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A WORD, ONLY A WORD

By Georg Ebers

Volume 4.

CHAPTER XXI.

The admiral's ship, which bore King Philip's ambassador to Venice, reached its destination safely, though it had encountered many severe storms on the voyage, during which Ulrich was the only passenger, who amid the rolling and pitching of the vessel, remained as well as an old sailor.

But, on the other hand his peace of mind was greatly impaired, and any one who had watched him leaning over the ship's bulwark, gazing into the sea, or pacing up and down with restless bearing and gloomy eyes, would scarcely have suspected that this reserved, irritable youth, who was only too often under the dominion of melancholy moods, had won only a short time before a noble human heart, and was on the way to the realization of his boldest dreams, the fulfilment of his most ardent wishes.

How differently he had hoped to enter "the Paradise of Art!"

Never had he been so free, so vigorous, so rich, as in the dawn of the day, at whose close he was to unite Isabella's life with his own--and now--now!

He had expected to wander through Italy from place to place as untrammelled, gay, and free as the birds in the air; he had desired to see, admire, enjoy, and after becoming familiar with all the great artists, choose a new master among them. Sophonisba's home was to have become his, and it had never entered his mind to limit the period of his enjoyment and study on the sacred soil.

How differently his life must now be ordered! Until he went on board of the ship in Valencia, the thought of calling a girl so good, sensible and loving as Isabella his own, rejoiced and inspired him, but during the solitary hours a sea-voyage so lavishly bestows, a strange transformation in his feelings occurred.

The wider became the watery expanse between him and Spain, the farther receded Isabella's memory, the less alluring and delightful grew the thought of possessing her hand.

He now told himself that, before the fatal hour, he had rejoiced at the anticipation of escaping her pedantic criticism, and when he looked forward to the future and saw himself, handsome Ulrich Navarrete, whose superior height filled the smaller Castilians with envy, walking through the streets with his tiny wife, and perceived the smiles of the people they met, he was seized with fierce indignation against himself and his hard fate.

He felt fettered like the galley-slaves, whose chains rattled and clanked, as they pulled at the oars in the ship's waist. At other times he could not help recalling her large, beautiful, love-beaming eyes, her soft, red lips, and yearningly confess that it would have been sweet to hold her in his arms and kiss her, and, since he had forever lost his Ruth, he could find no more faithful, sensible, tender wife than she.

But what should he, the student, the wandering disciple of Art, do with a bride, a wife? The best and fairest of her sex would now have seemed to him an impediment, a wearisome clog. The thought of being obliged to accomplish some fixed task within a certain time, and then be subjected to an examination, curbed his enjoyment, oppressed, angered him.

Grey mists gathered more and more densely over the sunny land, for which he had longed with such passionate ardor, and it seemed as if in that luckless hour, he had been faithless to the "word,"--had deprived himself of its assistance forever.

He often felt tempted to send Coello his ducats and tell him he had been hasty, and cherished no desire to wed his daughter; but perhaps that would break the heart of the poor, dear little thing, who loved him so tenderly! He would be no dishonorable ingrate, but bear the consequences of his own recklessness.

Perhaps some miracle would happen in Italy, Art's own domain. Perhaps the sublime goddess would again take him to her heart, and exert on him also the power Sophonisba had so fervently praised.

The ambassador and his secretary, de Soto, thought Ulrich an unsocial dreamer; but nevertheless, after they reached Venice, the latter invited him to share his lodgings, for Don Juan had requested him to interest himself in the young artist.

What could be the matter with the handsome fellow? The secretary tried to question him, but Ulrich did not betray what troubled him, only alluding in general terms to a great anxiety that burdened his mind.

"But the time is now coming when the poorest of the poor, the most miserable of all forsaken mortals, cast aside their griefs!" cried de Soto. "Day after to-morrow the joyous Carnival season will begin! Hold up your head, young man! Cast your sorrows into the Grand Canal, and until Ash-Wednesday, imagine that heaven has fallen upon earth!"

Oh! blue sea, that washes the lagunes, oh! mast-thronged Lido, oh! palace of the Doges, that chains the eye, as well as the backward gazing, mind, oh! dome of St. Mark, in thy incomparable garb of gold and paintings, oh! ye steeds and other divine works of bronze, ye noble palaces, for which the still surface of the placid water serves as a mirror, thou square of St. Mark, where, clad in velvet, silk and gold, the richest and freest of all races display their magnificence, with just pride! Thou harbor, thou forest of masts, thou countless fleet of stately galleys, which bind one quarter of the globe to another,

inspiring terror, compelling obedience, and gaining boundless treasures by peaceful voyages and with shining blades. Oh! thou Rialto, where gold is stored, as wheat and rye are elsewhere;--ye proud nobles, ye fair dames with luxuriant tresses, whose raven hue pleases ye not, and which ye dye as bright golden as the glittering zechins ye squander with such small, yet lavish hands! Oh! Venice, Queen of the sea, mother of riches, throne of power, hall of fame, temple of art, who could escape thy spell!

What wanton Spring is to the earth, thy carnival season is to thee! It transforms the magnificence of color of the lagune-city into a dazzling radiance, the smiles to Olympic laughter, the love-whispers to exultant songs, the noisy, busy life of the mighty commercial city into a mad whirlpool, which draws everything into its circle, and releases nothing it has once seized.

De Soto urged and pushed the youth, who had already lost his mental equipoise, into the midst of the gulf, ere he had found the right current.

On the barges, amid the throngs in the streets, at banquets, in ball-rooms, at the gaming-table, everywhere, the young, golden-haired, superbly-dressed artist, who was on intimate terms with the Spanish king's ambassador, attracted the attention of men, and the eyes, curiosity and admiration of the women; though people as yet knew not whence he came.

He chose the tallest and most stately of the slender dames of Venice to lead in the dance, or through the throng of masks and citizens intoxicated with the mirth of the carnival. Whithersoever he led the fairest followed.

He wished to enjoy the respite before execution. To forget--to forget--to indemnify himself for future seasons of sacrifice, dulness, self-conquest, torment.

Poor little Isabella! Your lover sought to enjoy the sensation of showing himself to the crowd with the stateliest woman in the company on his arm! And you, Ulrich, how did you feel when people exclaimed behind you: "A splendid pair! Look at that couple!"

Amid this ecstasy, he needed no helping word, neither "fortune" nor "art; "without any magic spell he flew from pleasure to pleasure, through every changing scene, thinking only of the present and asking no questions about the future.

Like one possessed he plunged into passion's wild whirl. From the embrace of beautiful arms he rushed to the gaming-table, where the ducats he flung down soon became a pile of gold; the zechins filled his purse to overflowing.

The quickly-won treasure melted like snow in the sun, and returned again like stray doves to their open cote.

