his pen in gall his own heart very often brims over with love. The vast majority only laughed at his mordant irony, called him a scoffer and an atheist, and hated him. When a friend had whispered in his ear "Look out for the Jesuits," Albert only laughed. He thought it was for them to look out for him. He knew no fear.

## V.

The reception given him on his arrival at Munich assured him that his friend was wrong. He had no cause to fear the Jesuits.

But the Jesuits in Munich were watching him. He was their sworn enemy, and the report that he would direct the policy of a new journal roused their ire. Munich was then the centre of Jesuitical activities. Ever since their return to Germany, after the fall of Napoleon, they had been hatching plots, creating dissension among the masses, shaping policies for their own selfish ends. They



were seeking to rehabilitate themselves. They could not afford to pass in silence the caustic attacks of the jesting Albert Zorn.

Before long, however, he grew tired of political strife. He was again soul-weary. He craved the solitude of the mountains, he longed for the golden mist of the southern heavens, he yearned for the warmth of the sunny climes. A thousand mysterious voices called to him from the land of orange blossoms and echoed in his heart melodiously. He longed for a peep at Italy. Ah, Italy! Italy! When the great God kneaded the earth into shape and set the human insects into motion—the whole swarm of human insects—he allotted the Caucasian steppes to the Tartars, Prussia to the Pedants, to the Hunters he gave the British Isle, France to the gay in spirit, but Italy,—Italy!—the great God breathed upon that colorful spot lovingly, kissed it, and was about to reserve it for his favorites among the angels when he changed His mind and assigned it as a haven for the soul-weary! Alas! with the confusion of the Tower of Babel many a Tartar wandered from his homeland and many a poet strayed from his designated abode.

He wandered through Italy—through Livorno, Bagni di Lucca, Florence, Bologna, Venice—and he wandered among the ruins of antiquity, “a ruin among ruins.” He jested and scoffed, worshipped and blasphemed, honey in his heart. Poetic melodies, like birds of passage driven South, returned to him; his heart once more glowed and beat tumultuously; the nightingale again sang for him. The broken columns, the ruined towers, the shattered classic images spoke to him in a language he understood.

He wanted to forget the past, to obliterate the insults heaped upon him by his enemies. Italian skies inspire sweet dreams and make one forget troubles. The promise of a chair at the University whispered hope. Yes, he would give the rest of his life to champion the rights of the people.

While amusing himself at the Baths of Lucca he was laying plans for the future. He had received a hopeful letter about the professorship. His brain was brimming over with enthusiasm and joy. He would make all his friends proud of him and he would not only repay them with gratitude but also with service. And how gloriously his third book was coming along! The volume was so spontaneous; it was writing itself. Humor and song were flowing from his pen. Not a word of bitterness in this book, he decided. No stings, nothing but the sweetest of honey. He intended to have the third volume mirror the heavenly witchery of Italy and the flowing love of his soul; no, not a word of bitterness. At the worst, only a passage of fun-making at superstition but nothing—not a line—to offend anyone’s sensibilities.

Ah, there was again spring in his heart! Sentiments of love and freedom,

like fresh roses, burst forth anew. Above him the rays of the brilliant sun pierced the mist hanging over the mountains and “sucked at the earth’s breast like a hungry suckling child.” He was again in the spring of life, everything thawing, melting, sweet murmurs everywhere. He was in love with life and every breathing creature.

And the arts of man were about him in abundance; the divine ecstasy of generations long dead impressed on palace and ruin; ecstasy filled his being to overflowing. No, not a tinge of bitterness in his heart, no acrid irony in his brain, nothing but goodwill and happiness and the effervescence of life.

## VI.

But one day in November a gust of wind swept over him; a cold, damp, bleak wind that blighted the blooming flowers in his heart and covered the sun rays with a black cloud and filled his heart with sadness. No more hope for a chair at a university, no prospect of a life of contemplation and peace and song. The Jesuits had stronger influence than his friends. And as if designing to annihilate him completely the Jesuits had attacked him with all their forces.

His third volume was nearly completed when the latest affront reached him. He had quite forgotten his Hebraic strain. In the land of Virgil, with the echo of Homer from the neighboring shores, he thought himself more Greek than Hebrew, but suddenly the evaporated fumes of his smouldering agony were driven back into his heart. He was consumed by a thirst for vengeance. Since his enemies would not let him forget his Hebraism he would be like the God of the ancient Hebrews. No whining, cowering for him! Even as the Macabees of old, his progenitors, he would meet the enemy with piercing arrows and devastating rocks. He was no preacher of love for those that hated him; hate for hate! There was scornful laughter in his heart. His enemies—the Preachers of Love—had hated even those who loved them!

He was then in Florence, that dreary November day, the skies a-drizzling, thick mist screening the banks of the Arno, a severe cold in his head. He had spent six weeks, rambling, dreaming, drinking from the fountain of beauty. With all the quaint narrow streets, the art treasures around him, the buildings mellowed with age, his imagination astir with a thousand memories of antiquity, a thousand raptures to enthrall his soul, his romantic love for Catholic mysticism returned, the slumbering sensuous love he felt in his childhood. Even while he smiled at the faded Madonnas and was provoked to laughter by the hideous saints of early Tuscan conception his heart glowed

with reverence and deep emotion. But that day only rancor filled his heart.

He left his lodgings and wandered along the bank of the Arno, unmindful of the cold and the pain in his head. The water of the flowing river did not reflect the azure of the Italian skies. The drizzling rain had stirred the placid surface and, like his heart, was turgid and muddy. Nothing was beautiful around him now. All was grim. For not only woman's beauty but all beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. He wished to think of other things—he said to himself he would dismiss the “filth and stupidity” of the “congregation” at Munich—but his brain would admit no other thought. But for his birthright—or was it his birth-curse?—he would have been now on his way to assume the duties of a professor of literature and devote the rest of his life to his beloved fatherland. He shuddered, then a cynical smile appeared on his tightly closed mouth. He remembered that morning at the Franciscan school, when he revealed to Christian Lutz the fact that his father's father had been a little Jew with long whiskers. Every time the world recalled that revelation there was a mob to jeer at him and a Father Scher to shower blows upon him!

He continued along the bank, one moment serious, his eyes closed, the next moment a strange smile on his lips.

When he reached the Ponte Grazie and made his way across the little stone bridge toward the Uffizi, his heart felt lightened. He saw the sublime jest of life; everybody laughing at everybody else. The world was a great lazaretto where every suffering inmate was laughing at the infirmities of the other. Was he not himself a suffering patient mocking the other patients? The irony of it all amused him and made him forget the drizzling rain and the pain in his head.

Presently a priest passed him, a sorry spectacle of a man; pale, emaciated, bent, his bony hands quivering, his lips muttering something. The poor fellow had spent so much time in praying that his lips moved even when not at prayer. What a face! All the pains and sorrows that human flesh was heir to were mirrored in it. Albert's heart was wrung with pity; there was no mockery in his heart. No, he would not even reply to the attacks of his enemies. Love those that hate you! He now understood that sublime utterance. The great Jew of Galilee must have understood the jest of life, and when one understands one can only pity, not mock.

Then he passed an old church. A woman, her head and shoulders covered with a black cashmere shawl, pulled open the heavy church door and entered. He followed her in. The woman did not turn right or left but walked up to the altar, knelt on the stone steps and began to pray. He stood in the rear, his eyes gazing blankly in front of him. The church was deserted, gloomy, a strange sombre light sifting in through the many colored window-panes, leaving the

long archways in twilight dimness; a swinging oil lamp in front of the beautiful image of the Madonna accentuated the nocturnal shadows beyond the reach of this glimmering light. It was noiseless yet there sounded in his ears dying echoes. Now and then a soft murmur came from somewhere as if the great organ, weary of prolonged silence, emitted a soft sigh. A thousand invisible phantoms seemed to people this empty, age-smelling church. The kneeling, praying woman, the stone images of saints, the indefinable forms flitting here and there back of the pillars, the murmuring from the side chapel, the emaciated priests outside, the Jesuits at Munich, all the religious controversies—Oh, God, what a travesty, what a jest! He wondered which was the greater jest, the festive gods of Olympus, who went about their business merrily and drank toasts from golden goblets and made love to the goddesses and slew their rivals, or the solemn, abstemious gods surrounded by shaven monks who fretfully cajoled and fawned upon their Jupiter, sadly rolling their eyes, praying for favors.

He suddenly rushed out of the church and proceeded through a narrow alley which afforded a short cut to the Uffizi. At present everything appeared farcical to him; nothing was serious. Politics, religion, love, spaghetti, literature, painting, the Seven Sins—or was it the Seven Wonders?—amusing jests all! As he entered the *Palazzo degli Uffizi*, walking past marble statues, Florentine tapestries, Satyrs, Wrestlers, Fauns, Madonnas, Venuses, Popes, Cupids, the Flight from Egypt and the Flight into Egypt, the *Weltschmerz*—the soul-weariness—of it all seized him and almost choked him with Satanic laughter. At a glance he beheld the Sublime Jesters of all ages!—Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Botticelli, Fra Angelico, da Vinci—the sublimest jester of all—each one busy with the jest of life in his own way.

He traversed vestibules and corridors, lofty vaulted chambers and frescoed palaces, and suddenly halted before a relief of the Sacrifice of Iphigeneia and close beyond it the Martyrdom of St. Justina by Paul Veronese. Were these jests, too?

He passed his hand over his eyes, then rubbed his forehead. Was he insane or had the rest of the world lost their wits? again passed through his mind. If he was sane the rest of the world could not be sane. The rest of the world took all this seriously, almost tragically—the Satyrs and the Fauns and the Madonnas and the Martyrs—and did not see the jest of it all.

His eyes dimmed by fugitive thoughts, he walked without seeing anything around him. He was feeling for the pillars, a prayer in his heart—O Lord God, I pray Thee, strengthen me, O God, that I may be avenged of the Philistines. The jeering laughter of the Philistines was in his ears. Dagon, their god,

towered over him; he felt the fetters of brass against his flesh.

He returned to his lodging and plunged into work. He meant to jest but his jesting now was bitter. He was avenging himself on the Philistines. And no one ever avenged himself on the Philistines without falling with them.

## VII.

There is always an element of discontent in the desire to travel. Contented people, like cattle in verdant pastures, remain on the hillside, munching their food in peace and tranquility.

He could not remain much longer in Florence. He wanted to travel, to move about. He went to Bologna, to Ferrara, to Padua, to Venice. But one cannot escape his own shadow. He carried his griefs with him. He was short of money but that mattered little to him. The memory of his gayety at the Baths of Lucca, at Livorno, at Florence, was forgotten.

Innately sensual he sought to drive away his gloom (as he had often done) by conjuring scenes of Florentine Nights and living over again those blissful moments; Signora Francesca, with those dark brown eyes, long, black lashes, rich black hair, and captivating body; Signora Letitia—that temptress, with a throbbing bosom, who carried on flirtations with half a dozen men at the same time; Matilda—that virtuous flirt, who tried to conceal her sensuousness by constantly talking about, and condemning, the sensuality of others; that pink-cheeked English girl, whose face looked as if it were bedewed with spray from the sea—No, these recollections brought no joy to his heart, not even a momentary consolation, as they had done on other occasions. He was seized with a morbid longing to wander, to wander everlastingly, to run away from himself.

While at Venice he received a letter from his brother that his father was very ill. He could read between the lines that it was a call to his father's death-bed. Somehow, this very sad news brought him relief. It at once removed his restlessness. He was calm. He had suddenly become philosophical, stoical. It was as if one of his veins had been opened to relieve an intense pain. He left Italy and rushed back to his native land where his father was dying.

The following three months he frittered away between Hamburg and Berlin. His widowed mother had moved to Hamburg, and she begged him to stay there but he detested the city. It held for him too many bitter memories.

He finally decided to isolate himself. His action was that of the storm-

tossed woman of passion who finds refuge in a nunnery.

He went to Potsdam, where he could see only “*Himmel und Soldaten*”. Potsdam in those days was not the suburb of Berlin that it is today. There was neither Subway nor Elevated nor speedy surface trains to carry one from *Unter den Linden* to Sans Souci in half an hour. Then it was a considerable distance from the Prussian capital.

In Potsdam he found himself truly isolated, far from friends and diversions. And he had so many plans for work; the completion of another book; a humorous book, poems, essays, a political treatise. Then, again, here he was safe from his ever threatening peril—of falling in love. He had barely escaped a strong attachment for the wife of a friend, but her intellect had saved him.

He remained at Potsdam nearly six months, working feverishly on new poems.

After a time he found his self-imposed imprisonment irksome. The atmosphere in Potsdam was not to his liking either. The presence of soldiers—*die Menschenfresser*—everywhere, the artificiality of the gardens of San Souci, where the firs were “masked as orange trees” and “so unnatural that they were almost human”—everything was unbearable here.

## VIII.

He longed for rest. He wished to escape from the tumults of life, from the tumults of his passions. He was a poet and wished to withdraw to bucolic quietude, indulge in pleasant reveries, and pipe sweet melodies.

With the Bible and Homer as his only companions he left his family and friends and went to the seashore. He would forget that he had been the editor of a political journal; he would forget that he had fought the Knights of Darkness; he would forget all the skirmishes in which he had engaged since his early youth. He would lie on the shore, listen to the sporting waves, and watch the clouds overhead.

He wandered along the beach in the twilight, solemn stillness all around him, the vault of heaven “like a Gothic church”, the stars above burning and flickering like countless lamps, the sweep of the waves “like the reverberations of a great organ”. At last he thought he had found himself. Again he wanted to emulate Goethe. He wanted no political strife, no controversial essays, no more ironic flings. Action was not his sphere, politics not his handiwork. He was no Ludwig Börne. He was neither agitator nor reformer. He was a literary artist

and must let politics and philosophy alone. He must devote the rest of his life to the observation of nature and to the interpretation of it—that was the thirst of his soul.

Yes, the quiet and peace of the seashore suited him. No one there to engage him in polemics, no one to argue with. He had made the acquaintance of a sea captain and at times listened to tales of the sea, the sea that he loved “as much as his soul”. There were also two young women, whose acquaintance he had made, but neither of them was young or pretty enough to arouse his interest. He was jestingly frivolous with them and they, in turn, lionized him and made him conscious of his fame. Indeed, he had found himself at last. He was supremely happy. After a few more weeks of rest and recuperation he would settle down to his life-work.

