

Barbara Blomberg — Volume 06 eBook

Barbara Blomberg — Volume 06 by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER XXV.

After this conversation the two men who, in different positions, stood nearest to the Emperor Charles, placed no obstacle in Barbara's way.

The third—the Bishop of Arras—also showed a friendly spirit toward the Emperor's love affair. True, he had not been taken into his confidence, but he rarely failed to be present when Barbara sang with the boy choir, or alone, in the Golden Cross, before the monarch or distinguished guests.

Charles summoned her there almost daily, and always at different hours.

This was done to strengthen the courtiers and the citizens of Ratisbon in the belief that Barbara owed his favour solely to her singing.

Granvelle, who appreciated and was interested in music as well as in painting and sculpture, found real pleasure in listening to Barbara, yet while doing so he did not forget that she might be of service to him. If she only remained on good terms with him she would, he was sure of that, whether willing or not, be used as his tool.

Spite of his nine-and-twenty years, he forbade himself to cherish any other wishes, because he would have regarded it treachery to the royal master whom he served with faithful devotion. But, as he accepted great gifts without ever allowing himself to be tempted to treason or forgetfulness of duty, so he did not reject little tokens of friendliness from Barbara, and of these she showed no lack. The young Bishop of Arras was also an extremely fine-looking man, whose clever brain and bright, penetrating glance harmonized with his great intellect and his position. Wolf had already told her how much the monarch regarded the opinion of this counsellor.

The fourth person whose good will had been represented to her as valuable was the almoner, Pedro de Soto; but he, who usually understood how to pay homage to beautiful women in the most delicate manner, kept rigidly aloof.

True, he had placed no obstacle in the way of the late kindling of the heart of his imperial master, but since his servant's report, from which it appeared that Barbara was on friendly terms with heretics, and therefore cherished but a lukewarm devotion to her own faith, she was no longer the same to him. In Spain this would have been enough to deliver her to the Holy Inquisition. Here, however, matters were different. Everywhere he saw the lambs associating with the wolves, and the larger number of the relatives of the Emperor's love had become converts to heresy. Therefore indulgence was demanded, and De Soto would have gladly been convinced of Barbara's orthodoxy under such difficult circumstances. But if it proved that the girl not only associated with heretics, but inclined to their error, then gentle inaction must be transformed into inexorable sternness, even though the rejuvenating power which she exerted upon the



monarch were tenfold stronger than it doubtless was; for what danger might threaten the Emperor and Christianity from the bewitching woman who seemed to love Charles, if she undertook to influence him in favour of the new doctrines, which, in the eyes of every earnest Dominican, the Emperor treated far too leniently!



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He, the confessor, even knew that Charles considered several demands of the Protestants to which the Church could never consent, entirely justifiable—nay, that he deemed a reformation of the Church by the council now in session at Trent extremely desirable.

Therefore it was a duty to withhold from him every influence which could favour these pernicious views and wishes, and Pedro de Soto had also been young and knew only too well what power so beautiful a woman, with such bewitching gifts, could exert upon the man whose heart cherishes her.

So, immediately after Barbara's entrance into Prebrunn, the confessor adopted his measures. Although the conversation to which he subjected her had resulted in her favour, he had deemed it beneficial to place a priest who was devoted to him among the ecclesiastics in the little castle.

To surround her with spies chosen from the lay class was repugnant to his lofty nature. Besides, they would have been superfluous; for a short time before his servant Cassian had asked permission to marry the marquise's French maid, and Alphonsine, who was neither young nor pretty, was inclined to all sorts of intrigues. She supplied slow, pious Cassian's deficiencies in the best possible manner. A chance word from the distinguished prelate had sufficed to make it their duty to watch Barbara and her visitors.

In Alphonsine's mistress, the Marquise de Leria, the almoner also possessed a willing tale-bearer. She had avoided him since his refusal to commend her ruined son to the favour of his imperial penitent. Now, unasked, she had again approached him, and her explanation first gave many an apparently unimportant communication from the servants its real value.

The atmosphere of the court was her vital air. Even when she had voluntarily offered to take Barbara under her charge, in a secluded house in the suburb, she had been aware how greatly she would miss the presence of royalty. Yet she would have endured far more difficult things, for a thousand signs betrayed that this time his Majesty's heart had not been merely superficially touched, and Barbara's traits of character made it appear probable that, like many a beauty at the court of Francis I of France, she might obtain an influence over the Emperor. If this occurred, the marquise had found the most powerful tool for the deliverance of her son.

This hope filled the old noblewoman's heart and brain. It was her last, for the Emperor was the only person who could save the worthless idol of her soul from ruin, and yet, when she had grovelled at his knees in her despair, she received an angry repulse and the threat of being instantly deprived of her position if she ever again attempted to speak to him about this vexatious matter. She knew only too well that Charles would keep his word, and therefore had already induced every person whom she believed



possessed even a small share of influence over the monarch to intercede for her, but they had been no less sharply rebuffed than herself; for the sovereign, usually so indulgent to the reckless pranks of the young nobles, would not even hear the name of the aristocratic sharper, who was said to have sold the plans of the fortifications to France.



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Charles now loved a woman whom, with swift presence of mind, she had bound to herself, and what no one else had succeeded in doing Barbara might accomplish.

Therefore the marquise had retired to the solitude which she hated, and hourly humbled herself to cringing flattery of a creature whom, on account of her birth, she scorned.

But Barbara was warned and, difficult as it often was for her to withstand the humble entreaties to which the old lady in waiting frequently condescended, persisted in her refusal.

Yet the unhappy mother did not give up hope, for as soon as the singer committed any act which she was obliged to conceal she could obtain power over her. So she kept her eyes open and, whenever the Emperor sought the young girl and was alone with her, she stole into the garden and peered through the badly fitting window shutters into the lighted room which was the scene of the happiness of the ill-matched lovers.

What she overheard, however, only increased the feeling of powerlessness against the hated creature whom she so urgently needed; for the tenderness which Charles showed Barbara was so great that it not only filled the marquise with surprise and bitter envy, but also awakened the conviction that it must be a small matter for the singer to obtain from so ardent a lover far greater things than she had asked.

So she continued to watch and listen unweariedly, day after day and evening after evening, but always in vain. She had not the most trivial thing for which Barbara could be seriously reproached to report to the confessor; yet De Soto desired nothing better, for Barbara still exerted an extremely favourable influence upon the Emperor's mood. Therefore it vexed him that Cassian informed him of many things which prevented his relying firmly upon her orthodoxy.

At any rate, there were Protestants among her visitors and, unfortunately, they included Herr Peter Schlumperger, whom De Soto knew as an active promoter of the apostasy of the Ratisbon burghers. He had called upon her the second day after her arrival and remained a long time but, it is true, had not appeared again. With the others also she held no regular intercourse—nay, she scarcely seemed to enjoy their visits. Thus the daughters of the Woller family from the Ark, who had appeared one afternoon, had been detained only a little longer by her than other Protestant matrons and maidens.

All this was scarcely sufficient to foster his anxiety; but Cassian reported one visit with which the case was different. Barbara had not only received this guest alone, but she had kept him more than an hour, and the servant could swear that the young man to whom she sang long songs—which, it is true, sounded like church music—to the lute and also to the harp, was Erasmus Eckhart, the adopted son of the archtraitor, Dr. Hiltner, who had just obtained the degree of Master of Arts in Wittenberg. This seemed suspicious, and induced De Soto to investigate the matter thoroughly.



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Erasmus had come in the morning, at a time when the Emperor never visited Barbara. Nothing remarkable had taken place during their interview, but Cassian had heard her dismiss him with a warning which, even to a less distrustful person, would have seemed suspicious. Why had she assured the Wittenberg theologian, as she extended her hand to him in farewell, that what he offered her had given her great pleasure, and she would gladly invite him to bring her similar things often, but must deny herself this gratification from motives which he could imagine? His urgent entreaty at least to be permitted to call on her sometimes she had curtly and positively refused, but the Wittenberg heretic did not allow himself to be rebuffed, for Cassian had seen him several times in the neighbourhood of the castle.

There was as little cause to object to the visits paid to her by Gombert, Appenzelder, Damian Feys, occasionally some noblemen or guests of the court, and once even by no less a personage than the Bishop of Arras, as to the rides she took every afternoon; for the latter were always under the charge of Herr de Fours, an old equerry of the Emperor, and in the company of several courtiers, among whom Baron Malfalconnet was often included. A number of gay young pages always belonged to this brilliant cavalcade, whose number never lacked the handsome sixteen-year-old Count Tassis, who spent his whole large stock of pocket money in flowers which he sent every morning to Barbara.

The confessor was glad to hear that the estimable violinist Massi frequently visited the girl, for he was firm in the faith, and that he brought her tidings of the sorely wounded Sir Wolf Hartschwert could only be beneficial, for perhaps he warned her of the seriousness of life and that there were other things here below than the joy of love, jest, and laughter. The almoner's doubt of Wolf's orthodoxy had been entirely dispelled by his confession. Men do not deceive in the presence of death.

It would have been a genuine boon had Barbara selected him to open her heart to him in the confessional, for her relation to the wounded man rendered it difficult for him to trust her entirely.

Wolf's thoughts in his fever constantly dwelt upon her, and he sometimes accused her of the basest treachery, sometimes coupled her name with Malfalconnet's, sometimes with Luis Quijada's. The Emperor's, on the contrary, he had not mentioned.

He must love Barbara with ardent passion, and she, too, still seemed warmly attached to him, for to see him again she had bravely exposed herself to serious danger.

Eye and ear witnesses had reported that, notwithstanding his Majesty's positive orders to avoid her old home, she had entered the house and the knight's apartments, knelt beside his couch, and even kissed his weak, burning hand with tender devotion.



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But though she still retained a portion of her former affection for Wolf Hartschwert, she loved the Emperor Charles with passionate fervour. Even the marquise did not venture to doubt this. Often as she had watched the meetings of the lovers, she had marvelled at the youthful ardour of the monarch, the joyous excitement with which Barbara awaited him, and her sorrowful depression when he left her. During the first week the old noblewoman thought that she had never met a happier pair. The almoner deemed it unworthy of him to listen to a report of the caresses which she scornfully mentioned.

The time even came when he no longer needed confirmation from others, and forbade himself to doubt Barbara's fidelity to her religion; for at the end of the first week in Prebrunn she had desired to ask a servant of the Church what she must do to make herself worthy of such abundance of the highest happiness, and to atone for the sin she was committing through her love.

In doing so she had opened her heart to the confessor with childlike frankness, and what De Soto heard on this occasion sincerely delighted him and endeared to him this thoroughly sound, beautiful creature overmastered by a first great passion. He believed her, and indignantly rejected what the spies afterward brought to him.