The works of art were only enjoyed with drunken eyes--yet, once more the gracious word exerted its wondrous power on the misguided youth.

On Shrove-Tuesday, the ambassador took Ulrich to the great Titian.

He stood face to face with the mighty monarch of colors, listened to gracious words from his lips, and saw the nonogenarian, whose tall figure was scarcely bowed, receive the king's gifts.

Never, never, to the close of his existence could he forget that face!

The features were as delicately and as clearly outlined, as if cut with an engraver's chisel from hard metal; but pallid, bloodless, untinged by the faintest trace of color. The long, silver-white beard of the tall venerable painter flowed in thick waves over his breast, and the eyes, with which he scanned Ulrich, were those of a vigorous, keen-sighted man. His voice did not sound harsh, but sad and melancholy; deep sorrow shadowed his glance, and stamped itself upon the mouth of him, whose thin, aged hand still ensnared the senses easily and surely with gay symphonies of color!

The youth answered the distinguished Master's questions with trembling lips, and when Titian invited him to share his meal, and Ulrich, seated at the lower end of the table in the brilliant banqueting-hall, was told by his neighbors with what great men he was permitted to eat, he felt so timid, small, and insignificant, that he scarcely ventured to touch the goblets and delicious viands the servants offered.

He looked and listened; distinguishing his old master's name, and hearing him praised without stint as a portrait-painter. He was questioned about him, and gave confused answers.

Then the guests rose.

The February sun was shining into the lofty window, where Titian seated himself to talk more gaily than before with Paolo Cagliari, Veronese, and other great artists and nobles.

Again Ulrich heard Moor mentioned. Then the old man, from whom the youth had not averted his eyes for an instant, beckoned, and Cagliari called him, saying that he, the gallant Antonio Moor's pupil, must now show what he could do; the Master, Titian, would give him a task.

A shudder ran through his frame; cold drops of perspiration, extorted by fear, stood on his brow.

The old man now invited him to accompany his nephew to the studio. Daylight would last an hour longer. He might paint a Jew; no usurer nor dealer in clothes, but one of the noble race of prophets, disciples, apostles.

Ulrich stood before the easel.

For the first time after a long period he again called upon the "word," and did so fervently, with all his heart. His beloved dead, who in the tumult of carnival mirth had vanished from his memory, again rose before his mind, among them the doctor, who gazed rebukingly at him with his clear, thoughtful eyes.

Like an inspiration a thought darted through the youth's brain. He could and would paint Costa, his friend and teacher, Ruth's father.

The portrait he had drawn when a boy appeared before his memory, feature for feature. A red pencil lay close at hand.

Sketching the outlines with a few hasty strokes, he seized the brush, and while hurriedly guiding it and mixing the colors, he saw in fancy Costa standing before him, asking him to paint his portrait.

Ulrich had never forgotten the mild expression of the eyes, the smile hovering about the delicate lips, and now delineated them as well as he could. The moments slipped by, and the portrait gained roundness and life. The youth stepped back to see what it still needed, and once more called upon the "word" from the inmost depths of his heart; at the same instant the door opened, and leaning on a younger painter, Titian, with several other artists, entered the studio.

He looked at the picture, then at Ulrich, and said with an approving smile: "See, see! Not too much of the Jew, and a perfect apostle! A Paul, or with longer hair and a little more youthful aspect, an admirable St. John. Well done, well done! my son!"

Well done, well done! These words from Titian had ennobled his work; they echoed loudly in his soul, and the measure of his bliss threatened to overflow, when no less a personage than the famous Paolo Veronese, invited him to come to his studio as a pupil on Saturday.

Enraptured, animated by fresh hope, he threw himself into his gondola.

Everyone had left the palace, where he lodged with de Soto. Who would remain at home on the evening of Shrove-Tuesday?

The lonely rooms grew too confined for him.

Quiet days would begin early the next morning, and on Saturday a new, fruitful life in the service of the only true word, Art, divine Art, would commence for him. He would enjoy this one more evening of pleasure, this night of joy; drain it to the dregs. He fancied he had won a right that day to taste every bliss earth could give.

Torches, pitch-pans and lamps made the square of St. Mark's as bright as day, and the maskers crowded upon its smooth pavement as if it were the floor of an immense ball-room.

Intoxicating music, loud laughter, low, tender whispers, sweet odors from

the floating tresses of fair women bewildered Ulrich's senses, already confused by success and joy. He boldly accosted every one, and if he suspected that a fair face was concealed under a mask, drew nearer, touched the strings of a lute, that hung by a purple ribbon round his neck, and in the notes of a tender song besought love.

Many a wave of the fan rewarded, many an angry glance from men's dark eyes rebuked the bold wooer. A magnificent woman of queenly height now passed, leaning on the arm of a richly-dressed cavalier.

Was not that the fair Claudia, who a short time before had lost enormous sums at the gaming-table in the name of the rich Grimani, and who had invited Ulrich to visit her later, during Lent?

It was, he could not be mistaken, and now followed the pair like a shadow, growing bolder and bolder the more angrily the cavalier rebuffed him with wrathful glances and harsh words; for the lady did not cease to signify that she recognized him and enjoyed his playing. But the nobleman was not disposed to endure this offensive sport. Pausing in the middle of the square, he released his arm with a contemptuous gesture, saying: "The lute-player, or I, my fair one; you can decide----"

The Venetian laughed loudly, laid her hand on Ulrich's arm and said: "The rest of the Shrove-Tuesday night shall be yours, my merry singer."

Ulrich joined in her gayety, and taking the lute from his neck, offered it to the cavalier, with a defiant gesture, exclaiming:

"It's at your disposal, Mask; we have changed parts. But please hold it firmer than you held your lady." High play went on in the gaming hall; Claudia was lucky with the artist's gold.

At midnight the banker laid down the cards. It was Ash-Wednesday, the hall must be cleared; the quiet Lenten season had begun.

The players withdrew into the adjoining rooms, among them the much-envied couple.

Claudia threw herself upon a couch; Ulrich left her to procure a gondola.

As soon as he was gone, she was surrounded by a motley throng of suitors.

How the beautiful woman's dark eyes sparkled, how the gems on her full neck and dazzling arms glittered, how readily she uttered a witty repartee to each gay sally.

"Claudia unaccompanied!" cried a young noble. "The strangest sight at this remarkable carnival!"

"I am fasting," she answered gaily; "and now that I long for meagre food, you come! What a lucky chance!"

"Heavy Grimani has also become a very light man, with your assistance."

"That's why he flew away. Suppose you follow him?"

"Gladly, gladly, if you will accompany me."

"Excuse me to-day; there comes my knight."

Ulrich had remained absent a long time, but Claudia had not noticed it. Now he bowed to the gentlemen, offered her his arm, and as they descended the staircase, whispered: "The mask who escorted you just now detained me;--and there....see, they are picking him up down there in the courtyard.--He attacked me...."