One day he was seated in his room reading and dreaming. The house where he lodged was situated on an elevation away from the shore, back of an old church, and commanded a beautiful view of the ocean in the distance; “*Zur schönen Aussicht*” the owner had named his cottage.

A knock on his door and his landlord, a fisherman, handed him a packet of newspapers and a letter from Berlin. The letter contained nothing of importance beyond literary gossip. He then tore the wrappers from the newspapers and began scanning the narrow columns in a careless, casual manner when he suddenly jumped from his seat, drew his breath, and stared at the sheet before him as if convulsed. At first pallor appeared in his cheeks, then they turned red, and his whole body quivered.

“A revolution!—a revolution!—a revolution, Herr Nikkels!”

Herr Nikkels, the fisherman, stared at the speaker with unconcealed bewilderment. He had thought his lodger a little queer—always walking up and down the seashore when not bathing, or pacing up and down the floor of his room—but he had never seen him so agitated.

Albert raced up and down the room, the newspaper clutched in his hand, a strange glow on his face.

“O, it’s wonderful! glorious!—at last it has come!” he cried.

“What has happened?” the fisherman, still staring, asked.

“Ah, my dear Nikkels, the greatest thing in the world has happened! They are marching in Paris, with the tri-colored flag, singing the Marseillaise. Oh, isn’t it wonderful!” Then stretching his arms upward, “Oh, for a glimpse of Paris today.”

The fisherman drew at his pipe, shrugged his shoulders, and walked out. "This fellow Zorn is quite crazy," he confided to his wife a few moments later.

Zorn was quite crazy that day. He did not take his prescribed sea-bath, could not read, could not write, dodged every acquaintance on the beach, rushed up and down the shore as if possessed.

Lafayette, the tri-colored flag, the Marseillaise! He could think of nothing else. He was intoxicated, delirious. All his resolutions had gone to the winds—all his resolutions for rest and quiet and peace; his hunger for calm reveries and piping melodies was gone. He was aching for strife, for the very vortex of strife. Ah, if he could whip his countrymen into action and arouse them from their sluggish contentment, perhaps they, too, would hoist the tri-colored flag and sing the Marseillaise!

*Aux armes, citoyens!*

No piping melodies for him, no fantasies, no love ditties!

*Aux armes, citoyens! Aux armes!*

He would take the lyre into his hands and sing a battle song. He was no Wolfgang von Goethe, playing with metrical verses while the enemy's cannons were roaring at the city gates! How differently the ocean waves were galloping to the shore today! They were chanting the Marseillaise, they were calling tumultuously:

*"Aux armes, citoyens, aux armes!"*

The whole ocean was aflame with the fire that was burning in his heart; the mermaids were dancing with joy, giving a *thé dansant* in honor of the great event. No, no, no rest for him! He was a child of the revolution, rebellion against all tyranny in his blood. He was what he was and could be no other. He would wreath his head with flowers for the death-struggle to come. Ah, he would smite the pious hypocrites who had crept into the holy of holies to defile it! He would hurl javelins at the tyrants, with their armies of *Menschenfresser*, who were holding mankind in fetters of steel! With words like flaming stars he would set fire to the palaces of the oppressors and illumine the dingy huts of the enslaved.

*Aux armes, citoyens, aux armes!*

He was "all joy and song, all sword and flame."

"And God said, let there be light!" The torch of the Revolution of July had spread light to all the dark places. To Poland, to Spain, to Britain, to Prussia. All eyes were turned to Paris. From there came the light!



He left the seashore. He could no longer bear the rest and quiet of the place. He went to Hamburg and restlessly watched developments. He could think of nothing but the revolution. He also watched, with a sinking heart, the renewed activities of the authorities. The censor had become even more ruthless. More than half he had written was suppressed. His publishers, the most daring in Germany, had dropped a hint of caution to him. They had learned that the Prussian government had issued a warrant for his arrest. The air of Hamburg was stifling. He wanted to breathe free air. Yes, he must fight, and, if necessary, perish in the war of human liberation. The dawn of a new religion—the religion of freedom—was rising and he must consecrate himself as one of its priests.

When he told Uncle Leopold of his intention to go to Paris the elderly gentleman heaved a sigh of relief. Indeed, he would be happy to defray all expenses for Albert's stay in Paris as long as he pleased. To be a namesake of Albert Zorn was no great comfort in these stirring days. Leopold Zorn was no revolutionary. He was a law-abiding citizen, and as a great banker he knew that even a tyrannical government was better than a government convulsed.

Albert's mother could not understand his desire to go to Paris. She had never been outside of Germany, and Paris seemed very distant. What would he do in Paris? Her fond hopes had been rudely shattered. Her poor husband had died with ambitions unattained and now her beloved son, the choice of her flock, was merely drifting, at an age when most men were comfortably established. Of course, she had heard of the abdication of Charles X and of the July Revolution in France, but what had these to do with her son? She was growing old, she was complaining, and craved for quiet and peace. Why go to Paris where there was so much excitement and turmoil?

"How soon will you be back?" she asked of him eagerly.

He was taking leave of her, his arms enfolding her, his sister, with a babe in her arms, standing close by.

"I can't tell, mother dearest;" looking away wistfully.

"Do take good care of yourself and don't get mixed up with bad company," she spoke beseechingly. "Uncle Leopold said——"

"Yes, I know, what Uncle Leopold always says," he struck in impatiently, with a cynical smile in the deep corners of his mouth. "Hold on to the *Thalers* and the rest will take care of itself."

There was a melancholy smile on the mother's benign face. Everything Albert said sounded clever to her ears but she did not like to hear him jest

about Uncle Leopold. Leopold was very good to her indeed, as he had always been in the past.

“What will you do in Paris?”

“March and sing the Marseillaise,” he said, laughing.

“Will you ever be serious?”

“It’s because I am too serious that I jest, my little mother.” He kissed her on both cheeks.

The mother sighed; a tear was slowly rolling down her face.

Albert flung his arms around his mother, embraced his sister, kissed her little son, and rushed out of the house. His tears and emotions were choking him.

Outside the sun was shining brightly, light clouds in the sky. It was the first of May, fresh, earth-scented odors in the air. A stolid sluggish fellow, with a large, heavy basket on his head, walked past Albert as he came out of his mother’s house. Albert looked after the fellow and sighed. Will *Michel* ever quicken his step? Ah, the poor *Michel*! Albert’s heart was wrung with pain. Presently an officer loomed up in the distance. Albert jumped into the vehicle that was waiting for him at the curb.

“*Aux armes, citoyens, aux armes!*” he murmured to himself as the vehicle rattled away.

PART THREE

A CYNIC IN THE MAKING

# A HAPPY EXILE.

## I.

A HEAVY load was lifted, the air seemed lighter, one could breathe freely. The uprising in Paris was but short-lived, the bloody skirmish had lasted two days and Louis Phillipe was once more safe on his throne, reinforced by a new cabinet. The citizen-king—*le roi citoyen*—once more made the people believe that he was the same Louis Phillipe who had been in the habit of carrying an umbrella like any plain citizen, with a modest round felt hat on his uncrowned head no different from one worn by the masses. Peace was again restored. The red flag was again replaced by the one of three colors; the shouts of “Long live the Republic” and “Down with Louis Phillipe” had once more been hushed; the vicinity of the Cloister St. Merry, where the zealous One Hundred Republicans had fought and fallen, was quiet and deserted. The French capital always lived from day to day and forgot the past. Barricades and booming cannon one day, gay laughter and resplendent parades the next.

The genial sun of early summer was in the sky and all Paris seemed to have turned out into the streets, into the public gardens, into the parks; God, feeling bored in his celestial abode, “opened the window of heaven and looked down on the Boulevards.” And the Boulevards were amusing enough. The deathly clash of a few days ago was forgotten. There was merriment in every face; smiling eyes beamed above the marble-topped tables along the sidewalks in front of the busy cafés; from side streets came the tremulous gurgling of hurdy-gurdies, the emotional tones of chanting beggars, singing the latest, *La Parisienne*. Suddenly a frantic, joyous shout rent the air; handkerchiefs waved, canes were brandished—the variegated colors of a crowd in motion. An old man in a phaeton passed. His white hair was covered with a brown wig; his kindly eyes sparkled with youth in spite of his seventy-four years; he raised his hat and bowed with military dignity and yet with the humility of the very great.

“Vive le général LaFayette!”

The appearance of the hero of two hemispheres on the Boulevards always had a soothing effect upon the masses. They felt that with this champion of liberty still among them the rights of the people were preserved.

Amidst the jovial pedestrians that thronged the Grand Boulevards Albert

Zorn strolled pensively, his hands in his pockets, his dreamy, though keen, eyes, narrowed inquisitively, his head thrown back, a smile of triumph and joy on his smooth-shaven oval face. He was well dressed, in light colored coat and trousers and a waistcoat of many bright hues, yet his clothes hung on him as if he gave no care to his outward appearance. Though well-built, with a body of medium height and a head proudly set upon a solidly formed neck, he gave one the impression of shortness. It was his legs rather than his body that were short. He walked with the aimlessness of a student, of a dreamer who always seeks life in the street rather than in the drawingroom. There was a touch of melancholy in his eyes even when he smiled and a peculiar light shone from between his narrowed eyelids—a shaft of sunlight emerging from a crevice. At times he whistled as he walked and mumbled rhythmic words to himself. There was the gait of conscious freedom in his step, the freedom regained by a convict after long imprisonment. The gayety of the people about him filled him with secret joy, the saluting ejaculations were music in his ears. He was seeing history in the making and was alive to the events of the day.

He rambled wistfully, as if carried along by the human tide, and not infrequently was jostled by the people about him. He was tempted to get into people's way and hear the exclamations of apology and see the sunny smiles on their faces. He loved the gleam of those velvety French eyes and the melody of their light-hearted laughter. Though of a bluntly frank nature himself he found the polite urbanity of the Parisians as refreshing as the wafting fragrance from a greenhouse. He was keenly conscious of the foreign atmosphere and fascinated by the people's manners. Some one had just touched his arm and apologized courteously, and he lapsed into a reverie of comparison between the people in his native land and the people here. In his native land people dug each other in the ribs without a suggestion of craving one's pardon. Many cycles of thought began to revolve in his brain. One led to another. Then came straggling, disjointed fragments of thought—like loose threads—that became snarled and were formed into a knotted coil. . . .

## II.

Since the Revolution in Paris the whole tenor in Albert's life had changed. He had hung up his lyre and gripped the sword. The Revolution had made him forget his resolution to devote the rest of his life to his art. He had thrown himself into the maelstrom of political activities and fought mercilessly. He had decided upon a mission in life. To write sweet songs was not enough, he had determined. He must do his share in the struggle for the liberation of man,

mental as well as physical liberation. He was fighting the *Junkers* and the priests—the *Adel und Pfaffenherrschaft*—with telling effect. The articles he had written since he fled from Germany stirred the people at home even more than while he was amongst them. Yes, he must fight for the liberation of man!

Instead of the Bible and Homer he was hugging to his breast Jean Jacques Rousseau's work. He realized that France was at present the cradle of Liberty as Judea of old was the cradle of Faith.

How could he really sing with the rattling of prisoners' chains in his ears? The course of one's life is fixed at one's very birth, and strive as one might the given course must be followed. Albert felt as if an invisible hand was directing his course, a forceful, dominating hand. Free will? There was no free will. He often thought of the allegory of Jonah fleeing to Tarsish. Poor Jonah believed in free will but the whale taught him a different lesson. "Arise, go unto Ninevah, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Everyone must preach the preaching that is bidden him.

However, at times he turned to the Prophets and drank from the ever fresh waters of their deep wells. And the Jesuits in Munich and the *Junkers* in Berlin were pointing to his blasphemy! So did the ancient priests and the nobles of old Judea call their prophets scoffers and blasphemers. It is ever thus, Albert Zorn mused with sublime contempt in his heart, one must be crucified in order to save the world.

Would he ever be understood? He did not preach any definite doctrine to attract adherents. He was no Börne, with set rules and formulas for the emancipation of mankind; no self-centered Goethe to inspire romantic cults. He was carrying on guerilla warfare, shooting at whosoever was hostile to human progress. He understood the course of human progress better than that fanatical Börne who dreamt of bringing about a millennium with one leap. Human progress is gained by taking a leap forward, then half a step backward, then forward again, until the goal is reached. Reaction is as much a part of human progress as revolution. Revolution is only a link in the chain of evolution. He dreaded Communism, he despised Absolutism, he detested the mediocrity of Republicanism, even more than Philistinism. He was concerned with the freedom of the spirit even more than with the freedom of the body. Must he go on being misunderstood? He did not care for the opinion of his enemies—it did not matter to him that they charged him with want of character—but it grieved him to learn that even his friends and admirers failed to understand him. Only a few days before he had bared his heart in a letter to a friend. Would any one ever understand his inner struggles and strife? "We do not expect our friends to agree with us but we expect them to understand the

motives of our actions,” he pleaded.

He could not deny that he had sipped from the sweetness of life since his arrival in Paris. A new world was opened to him. At last he had found himself free, breathing freely, moving about without restraint, without the conscious restraint that Prussian tyranny had imposed upon him. Not only the tangible shackles but even the invisible fetters—those that make one’s inner consciousness cower—had fallen away.

From the first day he stepped upon French soil no one reminded him, by look or gesture or remotest insinuations, of the virtues, or vices, of his forefathers. Having brought with him only a few letters of introduction, and as yet wholly unknown to the reading public in France, his poems and ready wit had quickly won him a large circle of friends and admirers. He had already met Victor Hugo, George Sand, Adolph Thiers, General LaFayette, and formed friendships with Balzac and Gautier and Alexandre Dumas; and, as in Berlin, he had found here an admirer who wished to be his patroness. She was a princess, who, while she did not possess the brilliancy and depth of Frau Varnhagen, was a woman of culture and had an innate appreciation of poetry. At her *soirées* one met not only the literary and artistic celebrities of the day but also renowned statesmen and diplomats.

He was as famous here as in his native land. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* was running a translation of his works, laudatory articles were written about him, his correspondence from Paris had made a stir in Germany and Austria, and his publishers were issuing new editions of his books. Though he was spending freely, sufficient money was coming in to meet his obligations. Indeed, fortune smiled upon him.

“*Vive le général LaFayette!*” the throngs around him roared again.

He had reached the Madaleine, which was then still under construction, and crossing the street he walked back along the Grands Boulevards. Only the day before he had talked with Balzac about the charm of wandering through the crowded streets of Paris, watching the people and listening to their talk. Albert found that he could think best as he wandered along the crowded sidewalks.