Yet he did not close his ears to the marquise when, in her clever, entertaining way, she told him what, against her will, she had overheard in consequence of the careless construction of the little castle, built only for a summer residence, or had seen during a walk in the garden when the shutters, through forgetfulness, had not been closed.

How should he not have heard gladly that the monarch, at every interview with Barbara, listened to her singing with special pleasure?

At first she chose grave, usually even religious songs, and among them Charles's favourite was the "Quia amore langueo."

To listen to these deeply felt tones of yearning always seemed to possess a fresh charm for him.

No wonder!

The singer understood how to produce a new effect each time by means of wonderful gradations of expression in the comprehension and execution.

Once she had also succeeded in cheering her lover with Perissone Cambio's merry singing lesson on the 'ut re mi fa sol', and again with Willaert's laughing song, "Sempre mi ridesta."

Two days later there had again been a great deal of laughing because Barbara undertook to sing to his Majesty another almost recklessly merry song by the same composer. The marquise knew it, and declared that Barbara's style and voice did not



suit such things. She admitted that her execution of serious, especially religious and solemn compositions, was not amiss—nay, often it was wonderfully fine—but in such secular tunes her real nature appeared too plainly, and the skilful singer became a Bacchante.

It had been a sorry pleasure to her to watch the boisterous manner and singing of this creature, who had been far too highly favoured by the caprice of Fortune.



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These reckless songs, unless she was mistaken, had also been by no means pleasing to his Majesty. The light had fallen directly upon his face just as she happened to glance up at the house from under the group of lindens, and she had distinctly seen him angrily thrust out his lower lip, which every one near his person knew was a sign of extreme displeasure.

But the girl had gone beyond all bounds. Old as she was, she could not help blushing at the mere thought of it. In her reckless mood she had probably forgotten that she had drawn her imperial lover into her net by arts of an entirely different nature. The almoner listened incredulously, for in his youth the Emperor Charles had joined in the wildest songs of the soldiery, and had well understood, on certain occasions, how to be merry with the merry, laugh and carouse in a Flemish tavern. After the confession the almoner heard things to which he would gladly have shut his ears, though they proved that the time which the marquise had spent at the French court had benefited her powers of observation.

Three days before the Emperor, for the first time, had seriously found fault with Barbara.

It had been impossible for the lady in waiting to discover the cause; but what she knew certainly was that her lover's censure had roused the girl to vehement contradiction, and that his Majesty, after a sharp reply, had been on the point of leaving her. True, the reckless beauty had repented her imprudent outburst of wrath speedily enough, and had understood how to conciliate the far too indulgent sovereign by such humility and such sweet tenderness that he probably must have forgiven her—at least the farewell had been as affectionate as ever.

Nevertheless, on the following evening, for the first time, he did not come to the castle, and the marquise had feared that the Emperor might now withdraw his favour from Barbara, which would have been too soon for her own wishes.

But yesterday evening, after sunset, the dark litter, to the old noblewoman's relief, had again stopped behind the garden gate, and the pleasure of having her lover again had so deeply overjoyed Barbara that he, too, was infected by her radiant delight.

Then, in the midst of the most tender caresses, he had been summoned out of the room, and when he returned, with frowning brow, the marquise had witnessed at least the commencement of a scene which seemed to justify her opinion that his Majesty: would have no taste for Barbara's utter freedom from restraint and gay secular songs.

Unfortunately, she had been prematurely driven from her post of observation; but she had seen the Emperor come in, and Barbara, without noticing his altered expression, or rather, probably, to cheer him by something especially merry, gaily began Baldassare Donati's superb dancing-master's song, "Qui la gagliarda vuol imparare," at the same

time in the merriest, most graceful manner imitating the movements of the gagliarda dancer.



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But Charles soon interrupted her, sharply requesting her to sing something else or cease entirely for that day.

Startled, she again asked forgiveness, and then pleaded in justification the universally acknowledged beauty of this charming song, which Maestro Gombert also admired; but the Emperor flew into a passion, and cut her short with the loud remark that he was not in the habit of having his own judgment corrected by the opinion of others. The jest did all honour to the skill and merry mood of the composer, but the contrary might be said of the singer who ventured to sing it to a person in whom it could awaken only bitter feelings.

But when, so painfully surprised that her eyes filled with tears, she confessed that her selection perhaps had not been very appropriate, and sadly added the inquiry why her beloved sovereign condemned a trivial offence so harshly, he wrathfully exclaimed, "For more than one reason."

Then, rising, he paced the room several times with a somewhat limping gait, saying, in so loud a tone that it could be distinctly heard in the dark, sultry garden: "Because it shows little delicacy of feeling when the man who is satiated tells the starving one of the dainty meal which he has just eaten; because—because I call it shameful for a person who can see to tell one who is blind of the pleasure he derives from the splendid colours of gay flowers; because I expect from the woman whom I honour with my love more consideration for me and what shadows my life. Because"—and here he raised his voice still more angrily—"I demand from any one united to me, the Emperor, by whatever bond——"

The marquise had been unable to hear more of the monarch's violent attack, for the messenger who had just brought the unwelcome news—it was Adrian Dubois—had not only passed her, but ventured to call to her and remark that she would be wise to go into the house—a thunderstorm was rising. He was not afraid of the rain, and would wait there for his Majesty.

So the listener did not hear how the incensed monarch continued with the demand that the woman he loved should neither tell him falsehoods nor deceive him.

Until then Barbara had listened, silent and pale, biting her trembling lips in order to adhere to her resolve to submit without reply to whatever Charles's terrible irritability inflicted upon her. But he must have noticed what was passing in her mind, for he suddenly paused in his walk, and, abruptly standing before her, gazed full into her face, exclaiming: "It is not you who are offended, but I, the sovereign whom you say you love. Day before yesterday I forbade you to go to the musician in Red Cock Street, yet you were with him to-day. I asked you just now whether you had obeyed me and, with smiling lips, you assented."

Barbara was already prepared with an answer in harmony with the sharpness of the attack, yet her lover's reproof was well founded.



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When he had left the room shortly before he must have been informed that, in defiance of his explicit command, she had gone to the knight's house that morning.

But no one had ever charged her with lack of courage. Why had she not dared to confess the fault which, from a good and certainly pardonable impulse, she had committed?

Was she not free, or when had she placed herself under obligation to render blind obedience to her lover?

But the falsehood!

How severely she must perhaps atone for it this time!

Yet the esteem, the love of the man to whom her heart clung, whom she worshipped with all the fervour of her passionate soul, might be at stake, and when he now seized his hat to withdraw she barred his way.

Sobbing aloud, she threw herself at his feet, confessed that she was guilty, and remorsefully admitted that fear of his resentment, which seemed to her more terrible than death, had induced her to deny what she had done. She could hate herself for it. Nothing could palliate the departure from the path of truth, but her disobedience might perhaps appear to him in a milder light if he learned what had induced her to commit it.

Charles, still in an angry, imperious tone, ordered her to rise. She silently obeyed, and when he threw himself on the divan she timidly sat down by his side, turning toward him her troubled face, which for the first time he saw wet with tears.

Yet a hopeful smile brightened her moist eyes, for she felt that, since he permitted her to remain at his side, all might yet be well.

Then she timidly took his hand and, as he permitted it, she held it firmly while she explained what ties had bound her to Wolf from childhood.

She represented herself as the sisterly counsellor of the friend who had grown up in the same house with her. Music and the Catholic religion, in the midst of a city which had fallen into the Protestant heresy, had been the bond between them. After his return home he had probably been unable to help falling in love with her, but, so truly as she hoped for Heaven's mercy, she had kept her heart closed against Cupid until he, the Emperor, had approached in order, like that other Caesar, to come, to see, and to conquer. But she was only a woman, and pity in a woman's soft heart was as hard to silence as the murmur of a swift mountain stream or the rushing of the wind.

Yesterday she had learned from the violinist Massi that the knight's condition was much more critical, and he desired before his death to clasp her hand again. So, believing



that disobedience committed to lighten the last hours of a dying man would be pardonable before God and human beings, she had visited the unfortunate Wolf.

The helpful and joy-bestowing power of good works, which the Protestants denied, had thus become very evident to her; for since she had clasped the sufferer's hand an indescribable sense of happiness had taken possession of her, while the knight began to improve. The news had reached her just before this, the Emperor's, arrival, had made her happy, and, in spite of her evil conscience, had put her in a very cheerful mood. But now this beautiful evening had become the saddest one of her whole life.



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Fresh tears, and the other means of conciliation inspired by her loving heart, then induced the angry lover to forgive her.

Barbara felt this as a great piece of good fortune, and made every effort to curb the refractory temper which, hitherto, had found nothing less welcome than humble submission.

Day after day since that evening the confessor had been informed that nothing interrupted the concord of the lovers, and that Barbara often prayed very fervently in the private chapel. This pleased the almoner, and when Cassian told him that, on the evening after the quarrel, the Emperor had again come to the castle to remain a long time, he rejoiced.

To Barbara this visit had been a true heavenly blessing, but though Charles showed himself sufficiently loving, she felt, even during the succeeding visits, that since that fateful episode something difficult to describe or explain had rested like a gloomy shadow on the Emperor's joyous confidence.

This change in her lover could scarcely be due to her, for she had honestly endeavoured to avoid everything which could anger him.

How should she have suspected that the great student of human nature to whom she had given her heart perceived the restraint which she imposed upon herself in every interview with him, and that the moderation to which she submitted from love robbed her of a portion of the charm her gay unconcern had exerted upon him? Charles suspiciously attributed this change in the disposition of the woman he loved sometimes to one cause, sometimes to another; and when he showed her that he missed something in her which had been dear to him, she thought it a new token of his dissatisfaction, and increased the restraint which she placed upon herself.

If the gout again attacked him or the pressure of business, which at that time constantly made more and more imperious demands upon the Emperor Charles, detained him from her on one or another evening, torturing anxiety assailed her, and she had no sleep all night.

Besides, the marquise did not cease to press her with entreaties and expostulations, and Frau Lerch constantly urged Barbara to profit by the favour of such a lover. She ought to think of the future, and indemnify herself with estates and titles for the sad fate awaiting her if his Majesty wearied of her love.

The ex-maid knew how to describe, in vivid hues, how all would turn from her if that should happen, and how little the jewels with which he sometimes delighted her would avail.



But Barbara had cared only for her lord's love, and it was not even difficult for her to resist the urgency. Yet whenever she was alone with Charles, and he showed plainly how dear she was to him, the question forced itself upon her whether this would not be the right time to speak of her future, and to follow the counsel of the experienced woman who certainly meant kindly toward her.

This made her silent and constrained for a time, and when she saw that her manner annoyed her lover she thrust aside the selfish impulse which was rendering her unlovable, and sometimes showed her delight in the victory of love over every other feeling so impetuously, that her nature seemed to have lost the unvarying cheerfulness which had formerly delighted him, and he left her in a less satisfied mood.