"You have--you...."

"They came to his assistance immediately. He barred my way with his unsheathed blade."

Claudia hastily drew her hand from the artist's arm, exclaiming in a low, anxious tone: "Go, go, unhappy man, whoever you may be! It was Luigi Grimani; it was a Grimani! You are lost, if they find you. Go, if you love your life, go at once!"

So ended the Shrove-Tuesday, which had begun so gloriously for the young artist. Titian's "well done" no longer sounded cheerfully in his ears, the "go, go," of the venal woman echoed all the more loudly.

De Soto was waiting for him, to repeat to him the high praise he had heard bestowed upon his art-test at Titian's; but Ulrich heard nothing, for he gave the secretary no time to speak, and the latter could only echo the beautiful Claudia's "go, go!" and then smooth the way for his flight.

When the morning of Ash-Wednesday dawned cool and misty, Venice lay behind the young artist. Unpursued, but without finding rest or satisfaction, he went to Parma, Bologna, Pisa, Florence.

Grimani's death burdened his conscience but lightly. Duelling was a battle in miniature, to kill one's foe no crime, but a victory. Far different anxieties tortured him.

Venice, whither the "word" had led him, from which he had hoped and expected everything, was lost to him, and with it Titian's favor and Cagliari's instruction.

He began to doubt himself, his future, the sublime word and its magic spell. The greater the works which the traveller's eyes beheld, the more insignificant he felt, the more pitiful his own powers, his own skill appeared.

"Draw, draw!" advised every master to whom he applied, as soon as he had seen his work. The great men, to whom he offered himself as a pupil, required years of persevering study. But his time was limited, for the

misguided youth's faithful German heart held firmly to one resolve; he must present himself to Coello at the end of the appointed time. The happiness of his life was forfeited, but no one should obtain the right to call him faithless to his word, or a scoundrel.

In Florence he heard Sebastiano Filippi--who had been a pupil of Michael Angelo--praised as a good drawer; so he sought him in Ferrara and found him ready to teach him what he still lacked. But the works of the new master did not please him. The youth, accustomed to Moor's wonderful clearness, Titian's brilliant hues, found Filippi's pictures indistinct, as if veiled by grey mists. Yet he forced himself to remain with him for months, for he was really remarkably skilful in drawing, and his studio never lacked nude models; he needed them for the preliminary studies for his "Day of Judgment."

Without satisfaction, without pleasure in the wearisome work, without love for the sickly master, who held aloof from any social intercourse with him when the hours of labor were over, he felt discontented, bored, disenchanted.

In the evening he sought diversion at the gaming-table, and fortune favored him here as it had done in Venice. His purse overflowed with zechins; but with the red gold, Art withdrew from him her powerful ally, necessity, the pressing need of gaining a livelihood by the exertion of his own strength.

He spent the hours appointed for study like a careless lover, and worked without inclination, without pleasure, without ardor, yet with visible increase of skill.

In gambling he forgot what tortured him, it stirred his blood, dispelled weariness; the gold was nothing to him.

The lion's share of his gains he loaned to broken gamblers, without expectation of return, gave to starving artists, or flung with lavish hand to beggars.

So the months in Ferrara glided by, and when the allotted time was over, he took leave of Sebastiano Filippi without regret. He returned by sea to Spain, and arrived in Madrid richer than he had gone away, but with impoverished confidence in his own powers, and doubting the omnipotence of Art.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ulrich again stood before the Alcazar, and recalled the hour when, a poor lad, just escaped from prison, he had been harshly rebuffed by the same porter, who now humbly saluted the young gentleman attired in costly velvet.

And yet how gladly he would have crossed this threshold poor as in those days, but free and with a soul full of enthusiasm and hope; how joyfully he would have effaced from his life the years that lay between that time and the present.

He dreaded meeting the Coellos; nothing but honor urged him to present himself to them.

Yes--and if the old man rejected him?--so much the better!

The old cheerful confusion reigned in the studio. He had a long time to wait there, and then heard through several doors Senora Petra's scolding voice and her husband's angry replies.

At last Coello came to him and after greeting him, first formally, then cordially, and enquiring about his health and experiences, he shrugged his shoulders, saying:

"My wife does not wish you to see Isabella again before the trial. You must show what you can do, of course; but I.... you look well and apparently have collected reales. Or is it true," and he moved his hand as if shaking a dice-box. "He who wins is a good fellow, but we want no more to do with such people here! You find me the same as of old, and you have returned at the right time, that is something. De Soto has told me about your quarrel in Venice. The great masters were pleased with you and this, you Hotspur, you forfeited! Ferrara for Venice! A poor exchange. Filippi--understands drawing; but otherwise.... Michael Angelo's pupil! Does he still write on his back? Every monk is God's servant, but in how few does the Lord dwell! What have you drawn with Sebastiano?"

Ulrich answered these questions in a subdued tone; and Coello listened with only partial attention, for he heard his wife telling the duenna Catalina in an adjoining room what she thought of her husband's conduct. She did so very loudly, for she wished to be overheard by him and Ulrich. But she was not to obtain her purpose, for Coello suddenly interrupted the returned travellers story, saying:

"This is getting beyond endurance. If she does her utmost, you shall see Isabella. A welcome, a grasp of the hand, nothing more. Poor young lovers! If only it did not require such a confounded number of things to live....Well, we will see!"

As soon as the artist had entered the adjoining room, a new and more violent quarrel arose there, but, though Senora Petra finally called a fainting-fit to her aid, her husband remained firm, and at last returned to the studio with Isabella.

Ulrich had awaited her, as a criminal expects his sentence. Now she stood before him led by her father's hand--and he, he struck his forehead with his fist, closed his eyes and opened them again to look at her--to gaze as if he beheld a wondrous apparition. Then feeling as if he should die of shame, grief, and joyful surprise, he stood spellbound, and knew

not what to do, save to extend both hands to her, or what to say, save I...I--I," then with a sudden change of tone exclaimed like a madman:

"You don't know! I am not.... Give me time, master. Here, here, girl, you must, you shall, all must not be over!"

He had opened his arms wide, and now hastily approached her with the eager look of the gambler, who has staked his last penny on a card.

Coello's daughter did not obey.

She was no longer little, unassuming Belita; here stood no child, but a beautiful, blooming maiden. In eighteen months her figure had gained height; anxious yearning and constant contention with her mother had wasted her superabundance of flesh; her face had become oval, her bearing self-possessed. Her large, clear eyes now showed their full beauty, her half-developed features had acquired exquisite symmetry, and her raven-black hair floated, like a shining ornament, around her pale, charming face.

"Happy will be the man, who is permitted to call this woman his own!" cried a voice in the youth's breast, but another voice whispered "Lost, lost, forfeited, trifled away!"