He soon found himself again thinking of his Fatherland. He was always thinking of his Fatherland. The soil of Germany was sacred to him, her language was music to his ears. He loved Paris, loved the French, but his heart beat for the land of the Rhine. He recalled a recent attack on him in a German newspaper. He was attacked on all sides. The radicals called him a traitor, the *Junkers* called him a revolutionist. But he did not mind. He was a little David

with more than one smooth stone in his pouch. He would yet slay the blustering Goliath. He would fight for Young Germany in his own way!

However, the knowledge that he was being attacked by the radicals and the *Junkers* stirred his blood. At last the poor *Michel* had stopped snoring. He was stretching his clumsy arms. No more sweet lullabies for the drowsy *Michel*, no more love songs, no dream ballads, no subtle epigrams. He must speak to him more directly, in language he could not misunderstand. He had scarcely more than unsheathed his sword. They shall see!



# MARGUERITE.

## I.

ALBERT found time passing pleasantly and swiftly. Two more years had passed and he was still living the life of a literary journalist—visiting cafés, art galleries, places of amusement; dining at the homes of the elite, visiting notables, frequenting fashionable circles. He was trying to persuade himself that his was a happy existence—fame in Germany and even greater renown in Paris, his health fairly good save for an occasional headache, and his earnings considerable—but he could not shut his ears to the small voice calling from the very depth of his heart. It was a rebuking, reproachful voice, which he could silence neither with a witty epigram nor with convincing preachment. It was the voice of mocking Satan, with whom the more one expostulates the more it mocks. He was already in his thirty-sixth year and none of his great literary plans had come to fruition. He had been bartering his talents for ducats. Had his fire gone out? He trembled. He had hardly written a poem worthy of the name in the past two years. True, he had not been idle and had fought for the liberation of his compatriots, and studied and worked very industriously on criticism of literature, religion, philosophy; but that, he said to himself, was not his life work. Yes, even love was dead in his heart. Was he growing old? Fear seized him. Goethe at thirty-six had only begun to love, and only begun to live. His heart was beating with the rapidity of fear. When one ceases to feel the lure of love one is nearing his grave, he mused. And one morning he awakened to find two fingers of his left hand benumbed. Alarmed he ran to a physician, a friend of his. The diagnosis was terrifying. The two fingers were paralyzed. But he only emitted a bitter laugh. “What a beneficent deity we have! God is reducing the strength of my left hand that I may strike the harder with my right.”

He jested about his deformity but it struck terror at his heart. It was not the fear of death but the fear of dying. He had seen death in all its grimness, when the cholera raged in Paris the year before. No, it was not death he feared but the approach of death. Indeed, he was getting old and dying. Perspiration burst over him. He recalled that the *Weltschmerz* which had gripped him so mercilessly in his youth had relaxed its hold on him since his arrival in Paris. And the *Weltschmerz* is the elixir of youth. Want of restlessness is want of life-force.

He wanted no sympathy. He had promised Princess Pampini to call on her that morning but he could not force himself to go to her. It was not vanity because his fingers were crippled but he would not listen to condolence.

As he thought of the princess a smile passed over his face. People were gossiping about his being in love with her. He could no more be in love with her than he could have been in love with Rahel. No, he could not be in love with anybody any more . . . He sighed disconsolately. No wonder the heights of Parnassus had been denied him in the past two years. Love and song were no longer for him. . .

In despair he wandered through the streets, frequently touching and fondling the numb fingers of his left hand with those of his right. He sought to dissipate his sorrow in motion. Pretty women walked past him but he glanced at them with trepidation. He saw their beauty but could feel no inner thrill. Yes, the glow of life was fast ebbing away from him. Youth and love and song were all dead in his heart.

He had reached the Porte St. Martin and turned into a side street. He wished to be alone, in a street less frequented by the young and gay. The sight of the young and gay around him was too tantalizing. He was brooding. Such was the irony of life. No sooner had he begun to enjoy life than life began to flee. Was not that the allegory of Moses on Mount Nebo?

Like another Faust—nay, like another *Koheleth*, the Preacher—Albert mused on the vanities and uselessness of life. It is only he whose eyes penetrate behind the scenes of life that can scoff and cry *Havel havolim*, vanity of vanities; and one's eyes scarcely ever penetrate the mystery of life until one is about ready to relinquish it. In the heart of a forest one does not see the forest. "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Ah, indeed, every man must write his own Faust as he must brood over his own Ecclesiastes! Albert had often said this to himself and friends, and he now understood the full import of his saying. Like all true humorists, he passed quickly from mirth to sadness. There was nothing in life for him any longer, and it did not matter if he could only go to his lodging, fall asleep, and never wake again.

He was making his way blindly through the quiet street, oblivious to everything about him, when his ears caught the humming of a street song, the snatch of a song which was then popular in Paris and played by every hurdy-gurdy. He raised his eyes and beheld a young girl, perhaps seventeen or eighteen years old, standing in the doorway of a little shop, her hands stuck in

the pockets of a white apron over her black skirt. There was the gleam of a cheerful smile on her comely countenance, and as he raised his eyes she stopped humming the song and looked at him with the candor and shyness of a child.

He was about to continue his walk when he remembered that he needed a pair of shoes, which were less costly on the side streets than on the Boulevards. He halted, hesitated, took a step back, and entered the shoe shop; the girl turned on her heel and followed him in.

Suddenly all his sadness fled, all his brooding thoughts vanished. He was conscious of a thrill in his heart and of the sweetness of living. The face before him was one mirroring youth and the ignorance of youth, eyes that sparkled, seeing only the surface of life. And in every line of her figure, in every movement of hers, was immaturity.

While he was examining a pair of shoes a heavy-set woman, with purple cheeks, stuck her head through a door in the rear, and said something about showing the gentleman the new style of footwear they had received the day before. What was there in the girl's voice that made something within him vibrate?

He began to take off his left shoe.

"Not the left but the right, *monsieur*;" and she emitted a little laugh with the unrestraint of a child.

He did as he was bidden, and felt a peculiar intimacy as the girl bent down to help him slip on the new shoe. As she bent forward his eyes rested on her lustrous black hair—wavy without being curly—combed back from her low forehead.

He was thinking of Miriam, the girl of Gnesen. There was a striking resemblance between the two, except that the girl before him had somnolent black eyes while the iris in Miriam's eyes were of a deep dark-blue. There was the same lack of artifice in her speech, the same touch of tenderness in her voice. Likewise was her face a book with blank pages.

He lingered in the little shop even after he had made his purchase. Was the woman who had spoken through the doorway her mother? No, she was an aunt, for whom she was working. Her mother lived in the country, in a little village near Nantes, and her mother had sent her to Paris to earn her living. Was her mother poor? Yes, very, very poor.

"Where do you come from?" she presently questioned him with equal candor, and looked up into his face without the least embarrassment.

“Where do you think?”

The deep corners of his large mouth drooped and there was a faint smile on his oval face.

She straightened up, her hands now behind her, her eyes resting on his light-brown hair, on his thoughtful face.

“From—from Normandy—all the men in Normandy are blond and have bluish eyes——”

He laughed with frank amusement, the amusement a child’s talk provokes, and told her his eyes only seemed blue but they were greenish.

“But a thing is only what it seems,” she said, with naive protest.

“I grant you it is good philosophy but not all philosophy is truth.”

There was a comical expression on his face as he uttered the last, and she looked puzzled. A bit of shyness came over her.

“So you can’t guess where I come from,” he said, looking tenderly at her. Then he added, as if speaking to himself, “I come from a country where they wish I had come from another country, and if I had come from another country they would have wished the same.”

He threw his head back and laughed but not without a touch of bitterness in his tone.

She did not understand him. There was perplexity in the girl’s face. No one had ever looked at her in this manner. There was something beseeching in his half-closed eyes, something eloquently covetous, and he gazed at her as if she were an inanimate thing, a picture or statue of the masters in the Louvre.

His next question sounded still more puzzling. Was she always in the shop? What a question! She was either in the shop or in the rear helping with the housework. Her employer was not boarding her and paying her mother ten francs a month for nothing!

As he was leaving he suddenly turned around and asked her name. “Marguerite,” she told him. He said he would like to be her Faust.

She looked at him incomprehensively and said, “*Vous êtes drôle.*”

“You are not the only one who thinks me funny,” he replied.

She laughed.

He walked away with drooping head and lagging step.

## II.

He was soon on Boulevard Strassbourg, a mere drop of spray in the human tide. People were coming and going, chatting and laughing, the zest of life everywhere. He, too, now felt the zest of life. He was no longer feeling that the marrow of his life had dried up. There was spring in his heart, the sap of renewed life was flowing through his veins; no, he was not dying. He was humming to himself a few verses of an old song of his, which had been set to music by an admirer.

Yes, sadness was creeping into his heart and enveloping his whole being, but it was not the sadness that possessed him earlier in the day. It was the sadness of longing, of woeful longing, the sadness of music in a minor key, which thrilled him even as it kept tugging at his heartstrings. Suddenly, oblivious of the people that were passing, he paused, and, clenching his fists with joy vibrating through the whole being, his face beaming with a strange light, he uttered, almost loud enough to be heard by passersby, "I am myself again—love has returned!"

And love had returned. He was his old self again. Youth had come back. His features had almost changed. There came a new softness in his eyes, languor in his face, the dreaminess of his student days. He had not been in love since Miriam had gone back to marry the drover's son. He had known friendship but not love.

He was not trying to argue himself out of his sudden passion for the girl in the shoe shop; he was only explaining himself to himself. What did it matter so long as love had again entered his heart, so long as he was restless with the yearnings and longings of his student days, so long as he felt the ache of blossoming youth! Indeed, what else mattered!

He went to his room and wrote a poem. He had not been in the mood for writing verse since his arrival in Paris, but now melody flowed from his soul. He could think of nothing, of nobody, but Marguerite. And he lost himself in reverie about her sweetly pouting lips, her well-formed nose, her glistening white teeth, the faint dimples in her cheeks. There was child-like beauty and sweetness in her face and speech, and it was that child-like quality in her that had captivated his imagination and passion.

He was too impetuous to lay plans. He could not lay siege to his citadel. He would either win it by storm or go down to defeat in the assault.

The next day he was again at the shoe shop without even the subtle

subterfuge of the lover. He offered no excuses, invented no pretences to account for his call. He sat down and gazed at her rapturously and called her Marguerite, and repeated the name again and again, lisping it, murmuring it, echoing it as if it were a melodious term.

Marguerite at first laughed and told him he was foolish but by and by new tints came into the pink of her cheeks and she smiled confusedly—with the confusion of a child who does not know why it is confused—and there came a shimmering heat in the lustrous pupils of her eyes. Her heart beat tumultuously when he looked at her, and his words seemed so caressing. Sometimes he gazed at her as if he did not see her at all and then he would say, “How beautiful your voice sounds!” and when he caught hold of an edge of her apron he fondled it as if he had passed his hand over her bare skin.

One day he took hold of her fingers and kissed the tips of every one of them. She never forgot that day. She thought she ought not to let him kiss her fingers but she liked the sensation and yielded.

And when a few days later she found herself in his arms she feigned no resistance. She craved the touch of his lips and of his tender embraces and the endearing names he called her and had no objections to being his Marguerite.

### III.

At last the longing of his youth—the longing which he had dissipated in dreams and song—were gratified. Marguerite was his. In her he saw the fulfillment of the promises of Hedwiga, of Hilda, of Eugenie, of Miriam. His soul was steeped in dreams, in imaginary romances, and he would not part with his dreams even when love had become a reality. He had brought to Marguerite all the pent-up passion that lay slumbering in his soul, all which he would have lavished on Hedwiga, on Hilda, on Eugenie, on Miriam. Realities are dreams to the poet as dreams are realities to him. What was wanting in the guileless country girl his romantic imagination supplied. What he had found especially fascinating about his beloved was her want of sophistication. When he proposed that she come and live with him in his two-room apartment she readily consented despite the protests of her relatives.

Nor was he disillusioned after she had gone to live with him. He had no illusions about her save her physical charms. He was sick at heart of the artifice of the chatter of the women of the drawingroom, and enjoyed the sweet naturalness of this woman child. And she obeyed his mandates. She sat for hours knitting or eating bonbons without uttering a syllable while he was

absorbed in his writing. She did not know what he was writing about, nor did she have sufficient curiosity to find out, and he loved her for her silence. He thought the price of a woman who could keep still for hours “far above rubies and precious ointment.”

His life would have been perfect could he have impressed the wisdom of silence on Marguerite’s pet parrot, but he was soon reconciled to his chatter since that was the parrot’s business. At least the parrot prattled the only things he knew. Albert wished some of the savants of his day would emulate the parrot’s example.

The love of Albert and Marguerite did not run smoothly, however. They quarreled, and quarreled frequently, but then Albert knew he had an uncontrollable temper and that she was sometimes unreasonable. And she did not like those queer countrymen of his to intrude upon him so often. But after each tilt he became more tender, more solicitous, and called her a thousand more endearing names, and she nestled closer to him and loved her Albert more than ever.

In the early stages of their love they had two serious ruptures. Each time they parted she went back to her relatives and he went to the seashore to mend his shattered nerves, but no sooner had he returned to Paris than he went to the Philistines and demanded his wife, and, unlike the people of Timnath, Marguerite’s aunt at once complied with his demand and nothing disastrous happened. Lover and beloved went back to their two room apartment, he to write and she to knit and eat bonbons and to quarrel as of yore.

## IV.

He was supremely happy—*Wie ein Fisch im Wasser*—in spite of his slight deformity. He was industrious, had finished another volume of poems and was making mental notes for a dramatic poem.

He was not fond of the German refugees in Paris. Now and then there came a refugee of real worth—but most of them were without talent, without any well defined idea of what they wanted, and only plumed themselves with the title of revolutionaries. Paris in those days was a hotbed of revolutionists; Mazzini with his carbonari, plotters from Portugal, insurgents from Poland, assassins from Spain. Prussian spies were abundant and very active, and the French government was secretly lending a helping hand to rid Paris of these stirring elements. Louis Phillipe had enough to contend with without foreign intriguers.