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Besides, the marquise had received a letter from Paris, in which her son declared that if his gambling debts were not paid by the first of August he would be completely disgraced, and nothing would remain for him except to end an existence which had lost all charm. The wretched mother again opened her heart to Barbara and, when she still resisted her lamentations and entreaties, threw herself on her knees and sobbing besought her to let her heart be softened.

The sight of the aged noblewoman writhing like a maniac in the dust was so pitiful and touching that it melted Barbara's heart, and induced her to promise to use the first favourable opportunity to intercede with the Emperor in behalf of her son and his child, a little girl of six. From that time she awaited at every new interview the opportune moment; but when Charles was less gracious, the right time certainly had not come, and when he was especially loving the happiness of possessing his heart seemed to her so great that it appeared sinful to risk it for the sake of a stranger.

This waiting and conflict with herself also did not remain unnoticed, and it was characteristic of Charles to reflect upon and seek reasons for it. Only the spell of her voice and her beauty had remained unchanged, and when she sang in the Golden Cross in the presence of the guests, who became more numerous the nearer drew the time of the opening of the Reichstag, fixed for the fifth of June, and he perceived their delight, vanity fanned the dying fire again, for he still loved her, and therefore felt associated with her and her successes.

So the days became weeks, and though they brought Barbara a wealth of happiness, they were not free from gloomy and bitter hours.

The marquise, who saw her son's doom drawing nearer and nearer, made the mealtimes and every moment which she spent with her a perfect hell. Frau Lerch continued to urge her, and now advised her to persuade the Emperor to rid her of the old tormentor.

In another matter also she was at a loss what to do. The Wittenberg theologian, Erasmus Eckhart, found that his own songs, when she sang them to him, seemed entirely new, and the gratitude he felt merged into ardent love, the first which had taken possession of his young soul. But Barbara resolutely refused to receive his visits, and thereby deprived him of the possibility of opening his heart to her. So, in despair, he wandered about her house more and more frequently, and sent her one fiery love letter after another.

To betray his unseemly conduct to the Emperor or to the confessor would have brought upon him too severe a punishment for an offence which, after all, was the most profound homage. She dared not go to the Hiltners, from fear of a fresh misunderstanding, and it would be a long time ere Wolf's health would permit him to be excited by such matters.



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So she was forced to content herself with censuring Erasmus's conduct, through Frau Lerch, in the harshest manner, and threatening to appeal to his foster-parents and, in the worst extremity, to the magistrate, to rid herself of his importunities. Nearly two thirds of May had passed when the Emperor found himself prevented by a second attack of gout from visiting her. But Barbara's heart drew her toward him so strongly that during the usual noon ride she hit upon an idea, for whose execution she immediately made preparations by secretly entreating young Count Tassis to lend her one of his suits of clothes.

The merry page, a handsome boy of sixteen, who had already crossed rapiers with one of his companions for her sake, was about her height, and delighted to share a secret with her. His most expensive costume, with everything belonging to it, was placed in her room at twilight, and when night closed in, disguised as a page, she entered the litter and was carried to the Golden Cross, where Adrian received her and conducted her to his royal master.

The elderly man thought he had never seen her look so charming as in the yellow velvet doublet with ash-gray facings, the gray silk hose, and the yellow and gray cap resting on her glittering golden hair.

And the Emperor Charles was of the same opinion.

Besides, her lively prank transported him back to his own youth, when he himself had glided more than once in page's attire to some beautiful young lady of the court, and gaily as in better days, tenderly as an ardent youth, he thanked her for her charming enterprise.

After a few blissful hours, which crowded all that she had lately suffered into oblivion, she left him.

When she again entered the little Prebrunn castle she would gladly have embraced the whole world.

From the litter she had noticed a light in the windows of the marquise's sitting-room, but she could now look the poor old noblewoman freely in the face, for this time, sure of experiencing no sharp rebuff, she had found courage to speak of the son to her royal lover.

True, as soon as Charles heard what she desired, he kindly requested her not to sully her beautiful lips with the name of a scoundrel who had long since forfeited every claim to his favour, and her mission was thereby frustrated; but she had now kept her promise.



With the entreaty to spare him in future the pain of refusing any wish of the woman he loved, the disagreeable affair had been dismissed.

When Barbara took the lute, he had begged the fairest of all troubadours to sing once more, before any other song, his beloved "Quia amore languet," and the most vigorous applause was bestowed on every one which she afterward executed.

Now she had done all that was possible for the marquise, but no power on earth should induce her to undertake anything of the sort a second time; She was saying this to herself as she entered the little castle.



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Let the old noblewoman come now!

She was not long in doing so. But how she looked!

The little gray curls done up in papers stood out queerly from her narrow head. Her haggard cheeks were destitute of rouge and lividly pale.

Her black eyes glittered strangely from their deep sockets as if she were insane, and ragged pieces of her morning dress, which she had torn in a fit of helpless fury, hung down upon her breast.

The sight made Barbara shudder. She suspected the truth.

During her absence a new message of evil had reached the marquise.

Unless ten thousand lire could be sent to her son at once, he would be condemned to the galleys, and his child would be abandoned to misery and disgrace.

While speaking, the wretched mother, with trembling hands, tore out a locket which she wore on a little chain around her neck. It contained the angelic face, painted on ivory by an artist's hand, of a fair-haired little girl. The child bore her name, Barbara. The singer knew this. How often the affectionate grandmother had told her with sparkling eyes of her little "Babette"!

The father chained to the rowers' bench among the most abominable ruffians, this loveliest of children perishing in hunger, misery, and shame—what a terrible picture! Barbara beheld it with tangible distinctness, and while the undignified old aristocrat, deprived of all self-control, sobbed and besought her to have compassion, the girl who had grown up amid poverty and care went back in memory to the days when, to earn money for a thin soup, a bit of dry bread, a small piece of cheap cow beef, or to protect herself from the importunity of an unpaid tradesman, she had washed laces with her own delicate hands and seen her nobly born, heroic father scratch crooked letters and scrawling ornaments upon common gray tin.

The same fate, nay, one a thousand times worse, awaited this wonderfully lovely patrician child, whose father was to wield the oars in the galleys if no one interceded for the unfortunate man.

What was life!

From the height of happiness it led her directly to such an abyss of the deepest woe.

What contrasts!



A day, an hour had transported her from bitter poverty and torturing yearning to the side of the highest and greatest of monarchs, but who could tell for how long—how soon the fall into the gulf awaited her?

A shudder ran through her frame, and a deep pity for the sweet creature whose coloured likeness she held in her hand seized upon her.

She probably remembered her lover's refusal, and that she only needed to allude to it to release herself from the wailing old woman, but an invisible power sealed her lips. She was filled with an ardent desire to help, to avert this unutterable misery, to bring aid to this child, devoted to destruction.

To rise above everything petty, and with the imperial motto "More, farther," before her eyes, to attain a lofty height from which to look down upon others and show her own generosity to them, had been the longing of her life. She was still permitted to feel herself the object of the love of the mightiest sovereign on earth, and should she be denied performing, by her own power, an act of deliverance to which heart and mind urged her?



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No, and again no!

She was no longer poor Wawerl!

She could and would show this, for, like an illumination, words which she had heard the day before in the Golden Cross had flashed into her memory.

Master Wenzel Jamnitzer, the famous Nuremberg goldsmith, had addressed them to her in the imperial apartments, where he had listened to her singing the day before.

He had come to consult with the Emperor Charles about the diadems which he wished to give his two nieces, the daughters of Ferdinand, King of the Romans, who were to be married in July in Ratisbon. Their manufacture had been intrusted to Master Jamnitzer, and after the concert the Nuremberg artist had thanked Barbara for the pleasure which he owed her. In doing so, he had noticed the Emperor's first gift, the magnificent star which she wore on her breast at the side of her squarenecked dress. Examining it with the eye of an expert, he had remarked that the central stone alone was worth an estate.

If she deprived herself of this superb ornament, the despairing old mother would be consoled, and the lovely child saved from hunger and disgrace.

With Barbara, thought, resolve, and action followed one another in rapid succession.

"You shall have what you need to-morrow," she called to the marquise, kissed—obeying a hasty impulse—her little namesake's picture, rejected any expression of thanks from the astonished old dame, and went to rest.

Frau Lerch had never seen her so radiant with happiness, yet she was irritated by the reserve of the girl for whom she thought she had sacrificed so much, yet whose new garments had already brought her more profit than the earnings of the three previous years.

The next morning Master Jamnitzer called the valuable star his own, and pledged himself to keep the matter secret, and to obtain from the Fuggers a bill of exchange upon Paris for ten thousand lire.

The honest man sent her through the Haller banking house a thousand ducats, that he might not be open to the reproach of having defrauded her.

Yet the gold which she did not need for the marquise seemed to Barbara like money unjustly obtained. While she was riding out at noon, Frau Lerch found it in her chest, and thought that she now knew what had made the girl so happy the day before. She was all the more indignant when, soon after, Barbara gave half the new wealth to the Prebrunn town clerk to distribute among the poor journeymen potters whose huts had



been burned down the previous night. The rest she kept to give to the relatives of her one-eyed maid-servant at home, who were in the direst poverty.

For the first time she had felt the pleasure of interposing, like a higher power, in the destiny of others. What she had hoped from the greatness to which she had risen now appeared on the eve of being actually and wholly fulfilled.

Even the strange manner in which the marquise thanked her for her generosity could but partially impair the exquisite sense of happiness which filled her heart.



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As soon as the old noblewoman heard that the bill of exchange for her son was on the way to Paris, she expressed her intention of thanking his Majesty for this noble donation.

Startled and anxious, Barbara was obliged to forbid this, and to confess that, on the contrary, the Emperor had refused to do anything whatever for her son, and that morning, for little Babette's sake, she had used her own property.

The marquise then angrily declared that a Marquise de Leria could accept such a favour without a blush solely from his Majesty. Even from an equal in station she must refuse gifts of such value. If Barbara was honest, she would admit that she had never, even by a syllable, asked for a donation, but always only for her intercession with his Majesty. Her hasty action made withdrawal impossible, but the humiliation which she had experienced through her was so hard to conquer that she could scarcely bring herself to feel grateful for a gift which, in itself, was certainly worthy of appreciation.

In fact, from that time the marquise entirely changed her manner, and instead of flattering her ward as before, she treated her with haughty coldness, and sometimes remarked that poverty and hostility were often easier to bear than intrusive kindness and humiliating gifts.

Hitherto Barbara had placed no one under obligation to be grateful, and therefore the ugliness of ingratitude was unknown to her.

Now she was to become acquainted with it.

At first this disappointment wounded her, but soon the marquise's intention of ridding herself, by this conduct, of a heavy debt became apparent, and she opposed to the base cunning a gay defence, but was then forced to encounter the marquise's condemnation of it as the outgrowth of an ungenerous soul.