Why did she not obey his call? Why did she not rush into his open arms? Why, why?

He clenched his fists, bit his lips, for she did not stir, except to press closely to her father's side.

This handsome, splendidly-dressed gentleman, with the pointed beard, deep-set eyes, and stern, gloomy gaze, was an entirely different person from the gay enthusiastic follower of art, for whom her awakening heart had first throbbed more quickly; this was not the future master, who stood before her mind as a glorious favorite of fortune and the muse, transfigured by joyous creation and lofty success--this defiant giant did not look like an artist. No, no; yonder man no longer resembled the Ulrich, to whom, in the happiest hour of her life, she had so willingly, almost too willingly, offered her pure lips.

Isabella's young heart contracted with a chill, yet she saw that he longed for her; she knew, could not deny, that she had bound herself to him body and soul, and yet--yet, she would so gladly have loved him.

She strove to speak, but could find no words, save "Ulrich, Ulrich," and these did not sound gay and joyous, but confused and questioning.

Coello felt her fingers press his shoulder closer and closer. She was surely seeking protection and aid from him, to keep her promise and resist her lover's passionate appeal.

Now his darling's eyes filled with tears, and he felt the tremor of her limbs.

Softened by affectionate weakness and no longer able to resist the impulse to see his little Belita happy, he whispered:

"Poor thing, poor young lovers! Do as you choose, I won't look."

But Isabella did not leave him; she only drew herself up higher, summoned all her courage and looking the returned traveller more steadily in the face, said:

"You are so changed, so entirely changed, Ulrich I cannot tell what has come over me. I have anticipated this hour day and night, and now it is here;--what is this? What has placed itself between us?"

"What, indeed!" he indignantly exclaimed, advancing towards her with a threatening air. "What? Surely you must know! Your mother has destroyed your regard for the poor bungler. Here I stand! Have I kept my promise, yes or no? Have I become a monster, a venomous serpent? Do not look at me so again, do not! It will do no good; to you or me. I will not allow myself to be trifled with!"

Ulrich had shouted these words, as if some great injustice had been done him, and he believed himself in the right.

Coello tried to release himself from his daughter, to confront the passionately excited man, but she held him back, and with a pale face and trembling voice, but proud and resolute manner, answered:

"No one has trifled with you, I least of all; my love has been earnest, sacred earnest."

"Earnest!" interrupted Ulrich, with cutting irony.

"Yes, yes, sacred earnest;--and when my mother told me you had killed a man and left Venice for a worthless woman's sake, when it was rumored, that in Ferrara you had become a gambler, I thought: 'I know him better, they are slandering him to destroy the love you bear in your heart.'

I did not believe it; but now I do. I believe it, and shall do so, till you have withstood your trial. For the gambler I am too good, to the artist Navarrete I will joyfully keep my promise. Not a word, I will hear no more. Come, father! If he loves me, he will understand how to win me. I am afraid of this man."

Ulrich now knew who was in fault, and who in the right. Strong impulse urged him away from the studio, away from Art and his betrothed bride; for he had forfeited all the best things in life.

But Coello barred his way. He was not the man, for the sake of a brawl and luck at play, to break friendship with the faithful companion, who had shown distinctly enough how fondly he loved his darling. He had hidden behind these bushes himself in his youth, and yet become a skilful artist and good husband.

He willingly yielded to his wife in small matters, in important ones he meant to remain master of the house. Herrera was a great scholar and artist, but an insignificant man; and he allowed himself to be paid like a bungler. Ulrich's manly beauty had pleased him, and under his, Coello's teaching, he would make his mark. He, the father knew better what suited Isabella than she herself. Girls do not sob so bitterly as she had done, as soon as the door of the studio closed behind her, unless they are in love.

Whence did she obtain this cool judgment? Certainly not from him, far less from her mother.

Perhaps she only wished to arouse Navarrete to do his best at the trial. Coello smiled; it was in his power to judge mildly.

So he detained Ulrich with cheering words, and gave him a task in which he could probably succeed. He was to paint a Madonna and Child, and two months were allowed him for the work. There was a studio in the Casa del Campo, he could paint there and need only promise never to visit the Alcazar before the completion of the work.

Ulrich consented. Isabella must be his. Scorn for scorn!

She should learn which was the stronger.

He knew not whether he loved or hated her, but her resistance had passionately inflamed his longing to call her his. He was determined, by summoning all his powers, to create a masterpiece. What Titian had approved must satisfy a Coello! so he began the task.

A strong impulse urged him to sketch boldly and without long consideration, the picture of the Madonna, as it had once lived in his soul, but he restrained himself, repeating the warning words which had so often been dinned into his ears: Draw, draw!

A female model was soon found; but instead of trusting his eyes and boldly reproducing what he beheld, he measured again and again, and effaced what the red pencil had finished. While painting his courage rose, for the hair, flesh, and dress seemed to him to become true to nature and effective. But he, who in better times had bound himself heart and soul to Art and served her with his whole soul, in this picture forced himself to a method of work, against which his inmost heart rebelled. His model was beautiful, but he could read nothing in the regular features, except that they were fair, and the lifeless countenance became distasteful to him. The boy too caused him great trouble, for he lacked appreciation of the charm of childish innocence, the spell of childish character.

Meantime he felt great secret anxiety. The impulse that moved his brush was no longer the divine pleasure in creation of former days, but dread of failure, and ardent, daily increasing love for Isabella.

Weeks elapsed.

Ulrich lived in the lonely little palace to which he had retired, avoiding all society, toiling early and late with restless, joyless industry, at a work which pleased him less with every new day.

Don Juan of Austria sometimes met him in the park. Once the Emperor's son called to him:

"Well, Navarrete, how goes the enlisting?"

But Ulrich would not abandon his art, though he had long doubted its omnipotence. The nearer the second month approached its close, the more frequently, the more fervently he called upon the "word," but it did not hear.

When it grew dark, a strong impulse urged him to go to the city, seek brawls, and forget himself at the gaming-table; but he did not yield, and to escape the temptation, fled to the church, where he spent whole hours, till the sacristan put out the lights.

He was not striving for communion with the highest things, he felt no humble desire for inward purification; far different motives influenced him.

Inhaling the atmosphere laden with the soft music of the organ and the fragrant incense, he could converse with his beloved dead, as if they were actually present; the wayward man became a child, and felt all the gentle, tender emotions of his early youth again stir his heart.

One night during the last week before the expiration of the allotted time, a thought which could not fail to lead him to his goal, darted into his brain like a revelation.

A beautiful woman, with a child standing in her lap, adorned the canvas.

What efforts he had made to lend these features the right expression.

Memory should aid him to gain his purpose. What woman had ever been fairer, more tender and loving than his own mother?