Albert was living quietly in a district inhabited by the genteel poor—clerks, journalists, small shop-keepers, artists—and kept aloof from his compatriots. But the news he was receiving from “home”—for he never ceased thinking of Germany as his home—was disquieting. The news came to him from various sources, but chiefly from pilgrims who were coming to worship at his shrine. Every aspiring poet, every young writer with an idea in his head, every agitator, came either to pay homage to his genius or to see the poet in exile in order to give first-hand information to their friends at home. Albert had the misfortune of having had woven around him myths and legends that reflected upon his morality. To the Germans he was a Don Juan. His flippant speech (often only the flash of the moment), his witty epigrams (at times uttered for the sheer love of wit), his blasphemy (rarely intended), gave credence to all the shocking things his enemies told about him. Furthermore, his imaginary love affairs narrated, and hinted at, in his poems were taken too literally. His countrymen failed to realize that one actually given to licentiousness rarely writes about it, never glorifies it in song and rhapsodies; that one who yields to dissipation rarely indulges in sweet day dreams about it. The Germans have always been too stolid, too ponderous, too matter of fact to comprehend the subtlety of fine humor. While an elephant can easily lift a log with his trunk he is quite helpless with a feather.

## V.

One day he was at work in his room, Marguerite and the parrot in the other room, the door between them shut. Marguerite had found a way of keeping the parrot quiet when Albert was at work. A family with small children had recently moved in on the floor below and their noises were irritating Albert beyond endurance, so Marguerite was taking pains to keep the parrot quiet. She was feeding him bonbons and carrying on a deaf-and-dumb conversation with the hook-nosed chatterer.

“You mustn’t make a sound,” she whispered in a soft lisp, as if talking to a babe, and waved an admonishing finger. “Not the least bit of sound, for we don’t want Albert to be angry, do we?”

The parrot buried his beak in the down under his left wing and muffled his suppressed laughter.

“There goes the postman! That fool, he rings the doorbell as if the house were on fire! Albert has told him a thousand times not to do it in the morning as it disturbs his thoughts——”



The door soon opened with an abrupt jerk and Albert, in a long *Schlafrock* (lounging robe) appeared in the doorway. His hair dishevelled, a look of unendurable annoyance on his face, his eyes contracted and intense, he clenched his fists and almost shouted—"Can't you tell that fool to stop ringing? I can hear every bell in the neighborhood when that imbecile makes his rounds. I was in the midst of a sentence and, bah!—that fool comes along with his clamor and I forget what I was going to say—my whole drift of thought is lost—just when my writing was coming along so easily he comes along and kills my morning's work—that idiot!"

"I told him a number of times not to ring so loud," Marguerite struck in.

"You told him! You don't think he is doing it to spite me! That postman and the parrot are a pair!"

"The parrot! He never opened his month. He was as quiet as a mouse all morning. You blame him for everything.—" Marguerite's voice was becoming lachrymose. "You hate him because I love him so. Poor dear!" She nestled close to the parrot's cage. "It is about time that both you and I go—Albert loves neither of us any longer——"

Marguerite's chin began to quiver, the dimples in her cheeks appeared and disappeared, and presently the deluge. She dropped into a chair and the tears soon flowed through her fingers, with which she covered her eyes.

He rushed up to her with a gesture of helplessness.

"What are you crying about? It's I who ought to cry—a fine morning's work gone because that stupid postman rings the doorbell as if he were a Prussian officer. Am I blaming you?"

"If—you—loved—me—you—wouldn't—talk—that—way—" Her words came between sobs.

He strode across the room and waved his arms in despair. He gnashed his teeth but said nothing.

"You see, you wouldn't even deny it—you know you don't love me any longer. I know, I know, yesterday at the *Café des Ambassadeurs* with those funny Germans of yours you sat at the table and talked of nothing but the Princess Pompani. You think because I don't understand German you can talk of your other loves with impunity—but I understand what *Prinzessin* means—every minute it was *Prinzessin* this and *Prinzessin* that—"

She lapsed into convulsive sobbing.

Suddenly he burst out laughing.

“Yes, you laugh because you have no heart and because you make me suffer——”

The next moment he walked up to her, gently passed his hand over her hair and tried to embrace her but she pushed him away——

“Don’t touch me—I know when you touch me you are thinking you are passing your hands over the Princess——”

Albert was still laughing softly and trying to remove her hands from her face.

“Don’t you come near me—don’t——”

He had succeeded in pulling her hands away from her face and in giving her a grazing kiss on her lips.

“Aren’t you silly, my sweet little Nonette (one of his endearing nicknames)”. “Look at me!” He was holding her face between his hands, trying to make her look at him, but she tightened her eyelids and pulled away from him.

“No, I won’t look at you until you stop loving that Princess——”

He laughed indulgently.

“What a child you are. You know I don’t love anybody but my sweet little kitten with those dear little dimples”——he kissed her on both cheeks, and catching her unawares, pressed a kiss on her mouth.

“Aren’t you silly?” he continued as he wiped her gathered tears. “Here I am working so hard to get a little more money so that we may be able to move away from this clattering neighborhood to a cozy little apartment on Rue St. Honoré and you blame me for getting angry at that stupid postman!”

“I told the *concierge* only yesterday that unless she made the children behave we would have to move.” Her voice sounded half reconciled but her eyes were still averted from him.

“You sweet little monkey!”

He embraced her affectionately and she rested on his arms without resistance.

“Ha—ha! Ha—ha!—Ha—ha!”

“Shut up, you fool!” she turned angrily upon the laughing parrot.

“No one is a fool who can laugh,” Albert said wistfully, with a sad smile on his face. “Come on, let’s all laugh—Ha—ha! Ha—ha!” he mimicked the

parrot, and Marguerite presently joined in the laughter.

“I am nearly through with my book” he presently consoled her, “and I think I can make that miserly publisher in Berlin advance me five thousand francs on my royalties, and I have my eye on a beautiful apartment on Rue St. Honoré overlooking a garden. I think I’ll be able to buy you the earrings you saw in the display window the other day and——”

There was a knock on the door and they both jumped up, Albert went to the door.

The *concierge* was standing with a packet of letters and newspapers.

Albert thanked the *concierge* profusely, tipped her liberally, and scanned the envelopes.

“Here is a letter from the publisher,” he exclaimed jubilantly. “I’ll bet the rascal offers me only three thousand francs as an advance for my next volume. He always likes to bargain. If I had asked for three thousand he would have offered me one——”

“Why didn’t you ask him for ten, he might have then offered you five,” she counselled.

“I didn’t want him to get apoplexy——” he laughed.

He tore the envelope and while removing the contents continued talking half to himself, half to Marguerite.

“What a long letter—I know—he is telling me, I suppose, how much he has lost on my other books. That rogue! He has grown rich on my sweat and blood and is always whining how little there is in the publishing business and throws me a pittance! Huh! What’s that!” His eyelids came close together as he continued turning the pages and there was a deep dent between his eyes. “The dogs!——”

“What’s the matter, my dear?” she looked up anxiously at Albert’s agitated countenance.

For a moment he did not answer her. Then, with the loose sheets of the letter in one hand, the large square envelope in the other, he paced up and down the room, frowning, uncontrollable rage in his eyes.

“Those vultures are trying to wrest the very bread from my mouth, but they shall see, I won’t sit idle either.” He still talked half to himself, half to the puzzled Marguerite.

He suddenly remained standing stock still in the middle of the room, his

eyes barely open. Then, without saying a word, he rushed to the adjoining room, put the sheets of manuscript in order and stowed them safely into a drawer, exchanged his *Schlafröck* for a more fitting coat for the street, and was presently ready to leave, Marguerite following him attentively, almost mutely, and helping him with his toilet. She knew that something was irritating her Albert but he had often told her she could not understand his inner disturbances so she did not press him with further questions. But presently he volunteered enlightenment.

“They have forbidden my books in Prussia, and not only those I have published but even those I might publish. The publisher says he can’t send me a *sou* under the circumstances, and that he, too, will be ruined.”

The want of money was quite intelligible to Marguerite. She knew that without money they could not move to the cozy little apartment on Rue St. Honoré and she wouldn’t be able to get those coveted earrings.

“What’s the difference?” she soon consoled him, “you can write for the French papers. The Germans are queer anyhow.”

For a bare second Marguerite’s stupidity and simplicity irritated him but before his anger had gathered he glanced at her child-like face, her doting eyes, clasped her in his arms and dashed out of the house.

“Yes, I’ll be back in time for dinner. We’ll go to the *Ambassadeurs* tonight,” he comforted her as he closed the door.

## VI.

The information that the German *Diet* had prohibited the publication of his books had so upset him that he could not think clearly. It seemed to him that some sinister fate was always interfering with his work. At first it was the parrot, who chattered volubly, and when he had trained him to keep still in the morning, a whole brood of children moved in on the floor below and insisted on doing all their crying during the hours he had set aside for writing; and when by chance everyone was quiet it usually happened that just then he was not in the mood for writing. He thought it strange that all noises came when he was in the best of moods. Yes, it must be the fates who were always pursuing him. This morning everything had moved so smoothly. He had felt as if he had been on wings, his thoughts came flying, and the expressions he wanted were coming so spontaneously that he could scarcely write fast enough when that idiot of a postman began his clamorous ringing! Well, the bad news could have

waited until his morning's work was done! Ah! fate, cruel fate, had been tormenting him from his very cradle!

He was walking down the street rather rapidly, his inner agitation gaining momentum. It was early in December and the air was cold and refreshing. He could not understand why the *Diet* should have decreed against his writings, especially now when he was preaching moderation. Goethe's and Lessing's works had never been forbidden! Goethe had always been anti-Christian, quite pagan, and Lessing was a veritable iconoclast, and yet the government had never taken measures against them! An unpleasant thought was intruding upon him. He tried to force this unpleasant thought away. In the past six years he had banished this unpleasant thought by sheer force whenever it sought admission into his brain. His life in Paris would not permit him to dwell upon this unpleasant thought. But now it took hold of him in spite of himself. The Prussians would not forgive his Jewish blood! The mark of Cain was on his brow! Genius or no genius, it did not matter. Ah, those narrow minded tyrants! They shall see—the whole pack of them—he would smite those Philistines hip and thigh!

As he proceeded on his walk he was mentally wording a reply to the Prussian *Diet*. He felt himself a Luther standing before the King. Indeed, like the man of Worms, he would not recant. He was smiting the Philistines. He was not sparing them. His words were molten lead. He would pour it red hot upon their stupid heads. He would avenge himself on all of them—on the Aristocrats and the Democrats. They had both combined to annihilate him but he would pull the temple down upon them.

Under the heat of composition his face brightened, his eyes were aglow, his step became more elastic and rapid. He was almost glad that this had happened. His fire was kindled with greater fury.

But he soon remembered that his funds were exhausted. His uncle Leopold's quarter-annual stipend was two months away, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* had already advanced him for his next contribution, his publisher would certainly not send him a *sou* at present, and the four hundred *Thaler* he had borrowed from a friend were nearly gone. His gait slackened, his countenance fell, the light was out of his eyes. Yes, he must seek counsel. He must not act too rashly. His left hand was troubling him and he was afraid the paralysis of his two fingers was spreading. He must seek counsel.

He thought of a few influential friends, who were then in Paris. They were admirers of his and, he was sure, would be glad to intercede for him. But, no, he would ask no assistance from a Prussian. He would—the thought of Princess Pampini came to him like a ray of light. She could give him the right

advice. If influence was needed she could use it. She had powerful friends in Paris, men close to King Louis Philippe. Thiers and Guizot were frequent callers at her home. And he soon remembered that he had received a note from her, reproaching him for his absence from her *soirées*. The thought of the princess cheered him. He directed his steps toward Rue de Courcelles, her present dwelling.

## VII.

On his way home from the visit with the Princess a flitting thought disturbed him. Yes, the fates did combine against him. Why was he always falling in love with stupid women? If only he had a life-companion like the Princess! He needed some one to counsel him, to guide him.

Presently he was passing the jewelry shop where Marguerite had seen those coveted earrings. He visualized her with those earrings. He could see a hundred eyes gazing at her as she entered the *Café des Ambassadeurs* on his arm, with her beautiful flushed cheeks, vivacious black eyes, and her exquisite little figure. She was beautiful—that child! The next moment he was in the shop, before the jewelry counter, holding the earrings on the palm of his hand, turning them this way and that. Would the gentleman behind the counter lay them aside for a week? He was sure he would have the money by that time. Yes, the gentleman behind the counter was very affable and accommodating. “You see, *monsieur*, I am putting them aside and will hold them for you until a week from tomorrow—thank you, *monsieur*.”

Albert sped home exultantly. He was optimistic. He did not see clearly how such a miracle could happen, how the money for the earrings would come to him—a *thousand francs*!—but he had hopes. He was glad he had talked with Princess Pampini. He would follow her advice and instead of protesting just request the German government to reconsider the decree against him; and then his publisher would advance him the five thousand francs—three thousand, at least.

He ran up the three flights of stairs to his apartment with boyish glee and, embracing Marguerite, whispered in her sweet little ear that he had a great surprise in store for her. No; he could not tell her what it was, but she must wait patiently a week, and tonight they would dine at the *Café des Ambassadeurs*. He would order the same *menu* they had been served a week ago.

“Wasn’t that a fine meal, hein? A feast to be eaten on one’s knees!”

Albert's eyes glowed with ecstasy as he recalled that dinner.

"You are the most wonderful lover in the world, my Albert," Marguerite threw her round warm arms around his neck and pressed him to her breast.

Presently he was seated at his desk writing his address to the *High Diet*. He was checking his propensity to be bitter, cynical, satirical. He repeated the words under his breath as he put them on paper, thinking of Princess Pampini's counsel.

When he had finished his long letter he felt as if a great burden had been lifted. He read, and translated it, to Marguerite, who, with arms folded and eyes staring blankly in front of her, listened attentively but without hearing a word of it. She was wondering what surprise Albert had in store for her next week.

## VIII.

The miracle had happened. A week later Albert had the thousand francs with which to purchase the earrings so much desired by his dimple-cheeked Nonette. Though very rational in his beliefs, and having scoffed so frequently at Biblical miracles, he experienced a secret sense of awe and wonderment as he thought of the unexpected source of this bounty. And it had come to him in the mysterious manner that invariably ushers in miraculous events.

Six days after he had last visited the Princess Pampini a document, bearing the government seal of the reign of King Louis Philippe, was delivered to him in person. Albert's heart was quivering with fright when the official-looking paper was handed him. He had an innate dread of official papers. He unfolded the contents of the sealed envelope with trembling hands and to his amazement found an endorsed order for twelve hundred francs. A brief note, signed by the Minister of Public Instruction, accompanied the money order. The Minister expressed his personal friendship and admiration for the poet.