How unpleasant this was! Yet she kept what she had done for the old aristocrat and the way in which she had requited it a secret, even from Frau Lerch, especially as the Emperor soon alluded to his denial of her entreaty, and gave a description of young Leria which filled her with horror, and led to the conviction that the sacrifice which she had made for him and his little daughter had been utterly futile.

Little Babette, she also heard, was cared for in the best possible manner, having been withdrawn from her father's influence long before and placed in charge of an estimable, wealthy, and aristocratic aunt, her mother's sister, who filled the latter's place.

This act of charity had been utterly spoiled for the overhasty giver, and, while the glad remembrance of the pure delight which she had felt after her generous resolve faded more and more, she began to be uneasy about her reckless transaction with the



Nuremberg goldsmith, for the Emperor during his very next visit had asked about the star, and in her confusion she had again been forced into a falsehood, and tried to excuse herself for so rarely wearing his beautiful present by the pretext that the gold pin which fastened it was bent.



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She could have inflicted various punishments upon herself for her precipitate yielding to a hastily awakened sympathy, for it would surely anger the Emperor if he learned how carelessly she had treated his first costly gift.

Perhaps some hint of its sale had already reached his ears, for, although he had made no opposition to her apology, he afterward remained taciturn and irritable.

Every subsequent interview with her lover was terribly shadowed by the dread that he might think of the unlucky ornament again.

Yet, on this occasion also, fear prevented the brave girl from confessing the whole truth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On St. Desiderius's Day—[May 23rd]—the Emperor again missed the star, and, as it was in the Golden Cross and the heat was great, Barbara replied that her dress was too thin for the heavy ornament. But the inquiry had made her fear of additional questions so great that she rejoiced over the news that her lover would not visit her the next day.

On the day before yesterday Christoph Madrucci, the Cardinal of Trent, his warlike brother Hildebrand, and the Count of Arco had arrived, bringing news from the Council; but on the morrow Duke Maurice of Saxony was expected, and the most important negotiations were to be carried on not only with him, but also with the former, each individual being dealt with singly and at different hours.

In the evening the welcome guest was to be entertained by music and, if agreeable to Barbara, by singing also. On the twenty-fifth the city had decided to give a May festival under the lindens in honour of the duke. The Emperor and the whole court were of course invited.

Barbara then acknowledged that she was fond of such magnificent exhibitions, and begged Charles to allow her to attend the festival with the marquise.

The answer was an assent, but the Emperor gave it after some delay, and with the remark that he could devote little time to her, and expected that she would subject herself to some restraint.

True, the painful surprise which her features expressed vividly enough led him to add the apology that, on account of the presence of the two cardinals—for one had come from Augsburg—he would be compelled to deny himself the pleasure of showing her anything more than courteous consideration in public; but she could not succeed in conquering the mortification which, besides the grief of disappointment, had taken possession of her sensitive soul.



Charles probably perceived, by the alternate flushing and paling of her cheeks, what was passing in her thoughts, and would gladly have soothed her; but he refrained, and forced himself to be content with the few conciliatory words which he had already addressed to her.

Great events were impending. If he decided upon war, nothing, not even love, could be permitted to encroach too heavily upon his time and strength; but Barbara and the demands which her love made upon him would surely do this if he did not early impose moderation upon her and himself.



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He had heard nothing about the sale of the star, and whatever had displeased him in Barbara's conduct during the last few weeks she had succeeded in effacing. Yet he had often been on the point of breaking off his relations with her, for just at this time it was of infinite importance that he should keep himself free and strong in mind and body.

Moreover, in a few days he expected his brother Ferdinand with his grown children. Two of his nieces were to be married here in his presence, and he felt that he ought not to let either them or the Cardinal of Trent—who was coming from the Council and would return there—see how strong were the fetters with which, at his age and just at this time, he allowed himself to be bound by love for a beautiful singer.

The wisdom which had long been characteristic of him commanded him to sever abruptly the connection with the woman he loved and remove her from his path. But the demands of the heart and the senses were too powerful for the man who indulged to excess in fiery wine and spiced foods, though he knew that greater abstinence would have spared him torturing pangs.

He had succeeded hundreds of times in obtaining the victory over other urgent wishes, and conquering strong affections. But this was different, for separation from Barbara must, at any rate, destroy the exquisite late happiness of the newly unfolded enjoyment of life, and for this heavy loss he saw no compensation. To part from her entirely, therefore, seemed to him impossible—at any rate, for the present. On the other hand, the duty of the sovereign and consideration for his relatives both commanded him to restrict the demands of her passionate young heart and his own, which had so recently awaked from slumber.

He had recognised this necessity, and considered the pros and cons precisely as if the matter were a political question. He who, without the quiver of an eyelash, had sent many a band of soldiers to certain death in order to execute a well-conceived plan of battle, was compelled to inflict keen suffering upon the woman he loved and himself, that greater interests might not be injured.

He had commenced the retreat that day.

The constraint which it was necessary to impose upon themselves must be equally painful to them both, yet this could not be altered.

Had it affected him alone, in defiance of his sense of rank and the tyranny of court etiquette, he would have led Barbara, attired like a true queen, with his own hand to the festival under the lindens, but the gratification of this heartfelt wish would have entailed too many evil consequences.

Toying with her, who so quickly understood and so gratefully accepted the gifts of the intellect which he offered, was so sweet, but in these days it must not be permitted to



impair mental repose, keen thought. What he had to discuss and settle with Maurice of Saxony and Cardinal Madrucci was of too momentous importance to the destiny of the world, to the Church, to his fame as a sovereign, to his own greatness and that of his race.



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He would have liked best to send Barbara away from Ratisbon, as he had despatched her father three weeks before, and not recall her until these decisive days were over; but this was prohibited by his ardent desire for her presence, her clever questions and appreciative listening, and, above all, her singing, which he valued perhaps even more than her beauty.

Had he confided to Barbara the important reasons which compelled him to impose restrictions for a short time upon the demands of his heart, she, who esteemed his grandeur little less than his love, would have cheerfully submitted to what was necessary and right; but truthfulness and frankness were far more characteristic of her nature than of that of the politician who was accustomed to the tricks and evasions of the time of Machiavelli. He never lacked credible reasons when he desired to place an intention in a favourable light, and where he wished to keep Barbara away from him, during the next few days, such were certainly to be found in each individual instance. Suppose the woman he loved did not accept them? So much the worse for her; he was the Emperor.

As for Barbara, with the subtle power of presentiment of a loving heart she felt that his passion was waning, and tortured her mobile intellect to discover the right cause.

If the luckless star was connected with it, why had he not blamed her openly?

No, no!

Adrian had already predicted it; his constancy could not be relied upon, and if war was in prospect he forgot everything that was usually dear to his heart, and the appearance of the Duke of Saxony certainly seemed to indicate an outbreak. Many an intimation of the Emperor, Granvelle, and the almoner seemed to suggest this, and, deeply troubled, she went to rest.

During the silent night her worst fears became certainty.

She recalled to mind every hour which they had spent alone together. Some change had certainly taken place in him of late.

During her visit as a page the passion of former days had once more glowed hotly, as the fire on the hearth blazes up brightly before it expires.

The alteration had begun with the reproaches for her visit to the suffering Wolf. Now he was aiming to rid himself of her, though with a considerate hand. And she, what could she do to win back the man who held every fixed resolve as firmly as the rocks of the cliff hold the pine which grows from them?

Nothing, except to bear patiently whatever he inflicted upon her.



This, however, seemed to her so impossible and painful, so humiliating and shocking, that she sprang from her bed and for a long time paced with bare feet the sleeping-room, which was but dimly lighted by the lamp. Yet all her thoughts and pondering were futile, and when she lay down again she slept until mass.

By daylight she found that she had regarded matters in far too dark a light. True, Charles probably no longer loved her as ardently as before, yet she need scarcely fear the worst at present. But the bare thought of having so soon lost the power to bind him to her aroused a storm of feeling in her passionate soul, and when it subsided bitter thoughts followed, and a series of plans which, on closer examination, proved impracticable.



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The day dragged slowly along.

During the ride in the country she was so depressed and downcast that her companions asked what troubled her.

The lonely evening seemed endless. A short letter from her father, which informed her that he had not expected too much of himself, and was in good health, she cast aside after reading. During the night the feeling of unhappiness and apprehension increased. But the next morning the sun shone brightly into her windows, and after mass a messenger from the Golden Cross announced that Duke Maurice of Saxony had arrived, and in the afternoon his Majesty wished to see her and hear her sing.

This news cheered her wonderfully; but while Fran Lerch was dressing her she, too, missed the star, and it seemed to Barbara that with it she had lost a portion of her charm.

In going out, the marquise met her in the corridor, but Barbara passed without returning her greeting.

When she arrived, the company had assembled in the chapel. The Duke of Saxony sat between the Emperor and Granvelle.

What a handsome, knightly man this Maurice was! A prince from head to foot, young, and yet, while talking with the Emperor and Granvelle, grave and self-possessed as if he felt himself their peer.

And what fire glowed in his bright glance whenever it rested upon her!

In the chase and over the wine-cup this brave soldier and subtle statesman was said scarcely to have his equal. Many tales of his successes with fair women had been told her. He pleased her, too, in spite of the bold, free manner in which he gazed at her, and which she would not have tolerated in any one else.

After she had finished the last song, the duke expressed his appreciation in gay, flattering words, at the same time complimenting her beauty.

There had been something remarkably winning in his compliments; but when she pleased her imperial lover, the acknowledgment was very different. Then there was no mere praise clad in the form of enthusiastic homage, but in addition always acute remarks. With the recognition blended opinions which revealed the true connoisseur.

This Maurice was certainly wise and brave, and, moreover, far handsomer than his imperial master; but what illumined Charles's prominent brow and brilliant eyes she had never beheld in any one else. To him, to him alone her heart belonged, worthy of esteem as the duke, who was so much his junior, appeared.



While taking leave the Saxon held her hand in his for a time and, as she permitted it, she met a glance from her lover which warned her to be ware of incautious familiarity with this breaker of hearts.

Barbara felt as if a sudden brightness had filled her soul, and on her way home the seed which that look had cast into it began to put forth vigorous shoots.

The ardent young Saxon duke would have been a dangerous rival for any one, even the handsomest and most powerful of men. Suppose that she should profit by the wish he showed so plainly, and through jealousy bind the man whom she loved anew and more firmly than ever?



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She probably admitted to herself that in doing so she would incur a great risk, but it seemed easier to lose her greatest treasure entirely than only to half possess it; and when she had once looked this thought in the face it attracted her, as with the gaze of a basilisk, more and more strongly.

The afternoon of the following day, with the marquise, she entered the scene of festivity under the lindens.