He distinctly recalled her eyes and lips, and during the last few days remaining to him, his Madonna obtained Florette's joyous expression, while the sensual, alluring charm, that had been peculiar to the mouth of the musician's daughter, soon hovered around the Virgin's lips.

Ay, this was a mother, this must be a true mother, for the picture resembled his own!

The gloomier the mood that pervaded his own soul, the more sunny and bright the painting seemed. He could not weary of gazing at it, for it transported him to the happiest hours of his childhood, and when the Madonna looked down upon him, it seemed as if he beheld the balsams behind the window of the smithy in the market-place, and again saw the

Handsome nobles, who lifted him from his laughing mother's lap to set him on their shoulders.

Yes! In this picture he had been aided by the "joyous art," in whose honor Paolo Veronese, had at one of Titian's banquets, started up, drained a glass of wine to the dregs, and hurled it through the window into the canal.

He believed himself sure of success, and could no longer cherish anger against Isabella. She had led him back into the right path, and it would be sweet, rapturously sweet, to bear the beloved maiden tenderly and gently in his strong arms over the rough places of life.

One morning, according to the agreement, he notified Coello that the Madonna was completed.

The Spanish artist appeared at noon, but did not come alone, and the man, who preceded him, was no less important a personage than the king himself.

With throbbing heart, unable to utter a single word, Ulrich opened the door of the studio, bowing low before the monarch, who without vouchsafing him a single glance, walked solemnly to the painting.

Coello drew aside the cloth that covered it, and the sarcastic chuckle Ulrich had so often heard instantly echoed from the king's lips; then turning to Coello he angrily exclaimed, loud enough to be heard by the young artist:

"Scandalous! Insulting, offensive botchwork! A Bacchante in the garb of a Madonna! And the child! Look at those legs! When he grows up, he may become a dancing-master. He who paints such Madonnas should drop his colors! His place is the stable--among refractory horses."

Coello could make no reply, but the king, glancing at the picture again, cried wrathfully:

"A Christian's work, a Christian's! What does the reptile who painted this know of the mother, the Virgin, the stainless lily, the thornless rose, the path by which God came to men, the mother of sorrow, who bought the world with her tears, as Christ did with His sacred blood. I have seen enough, more than enough! Escovedo is waiting for me outside! We will discuss the triumphal arch to-morrow!"

Philip left the studio, the court-artist accompanying him to the door.

When he returned, the unhappy youth was still standing in the same place, gazing, panting for breath, at his condemned work.

"Poor fellow!" said Coello, compassionately, approaching him; but Ulrich interrupted, gasping in broken accents:

"And you, you? Your verdict!"

The other shrugged his shoulders and answered with sincere pity:

"His Majesty is not indulgent; but come here and look yourself. I will not speak of the child, though it.... In God's name, let us leave it as it is. The picture impresses me as it did the king, and the Madonna-- I grieve to say it, she belongs anywhere rather than in Heaven. How often this subject is painted! If Meister Antonio, if Moor should see this...."

"Then, then?" asked Ulrich, his eyes glowing with a gloomy fire.

"He would compel you to begin at the beginning once more. I am sincerely sorry for you, and not less so for poor Belita. My wife will triumph! You know I have always upheld your cause; but this luckless work..."

"Enough!" interrupted the youth. Rushing to the picture, he thrust his maul-stick through it, then kicked easel and painting to the floor.

Coello, shaking his head, watched him, and tried to soothe him with kindly words, but Ulrich paid no heed, exclaiming:

"It is all over with art, all over. A Dios, Master! Your daughter does not care for love without art, and art and I have nothing more to do with each other."

At the door he paused, strove to regain his self-control, and at last held out his hand to Coello, who was gazing sorrowfully after him.

The artist gladly extended his, and Ulrich, pressing it warmly, murmured in an agitated, trembling voice:

"Forgive this raving....It is only....I only feel, as if I was bearing all that had been dear to me to the grave. Thanks, Master, thanks for many kindnesses. I am, I have--my heart--my brain, everything is confused. I only know that you, that Isabella, have been kind to me. and I, I have--it will kill me yet! Good fortune gone! Art gone! A Dios, treacherous world! A Dios, divine art!"

As he uttered the last sentence he drew his hand from the artist's grasp, rushed back into the studio, and with streaming eyes pressed his lips to the palette, the handle of the brush, and his ruined picture; then he dashed past Coello into the street.

The artist longed to go to his child; but the king detained him in the park. At last he was permitted to return to the Alcazar.

Isabella was waiting on the steps, before the door of their apartments. She had stood there a long, long time.

"Father!" she called.

Coello looked up sadly and gave an answer in the negative by

compassionately waving his hand.

The young girl shivered, as if a chill breeze had struck her, and when the artist stood beside her, she gazed enquiringly at him with her dark eyes, which looked larger than ever in the pallid, emaciated face, and said in a low, firm tone:

"I want to speak to him. You will take me to the picture. I must see it."

"He has thrust his maul-stick through it. Believe me, child, you would have condemned it yourself."

"And yet, yet! I must see it," she answered earnestly, "see it with these eyes. I feel, I know--he is an artist. Wait, I'll get my mantilla."

Isabella hurried back with flying feet, and when a short time after, wearing the black lace kerchief on her head, she descended the staircase by her father's side, the private secretary de Soto came towards them, exclaiming:

"Do you want to hear the latest news, Coello? Your pupil Navarrete has become faithless to you and the noble art of painting. Don Juan gave him the enlistment money fifteen minutes ago. Better be a good trooper, than a mediocre artist! What is the matter, Senorita?"

"Nothing, nothing," Isabella murmured gently, and fell fainting on her father's breast.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Two years had passed. A beautiful October day was dawning; no cloud dimmed the azure sky, and the sun's disk rose, glowing crimson, behind the narrow strait, that afforded ingress to the Gulf of Corinth.

The rippling waves of the placid sea, which here washed the sunny shores of Hellas, yonder the shady coasts of the Peloponnesus, glittered like fresh blooming blue-bottles.

Bare, parched rocks rise in naked beauty at the north of the bay, and the rays of the young day-star shot golden threads through the light white mists, that floated around them.

The coast of Morea faces the north; so dense shadows still rested on the stony olive-groves and the dark foliage of the pink laurel and oleander bushes, whose dense clumps followed the course of the stream and filled the ravines.

How still, how pleasant it usually was here in the early morning!

White sea-gulls hovered peacefully over the waves, a fishing-boat or galley glided gently along, making shining furrows in the blue mirror of the water; but today the waves curled under the burden of countless ships, to-day thousands of long oars lashed the sea, till the surges splashed high in the air with a wailing, clashing sound. To-day there was a loud clanking, rattling, roaring on both sides of the water-gate, which afforded admittance to the Bay of Lepanto.