"Marguerite! Marguerite! A letter from the king!" he cried jubilantly, as he rushed to Marguerite who was trimming a hat.

She looked up incredulously. Albert was such a jester; one never knew when to take him seriously.

He showed her the money order, pointing to the numerals, 1200.

"The king has sent this to me from his own treasury," he added. "He read my writings and likes them. And every three months he will send me an

additional twelve hundred francs.”

He threw his arms around her and kissed her.

“Now we’ll be able to move to Rue St. Honoré,” she reminded him.

“No, not yet. We must wait a little while. We must wait until I get the remittance from my publisher. His heart will soften as soon as the *Diet* cancels its decree.”

“What will you do with the twelve hundred?”

“Don’t worry—I’ll know what to do with it——”

“I know, you’ll put it in the bank, you miser——”

Her countenance fell. Albert had been complaining of late of his extravagances and regretting that he had saved nothing from his large earnings during the past five years. He had told her that from now on he would be very economical and lay something aside for a rainy day.

He was wistful. He was thinking of the earrings and wished to guard his surprise.

“Will you put away all of it?”

Anger was gathering in her pretty face. Since the king had become his friend she could not see why Albert should want to save any money after this. She had hoped he would at least take her that evening to one of the cafés.

“No, no, I won’t put it all away,” he said joyfully, fondling her.

“You are becoming stingy,” she said sullenly, and tried to disengage herself from his embrace.

“You don’t call a man who tries to lay aside a few francs for a rainy day, stingy—do you?”

Presently he was fully dressed and he dashed out of the house, the happiest of mortals. He ran down the three flights of steps like a little boy speeding to join his waiting playmates. And he kept running thru the streets, seeing no one until he reached the jewelry shop.

He was soon back, with flushed face and panting, a nice little box in his breast pocket. Marguerite was addressing the parrot when Albert opened the door. She was telling the parrot that Albert was a great *poète allemand* and the sweetest lover in the world, even though he was stingy at times. And the parrot laughed—“Ha—ha! Ha—ha! Ha—ha!”

“Close your eyes, my sweet monkey,” Albert commanded.



“You did not spend any money on a present for me, you extravagant boy!”

“Close your eyes and keep them closed until I count three!”

He kissed her and closed her eyes with the tips of his fingers.

“One—two—three!”

She opened her eyes upon a pair of sparkling earrings.

“Albert! You spendthrift!”

At seven-thirty the following evening the people seated against the mirrored walls of the *Café des Ambassadeurs* cast glances of unconcealed admiration at the pretty woman on the arm of the renowned *poète allemand*. There was pride in his keen eyes as he caught the admiring glances and nodded almost triumphantly to his acquaintances. He was quite exultant and carefree, with all the melody of the Song of Songs in his heart.

## IX.

Albert Zorn now found himself attacking, and attacked by, the reactionaries in the Fatherland and the extreme radicals in Paris. At last the *Junkers* and the *Jacobines* joined hands to down him, their common foe. The pension granted by the king was the peg on which they hung their calumnies. And helped by the Prussian *High Diet* he was even denied the right to defend himself against this fabricated charge of disloyalty. However, this did not muzzle the valiant fighter. Screened by a pseudonym he returned blow for blow. Before the censor had become aware of his identity, his devastating irony was again felt in Germany.

And in spite of the growing paralysis of his left hand he worked indefatigably. He penned poems, critical essays, satires, political tracts, with the same spirit running through them all; the emancipation of the enslaved Prussian mind from the influence of the *Junkers*.

One day a compatriot challenged him to a duel. His compatriot had taken exception to an insinuation against a close friend of his in one of Albert Zorn's recent books. True, Albert did not believe in the barbaric custom of duelling but he would not have any one charge him with cowardice, moral or physical. Indeed, he was ready to meet his adversary with any weapons he might choose.

The only thing that distressed him was Marguerite's condition, should the duel prove fatal to him.

“Marguerite!—Marguerite!——”

Albert was calling her from the adjoining room. It was twilight, the dim twilight of a summer day. His voice sounded softer, more kindly than ever.

Albert was in the living-room. It was a small room, with a white marble mantle over the fireplace and a large mirror above it. The open windows opposite were reflected in the mirror. He was seated, an elbow on the arm of his chair, his cheek against the palm of his left hand, his legs outstretched, wistfully thinking, a strange melancholy in his half-closed eyes. His usual impatience was lacking.

Presently Marguerite appeared. She seemed unusually pretty. Her plump figure had never looked so comely and her eyes never sparkled with more vivacity. She paused for a moment coquettishly, inviting inspection. Should she make a light? No, he did not care for a light. He could see how beautiful she was even in the dim light of the setting sun.

He languidly stretched out his right hand and she came closer to him and placed her hand in his. Ah! she knew how to humor her Albert when he was in a melancholy mood, and her Albert was never more amiable and kind than when in this mood. Though jocular he could not hide his melancholy the past few days, and though he might think her a fool, and without much brains, she understood every passing mood of his. No, indeed, all his friends were telling her what a great man Albert was, and how subtle and profound he was, but she knew better than any of them. She knew he was as simple minded as a child. Albert often called her his child—a lot he knew! It was he who needed mothering from his Marguerite.

The next moment she was on his knees, her lips against his forehead, a hand through his soft hair. He responded quickly to tenderness and pressed his lips against her fingers. There was mist in his eyes. He had been thinking very much of her the past few days; in fact, all his thoughts were of her. He had just come from a notary and made his will, leaving everything he possessed to her.

They were seated in silence for a short space, the clock on the mantle ticking strange melodies. Albert often heard this French clock tick German folk songs. He often wondered why Marguerite could not hear these songs—the only one she could make out was *La Parisienne*, and even this one only when Albert hummed it and used his hand as a baton.

“We are going to get married, Marguerite,” he suddenly announced.

Her hand gripped his involuntarily and for a few seconds she made no sound. Her brain could not quite comprehend his statement. She had never

asked him to marry her legally and he had never spoken of it.

“Are you ill—What is troubling you?” she was almost breathless with anxiety.

“No, my kitten,” he made an effort to talk in a light tone and encircled her waist with his arm. “It has just occurred to me that in case anything should happen to me—in case I die—you understand——”

“But what put dying into your head all of a sudden?” There was terror in her voice.

“Nothing—nothing particularly——” he was forcing an indifferent tone —“the thought occurred to me today as I was passing the Boulevard. A horse slipped and fell and hurt a pedestrian. One thought brought another—don’t you see, I was thinking an accident might happen to me—what would become of you?”

Her eyes quickly filled with tears and there were tears in her voice. She did not want her Albert to die and if he died she might as well die, too. Marriage or no marriage, it made no difference to her. Many men had flirted with her and tried to win her away from him—yes, even a few of his friends—yes, all men were alike. Whenever they saw a pretty young woman, they wanted to appropriate her, be she a friend’s wife or mistress. No, indeed, it made no difference to her. She had gone to live with him because she loved him and would never leave him, marriage or no marriage.

“*Apprends donc,*” she was saying, “*que jamais je ne te quitterai, que tu m’aimes ou non, que tu m’epouses ou non, que tu me maltraites ou non, jamais je ne te quitterai. Entends-tu bien? Jamais! jamais!*”

No, indeed, it made no difference to her, marriage or no marriage, whether or not he loved her, whether or not he’d ever ill-treat her, she’d never leave him—never! never! never! If he was proposing marriage to her because perchance he was jealous for a moment and thought some one might wean her away from him he need have no fear on that score.

He kissed her fingers in silence; there was ecstasy in his soul. He remembered the speech of Ruth when Naomi counselled her return to her people.

Presently Marguerite was sobbing on his breast. Her Albert was speaking and acting strangely. Had he been to see a physician, who had told him he could not live long? What did physicians know—indeed, what did they know? Her Albert would outlive them all. And she would take care of her Albert better than all the nurses in Paris and she would always be faithful to him. Oh,

her poor Albert! What had put such foolish thoughts into his brain?

He cleared his throat, wiped the tears out of the corners of his eyes, and spoke light-heartedly. No, he had seen no physician and his health was good and he did not expect to die. He wanted to marry her for her own sake; he wanted no one ever to cast reflections upon her relationship with him. How would she be married—would she like to have a religious marriage? Yes, indeed, he would marry her in any manner it pleased her.

Since Albert insisted upon a legal bond, she wondered if he would mind going with her to the priest at the church of St. Sulpice. She had been “confessing” to him since she came to Paris.

“No, indeed, my kitten!” Albert’s voice was almost jubilant. “By all means let us be married by a Catholic priest. When the Church of Rome binds no one can tear asunder,” he added with a mysterious twinkle in his eyes.

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Eight days later Albert was brought home slightly wounded. The duel had taken place in the Valley of St. Germain.

During his convalescence a friend dropped in.

“You have made thousands and thousands of friends,” the visitor was saying enthusiastically.

“Ah, yes, I understand,” jested Albert, “Drawing blood—especially an enemy’s blood—always relieves one’s pain. If I had been killed the kind Jesuits would have named the day of the duel a Saint’s Day.”

Marguerite, who sat by his bedside, begged him to stop laughing, as the physician had told her his constant laughing and joking irritated his wound.

“The doctor is mistaken,” Albert retorted. “My joking and laughing irritates the wounds of my enemies.”

# THE JEST OF THE GODS.

## I.

**Y**OUTH lives in the future, middle age in the present, old age in the past, but Albert Zorn, though still in his early middle life, and in the greatest vigor of his mentality, found himself nursing memories of the past.

Instead of dwelling upon the present or the future he was now constantly brooding over the blunders in the days gone by, living over again the moments of ecstasy, and of passion, long vanished, musing upon experiences that could never enter his life again. Never a man of action—his battles were only strifes of ideas—he reached the stage when no one would take up his challenges. For it was in the middle of the nineteenth century when there came a lull in the struggle of ideas. After every sharp world conflict there comes a momentary pause, a lethargical rest, while man gathers strength for the next combat. Recently there had been so many clashes of ideas, irreconcilable ideas, that for the moment no one cared what the other thought.

In spite of his growing fame Albert was living in a modest quarter in Paris, just he and his Marguerite, as simply as the humblest of workmen, and worked indefatigably. He wrote poems, the finest fruits of his pen, he discussed on philosophical themes, with keener insight than the obtuse pedants who passed for philosophers; he made political observations, with clearer vision than those whom the world called statesmen. But his enemies—and all his antagonists were his enemies—clamored loud enough to drown his voice. Being a radical among the conservatives and a conservative among radicals his enemies had no difficulty in confusing the masses as to the meaning of his words. The enemies of clear thinking and right living have always seen to it that the masses should fail to understand those that come to their aid. Ah, the masses, he murmured under his breath, the masses have always unwittingly stoned those who came to redeem them!

Spring came again, spring in Paris. The sky was clear and blue; blossoms dazzled in the morning sunshine; delicious fragrance wafted from the distant fields. Spring always brought melancholy thoughts to Albert's mind, and his thoughts this spring were even more melancholy. For paralysis had spread from his left hand to the whole left side and he could hardly move without acute pain. However, the more he suffered the harder he worked because the intensity of creative word deadened his pain, but when the effort was spent the

reaction was all the greater.

One late afternoon he settled at an open window, with his eyes almost closed, dreams of old songs in his brain. He was tired and, leaning in an arm-chair, he rested, feeling as if an iron hoop was around his head and through its tight embrace all his thoughts and ideas had been put to sleep. Gradually all the sweet memories of the past—and even his past great sorrows were now sweet memories to him—came back to him. He let his mind wander . . .

A bird twittered under his window; a sparrow came hopping on his little feet. He sighed and drew his breath painfully. He could not even hop like the sparrow. It was years since he had walked the Boulevards, since he had heard Paris laugh. Oh, Paris! he sighed and nodded his head woefully. France was to him like a garden where all the beautiful flowers of the world had been plucked to make one fine nosegay—Paris was the nosegay. It seemed to him ages since the perfume of this nosegay had reached his nostrils . . .

His thoughts drifted. He began to feel the ennui of his isolation. His visitors had grown fewer and fewer and fewer. He realized that no one cared to see one in misery. Presently his mind dwelt upon his last glimpse of Parisian life. It seemed to him ages ago. Leaning back in his cab he had watched the smiling grisettes in the doorways of the shops, the coquettes on the pavement . . .

He again heaved a sigh and abruptly dismissed that pleasant memory. There was rancor in his heart. People had called him a libertine, a Don Juan . . . A bitter smile appeared on his bloodless lips. He a Don Juan! He who had sung of romance and love! He frowned upon the injustice of the world's opinion. He could count on the fingers of one hand the number of women he had ever loved . . .

He tossed his head, contempt on his face. He did not care what the people were saying about him.

The next moment his wife's laughter reached his ears. In the adjoining room she was munching bonbons and reading a novel by Paul de Kock. He shuddered. Ah, he should have married a woman who could understand him . . .

He suddenly raised himself from his arm-chair, picked up his cane, limped across the room, and was soon in the street. An overwhelming desire to see the Boulevards again came upon him. He hailed a cab and leaning back in the conveyance feasted his eyes upon the surging crowds in the thoroughfares. Reaching the Madeleine he ordered the driver to turn into Rue Royal, and then along the Tuilleries Gardens up to the Louvre, when he ordered the coachman

to halt and alighted. Half paralyzed, half blind, leaning heavily upon his cane and dragging his withered limbs, he proceeded to the palace of art.

It was late in the afternoon, the galleries were deserted, the glow of the setting sun cast melancholy shadows over the plastic statues of stone and granite wrought by the hands of the ancient Egyptians and long forgotten Greeks. There was even vaster melancholy in his heart. The gods and goddesses he worshipped in his youth seemed to be mocking him—Bacchus and Apollo, Orpheus and the bearded, horny Pan—they all seemed to jeer at him. He could not withhold a groan. He fathomed the despair of Moses, the son of Amram, as he stood on the top of the Pisgah and yearningly gazed at the land of Canaan—the land for which he had fought that others might enter but he could not enter. That was the irony of life, the jest of the gods. He, too, like Moses of old, had dragged himself to the top of Pisgah to have his last glance at his promised land!