To punish Barbara for not returning her greeting, the gray-haired lady in waiting had at first been inclined to excuse herself on the plea of illness; but the taste for amusement with which her nature was still pervaded, as well as curiosity to see the much-discussed Duke Maurice, and the desire to watch Barbara's conduct, drew her to the place where the festival was held.

Ratisbon had done her best to receive this guest, whom she especially desired to honour, with all possible magnificence. Flags and streamers bearing the colours of the empire, with the Burgundian red and gold of the Emperor, the silver-crossed keys on a red field of the city of Ratisbon, and with the Saxon coats of arms, rose amid the leafy tops of the lindens, and floated from tall poles in the sunny May air. The blue and yellow Saxon flag, with the black and yellow chevron in the field and a lozenged chaplet from the left corner to the top, was more frequently seen than any other banner.

Even though this festival was held for Duke Maurice, no one could fail to notice how much more space was given to his escutcheon than to the Emperor's.

The entertainment had opened at noon with a tournament and riding at the ring. The duke had participated in the sport a short time, and carried off several rings on his sword while in full career.

The Emperor had held aloof from this game, in which he had formerly joined gladly and with much skill, but, on the other hand, he had promised to appear at the festival under the lindens, which was to last until night. The Council had had a magnificent tent erected for him, Duke Maurice, and the court, and in order to ornament the interior suitably had allowed the use of the beautiful tapestries in the town hall. These represented familiar incidents from famous love tales: Tristan and Isolde seeing the face of King Mark in the mirror of the spring, Frau Venus as, surrounded by her court, she receives Tannhauser in the Horselberg, and similar scenes. Other art textiles showed incidents in the lives of forest people—little men and women in striped linen garments, wonderful trees and birds such as no human eye ever beheld—but above the hangings a row of coats of arms again appeared, in which the imperial escutcheon alternated with the Saxon.

The front of the tent, covered with red and white material, stood open, permitting the guests who did not belong to the court to survey the interior.



Artistic platters, large dishes, in which dainty sweets and fruits were gracefully heaped and the cathedral of Ratisbon and other devices stood, the costly silverware of the city, and many beautifully formed wine flagons attracted the gaze. Beside these were dishes of roast meats, fish, and cakes for the illustrious guests.



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Stewards and guards of the Council, clad in red and white, with the crossed keys in silver embroidery on the shoulder, offered refreshments. Two superb thrones stood ready for the Emperor and the duke, easy-chairs for the cardinals, princes, and counts, stools for the barons, knights, and ladies.

Opposite to the tent stands were erected for the Council, the patrician families, and the other ladies and gentlemen whom the city had invited to the festival. In their midst rose a large, richly decorated stage for the Emperor's orchestra, which, with his Majesty's permission, had been induced to play a few pieces, and by the side of the stands was a towerlike structure, from whose summit the city pipers of Ratisbon, joined by those of Landshut, were to be heard.

A large, round stage, encircled by a fence of young birch logs, had been built for dancing amid the leafy lindens, and stood directly opposite to the imperial tent. Near the linden-shaded square at the shooting house were posted the cannon and howitzers, which were to receive the distinguished guests with loud volleys and lend fresh animation to the festival.

The Lindenplatz belonged to the same suburb of Prebrunn in which stood the little castle of the Prince Abbot of Berchtesgaden, which Barbara occupied. So, during the short distance which she and the marquise had to traverse in litters, uproar, music, and the thunder of artillery greeted them.

This exerted an intoxicating influence upon Barbara, who had been so long absent from such scenes. At home she had abandoned her intention of arousing the Emperor's jealousy; now her excited nerves urged her to execute it. The advantage she hoped to derive was well worth the risk. But if the bold game failed, and the proud, sensitive monarch should be seriously angry——

Just then shots crashed again, music and shouts echoed more loudly in her ears.

"A Blomberg does not fear," and with newly awakened defiance she closed her ears to the warning voice.

The festival was commencing.

She, too, would be gay for once, and if she was cautious the bold enterprise must succeed. A merry evening awaited her and, if all went well, on the morrow, after a few unpleasant hours, her lover's whole heart would once more be hers.

When she reached the scene of festivity it was already thronged with richly attired princes and counts, knights and ladies, citizens of Ratisbon, as well as nobles and distinguished townspeople from the neighbouring castles, citadels, and cities.

Music and a loud medley of shouts and conversation greeted her at her entrance. Her heart throbbed quickly, for she did not forget her daring purpose, and a throng of memories of modest but more carefree days rushed upon her.



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Here, when a little girl, she had attended the May festival Virgatum— which owed its name to the green rods or twigs with which the school children adorned themselves— and played under yonder lindens with Wolf, with the wilder Erasmus, and other boys. How delightful it had been!— and when the enlarged band of city pipers struck up a gavotte her feet unconsciously kept time, and she could not help thinking of the last dance in the New Scales, the recruiting officer who had guided her so firmly and skilfully in the Schwabeln, and through him of her father, of whom she had not thought again since the good news received two evenings before.

She still stood at the crowded entrance gazing around her.

The interior of the imperial tent could not be seen from here, but she could overlook the stand of the noble families, and there she saw her cousins Anne Mirl and Nandl Woller, with Martina Hiltner beside them.

She had refused to receive all three in her little castle at Prebrunn; the true reason she alone knew. Her excuse had perhaps appeared to the girls trivial and unkind.

Now her glance met Nandl's, and her warmhearted friend beckoned eagerly to her; but her mother drew her arm down, and it was evident that the corpulent lady said something reproving.

Barbara looked away from the stand, and the question where her place was here suddenly disturbed her.

She had received no invitation from the Council of the city, and perhaps she would have been refused admittance to the stand. She did not know whether before the Emperor's arrival she would be received in the court tent, which Cardinal Madrucci of Trent, in superb scarlet robes, was just approaching, and an oppressive anxiety again subdued the courage which had just resolved on the boldest venture.

At that moment Baron Malfalconnet saw her, and instantly approached. Gaily offering one arm to her and the other to the marquise, he escorted both to the tent, whispering meanwhile in Barbara's ear, "Glowing summer, between spring and winter," and, as soon as he had taken them to the buffet, off he hurried again to offer his arm to the Margravine of Leuchtenberg, who was followed by two charming daughters, with pretty pages bearing their trains.

How the gold, jewels, and shining armour in the tent glittered! How the crimson glowed, the plumes waved, the heavy velvet attracted the eye by rich hues, the light laces by their delicate fineness! How the silk rustled, and one superb piece of fur vied with the other in costliness, the white with the red rose in beauty!



Barbara involuntarily looked at her sea-green brocade, and felt its heavy texture and the softness of the fur trimming on the overdress, which at home she had called a masterpiece of Frau Lerch's work. She could be satisfied with her appearance, and the string of pearls on her neck and the bracelet which her lover had sent to her, after her visit in the page's costume, were also costly ornaments. The magnificent star was missing; in its place she wore at the square-cut neck of her dress two beautiful halfblown roses, and her mirror had showed her how becoming they were.



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She did not need gold or gems. What gave her power to subdue the hearts of men was of higher value.

Yet, when she mingled among the other dignitaries, she felt like an intruder in this circle.

The marquise had left her, and joined those of her own rank. Most of the ladies were strangers to Barbara, and she was avoided by those whom she knew; but, to make amends, she was soon surrounded by many aristocratic gentlemen, and her mobile nature speedily made her forget what had just depressed her joyous spirit.

Then the cannon and culverins thundered louder, the blare of trumpets rent the air with deafening shrillness, the ringing of bells in all the steeples of Ratisbon, the exulting shouts of the crowd upon the stands and in the whole Lindenplatz poured in mighty waves of sound into the tent, where the nobles and aristocratic ladies around Barbara now raised their voices also.

With a throbbing heart she mingled her cheers with those of the others and, like them, waved her handkerchief and her fan.

The man whom she loved was approaching! This crashing and echoing, this wild uproar of enthusiastic shouts and cries, this flutter of flags and waving of handkerchiefs were all in his honour and, stirred to her inmost soul by impetuous enthusiasm and ardent gratitude, her eyes grew dim with tears, and she joined far more loudly and freely in the cheers of the multitude than the aristocrats around her, to whom court etiquette dictated reserve on all occasions, even this one.

The loving woman saw nothing save the man who was advancing. How should she have noticed the scornful glances which her unrestrained vivacity elicited?

Her gaze was fixed solely upon the one sun to which the little stars around her owed their paler or brighter radiance. She scarcely noticed even the handsome young prince at Charles's side. Yet Duke Maurice would have been well worthy of her whole attention, for with what a free, proud step he advanced, while his imperial master used his arm as a support!

Charles also looked magnificent in the Castilian court costume, with the chain of the Grand Master of the Golden Fleece about his neck; but the young Saxon duke was considerably his superior in height, and the silver-embroidered, steel-gray suit of Spanish cut and the black velvet mantle trimmed with a border of marten fur, were extremely becoming. Both saluted the crowd that welcomed them so warmly and loudly, gazing meanwhile at the festal scene, the Emperor with haughty, almost indifferent dignity, the duke with less reserve and more eager gestures.



Barbara knew the sovereign, and when she saw him thrust his lower lip slightly forward she was sure that something vexed him.

Perhaps she ought not to venture to irritate the lion that day.

Was his anger roused by the boldness of the city magistrates, who dared to favour the Saxon escutcheon and banners so openly? It seemed to her exasperating, punishable insolence. But perhaps in his greatness he did not grudge this distinction to a guest so much his inferior, and it was only the gout again inflicting its pangs upon his poor tortured foot.



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The way was strewn with leaves and green branches, and the Saxon was leading her lord directly over the hard little boughs in the middle of the path. Barbara would fain have called to him to look at the ground and not up at the banners and escutcheons bearing his colours, whose number seemed to flatter him. Had Charles been leaning on her arm, she would have performed the office of guide better.

At last the distinguished pair, with the companions who followed them, reached the tent and took their seats upon the thrones. Again Maurice gazed eagerly around him, but Charles vouchsafed the Lindenplatz and stands only a few careless glances. He had no time to do more, for the young Landgravines of Leuchtenber; and several other newcomers at court were presented to him by the Count of Nassau, and, after greeting the occupants of the tent by a gracious gesture, the monarch addressed a few kind words to each.

Barbara was obliged to content herself with the others, yet her heart ached secretly that he gave her no word of welcome.

Then, when the performances began and the chamberlains and major-domo seated the aristocratic ladies and older dignitaries according to their sex and rank, and she was thus placed very far in the rear, she felt it as a grievous injustice. Was she no longer the love of the man who reigned over everything here? And since no one could deny this claim, why need she be satisfied with a place beside the insignificant ladies of honour of the princelings who were present?

How forsaken and ill-treated she seemed to herself!

But there was Don Luis Quijada already making his way to her to bring a greeting from his Majesty and escort her to a place from which she could have a better view of what the city had arranged for the entertainment of the distinguished guest.