The roaring and shouting reverberated in mighty echoes from the bare northern cliffs, but were subdued by the densely wooded southern shore.

Two vast bodies of furious foes confronted each other like wrestlers, who stretch their sinewy arms to grasp and hurl their opponents to the ground.

Pope Pius the Fifth had summoned Christianity to resist the land-devouring power of the Ottomans. Cyprus, Christian Cyprus, the last province Venice possessed in the Levant, had fallen into the hands of the Moslems. Spain and Venice had formed an alliance with Christ's vicegerent; Genoese, other Italians, and the Knights of St. John were assembling in Messina to aid the league.

The finest and largest Christian armada, which had left a Christian port for a long time, put forth to sea from this harbor. In spite of all intrigues, King Philip had entrusted the chief command to his young half-brother, Don Juan of Austria.

The Ottomans too had not been idle, and with twelve myriads of soldiers on three hundred ships, awaited the foe in the Gulf of Lepanto.

Don Juan made no delay. The Moslems had recently murdered thousands of Christians at Cyprus, an outrage the fiery hero could not endure, so he cast to the winds the warnings and letters of counsel from Madrid, which sought to curb his impetuous energy, his troops, especially the Venetians, were longing for vengeance.

But the Moslems were no less eager for the fray, and at the close of his council-of-war, and contrary to its decision, Kapudan Pacha sailed to meet the enemy.

On the morning of October 7th every ship, every man was ready for battle.

The sun appeared, and from the Spanish ships musical bell-notes rose towards heaven, blending with the echoing chant: "Allahu akbar, allahu akbar, allahu akbar," and the devout words: "There is no God save Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah; to prayer!"

"To prayer!" The iron tongue of the bell uttered the summons, as well as the resonant voice of the Muezzin, who to-day did not call the worshippers to devotion from the top of a minaret, but from the masthead of a ship. On both sides of the narrow seagate, thousands of Moslems and Christians thought, hoped and believed, that the Omnipotent One heard

them.

The bells and chanting died away, and a swift galley with Don Juan on board, moved from ship to ship. The young hero, holding a crucifix in his hand, shouted encouraging words to the Christian soldiers.

The blare of trumpets, roll of drums, and shouts of command echoed from the rocky shores.

The armada moved forward, the admiral's galley, with Don Juan, at its head.

The Turkish fleet advanced to meet it.

The young lion no longer asked the wise counsel of the experienced admiral. He desired nothing, thought of nothing, issued no orders, except "forward," "attack," "board," "kill," "sink," "destroy!"

The hostile fleets clashed into the fight as bulls, bellowing sullenly, rush upon each other with lowered heads and bloodshot eyes.

Who, on this day of vengeance, thought of Marco Antonio Colonna's plan of battle, or the wise counsels of Doria, Venieri, Giustiniani?

Not the clear brain and keen eye--but manly courage and strength would turn the scale to-day. Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, had joined his young uncle a short time before, and now commanded a squadron of Genoese ships in the front. He was to keep back till Doria ordered him to enter the battle. But Don Juan had already boarded the vessel commanded by the Turkish admiral, scaled the deck, and with a heavy sword-stroke felled Kapudan Pacha. Alexander witnessed the scene, his impetuous, heroic courage bore him on, and he too ordered: "Forward!"

What was the huge ship he was approaching? The silver crescent decked its scarlet pennon, rows of cannon poured destruction from its sides, and its lofty deck was doubly defended by bearded wearers of the turban.

It was the treasure-galley of the Ottoman fleet. It would be a gallant achievement could the prince vanquish this bulwark, this stronghold of the foe; which was three times greater in size, strength, and number of its crew, than Farnese's vessel. What did he care, what recked he of the shower of bullets and tar-hoops that awaited him?

Up and at them.

Doria made warning signals, but the prince paid no heed, he would neither see nor hear them.

Brave soldiers fell bleeding and gasping on the deck beside him, his mast was split and came crashing down. "Who'll follow me?" he shouted, resting his hand on the bulwark.

The tried Spanish warriors, with whom Don Juan had manned his vessel,

hesitated. Only one stepped mutely and resolutely to his side, flinging over his shoulder the two-handed sword, whose hilt nearly reached to the tall youth's eyes.

Every one on board knew the fair-haired giant. It was the favorite of the commander in chief--it was Navarrete, who in the war against the Moors of Cadiz and Baza had performed many an envied deed of valor. His arm seemed made of steel; he valued his life no more than one of the plumes in his helmet, and risked it in battle as recklessly as he did his zechins at the gaming-table.

Here, as well as there, he remained the winner.

No one knew exactly whence he came as he never mentioned his family, for he was a reserved, unsocial man; but on the voyage to Lepanto he had formed a friendship with a sick soldier, Don Miguel Cervantes. The latter could tell marvellous tales, and had his own peculiar opinions about everything between heaven and earth.

Navarrete, who carried his head as high as the proudest grandee, devoted every leisure hour to his suffering comrade, uniting the affection of a brother, with the duties of a servant.

It was known that Navarrete had once been an artist, and he seemed one of the most fervent of the devout Castilians, for he entered every church and chapel the army passed, and remained standing a long, long time before many a Madonna and altar-painting as if spellbound.

Even the boldest dared not attack him, for death hovered over his sword, yet his heart had not hardened. He gave winnings and booty with lavish hand, and every beggar was sure of assistance.

He avoided women, but sought the society of the sick and wounded, often watching all night beside the couch of some sorely-injured comrade, and this led to the rumor that he liked to witness death.

Ah, no! The heart of the proud, lonely man only sought a place where it might be permitted to soften; the soldier, bereft of love, needed some nook where he could exercise on others what was denied to himself: "devoted affection."

Alexander Farnese recognized in Navarrete the horse-tamer of the picadero in Madrid; he nodded approvingly to him, and mounted the bulwark. But the other did not follow instantly, for his friend Don Miguel had joined him, and asked to share the adventure. Navarrete and the captain strove to dissuade the sick man, but the latter suddenly felt cured of his fever, and with flashing eyes insisted on having his own way.

Ulrich did not wait for the end of the dispute, for Farnese was now springing into the hostile ship, and the former, with a bold leap, followed.

Alexander, like himself, carried a two-Banded sword, and both swung them

as mowers do their scythes. They attacked, struck, felled, and the foremost foes shrank from the grim destroyers. Mustapha Pacha, the treasurer and captain of the galley, advanced in person to confront the terrible Christians, and a sword-stroke from Alexander shattered the hand that held the curved sabre, a second stretched the Moslem on the deck.

But the Turks' numbers were greatly superior and threatened to crush the heroes, when Don Miguel Cervantes, Ulrich's friend, appeared with twelve fresh soldiers on the scene of battle, and cut their way to the hard-pressed champions. Other Spanish and Genoese warriors followed and the fray became still more furious.