A thousand sad thoughts flitted through his brain. He limped along the vast halls and paused before Venus de Milo. A hectic flush came into his face. He looked up at the armless goddess with the covetousness of a virgin youth beholding a maiden of rare beauty. Settling down on the cold stone bench in front of the statue, both of his hands resting on the head of his cane, his half-blind eyes blurred with tears, he gazed yearningly at the parted lips of her exquisite mouth. Was she just smiling, or was she, too, smiling at him? His eyes closed for a moment, with unbearable pain in his heart. Ah, if he could only die at this very moment! he reflected. That would be a poetical, pagan, fitting death for him. His whole life passed before him like a vision. All his life he had worshipped beauty—the divine figure before him was the symbol of beauty—her seductive, tantalizing, heavenly smile, her sweet sensuous lips set his blood boiling. Tears rolled down his wan cheeks, his enfeebled frame shook with grief and mortification. He must live perforce and look on as the great, avenging, mocking God was finishing his diabolic jest . . . .

He struggled to his feet and staggered through the vast corridors, without turning his eyes in the direction of the artistic masterpieces of all ages . . .

After that visit at the Louvre Albert was unable to leave his room. His forebodings were prophetic. That palace of art—the Salle de la Venus de Milo—was his Mount of Nebo, from which he had caught the last glimpse of his promised land.

## II.

One day Marguerite entered his room with the announcement that some one wished to see him.

At first he made no reply. He lay stretched on a low couch with the immobility of a corpse and his upper eyelids met the lower in two fine pencilled lines like the eyes of the dead. His hair and beard, framing skin of deathly pallor, were also lifeless. His beautifully shaped right hand, thin almost to the point of transparency, rested limply on his coverlet.

Marguerite repeated: "Albert, there is some one who wants to see you."

His figure suddenly stirred as if convulsed.

"I suppose another countryman to view my remains and then go back to Germany and lie about me!" A bitter smile appeared on his bloodless lips as he uttered these words with an irritable sneer. "I am sick of all visitors. They come here out of curiosity. The swine! What stories they have fabricated about me. I want friends, not visitors. And friends come only when one has something to give them!" He emitted a sigh. "Why should they come?" he soon added more bitterly. "Who wants to see misery!"

"This is a woman, Albert. She says she comes from Vienna——"

"From Vienna—she is perhaps bringing me word that the director of the Royal theatre is to present one of my tragedies—he has promised me. Send her in."

The next instant the corner of his mouth twitched, the crease between his eyes flattened, and digging his right elbow into the downy pillow underneath him, he raised his right side to a half-sitting posture and leaned against the prop of pillows at his head. A panting sigh betrayed the great effort of raising himself.

Presently a girl of about twenty-two stepped in, and as she caught sight of the half-blind, half-paralyzed figure her breathing almost stopped. For a bare second she halted as if she meant to retreat, but her blue eyes filled with tears and she whispered. "*Bon jour.*"

"*Guten Morgen,*" he replied in German and extended his withered right hand. "So you have come from Vienna," he added without releasing her hand. "Do you know my friend Loeb?"

The young woman stood speechless, leaning over the couch, realizing for the first time that unless he lifted the paralyzed lid of his right eye he saw nothing. Tears overflowed her eyes.

"I have not come direct from Vienna," she faltered—"I haven't been there



for some time, but—but I wanted some excuse to cross your threshold—I lisped your songs before I could lisp my prayers—they were my breviary—you have taught me the meaning of the beauty of life——”

Albert nodded his head as she uttered the last flattering words, a smile of great satisfaction appeared on his face. The speaker’s girlish voice attracted him; it was like a voice from his young life, the days of love-making in Gundsorf, Bonn and Goettingen. And the voice was such a relief to him! He was tired of all the voices around him—of the jabbering speech of his nurses, and of his wife—good souls all, but God! what voices! It was years since he had heard a pleasing voice.

“Never mind why you came here,” he struck in, smiling, “I am happy that you are here. Sit down and tell me who you are.”

She moved a chair nearer the couch and sat down.

“I can hardly tell you who I am—” she was nervously plucking at the edges of the roll of music in her hands, her eyes filled with tears, rested pitifully on the face that spoke of a thousand sufferings. To her it was the face of the Christ—the suffering face of the Man of Sorrows; the beard and the superfine, bloodless lips and the nose and the closed eyes and the strange smile—there was something of the expression of *Eli, Eli, lamah Zabachtani* in that face.

“Come nearer, let me see what you look like.”

She moved her chair closer to the couch, and raising the right eyelid with the tips of his fingers, he held it for a moment and looked at the visitor, who hesitated to tell her name. He scented romance. The sweet tantalization of youth was again in his blood. He was eager, pursuing, impatient. The glimpse of her made him still more eager. He took in at a glance her roguish blue eyes, so appealing yet so shrewd, her light-brown hair, her slender figure—the slenderness, without the suggestion of meagerness that always attracted him.

He pressed her for information about herself. She fenced cleverly. She did not mean to tell him her history—she had never told her history to any one.

“I’ll tell you the truth,” she was saying, trying to divert his mind from her person. “I learned that your secretary had gone and since French and German are almost equally my mother tongue, I thought I might be of service to you.”

“No, no,” he shook his head, laughing, “one can no more have two mother tongues than one can have two mothers. You are a Swabian—you can’t hide it from me. I can tell a Swabian accent—I can never forget Hegel’s accent and manner of pronouncing certain words—and a sweet Swabian woman’s face.—”

Now, since I have paid you a compliment we are friends, so you must tell me who you are.”

There was a moment's silence. The visitor's blue eyes shifted from side to side, her inner indecision was betrayed in her mobile features.

“I once spent a whole day talking about you with a perfect stranger, a man who happened to be a friend and admirer of yours—he thought I had fallen in love with him.” She gave a roguish little laugh.

“Who was he?” There was boyish inquisitiveness in his voice.

“Heinrich Metzger.”

“So you are the Butterfly!” Albert exclaimed.

“Yes, I am the Butterfly,” she returned, laughing. “What did Herr Metzger tell you about me?” She halted and a blush spread over her cheeks. “I know; he told you he had met me on a train going from Paris to Havre, and that I had fallen in love with him at first sight. Herr Metzger thinks he is quite irresistible.”

Albert laughed cheerfully. No man is displeased at hearing a pretty woman ridicule another man, even when the other happens to be a friend. However, he protested.

“Metzger is a handsome fellow—a very fine chap—quite a lady-killer.”

“What else did he tell you?”

“Let me see. He was quite impressed with the mystery of your flitting existence. You wouldn't give him your name but you gave him your ring on which there was a seal with the emblem of a butterfly—and you did fly away. The next time he met you on the Strand in London, but you wouldn't recognize him. And then he found you in Paris. He thought you were a mysterious person. He wished he were a novelist instead of a poet. He could have written an interesting story about you.”

The girl laughed.

“In order to write the novel he would have to know the mystery,” she said, her smiling face quickly changing to that of sadness, “and he still knows nothing about me. He doesn't even know my first name. O, yes, he thinks my name is Margot.” Again she emitted a light-hearted laugh. “He evidently doesn't know the meaning of *Margot* in French. I had talked so much and so recklessly that day that I thought *Margot* a fitting name for myself. I was a regular *margot*—a real chatterbox—that day—and all because we talked about

you and he said he had just visited you——”

Albert extended his hand. She let her hand rest in his and gazed intensely at his face, which was now flushed and full of animation.

“I never hoped, I never dreamed, I’d come so close to you, the poet of my dreams,” she murmured without withdrawing her hand from his.

“Do tell me who you are,” he begged.

“For the present call me Butterfly,” she said, rising. “I’ll call again—if you’ll let me.”

He was clinging to her hand.

“You must come again!” he addressed her *du* (thou) familiarly. “You must!” he pressed her hand affectionately. “You shall be the last ray of sunshine in my dark life. Ah, why didn’t you come before? My life of late has been so dreary!”

There were tears in his voice. Tears gathered in her eyes, too. Then a moment of silence. From the next room came the jarring laughter of his wife. The parrot was repeating *au revoir* again and again. From outside, through the open door over the balcony, came the noise of the street, the rattle of carriages, the jangling of a hurdy-gurdy——

“*Au revoir*,” she whispered.

He was still clinging to her hand, speechlessly. Bending over him she kissed his forehead and rushed out of the house.

### III.

He dropped on his pillows, a hectic flush on his bloodless cheeks. His eyelids sealed, his right arm limply on the coverlet, he lay musing, half dreaming. In this somnolent manner he often spent hours, conjuring up sweet recollections, pleasing fantasies, and more often composed lyrics.

Presently Marguerite stood before him. Her approaching steps irritated him. Only the other day he had jested about the blessing of his growing blindness—it spared him the sight of Marguerite getting fat! Fat women had always offended his sense of beauty and even now he could not bear the thought that his Marguerite—the slim pretty girl he had first known—was tipping the scale at two hundred pounds. No wonder, that spendthrift had of late thought of nothing but rich food and gaudy clothes. And now while her

Albert, notwithstanding his paralysis, was laboring all day with his pen to provide her wants, she was only thinking of many course dinners and pretty dresses. He had pretended not to notice this. He wished to banish unhappy broodings—his life was unhappy enough without tormenting thoughts.

“Who was that girl?” she asked.

“Oh, some friend sent her here,” he replied perfunctorily. “In the absence of my secretary she might be of some service to me. She is quite proficient in both French and German.”

“She is quite chic—that girl——”

For a bare second he made no rejoinder. He seemed to hold his breath. Then he said, with evident constraint, “Rather amiable—and bright.”

The next moment he heard her making her toilette preparatory to going out. She was always going out, he was saying to himself with increased irritability. In the past few years this thought frequently crossed his mind, only to be brushed away by a counterthought of sympathy for his poor wife, chained to a corpse. He pitied her, his martyr.

Presently as he heard her splashing in the next room, talking loudly to the nurse, and laughing lustily, his irritation grew. He was vexed and angry. He wondered whom she was going to meet. She usually stayed away hours—sometimes almost the whole day—and when he pressed her for an explanation she would burst in tears and say that after she had walked blocks and blocks in order to save cabfare he ill-treated her; and then he would call himself a brute and would reprimand her for her niggardliness. No, he did not want his devoted wife to wear her legs off for the sake of a couple of francs; for even though he was paralyzed he was working and earning as much as many an able-bodied man, he added boastfully.

This moment he was sure that she had always lied to him. She was having secret rendezvous. No, no, he was not jealous. A paralyzed man, with a wasted body, could hardly compete with half a million able-bodied men in Paris! he would say to himself cynically. Ah! he did not care whom she was going to meet if she only did not laugh so boisterously. He could not bear that booming, loud laughter of hers coming now from the adjoining room.

He was annoyed beyond words. No wonder the young visitor who had just left had mistaken Marguerite for a servant.

The young Swabian girl had made a *faux pas*. She had referred to Marguerite as his servant and when he had enlightened her she blundered still worse. The woman who had opened the door for her looked so ordinary, she

had said, that she could not imagine her idol would have chosen such a fat woman for his mate. No, he did not blame this young girl for her blundering speech. Marguerite was an ordinary fat woman, not the fit companion of a poet, who had always worshipped feminine beauty.

He was glad Marguerite was going out, and would leave him in peace. Between the parrot's screeching and Marguerite's laughter he did not know which to choose, but when both were exercising their lungs life was unbearable. He felt quite relieved when his wife, in swishing silk, presently bade him *au revoir* and slammed the door, leaving an odor of cosmetics behind her.

He was again calm, frolicsome thoughts playing in the attic of his brain. He was thinking of his mysterious visitor, the Butterfly. She was charming. Her voice came back to him like a sweet chime. A delectable sensation was rising within him. The voice of the sweetest romance was calling to him. His chest heaved. She had been kind to Metzger and had given him her ring as a souvenir because he was the friend of her poet, and the deluded soul thought she was in love with him! A happy smile was on his face. He was very fond of Metzger. Had he not said in print he, Albert Zorn, aside from being the greatest living poet in the world, had the kindest heart, the noblest soul? And Metzger was handsome. Even in his days of bloom, Albert could not boast of such manly beauty as his friend, Albert owned to himself. And this mysterious Swabian damsel had always been in love, with him ever since she was a child, she had said! All his pains disappeared. The romanticism of his youth was returning. Indeed, his body was wasted but his spirit, his heart, was as young as of yore! Real poets die young! Youth remains in their hearts even if they reach the age of Methuselah! Yes, he was young again. The lure of love was in his blood once more. The dying candle sent forth a leaping flame.

He was soon feverish with anxiety, as feverish as when he waited for Miriam under the willows near Gnesen. His fancy lent color to his vision of this mysterious stranger. He had only a glimpse of her but the impression of her face was indelible. With his eyes closed the picture of her was most vivid.

He stirred and reached for the portfolio that contained his paper and pencil—which always lay by his side. He rose higher on his pillows and, gripping his long pencil, began to scrawl. He had always had a beautiful handwriting but now he could only scratch long irregular letters. He was glad that she had left him her address. Why had she left him her address? Honey flowed in his veins. Did she hope he would write to her? She was but womanly; wanted to be wooed by her lover . . .

“Lovable and charming Person:—” he scribbled hastily,

“I regret most keenly having seen so little of you on your first visit. You left a most agreeable impression upon me, and I have the greatest desire to see you again. Don’t stand on ceremony but come as soon as possible—tomorrow if you can. I am ready to receive you at any time. I should prefer that you come at four and stay until—as late as you please. I am writing to you with my own hand, in spite of my poor eyesight, because, as you know, I have no secretary whom I can trust. The deafening noises around me cause me incessant pain, and your sympathy has meant so much to me. Superstitious as I am, I imagine that a good fairy has visited me in my hour of affliction. My hours of affliction? No, if you are a good fairy this is an hour of bliss. Or will you be a bad fairy? I must know this at once.

Your Albert Zorn.”

#### IV.

He forwarded the letter as soon as he had finished it and indulged in speculations, sweet speculations. Would she come tomorrow at four? No, she might not. Women were never as impulsive as men but more subtle. Women possessed greater self-control; at least, they were not as demonstrative as men; they knew how to hide their feelings. Indeed, he had known the whims and caprices of women since he was sixteen! Women loved to make men beg on their knees for that which they would eagerly give without asking. Is it possible that this pretty young Swabian was in love with him?—with him who was no longer a man but a spirit? He was not even an aged Faust rejuvenated by love. What comedy life was playing with him!