So she was not wholly forgotten by her lover, but with what scanty alms he fed her!

What did she care for the exhibition which was about to begin?

The minutes dragged on at a snail's pace while the lanterns on the lindens and poles, the torches, and pitch pans were lighted.

Had not the gentlemen and ladies been so completely separated, it might perhaps have been a little gay. But, as it was, no one of the aristocratic women who surrounded her granted her even one poor word; but the number of glances, open and secret, cast at her became all the greater as one noble dame whispered to another that she was the singer whom his Majesty condescended to distinguish in so remarkable a manner.

To know that she was thus watched might be endured, as she was aware that she could be satisfied with her appearance, but vanity compelled her to assume an expression

and bearing which would not disappoint the gazers, and after the performances began this imposed a wearisome restraint.



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Once only was her solitude in the midst of this great company pleasantly interrupted, for the Bishop of Arras, without troubling himself about the separation of the sexes, had sought her out and whispered that he had something to ask of her, whose details they would discuss later. On the evening of the day after to-morrow his Majesty's most distinguished guests, with their ladies, were to assemble at his house. If she desired to place him under the deepest obligations, she would join them there and adorn the festival with her singing. Barbara asked in a low tone whether the Emperor would also be present, and the statesman, smiling, answered that court etiquette prohibited such things. Yet it was not impossible that, as a special favour, his Majesty might listen for a short time in the festal hall, only he feared that the gout might interpose—the evil guest was already giving slight warnings of its approach.

Then, without waiting for a reply, the young minister went back to his royal master; but his invitation exerted a disturbing influence upon Barbara. She would have been more than glad to accept, for the entertainments of the Bishop of Arras were unequalled in varied attractions, magnificence, and gaiety, and what a satisfaction to her ambition it would be to sing before such an audience, dine at the same table with such ladies and gentlemen! She knew also how heavily this man's favour would weigh in the scales with the Emperor, yet to appear at the banquet without her lover's knowledge was utterly impossible, and just now she felt reluctant to ask his permission. What heavy chains loaded the favoured woman who possessed the love of this greatest of sovereigns!

However, reflections concerning Granvelle's invitation passed away the time until the lighting of the Lindenplatz was completed. Then the shrill blare of trumpets again rent the air, the city pipers in the towers struck up a gay march, and the entertainment began.

The gods of Olympus, led by Fame and Fortune, offered their homage to the Emperor. A youth from the school of poets, attired as the goddess of Fame, bewailed in well-rhymed verses that for a long time no one had given her so much to do as the Emperor Charles. His comrade, who, bearing a cornucopia in his arms, represented Fortune, assured her companion, in still more bombastic verse, that she should certainly expect far more from her, the goddess of Fame, in favour of his Majesty. This would continue until her own end and that of all the Olympians, because the Emperor Charles himself was an immortal. He had made them both subject to him. Fortune as well as Fame must obey his sign. But there was another younger friend of the gods for whom, on account of the shortness of his life, they had been able to do less, but for whom they also held in readiness their best and greatest gifts. He, too, would succeed in rendering them his subjects. While speaking, Fortune pointed with the cornucopia and Fame with the trumpet to Duke Maurice, and besought their indulgent lord and master, the Emperor Charles, to be permitted to show some of their young favourite's possessions, by whose means he, too, would succeed in retaining them in his service.



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Then Pallas Athene appeared with the university city of Leipsic, the latter laden with all sorts of symbols of knowledge. Next came Plutus, the god of Wealth, followed by Freiberg miners bearing large specimens of silver ore in buckets and baskets; and, lastly, Mars, the god of War, leading by a long chain two camels on which rode captive and fettered Turks.

During these spectacles, which were followed by other similar ones, Barbara had been thinking of her own affairs, and gazed more frequently at her lover and his distinguished guests than at the former.

But the next group interested her more because it seemed to honour the Emperor's taste for astronomy, of which he had often talked with her.

On a long cart, drawn by powerful stallions, appeared a gigantic firmament in the shape of a hemisphere, on whose upper surface the sun, moon, and stars were seen shining in radiant light. The moon passed through all her changes, the sun and planets moved, and from the dome echoed songs and lute-playing, which were intended to represent the music of the spheres. Another chorus was heard from a basket of flowers of stupendous size. Among the natural and artificial blossoms sat and lay upon leaves and in the calyxes of the flowers child genii, who flung to the Emperor beautiful bouquets, and into the laps and at the feet of the ladies in the tent smaller ones and single flowers.

Barbara, too, did not go with empty hands. The Cupid who had thrown his to her was the little Maltese Hannibal, who sang with other boys as "Voices of the Flowers," and later was to take part in the great chorus.

This friendly remembrance of her young fellow-artist cheered Barbara, and when a fight began, which was carried on by a dozen trained champions brought from Strasburg expressly for this purpose, she turned her attention to it.

At first this dealing blows at one another with blunt weapons offered her little amusement; but when shouts from the tent and the stands cheered the men from the Mark, and powerful blows incensed to fury those who were struck, the scene began to enthral her.

A handsome, agile youth, to her sincere regret, had just fallen, but swiftly recovered his elasticity, and, springing to his feet, belaboured his opponent, a clumsy giant, so skilfully and vigorously that the bright blood streamed down his ugly face and big body. Barbara's cheeks flushed with sympathy. That was right. Skill and grace ought everywhere to conquer hideous rude force.

If she had been a man she would have found her greatest happiness, as her father did, in battle, in measuring her own strength with another's. Now she was obliged to defend



herself with other weapons than blunt swords, and when she saw the champions, six against six, again rush upon one another, and one side drive the other back, her vivid imagination transported her into the midst of the victors, and it seemed as if the marquise and the whole throng of arrogant dames in the tent, as well as the Ratisbon women on the stands who had insulted her by their haughty airs of virtue, were fleeing from her presence.

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How repulsive these envious, hypocritical people were! How she hated everything that threatened to estrange her lover's heart! To them also belonged the scoundrel who, she supposed, had betrayed the sale of the star to the Emperor. She resolved to confess to Charles how she had been led to commit this offence, which was indeed hard to forgive. Perhaps all would then be well again, for in this unfortunate action she could recognise the sole wrong which she had ever inflicted upon her lover. She could not help attributing his humiliating manner to it alone, for her love had always remained the same, and only yesterday, after she had sung before the Duke of Saxony, Appenzelder, who never flattered, had assured her that her voice had gained in power, her expression in depth, and she herself felt that it was so.

Music was still the firmest bond that united her to her lover. So long as her art remained faithful, he could not abandon her. This conviction was transformed into certainty when the final performance began, and the Ratisbon choir, under the direction of Damian Feys, commenced the mighty hymn with which the composer, Jean Courtois, had greeted the Emperor Charles in Cambray:

“Venite populi terrai”—“Come hither, ye nations of the earth”—this motet for four voices called imperiously to all mankind like a joyous summons.

“Ave Cesar, ave majestas sacra,” sounded in solemn, religious tones the greeting to the greatest of monarchs. It seemed to transport the listener to the summit of the cathedral, as the choir now called to the ruler that the earth was full of his renown. The Ratisbon singers and the able Feys did their best, and this mighty act of homage of all the nations of the earth by no means failed to produce its effect upon him to whom it was addressed.

While Barbara listened, deeply agitated, she did not avert her eyes from her lover's face, which was brightly illumined by a pyramid of candles on each side of the two thrones.

Every trace of weariness, indifference, and discomfort had vanished from Charles's features. His heart, like hers—she knew it—was now throbbing higher. If he had just been enduring pain, this singing must have driven it away or lessened it, and he had certainly felt gratefully what power dwells in the divine art.

This noble composition, Barbara realized it, would again draw her near her lover, and the confirmation of this hope was not delayed, for as soon as the last notes of the motet and the storm of applause that followed had died away, the Emperor, amid the renewed roar of the artillery, rose and looked around him—surely for her.

The good citizens of Ratisbon! No matter how much more bunting they had cut up in honour of the Saxon duke than of the Emperor, how bombastic were the verses composed and repeated in praise of Maurice, this paean of homage put all their efforts

to shame. It suited only one, lauded a grandeur and dignity which stood firm as indestructible cliffs, and which no one here possessed save the Emperor Charles.

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Who would have ventured to apply this motet to the brave and clever Saxon, high as he, too, towered above most of his peers? What did the nations of the earth know about him? How small was the world still that was full of his renown!

This singing had reminded both princes of Barbara, and they looked for her. The Emperor perceived her first, beckoned kindly to her, and, after conversing with her for a while so graciously that it aroused the envy of the other ladies in the tent, he said eagerly: “Not sung amiss for your Ratisbon, I should think. But how this superb composition was sung six years ago at Catnbray, under the direction of Courtois himself!—that, yes, that is one of the things never to be forgotten. Thirty-four singers, and what power, what precision, and, moreover, the great charm of novelty! I have certainly been permitted to hear many things——”

Here he paused; the Cardinal of Trent was approaching with the Bishop of Arras.

The younger Granvelle, with his father, had also been present at the performance of this motet of homage at Cambrai, and respectfully confirmed his Majesty’s remark, speaking with special warmth of the fervour and delicacy with which Jean Courtois had conducted the choir.

The cardinal had no wish to detract from the merits of the Netherland maestro, but he called the Emperor’s attention to young Orlando di Lasso, the leader of the orchestra in the Lateran at Rome, who, in his opinion, was destined as a composer and conductor to cast into the shade all the musicians of his time. He was born in Hennegau. The goddess of Music continued to honour the Netherlands with her special favour.

During this conversation Barbara had stepped modestly aside. Charles glanced toward her several times to address her again, but when the Bishop of Arras whispered that, before the commencement of the festival, the cardinal had received despatches from the Council and from Rome, he motioned to both prelates to follow him, and, paying no further heed to Barbara—nay, without even vouchsafing her a farewell wave of the hand — conducted them to the rear of the tent.

Again the girl’s heart ached in her abandonment. Duke Maurice, too, had vanished. When he saw the Emperor address her he had left the tent.

Dancing had begun, and he was now accepting the invitation of the magistrate Ambrosius Ammann to inaugurate the young people’s pleasure as leader of the Polish dance.

For a time Barbara stood as if spellbound to the spot where her lover had so suddenly turned away from her.



She was again experiencing what Adrian had predicted—politics made Charles forget everything else, even love. How would it be when war actually came?

Now, after the Emperor had showed her that he still deemed her worthy of regard, she felt for the first time thoroughly neglected, and with difficulty restrained her tears. She would have liked to follow Charles, and at every peril whisper softly, so that he alone could hear, yet with all the sharpness of her resentment, that it was unchivalrous to leave her standing here like an outcast, and that she demanded to learn why she had forfeited his love.