Ulrich had been forced far away from his royal companion-in-arms, and was now swinging his blade beside his invalid friend. Don Miguel's breast was already bleeding from two wounds, and he now fell by Ulrich's side; a bullet had broken his left arm.

Ulrich stooped and raised him; his men surrounded him, and the Turks were scattered, as the tempest sweeps clouds from the mountain.

Don Miguel tried to lift the sword, which had dropped from his grasp, but he only clutched the empty air, and raising his large eyes as if in ecstasy, pressed his hand upon his bleeding breast, exclaiming enthusiastically: "Wounds are stars; they point the way to the heaven of fame-of-fame...."

His senses failed, and Ulrich bore him in his strong arms to a part of the treasure-ship, which was held by Genoese soldiers. Then he rushed into the fight again, while in his ears still rang his friend's fervid words:

"The heaven of fame!"

That was the last, the highest aim of man! Fame, yes surely fame was the "word"; it should henceforth be his word!

It seemed as if a gloomy multitude of heavy thunderclouds had gathered over the still, blue arm of the sea. The stifling smoke of powder darkened the clear sky like black vapors, while flashes of lightning and peals of thunder constantly illumined and shook the dusky atmosphere.

Here a magazine flew through the air, there one ascended with a fierce crash towards the sky. Wails of pain and shouts of victory, the blare of trumpets, the crash of shattered ships and falling masts blended in hellish uproar.

The sun's light was obscured, but the gigantic frames of huge burning galleys served for torches to light the combatants.

When twilight closed in, the Christians had gained a decisive victory. Don Juan had killed the commander-in-chief of the Ottoman force, Ali Pacha, as Farnese hewed down the treasurer. Uncle and nephew emerged from the battle as heroes worthy of renown, but the glory of this victory

clung to Don Juan's name.

Farnese's bold assault was kindly rebuked by the commander-in-chief, and when the former praised Navarrete's heroic aid before Don Juan, the general gave the bold warrior and gallant trooper, the honorable commission of bearing tidings of the victory to the king. Two galleys stood out to sea in a westerly direction at the same time: a Spanish one, bearing Don Juan's messenger, and a Venetian ship, conveying the courier of the Republic.

The rowers of both vessels had much difficulty in forcing a way through the wreckage, broken masts and planks, the multitude of dead bodies and net work of cordage, which covered the surface of the water; but even amid these obstacles the race began.

The wind and sea were equally favorable to both galleys; but the Venetians outstripped the Spaniards and dropped anchor at Alicante twenty-four hours before the latter.

It was the rider's task, to make up for the time lost by the sailors. The messenger of the Republic was far in advance of the general's. Everywhere that Ulrich changed horses, displaying at short intervals the prophet's banner, which he was to deliver to the king as the fairest trophy of victory--it was inscribed with Allah's name twenty-eight thousand nine hundred times--he met rejoicing throngs, processions, and festal decorations.

Don Juan's name echoed from the lips of men and women, girls and children. This was fame, this was the omnipresence of a god; there could be no higher aspiration for him, who had obtained such honor.

Fame, fame! again echoed in Ulrich's soul; if there is a word, which raises a man above himself and implants his own being in that of millions of fellow-creatures, it is this.

And now he urged one steed after another until it broke down, giving himself no rest even at night; half an hour's ride outside of Madrid he overtook the Venetian, and passed by him with a courteous greeting.

The king was not in the capital, and he went on without delay to the Escorial.

Covered with dust, splashed from head to foot with mud, bruised, tortured as if on the rack, he clung to the saddle, yet never ceased to use whip and spur, and would trust his message to no other horseman.

Now the barren peaks of the Guadarrama mountains lay close before him, now he reached the first workshops, where iron was being forged for the gigantic palace in process of building. How many chimneys smoked, how many hands were toiling for this edifice, which was to comprise a royal residence, a temple, a peerless library, a museum and a tomb.

Numerous carts and sledges, on which blocks of light grey granite had

been drawn hither, barred his way. He rode around them at the peril of falling with his horse over a precipice, and now found himself before a labyrinth of scaffolds and free-stone, in the midst of a wild, grey, treeless mountain valley. What kind of a man was this, who had chosen this desert for his home, in life as well as in death! The Escorial suited King Philip, as King Philip suited the Escorial. Here he felt most at ease, from here the royal spider ceaselessly entangled the world in his skilful nets.

His majesty was attending vespers in the scarcely completed chapel. The chief officer of the palace, Fray Antonio de Villacastin, seeing Ulrich slip from his horse, hastened to receive the tottering soldier's tidings, and led him to the church.

The 'confiteor' had just commenced, but Fray Antonio motioned to the priests, who interrupted the Mass, and Ulrich, holding the prophet's standard high aloft, exclaimed: "An unparalleled victory!--Don Juan.... October 7th....! at Lepanto--the Ottoman navy totally destroyed....!"

Philip heard this great news and saw the standard, but seemed to have neither eyes nor ears; not a muscle in his face stirred, no movement betrayed that anything was passing in his mind. Murmuring in a sarcastic, rather than a joyous tone: "Don Juan has dared much," he gave a sign, without opening the letter, to continue the Mass, remaining on his knees as if nothing had disturbed the sacred rite.

The exhausted messenger sank into a pew and did not wake from his stupor, until the communion was over and the king had ordered a Te Deum for the victory of Lepanto.

Then he rose, and as he came out of the pew a newly-married couple passed him, the architect, Herrera, and Isabella Coello, radiant in beauty.

Ulrich clenched his fist, and the thought passed through his mind, that he would cast away good-fortune, art and fame as carelessly as soap-bubbles, if he could be in Herrera's place.

CHAPTER XXIV.

What fame is--Ulrich was to learn!

He saw in Messina the hero of Lepanto revered as a god. Wherever the victor appeared, fair hands strewed flowers in his path, balconies and windows were decked with hangings, and exulting women and girls, joyous children and grave men enthusiastically shouted his name and flung laurel-wreaths and branches to him. Messages, congratulations and gifts arrived from all the monarchs and great men of the world.

When he saw the wonderful youth dash by, Ulrich marvelled that his steed did not put forth wings and soar away with him into the clouds. But he

too, Navarrete, had done his duty, and was to enjoy the sweetness of renown. When he appeared on Don Juan's most refractory steed, among the last of the victor's train, he felt that he was not overlooked, and often heard people tell each other of his deeds.

This made him raise his head, swelled his heart, urged him into new paths of fame.

The commander-in-chief also longed to press forward, but found himself condemned to inactivity, while he saw the league dissolve, and the fruit of his victory wither. King Philip's petty jealousy opposed his wishes, poisoned his hopes, and barred the realization of his dreams.