His dual vision—of experiencing sensations and contemplating them at the same time—had never left him, since his impressionable youth. Feverish youth was in his blood again. He recalled the touch of her hand—how clinging her hand was, when he clasped it in his!—he had experienced the same feeling as when he first touched the hand of—of Hedwiga, of Hilda, or Eugenie, of Miriam, of—no, he could not think of Marguerite now.

The next moment he grew self-analytical and serious. He was always analyzing himself. Love did not change, he said to himself. The fire that burned in his veins when he first met Marguerite was out. Yes, that fire was now dead. As far as Marguerite was concerned there was winter in his heart; white flakes had fallen on the sweet blossoms of yesterday and blighted them. In their place new flowers had sprung, new perfumes, the beginning of a new spring. Ah, he must seize his lyre and serenade his awakened joys and

sorrows! Indeed, joys and sorrows always went together, like the rose and the thorn, like the sun and the clouds. His harpstrings quivered with sweet, sad tones. The moonbeams again played with the flower petals of verdant spring; the departed nightingales had come floating from afar and were singing as sweetly as ever. Love was dead, long live love!

Ah, he was young again! Songs flowed from his heart. He must not philosophize. Love was eternal.

He would not think of his shrunken body, he would not dwell on his wasted strength, new blood flowed in his veins.

## V.

His good fairy came punctually at four. She tripped in like a fairy, indeed, and leaned over him and kissed him on his forehead, while her little hand rested in his. She, too seemed unconscious of the presence of Marguerite in the adjoining room. She removed her wrap with a gesture of determination—as if warding off an intruder—and settled down by his couch, as if she meant to stay with him forever.

“Let me look at your sweet Swabian face,” he whispered and raised the lifeless eyelid of his right eye. “You have a face of a Swabian *Gelb-Vögelein*,” he breathed in her ear.

He was glad Marguerite had never learned German. He could now speak freely with his Butterfly. And this was only the second time she had been near him! He felt that he had always known her; everything about her seemed strangely familiar to him; he felt as if he had met her in a previous existence and now met her again after a lapse of many years; and while his memory failed him as to her name and the place he had met her, his feelings toward her were those of an old friend.

“You haven’t told me yet your right name,” he murmured, seeking her hand, which she readily placed in his. “You elusive Butterfly!” He emitted a soft laugh, “I never stopped thinking of you for a moment since you left. I wondered if you were but a fairy of dreamland and feared that I might wake at any moment and find you had vanished. What is your name, fairy mine?”

“Call me Butterfly——”

“My Butterfly you shall always be, but what is your real name—who are you? It seems to me I have known you for ages—I am beginning to believe in the transmigration of souls—I feel that I met you before in a different sphere

——”

Her hand still resting in his she looked at his bloodless face wistfully; she seemed absent minded, as if she had not heard his words, and yet knew what he said.

“You are right, I know I met you before.” She was speaking in a hushed voice, an expression on her pensive face as if she were under a hypnotic influence; there was a strange glitter in her blue eyes. “When I was a little girl—when I first read your poems—your words seemed familiar to me as if I had heard them before. When I read your verses, I heard you recite them to me—the voice I now hear was the voice I always heard. When I told my mother about this she only laughed and patted me and said I was an imaginative child. The older I grew the more convinced I was that souls did migrate—that your soul and mine had loved each other before and had been parted and that we were destined to meet again. I always knew I’d meet you. When my mother brought me to Paris—I was little then—I heard some one speak of you. I can recall the trembling of my heart at the mention of your presence in Paris. But I was only a child then. I felt like a young girl, as yet unfamiliar with her own passions, suddenly awakened to the consciousness of male attraction. I trembled every time I heard your name mentioned and yet never dared learn of your whereabouts in this great Babel and see you in the flesh. Sometimes I heard people speak of you in uncomplimentary terms—they said you were immoral—and I felt mortified but I did not believe anything evil of you. I could not believe it. I have always known you—always! When I met Herr Metzger on the train he made some remark to me in French, but I could see that he was German so I addressed him in his language. He was piqued at first. People speaking a foreign language are always piqued when you make them feel their adopted tongue is not quite their own. We are all vain about it—even the great Albert Zorn!”

She gave a roguish little laugh and he pressed her hand tenderly without venturing a retort. He had listened to her so attentively that he did not wish to interrupt her speech.

“He thought I was flirting with him,” she continued with a gentle toss of her well-poised head. “Herr Metzger is very vain about his physique. Of course, he is good looking but he knows nothing about women—nothing! I was alone in the compartment—just he and I—and the train was speeding. During travel intimacies are quickly formed. Before long he told me the history of his life—he told me everything about himself, even of his love affairs, his conquests.” She chuckled. “He thought he made me jealous when I teased him about his frankness. Mind you, I was then only seventeen and he



was a man already—years and years older than I—and within half an hour he revealed himself to me completely while I had told him nothing about myself—literally nothing! When he began to probe he found all avenues closed. Then he began to boast—all men begin to boast when they fear they have not made sufficient impression upon a woman; they don't realize that their boasting, like a frost in late spring, nips the first buds. He was telling me what a great poet he was and what the critics said of him, incidentally mentioning what you had said of him. He must have noticed my sudden interest in him. He misunderstood the reason. He boasted of friendship with you and I showed still greater interest in him. He felt flattered. I wished to meet him again when he returned here—I wanted to renew my acquaintance with such a close friend of yours. I hoped to meet you through him. Was that mean of me?"

Albert sighed and only pressed her small hand with his thin fingers.

Marguerite passed through the room, and the girl quickly withdrew her hand. Marguerite paused to ask him if he minded her going to the theatre that evening. She had not yet seen Scribe's latest play. Albert said he did not mind it at all. In fact, he wished she would go and get a little fresh air. Would he mind if she took the nurse along and got dinner at one of the restaurants? No, he did not mind this either. He had not felt as well in years as at the present. Marguerite wobbled away, humming a bar of the latest popular song.

"Go on. And then?" he turned to the girl by his couch.

"Then something dreadful happened to me." She crossed her legs and gripped her knee between her clasped hands. "My mother urged me to get married. She was at the end of her string, she confided to me, with tears in her eyes. She did not want me to repeat her blunder. She thought I was too impetuous—she said she herself had been too impetuous and ruined her whole life. I, too, might prove indiscreet if I fell in love. She believed in the orthodox fashion of French marriages, a husband chosen by the parents. She wished she had listened to her mother when she was seventeen. Instead—instead she had a daughter on her hands without a father to look after her. Men were all alike, she preached to me, unless they were tied by legal fetters they flew away to warmer climates when the air at home grew cold. This was a shocking revelation to me. I had never known my father but my mother had never mentioned his name so I thought he had died, I asked no further questions. I now understood my mother's tragedy—and mine. A few days later she introduced me to a middle-aged Frenchman and told me he wished to marry me. He was rich, she added, and would provide well for me. I made no protests. I married him."

She paused. There were tears in her eyes, there were tears in her voice. The

poet lay still, his bloodless lips compressed, his paralyzed eyelids sealed. The clock on the mantel seemed to tick louder than ever. Through the open glass door over the balcony came noises from the street; rolling vehicles, snapping whips, floating laughter. The parrot was calling “*Bon jour*” and then joined in the laughter outside.

“I thought I was quite worldly then,” she soon preceded; “at least, quite sophisticated for a girl of seventeen. I had always mingled with people older than myself and assimilated their maturity. I had traveled considerably and my close association with my mother—who is a very intellectual and cultured woman and was governess in her younger days in one of the most influential aristocratic families in Germany—should have given me an understanding of life. Yes, I thought I did understand life much more than most girls of my age but I had soon learned that seventeen is but seventeen; my knowledge of the world was too superficial—it was like most conversations between pseudo-cultured people—meaningless phrases that sound well and vapid platitudes that pass for cleverness but contain not a grain of real sense. Stranger still, while I was a precocious child, impetuous, passionate, with a strong sex sense, I did not have the least intimation of the relationship between the sexes. It doesn’t found credible, but it was so. My inquisitiveness had never led me to probe the relationship of the sexes. I found myself married to a native of Paris, a man twenty-six years older than myself, a man to whom sex was an open book, one to whom sex had only one meaning. No, I can’t quite make clear to you my feelings when he first kissed me, when he ravished my body. Oh, it was revolting!” She shuddered visibly. “I had had visions of sweetness, of tenderness, of transporting passion, of ecstasy, and found—oh, I can’t describe it—it is too horrible to dwell upon it.”

She paused, a sob in her throat. Albert’s hand was caressing hers sympathetically, silently.

“I wonder if any man understands the difference between the passion of a woman and that of a man!” She heaved a sigh, and there was agony in her voice. She felt the tender grip of his hand and added smilingly, “Poets sometimes do understand the difference, but then poets are feminine in their instincts. A man may prefer one woman to another—just as he may prefer champagne to claret—but when he can’t have his preference the inferior is quite as agreeable. A woman is a woman. I am told even a man as wise as Benjamin Franklin felt this about women. Of course, Franklin was no poet. To a woman only her preference exists—the other are *abscheulich!* The fact that many women submit to men they don’t love proves nothing. In a society in which more than half of life is artificial, forced, and the woman the weaker,

she can't help but submit. But, oh! if man could but read the innermost secrets of woman's heart! Thousands of years of self-suppression have made women incapable of even revealing themselves to themselves.

“Well, I found myself legally tied to a man whom I abhorred. His mere presence was loathsome to me. When he touched me I was filled with revulsion. Instead of a vivacious, highly sensitive girl that I had been I had become a depressed, morbid woman. I could not even read your songs—all beauty had become ugliness to me. I thought seriously of ending my life. Many a time I carried carbolic acid to my lips and put it away from me by sheer force. At times I raved like a maniac. My husband showered gifts upon me—he gave me jewels and fine clothes—men are always so stupid and imagine trinkets win affection—but that made me hate him the more. He told me I ought to consult a physician but I knew opiates could not cure me. How could a sordid business man, to whom the acquisition of wealth was all that life offered, understand what ailed me? One day he suggested travel. I welcomed it. I hoped new scenes might take me away from myself. But it proved the reverse. It only made me realize that there were fragrant woods and that I was confined in a narrow little cage in a dingy attic. My husband was beside himself. When we got to London he decided that I was insane. Perhaps I was. At least, I acted like a lunatic. The excitement of the English metropolis had a strange effect upon me. I had suddenly grown hilarious, pulled my husband from music hall to music hall, from one jewelry shop to another—and made him squander his hard-earned money as if I were his mistress. It was then—on the Strand—that Metzger met me and spoke to me but, to his amazement, I denied his acquaintance. I could not think of the time when I read you poetry and was in love with the beauty of life. But a few days later the reaction set in. I flung my jewels away, I tore up my finery, I shrank from my distracted husband and wept.

“Days passed. He implored me, he beseeched me to be rational, but I was hysterical. One day on the pretext of taking a drive to get fresh air, he finally coaxed me to leave my room. The next thing I remember is that he escorted me to a luxurious villa, where I was met by a fine looking elderly gentleman, who talked to me as if I were a little child. That amused me and I couldn't help bursting into laughter. He patted my shoulder and said I would be all right in time, and his strange actions amused me still more although his French was enough to send one into convulsions. Before I realized what was happening, I was locked in a room, alone. The next day I discovered that my husband had placed me in a private sanitorium. But, thank God, I was rid of my husband, I said to myself; I was alone and free from his loathsome attentions. After a few days' rest I had a talk with the head physician—a very sane individual—who

was very sympathetic and kind. It did not take him long to understand my case. He gave me the five hundred pounds my husband had left with him for my care for three months and bade me God-speed. 'Yes, I understand—I understand,' he kept murmuring sadly. 'God help you,' he added in a prayerful tone.

"At last I was free. Instead of going back to my mother I went to Vienna, where I had relatives. I was afraid my mother might try to bring about a reconciliation with my husband. Before long I was myself again. Besides the money left me by my husband I earned a good deal by giving French lessons, and I lived economically. One day I made the acquaintance of a musician, a composer—a dreamy sort of chap—who seemed to be falling in love with me.

"He always carried a volume of your poems in his pocket or under his arm. And how he recited your songs! The poor young man was lovelorn. He thought he was in love with me but I knew he was intoxicated with love. He was a poet. And he set some of your songs to music most charmingly. I presume I encouraged his attentions and his visits—the poor young man was so helpless, so child-like, and I was so eager to hear him hum your songs—but when he began to make violent love to me I realized I had gone too far with him. I told him I could not love him—I could not love anybody—and that, besides, I was married. But I could not get rid of him. He was the most helpless creature I have ever known and the most sentimental. It was pitiful. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart and gave him some financial assistance. He took it, but he was not a parasite. He was just helpless. I then decided to return to Paris. I had exacted a promise from my mother that she would not mention my husband's name. And I have been living with her ever since. I have never discussed the source of her income but I know she has always received a monthly stipend from a well known noble family in Germany—it may be from my father—and her allowance is quite liberal."

"*Armes Kind,*" Albert murmured affectionately.

She paused. Marguerite, overdressed and overperfumed—large hipped and full-breasted, with rouged fleshy cheeks—came to bid Albert goodbye. She leaned over him and kissed his forehead but he made no attempt to raise his eyelid. He only murmured *au revoir*, and as he turned his face to one side a deep sadness flitted across his cadaverous cheeks. As Marguerite turned to leave, she turned around and gave the young girl a quizzical look.

When the outside door closed the invalid stretched out his hand toward his visitor and she replaced her hand into his.

"*Du letzte Blume meines larmoyanten Herbstes,*" he murmured, caressing

her hand.

A moment later he added, "You won't leave me now, since you have at last appeared, my last ray of sunshine. All my friends have left me—all—" There was a checked sob in his breast.

"Never, never, never!—" There were tears in her voice.

"Don't cry, *holdes Herz*, life is a comedy, and death its final scene. Last night I dreamt I was dead and hugely enjoyed the ceremony of my burial."

He gave a soft laugh and his bloodless lips puckered like those of a pouting child.

"They laid me in a gorgeous mausoleum of costly marble, and the walls were bas reliefs of grotesque scenes, sacred and profane—all the utterances of my whole life seemed illustrated on those walls. When they lowered my coffin I began to laugh and could not stop laughing even when they screwed on the lid. Then all of a sudden, as if by magic, I noticed a dark-blue flower spring from the ground at the foot of my tomb. It looked like a passion flower from which were suspended all the instruments of torture used during the Inquisition in Spain. All at once the passion flower assumed human form; it was a living being; it had the sweet face of a charming young woman; a sweet, sad face, full of tenderness and love, was leaning over my dead body. I stared in amazement. It was your sweet countenance, *liebstes Kind*, and hot burning tears were dripping from your eyes and falling upon my dead face. Ah, these dreams! Since the earliest recollections of my childhood I have always been dreaming—my days and nights were veritably different existences. So, you see, I have really lived longer than most men. You must multiply my age by two. I have long passed the century mark. Yes, indeed, I am a centenarian."