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The wild throbbing of her heart impeded her breathing, and, in the indignation of her soul, she longed to escape fresh humiliation and to leave the festival.

But again Baron Malfalconnet appeared as a preserver in the hour of need, and, with the profound submissiveness bordering upon mockery which he always showed her, asked why she had so speedily deprived his Majesty of the pleasure of her society. Barbara gave way to her wrath and, while vehemently forbidding the unseemly jibe, glanced with a bitter smile toward the Emperor, who, in conversation with the two dignitaries, seemed to have forgotten everything around him.

“The destiny of the world,” observed the baron, “can not be set to dance music. The domain of your obedient admirer, Malfalconnet, on the contrary, obeys solely the heart throbs in this loyal breast; and if you, fairest of women, will allow yourself to be satisfied with so small a realm of sovereignty, it is at your disposal, together with these tolerably agile feet, which still wait in vain for the well-merited imperial gout.”

The sharp refusal which this proposition received amused the baron instead of offending him, and passing into a more conversational tone, he proposed to her to leave this abode of ennui, where even the poor satyrs on the hangings were holding their big hands over their mouths to hide their yawns, and go with him to the dancing floor.

Barbara laid her hand on his arm and followed him to the pleasure ground under the lindens, where the pretty daughters of the Ratisbon noble families had just commenced a dance with the gentlemen belonging to their circle.

Barbara had gone to school, exchanged kisses, and was a relative or friend of most of these young girls in light gala dresses, adorned with coloured flowers, whose names Malfalconnet asked, yet, after an interval of these few weeks, she met them like a stranger.

The love which united her to the Emperor had raised her far above them.

Accustomed to give herself up entirely to the gifts which the present offered, she had turned her back on Ratisbon and its inhabitants, with whom, during this period of happiness she could easily dispense, as if they were a forgotten world. There was no one in her native city whom she seriously missed or to whom she was strongly drawn. That she, too, offered these people little, and was of small importance, self-love had never permitted her to realize, and therefore she felt an emotion of painful surprise when she perceived the deep gulf which separated her from her fellow-citizens of both sexes.

Now her old friends and acquaintances showed her plainly enough how little they cared for her withdrawal.

Pretty Elspet Zohrer, with whom she had contended for the recruiting officer, Pyramus Kogel, was standing opposite to her, by her partner's side, in the same row with charming little Mietz Schiltl, Anne Mirl Woller, her cousin, Marg Thun, and the others.



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The Zauner, which they were dancing with a solemn dignity that aroused the baron's mirth, afforded them an opportunity to look around them, and they eagerly availed themselves of it; nay, they almost all glanced at Barbara, and then, with evident intention, away from her, after Elspet Zohrer, with a contemptuous elevation of her dainty little snub nose, had ignored her schoolmate's greeting.

Barbara drew herself up, and the air of unapproachable dignity which she assumed well suited the aristocratic gentleman at her side, whom every one knew as the most brilliant, witty, and extravagant noble at the Emperor's court. At the same time she addressed the baron, whom she had hitherto kept at a distance, with unconstrained familiarity, and as the eyes of the mothers also rested upon her, remarks which might have driven the blood to her cheeks were made upon the intimate terms existing between the "Emperor's sweetheart" and the profligate and spendthrift Malfalconnet.

True, Barbara could not understand what they were saying, but it was easy enough to perceive in what way they were talking about her.

Yet what gave these women the right to condemn her?

They bore her a grudge because she had distinguished herself by her art, while their little geese were idle at home or, at most, busied themselves in the kitchen, at the spinning wheel, in dancing, and whatever was connected with it while waiting for their future husbands. The favour which the most illustrious of mortals showed her they imputed to her as a crime.

How could they know that she was more to the Emperor than the artist whose singing enraptured him?

The girls yonder—her Woller cousins certainly—merely held aloof because their mothers commanded them to do it. Only in the case of a few need she fear that jealousy and envy had taken possession of them. Yet what did she care for them and their behaviour? She looked over their heads with the air of a queen.

But what was the meaning of this?

As soon as the dance was over, a pretty young girl, scarcely seventeen years old, with blue forget-me-nots in her fair hair and on her breast, left her partner and came directly toward Barbara.

Her head drooped and she hesitated shyly as she did so, but her modest timidity was so charming that the dissolute courtier at Barbara's side felt a throb of sympathy, and gazed down at her like a benevolent fatherly friend as she held out her hand to his companion.



He did not think Martina Hiltner actually beautiful as she stood close before him, but, on the other hand, inexpressibly charming in her modest grace.

That it was she who came to Barbara so confidingly increased his good opinion of the self-reliant, hot-blooded girl who had won the Emperor's love, and therefore he was deeply angered when the latter answered Martina's greeting curtly and coldly, and, without vouchsafing her any further words, requested him to summon one of the attendants who were serving refreshments.



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Malfalconnet glanced significantly toward Martina, and, while offering Barbara a goblet of lemonade, said, "There is candied lemon and other seasoning in it, so it will probably suit your taste, exacting beauty, since you appear to dislike what is pure."

"Only when poison is mixed with it," she answered quickly, tossing her head arrogantly. Then, controlling herself, she added in an explanatory tone: "In this case, Baron, your far-famed penetration deceived you. It gave me more pain than you will believe to reject the friendly advances of this lovely child, but her father is the head of the Lutheran heresy here, and the almoner——"

"Then that certainly alters the case," the other interrupted. "Where the Holy Inquisition threatens, I should be capable of denying a friend thrice ere the cock crew. But what a number of charming young faces there are on this Lindenplatz! Here one can understand why Ratisbon, like the French Arles, is famed for the beauty of her daughters. It was not easy for you to earn the reputation of the greatest beauty here. You have also gained that of the most cruel one. You make me feel it. But if you wish to cast into oblivion the poisoned cup proffered just now, do me the favour to trust yourself to my guidance in the next dance."

"Impossible," answered Barbara firmly. "If I were really cruel, I would yield to your skill in tempting, and render you the base betrayer of the greatest and noblest of masters."

"Does not every one who gazes at your beauty or listens to your song become such a monster, at least in thought?" asked the baron gaily. "Are you really so inexorable about the dance?"

"As this statue," Barbara answered with mirthful resolution, pointing to a plaster figure which was intended to represent the goddess Flora or the month of May. "But let us stay here a few minutes longer, though only as spectators."

Barbara expressed this wish because a group of young gentlemen, who had always been among those who sought her most eagerly for a partner at the dances in the New Scales, had attracted her attention. They were engaged in an animated discussion, which from their glances and gestures evidently concerned Barbara.

Bernhard Trainer, the tall son of an old and wealthy family, who loved Martina Hiltner, and had been incensed by Barbara's treatment of her, seemed to gain his point, and when the city pipers began to play again, all of them—probably a dozen in number—passed by her arm-in-arm in couples, with their eyes studiously fixed upon the opposite side of the dancing floor.

Barbara could entertain no doubt that this insulting act was intended to wound her. The "little castle," as it was called in Prebrunn, owned by Bernhard Trainer's family, was near the bishop's house which she occupied. Therefore the Trainers had probably heard

more than others about the visits she received. Or did the gentlemen consider that she deserved punishment for not treating Martina more kindly?

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Whatever might have caused the unseemly act, in Barbara's eyes it was a base trick, which filled her with furious rage against the instigators. Had she shared the Emperor's power, it would have been a delight to her in this hour to repay the malignant insult in the same or far heavier coin. But, on Malfalconnet's account, she must submit in silence to what had been inflicted upon her.

So, in a muffled tone, she requested the baron to take her back to the tent, but while fulfilling her wish he wondered at the long strides of the capricious young lady at his side, and the mortifying inattention with which she received his questions.

Meanwhile the Emperor had returned to the throne, and Maurice of Saxony was again standing beside him, while the chamberlain Andreas Wolff was humbly, inviting the monarch to make the Ratisbon young people happy by visiting the scene of the dancing.

After a dance of inquiry at the duke, Charles assented to this request. But they must pardon him if he remained a shorter time than he himself would desire, as the physician was urging his return home.

While the chamberlain was retiring, Charles saw Barbara leaning on Malfalconnet's arm, beckoned to them, and asked her whether she had yielded to her love for dancing.

A brief "No, your Majesty," assured him of the contrary, and led him to make the remark that whoever exercised a noble art so admirably as she would be wise to refrain from one which could afford nobody any higher pleasure than the peasant and his sweetheart, if they only had sound feet.

The counsel sounded harsh, almost warning, and the already irritated girl with difficulty restrained a sharp reply; but the Emperor was already rising, that, leaning on Quijada's arm, he might seek the dancing ground.

Meantime the young Saxon duke had approached Barbara, and expressed his admiration of the successful festival, but she scarcely heard what he said. Yet when she turned her face toward him, and his ardent gaze rested yearningly upon her, she felt that the opportunity had now come to carry out her half-forgotten intention of arousing the jealousy of her royal lover.

Whatever it might cost, she must undertake the risk.

Summoning all her strength of will, she silenced the bitter resentment which filled her heart, and a sunny glance told Duke Maurice how much his escort pleased her. Malfalconnet had watched every look of the lady on his arm, as well as the duke's, and as they approached the scene of the dance he asked the latter if his Highness would



condescend to relieve him for a short time of a delightful duty. An important one in the service of his imperial Majesty——

Here the duke's eager assent interrupted him, and the next moment Barbara was leaning on the arm of the handsome young prince.

She had found in him the tool which she needed, and Maurice entered into her design only too readily, for the baron had scarcely retired ere he changed his tone of voice and began an attack upon her heart.



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He had no need to respect the older rights of his imperial host, for Charles had distrustfully concealed from him the bond which united him to the beautiful singer. So, with glowing eloquence, he described to Barbara how quickly and powerfully the spell of her beauty and her wonderful art had fired his brain, and besought her to aid him not to commence one of the most important periods of his life with a sore heart and sick with longing; but she allowed him to speak, without interrupting him by a single word.

She could not misunderstand what he desired, and many a glance permitted him to interpret it in his favour; but resentment still continued to stir in her soul, growing and deepening as the Emperor, seated on the throne erected for him, without noticing her appearance, sometimes listened to the chamberlain, who mentioned the names of the handsomest dancers, sometimes addressed a question to the Bishop of Arras and the other gentlemen who had followed him.

Her royal lover deprived her of even the possibility of rousing him by jealousy from the consciousness of the secure possession of her person. Besides, the flushed faces of the young men who had so shamelessly insulted her were beaming before her with the joy of the festival.

But the expression of their features was already changing. Duke Maurice had been recognised, and now all who felt entitled to do so approached him, among them her foes, at their head Bernhard Trainer, who were obliged to bend low before him, and therefore before her also.

Just then the city pipers struck up a gagliarde, and the music was the air of the dancing-master's song by Baldassaro Donati, which had roused the Emperor's indignation a few days ago. In imagination she again heard his outburst of anger, again saw him rise from his seat in wrath at the innocent "Chi la gagliarda vuol imparare."

The time of reckoning had come, and he should pay her for the bitterness of that hour! Yonder malevolent fellows, who now looked bewildered and uneasy, should be forced to retreat before her and perceive what power she had obtained by her beauty and her art.

With fevered blood and panting breath she listened to the gay music of the enlarged band of city pipers, and watched the movements of the couples who had already commenced the gagliarde, and—how was it possible in such a mood?—a passionate desire to dance took possession of her.

Without heeding the many persons who stood around them, she whispered softly to the duke, "It would be a pleasure to keep time to the music of the gagliarde with you, your Highness."

An ardent love glance accompanied this invitation, and the bold Saxon duke was a man to avail himself of every advantage.



He instantly expressed to the Ratisbon gentlemen his desire to try the gagliarde himself to such excellent music, and at a sign from the master of ceremonies the dance stopped.



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Several members of the Council requested the couples to make way, and Maurice took his partner's hand and led her on the stage.

The sudden cessation of the music attracted the Emperor's attention also. In an instant he perceived what was about to take place, and looked at Barbara. Her eyes met his, and such a glow of indignation, nay, wrath, so imperious a prohibition flashed from his glance that her flushed cheeks paled, and she strove to withdraw her hand from the duke's.

But Maurice held it firmly, and at the same moment the city pipers began to play again, and the music streamed forth in full, joyous tones.

The wooing notes fell into her defiant soul like sparks on dry brushwood. She could not help dancing, though it should be her death. Already she had begun, and with mischievous joy the thought darted through her mind that now Charles, too, would perceive what anguish lay in the fear of losing those whom we love.

If this grief brought him back to her, she thought, while eagerly following the figures of the dance, she would tend him all her life like a maidservant; if his pride severed the bond between them—that could not be done, because he loved her—she must bear it. Doubtless the conviction forced itself upon her superstitious mind that Fate would be ready to ruin her by the dance, yet she executed what must bring misfortune upon her; to retreat was no longer possible.

These thoughts darted in wild confusion in a few moments through her burning brain, and while Maurice swung her around it seemed as if the music reached her through the roar and thunder of breakers. The words "Chi la gagliarda vuol imparare" constantly echoed in her ears, mocking, reckless, urging her to retaliation.

The dancing-master, Bernandelli, whom the Council had summoned from Milan to the Danube, had taught her and the other young people of Ratisbon the gagliarde. The sensible teacher, to suit the taste of the German burghers, had divested the gay dance of its recklessness. But he had showed his best pupils with how much more freedom the Italians performed the gagliarde, and Barbara had not forgotten the lesson. Duke Maurice moved and guided her with the same unfettered ease that the little maestro had displayed in former days. Willing or not, she was obliged to follow his lead, and she did so, carried away by the demands of her excited blood and the pleasure of dancing, so long denied, yet with the grace and perfect ear for time which were her special characteristics.

Neither the Ratisbon citizens nor Charles, who had been a good dancer himself, had ever seen the gagliarde danced in this way by either the gentleman or the lady. A better-matched couple could scarcely be imagined than the tall, powerful, chivalrous



young prince and the beautiful, superbly formed, golden-haired girl who seemed, as it were, carried away by the music.

But Charles did not appear to share the pleasure which the sight of this rare couple and their dancing awakened even in the most envious and austere of the Ratisbon spectators, for when, in a pause, Barbara, with sparkling eyes, glanced first into the duke's face and then, with a merry look of inquiry, at her lover, she found his features no longer distorted by anger, but disgusted, as though he were witnessing an unpleasant spectacle.



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Nevertheless she danced a short time longer without looking at him, until suddenly the remembrance of his reproving glance spoiled her pleasure in this rare enjoyment.

She whispered to the duke that she was satisfied.

A wave of his hand stopped the music but, ere returning the bow of her distinguished partner, Barbara looked for the Emperor.

Her eyes sought him in vain—he had left the turf under the lindens before the close of the dance. The Bishop of Arras, Malfalconnet, and several of the ladies and gentlemen who had left the tent in no small number and gone to the scene of the dancing after learning what was taking place there, had remained after the monarch's departure. Most of them joined in the applause which the younger Granvelle eagerly commenced when the city pipers lowered their instruments.

Barbara heard it, and saw that Bernhard Trainer and other young citizens of Ratisbon were following the courtiers' example, but she seemed scarcely to notice the demonstration.

The doubt whether Charles had merely not waited till the end of the dance, or had already left the festival, made her forget everything else. Through the Bishop of Arras she learned that his Majesty had gone home.

No one, not even the baron and Quijada, had received a message for her.

This fresh humiliation pierced her heart like a knife.

On every similar occasion hitherto he had sent her a few kind words, or, if Don Luis was the messenger, tender ones.

Yet she was obliged to force herself to smile, in order not to betray what was passing in her mind. Besides, she could not shake off the Duke of Saxony like the poor, handsome recruiting officer, Pyramus Kogel.

Fortunately, some of the most prominent Ratisbon citizens now crowded around Maurice to thank him for the honour which he had done the city.

She availed herself of the favourable opportunity to beg Granvelle, in a low tone, to keep the duke away from her the next morning until his departure at noon, and, if possible, now."

"One service for another," replied the statesman. "I will rid you of the most desirable admirer in Germany. But, on the day after to-morrow, you will adorn my modest banquet with the singing of the most gifted artist in the world."



“Gladly, unless his Majesty forbids me to do so,” replied Barbara.

A few minutes later she informed her passionate young ducal lover, who wished to call upon her in her own home that very evening, that it would be utterly impossible. With an air of the greatest regret, she said that her little castle was guarded like an endangered citadel; and when the duke proposed a meeting, he was interrupted by the Bishop of Arras, who desired to speak to him about “important business.”

In spite of the late hour, the minister, even without the girl’s request, would have sought an audience with the duke, and to the ambitious Maurice politics and the important plans being prepared for immediate execution were of infinitely greater value than a love adventure, no matter what hours of pleasure it promised to afford.



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So Barbara succeeded in taking leave of the duke without giving him offence.

The marquise was waiting for her with ill-repressed indignation. The weary old woman had wanted to return home long before, but the command of the grand chamberlain compelled her to wait for Barbara and accompany her the short distance to the house.

With an angry glance and a few bitter-sweet words of greeting, the old dame entered the litter. Barbara preferred to walk beside hers, for clouds had darkened the sky; it had become oppressively sultry, and she felt as if she would stifle in the close, swaying box.

Four torch-bearers accompanied the litters. She ordered the knight and the two lackeys whom Quijada had commissioned to attend her to remain behind, and also refused the service of the little Maltese, who—oh, how gladly!—would have acted as a page and carried her train.

As the shipwrecked man on a plank amid the endless surges longs for land, Barbara longed to get away, far away from the noise of the festival. Yet she dreaded the solitude which she was approaching, for she now perceived how foolishly she had acted, and with what sinful recklessness she had perhaps forfeited the happiness of her life on this luckless evening.

But need she idly wait for the doom to which she was condemned? He whose bright eyes could beam on her so radiantly had just wounded her with angry glances, like a foe or a stern judge, and his indignation had not been groundless.

What had life to offer her without his love? The wantonly bold venture had been baffled. Yet no! All was not yet lost!

Suppose she should summon courage to steal back to him and on her knees repentantly beseech him to forgive her?

But she cherished this desire only a few moments. Then the angry, wronged heart rebelled against such humiliation. She had not so shamefully offended the Emperor, but the lover, and it was his place to entreat her not to withdraw the love which made him happy.

The young girl raised her head with fresh courage. What had happened more than she had expected?

Because he loved her, he had become jealous, and made her feel his anger. But if she should now persistently withdraw from him, and let him realize how deeply he had offended her, she could not fail to win the game. In spite of all his crowns and kingdoms, he was only a man, and must not she, who in a few brief hours had forced a Maurice of Saxony to sue yearningly for her love, succeed by the might of her art and



her beauty in transforming the wrath of the far older man, Charles, into his former passion?

If the Italian novels with which she was familiar did not lie, not only jealousy, but apparent indifference on the part of the beloved object, fanned the heart of man to burst into fresh flames.



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It was only necessary to hold her impetuous temper in check, and profit by the jealousy which had now been aroused in Charles's mind. Hitherto she had always obeyed hasty impulses. Why should not she, too, succeed in accomplishing a well-considered plan? With the torturing emotions of failure, mortification, desertion, remorse, and yearning for forgiveness, now blended the hope of yet bringing to a successful conclusion the hazardous enterprise which she had already given up as hopeless, and, while walking on, her brain toiled diligently over plans for the campaign which would compel the great general to return with twofold devotion the love of which he had deprived her.

So, in the intense darkness, she followed the light which the torches cast upon the uneven path. At first she had taken up the train of her dress; now it was sweeping the dusty road.

What did she care for the magnificent robe if she regained Charles's love? Of what use would it be if she had lost it, lost it forever?

Before the litters reached the little castle a gust of wind rose, driving large drops of rain, straw, and withered leaves—Barbara could not imagine whence they came in the month of May—into her face. She was obliged to struggle against these harbingers of the coming tempest, and her heart grew lighter during the conflict. She was not born to endure, but to contend.

The scene of the festivities emptied rapidly. The duke and Granvelle drove back to the city in the minister's carriage. Malfalconnet and Quijada, in spite of the gathering storm, went home on foot.

"What a festival!" said Don Luis scornfully.

"In former days such things presented a more superb spectacle even here. But now! No procession, no scarlet save on the cardinals, no golden cross, no venerable priest's head on the whole pleasure ground, and, moreover, neither consecration nor the pious exhortation to remember Heaven, whence comes the joy in which the crowd is rejoicing."

"I, too, missed something here," cried the baron eagerly, "and now I learn through you what it is."

"Will not the heretics themselves gradually feel that they are robbing the pasty of faith of its truffles—what am I saying?—of its salt? May their dry black bread choke them! The only thing that gave the unseasoned meal a certain charm was the capitally performed gagliarde.



“Which angered his Majesty more deeply than you imagine,” replied Don Luis. “The singer’s days are probably numbered. It is a pity! She was wonderfully successful in subduing the spirits of melancholy.”

“The war, on which we can now depend, will do that equally well, if not better,” interrupted the baron. “Within a short time I, too, have lost all admiration for this fair one. Cold-hearted and arrogant. Capable of the utmost extremes when her hot blood urges her on. Unpopular with the people to whom she belongs, and, in spite of her bold courage, surprisingly afraid of the Holy Inquisition. Here, among the heretics, that gives cause for thought.”

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“Enough!” replied Don Luis. “We will let matters take their course. If the worst comes, I, at least, will not move a finger in her behalf.”

“Nor will I,” said Malfalconnet, and both walked quietly on.

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