She leaned over him and kissed his emaciated hand in silence.

The next moment sadness appeared on his face. He turned his head and muttered, "*Ach, das ist schrecklich! Ein Toter, lechzend nach den lebendigsten Lebensgenüssen.* All my life I wished to write a Faust—a Faust different from all the Fausts ever written, different also from Goethe's—but I never fully understood my Faust until now. The conception of my Faust is a devout monk who had piously practiced self-denial and the mortification of his body to such an extent that his flesh shrivelled. Then Mephistopheles comes to tantalize him and brings him a maiden of matchless beauty. The saintly monk falls from grace, flings his life-long belief aside, and woos the fair Marguerite, who returns his love, but the poor monk can play his tune on only one string. Of all his earthly senses desire is the only one left him; a thirst unquenchable. Like old Job, he curses the day on which he was born even as he scraped himself

with a potsherd to soothe his pain, but, unlike the Man of Uz, Faust dies with a curse of God upon his lips, without realizing that the great beauty-loving God has punished him for his failure to listen to His Voice earlier in life. The wasted monk is then taken to the region of the Styx, where other fools like himself are baptised in waters of spouting flame and anointed with boiling oil and sulphur, and after a period of purification is sent back to earth, fully rejuvenated. In the second volume of my Faust I would sing of Paradise Regained.”

Albert chuckled. The Butterfly now understood why the critics spoke of him as the German Voltaire. No one could be at once so reverent and blasphemous as Albert.

The sun was setting, the afternoon glow was gone, invisible shades of darkness were descending upon the sick room; silence was round them. Even the parrot was hushed.

“Ah, the first volume of my Faust I have already lived,” he sighed, “but there won’t be a second volume.” Then, with a light laugh, “who can tell, perhaps the life of Paradise Regained may yet be granted me, too. I rather like the Buddhistic doctrine of Reincarnation. I may return to earth as the crowned Sultan of Turkey.”

She caught the spirit of his levity and remarked, “From all reports you have already lived the life of a Sultan—only uncrowned!”

“*Unsinn!*” There was scorn in his voice. All levity immediately fled from him. “The world has taken me too literally. Alas! When I was in earnest they thought I was jesting and when I jested they failed to grasp my humor—the French are the only people who understand me. When I meant to be a Socrates they mistook me for an Aristophanes and when I played Aristophanes they charged me with trying to be a Socrates. I a profligate! He who has lived the life of a profligate often writes virtuous tracts. It is your priest, your morality-preaching Philistine, your man wrapped in the pure white robe of piety, who is often the real profligate. My life has been given to devotion—I have been a Carmelite, locked in the cell of my dreams. I was a little Ishmael in the wilderness of Beer Sheba dying of thirst. Ah! that consuming thirst, the thirst of beauty that sears one’s soul—thirsting, thirsting—thirsting to the end! I have always loved honorably, earnestly, with all the senses God meant for love. Ah, love! There is nothing else in life worth striving after. What else is there in life? Fame, riches, achievements?—they are only coal burnt to clinkers. If I only had a child on whom to lavish my love in my dying days! \_\_\_\_\_”

A sigh, almost a groan, escaped his parted lips.

“Let me take the place of a child,” she pleaded in a whisper, tears filling her eyes.

“Indeed you are my *allersüßstes Kind*.”

He was fondling her fingers tenderly. “The fates have been kind to me after all to send you to me now, my good fairy.”

Dusk came, the invisible shades of twilight were thickening. With his eyes sealed he felt the approach of night.

“Will you come tomorrow, my child?”

“I’ll come every tomorrow.”

“Until there will be no tomorrow—” He caught his breath as he completed her thought.

## VI.

The candle was burning fast; the wick was charred; the wax was all but melted; the dying flame leaping upward from the depth of the overheated sconce. Darkness, and yet again the candle flame shot up.

No one knew better than Albert that his life was spent, that the fire within him was licking the last vestige of life-grease, that he was emitting the last flicker. He did not wish to crepitate and flutter at the end. Let a tongue of red flame be the last memory of the extinguished light.

Save for the Butterfly and his faithful physician, Albert was quite forsaken in his last days. But rarely did visitors drop in and now and then a distant admirer—usually a woman of high rank—from Germany, from England, from Russia, came to pay homage to his genius. His sister had come and gone, but his good mother was obliged to stay away. The poor woman was too old to make the journey. Besides, she was wondering why her son, being the younger, did not make the trip to Hamburg. For he had succeeded in keeping up the pious deception that he was only troubled with his eyes and could therefore not write to her with his own hand.

The Butterfly came daily (except when he bade her stay away, because of his excessive suffering) read to him, and attended to his correspondence. She took the place of his secretary. In order not to fatigue her he frequently paused and chatted. He loved to ramble, to skip from subject to subject, to rake up the

dead leaves of the past. His mind constantly reverted to his youth, to reminiscences of Gundsorf, of Bonn, of Goettingen, to the days when love was in his blood instead of in his brain. He knew he was deluding himself, yet found consolation in the delusion. He persuaded himself that he was in love with the mysterious stranger by his bedside—and what love is not a self-persuading delusion?—and clothed her with all the charms of his rich fantasy, permitted himself to be convinced that the love fever of youth was in his veins.

Indeed, he babbled deliriously the sweet syllables of feverish youth: “My sweetest kitten,” “Soul of my life,” “My maddening love”—red flares from the dying candle! He was again under the warm skies of Italy, his beloved Italy—Ah, Italy! he had hoped in vain to see it again—he was living over again the Florentine Nights with their thousand charms; he met again those black-eyed maidens of his fancy, those ethereal creatures of his dreams—the dreams he invented.

In the young woman by his bedside all the beauties of his dreams were blended. With his eyes sealed, his hand fondling her slender fingers, he was playing the youth again—the make-believe youth. And when she failed to come one day he was feverish with anguish and scrawled love notes to her.

“My Good, All Gracious, Sweet Butterfly,” he wrote entreatingly, “come and flutter your beautiful wings! I know one of Mendelsohn’s songs with the refrain ‘Come Soon!’ This song is running continuously through my head. ‘Come soon.’ ”

“I kiss both your dear little hands, not both at once, but one after the other.”

And before there was time to hear from her he dispatched another note:

“My dear Girl:

“I am very ill and do not wish to see you today. But I hope that you’ll be able to come tomorrow. Drop me a line if you can’t come before the day after tomorrow.”

An hour later he scribbled another love note, his amorous fever increasing, the restlessness of adolescence in his brain.

“My Dear, Gracious Kitten:

“No, I don’t want to see you tomorrow. I must see you today. Can’t you come today—at once—upon receipt of this note? I am afraid I won’t be able to see you tomorrow because I feel my headache is coming on. I must see you this afternoon and feel the tender caress of your sweet hand, the impress of your lips, the touch of your *Schwabengesicht*, and listen to the sound of your



voice. Ah! if I could press my precious flower to my breast! But, alas! I am only a ghost, a spirit.

“But do come at once, my dear, sweet child, and let me kiss your dear little hands and let my lips graze the strands of your fragrant hair.

Madly yours,

A. Z.”

He forwarded the last note as if it were of momentous import, and became restive. Marguerite did not understand the cause of his restlessness and irritated him by her constant inquiries. She detested the Butterfly. The wife was suspicious of the intruder, and kept telling Albert that the stranger must be a spy and he ought not to let her read and talk to him and attend to his correspondence.

Yes, Marguerite was positive this Mademoiselle was a German spy and she had roguish eyes and a coquettish look and was “as thin as a rail.” No, no, she was not jealous of her—indeed, not! Marguerite’s fat chin trembled as she emitted a little forced laugh. She jealous of the insignificant, plain German girl! It was laughable! While she, Marguerite, may not be as pretty as she had been, but could still hold her own——

“You remember, Albert, what you called me in those days? ‘My sweetest little kitten,’ ‘My translucent sunbeam,’ ‘My fragrant wild flower;’ (Albert tossed his head with evident annoyance)—she emitted another forced little laugh—“Indeed, even if I am not as pretty as I used to be, a flat-chested little hussy like that German vixen could not make me jealous, but I have warned you, and I am warning you again, that she is a dangerous person. She is——”

“I have a terrible headache,” he pleaded, with a grimace on his face.

“You always get a terrible headache when I make mention of this little German intriguer——”

“Can’t you get some other subject to talk about?” he groaned helplessly.

“Some other subject!—and that intriguing woman trying to steal your love right under my nose! This is what I get for my years of devotion! Go ahead and change your will—leave everything—to—this—German—spy——”

She was sobbing, the parrot was calling “*au revoir*,” Mimi, the little poodle, was barking in a falsetto voice, and Albert was beside himself.

At first he begged her to cease torturing him, then grew angry and commanded her to stop, and finally was seized with a fit of convulsive coughing which choked his breathing. Then the nurse appeared on the scene

and, with an angry look at Marguerite, took Albert in her arms—his body was so wasted that it weighed no more than that of a child—and laid him on the sofa, which was usually reserved for visitors. The nurse’s arms seemed to have a strange soothing effect upon the invalid. Covered with a white sheet he rested on the sofa until he was himself again.

Marguerite, her arms folded, sat in a chair and wept silently. No, she did not mean to irritate him; she loved her Albert as the apple of her eye; she loved him as much as she did when he used to take her to the opera and to the finest restaurants in Paris . . .

“Marguerite—Marguerite——”

She wept more quietly, her fat reel cheeks tear-stained.

“Marguerite, dearest!” His voice grew tender. “Come and sit by me.”

He drew his right hand from under the white sheet and extended it toward her.

“My sweetest kitten—my fragrant wildflower—my poor faithful wife—” His voice was husky now, tears of tenderness in his throat. “I have always loved you as I loved no other—Come, my guardian angel——”

Presently Marguerite was beside him on the sofa, kissing his broad, cadaverous forehead, pressing her lips against his lips that felt not, and murmuring the endearing terms of years gone by . . .

## VII.

Months had passed. It was winter, Parisian winter, the snowless, penetrating winter of mid-February; and it was night, pitch dark, and the hazy fog, like thick smoke, dimmed the street lamps on the Avenue, even the stronger lights around the corner of the adjacent Champs Elysées spread only a glow without illumination. There was the stillness of a winter night everywhere, the stillness of a belated hour, long past midnight, the stillness of a great city asleep.

In a room on the fifth story of a drab looking building, Albert was struggling for breath. He had coughed so much that he had no more strength to cough aloud, only his chest was heaving and the expression on his emaciated face, resembling a grim grin, betrayed acute suffering, the suffering beyond expression. He was propped up with pillows in a reclining posture to ease his breathing, and from time to time he hoisted his right shoulder as if to help his

breathing. A candle light on a nearby table cast a shadow in the room, and beyond the shadow sat the woman attendant, dozing.

The clock on the white marble mantle struck the hour. Semi-consciously the invalid counted the strokes—"One, two, three, four!"

The nurse jumped up, picked up a little bottle and spoon from the table, and crossed the chamber toward the bed.

The invalid stirred and shook his head.

"But Monsieur Zorn, the Doctor will scold me if I don't give you the medicine punctually," the nurse said.

"Be at ease! I'll tell the doctor myself that I did not want to drink it. Medicine does me no more good."

She did not understand him, for the past two days he had been addressing her in German, which was unknown to her beyond "*Ja*" and "*Nein.*" However, she divined his meaning and put the medicine away with a kindly smile.

He turned his head away and promptly forgot the attendant and the medicine. The strokes of the clock were still dinning in his ears; they sounded to him like church bells, like the strange sounds of psalters and harps, like—his mind wandered—the bells of St. Lombard's Church were ringing and he was watching Christian Lutz jerk his forefingers in and out of his ears. Christian said angels floated around the belfry when the bells rang. Albert laughed. Angels never flew that low, he insisted, but hovered around God's throne; only pigeons flew around the belfry. And that pug-nosed Fritz with his fishing rod screeched "Al—ber!" . . .

Would that clock ever stop striking the hour? It was positively deafening. He was glad Marguerite slept in a room at the furthest end of the apartment, so she could not hear him cough at night, and now she wouldn't be disturbed by that crazy clock that was striking endlessly. He wished to call the nurse to make her stop the clock but some one was choking him—some one was gagging him—he could not make a sound! . . .

Presently he was lying on his back perfectly still . . . stretched at full length on a mossy rock on the bank of the Rhine, watching the fleecy clouds shaped like the ruins of a castle against patches of deep blue . . . What bird was that singing so melodiously? No, it was not a bird—it was the string instruments at the Swiss Pavilion on the *Jungfernstieg*—the leader of the orchestra had a funny nose that looked like a suckling pig's snout, and it wiggled like one . . . And Miriam was standing on a pedestal in front of the palace at Sans Souci. Miriam had no arms and there was a strange smile on her lovely lips . . . He

was glad that he was all alone in the Louvre—not a soul around . . . . He rose on his tip-toes and kissed those beautiful cool lips, the moonlight shining over his left shoulder . . . His mother said he must not kiss marble statues . . . His mother—poor mother—the old house in Hamburg must be very cold in the winter . . . She was in tears because her pearls were gone . . . He, too, was in tears and . . . his sister was playing the piano . . . . Was the door bell ringing? Somebody was coming to visit him. He began to count the mounting footsteps —“forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four”—The footsteps stopped. Someone must have called on the floor below . . . Yes, people called on everybody but no one called on him . . . no one . . . not even curiosity seekers . . .

Suddenly all melancholy thoughts left him and he breathed easier. He felt no pain at all. Strange that all at once he was well again and he was promenading indolently, dreamily along the Rhine. He was strolling, swinging his cane and humming a song . . . No, he was flying . . . He had never realized that one needed no wings to fly . . . He was flying over the Hartz Mountains, over the dark firs of the Black Forest, over the slender silver birches silhouetted in the moonlight, in his ears the babbling of brooks, the laughter of girls, the song of the nightingale . . . and he was sailing . . . sailing . . . sailing through the purest air . . . .

*The End.*

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Sublime Jester* by Ezra Selig Brudno]