Don Juan was satiated with fame. "Power" was the food for which he longed. The busy spider in the Escorial could not deprive him of the laurel, but his own "word," his highest ambition in life, his power, he would consent to share with no mortal man, not even his brother.

"Laurels are withering leaves, power is arable land," said Don Juan to Escovedo.

It befits an emperor's son, thought Ulrich, to cherish such lofty wishes; to men of lower rank fame can remain the guiding star on life's pathway.

The elite of the army was in the Netherlands; there he could find what he desired.

Don Juan let him go, and when fame was the word, Ulrich had no cause to complain of its ill-will.

He bore the standard of the proud "Castilian" regiment, and when strange troops met him as he entered a city, one man whispered to another: "That is Navarrete, who was in the van at every assault on Haarlem, who, when all fell back before Alkmaar, assailed the walls again, it was not his fault that they were forced to retreat....he turned the scale with his men on Mook-Heath....have you heard the story? How, when struck by two bullets, he wrapped the banner around him, and fell with, and on it, upon the grass."

And now, when with the rebellious army he had left the island of Schouwen behind him and was marching through Brabant, it was said:

"Navarrete! It was he, who led the way for the Spaniards with the standard on his head, when they waded through the sea that stormy night, to surprise Zierikzee."

Whoever bore arms in the Netherlands knew his name; but the citizens also knew who he was, and clenched their fists when they spoke of him.

On the battle-field, in the water, on the ice, in the breaches of their firm walls, in burning cities, in streets and alleys, in council-chambers and plundered homes, he had confronted them as a murderer and destroyer. Yet, though the word fame had long been embittered to him, the inhumanity

which clung to his deeds had the least share in it.

He was the servant of his monarch, nothing more. All who bore the name of Netherlander were to him rebels and heretics, condemned by God, sentenced by his king; not worthy peasants, skilful, industrious citizens, noble men, who were risking property and life for religion and liberty.

This impish crew disdained to pray to the merciful mother of God and the saints, these temple violaters had robbed the churches of their statues, driven the pious monks and nuns from their cloisters! They called the Pope the Anti-Christ, and in every conquered city he found satirical songs and jeering verses about his lord, the king, his generals and all Spaniards.

He had kept the faith of his childhood, which was shared by every one who bore arms with him, and had easily obtained absolution, nay, encouragement and praise, for the most terrible deeds of blood.

In battle, in slaughter, when his wounds burned, in plundering, at the gaming-table, everywhere he called upon the Holy Virgin, and also, but very rarely, on the "word," fame.

He no longer believed in it, for it did not realize what he had anticipated. The laurel now rustled on his curls like withered leaves. Fame would not fill the void in his heart, failed to satisfy his discontented mind; power offered the lonely man no companionship of the soul, it could not even silence the voice which upbraided him--the unapproachable champion, him at whom no mortal dared to look askance--with being a miserable fool, defrauded of true happiness and the right ambition.

This voice tortured him on the soft down beds in the town, on the straw in the camp, over his wine and on the march.

Yet how many envied him. Ay! when he bore the standard at the head of the regiment he marched like a victorious demi-god! No one else could support so well as he the heavy pole, plated with gold, and the large embroidered silken banner, which might have served as a sail for a stately ship; but he held the staff with his right hand, as if the burden intrusted to him was an easily-managed toy. Meantime, with inimitable solemnity, he threw back the upper portion of the body and his curly head, placing his left hand on his hip. The arch of the broad chest stood forth in fine relief, and with it the breast-plate and points of his armor. He seemed like a proud ship under swelling sails, and even in hostile cities, read admiration in the glances of the gaping crowd. Yet he was a miserable, discontented man, and could not help thinking more and more frequently of Don Juan's "word."

He no longer trusted to the magic power of a word, as in former times. Still, he told himself that the "arable field" of the emperor's son, "power," was some thing lofty and great-ay, the loftiest aim a man could hope to attain.

Is not omnipotence God's first attribute? And now, on the march from Schouwen through Brabant, power beckoned to him. He had already tasted it, when the mutinous army to which he belonged attempted to pillage a smithy. He had stepped before the spoilers and saved the artisan's life and property. Whoever swung the hammer before the bellows was sacred to him; he had formerly shared gains and booty with many a plundered member of his father's craft.

He now carried a captain's staff, but this was mere mummery, child's play, nothing more. A merry soldier's-cook wore a captain's plume on the side of his tall hat. The field-officer, most of the captains and the lieutenants, had retired after the great mutiny on the island of Schouwen was accomplished, and their places were now occupied by ensigns, sergeants and quartermasters. The higher officers had gone to Brussels, and the mutinous army marched without any chief through Brabant.

They had not received their well-earned pay for twenty-two months, and the starving regiments now sought means of support wherever they could find them.

Two years since, after the battle of Mook-Heath, the army had helped itself, and at that time, as often happened on similar occasions, an Eletto--[The chosen one. The Italian form is used, instead of the Spanish 'electo'.]--had been chosen from among the rebellious subaltern officers. Ulrich had then been lying seriously wounded, but after the end of the mutiny was told by many, that no other would have been made Eletto had he only been well and present. Now an Eletto was again to be chosen, and whoever was elected would have command of at least three thousand men, and possibly more, as it was expected that other regiments would join the insurrection. To command an army! This was power, this was the highest attainment; it was worth risking life to obtain it.

The regiments pitched their camp at Herenthals, and here the election was to be held.

In the arrangement of the tents, the distribution of the wagons which surrounded the camp like a wall, the stationing of field-pieces at the least protected places, Ulrich had the most authority, and while exercising it forced himself, for the first time in his life, to appear gentle and yielding, when he would far rather have uttered words of command. He lived in a state of feverish excitement; sleep deserted his couch, he imagined that every word he heard referred to himself and his election.

During these days he learned to smile when he was angry, to speak pleasantly while curses were burning on his lips. He was careful not to betray by look, word, or deed what was passing in his mind, as he feared the ridicule that would ensue should he fail to achieve his purpose.

One more day, one more night, and perhaps he would be commander-in-chief, able to conquer a kingdom and keep the world in terror. Perhaps, only perhaps; for another was seeking with dangerous means to obtain control

of the army.

This was Sergeant-Major and Quartermaster Zorrillo, an excellent and popular soldier, who had been chosen Eletto after the battle of Mook-Heath, but voluntarily resigned his office at the first serious opposition he encountered.

It was said that he had done this by his wife's counsel, and this woman was Ulrich's most dangerous foe.

Zorrillo belonged to another regiment, but Ulrich had long known him and his companion, the "campsibyl."

Wine was sold in the quartermaster's tent, which, before the outbreak of the mutiny, had been the rendezvous of the officers and chaplains.

The sibyl entertained the officers with her gay conversation, while they drank or sat at the gaming-table; she probably owed her name to the skill she displayed in telling fortunes by cards. The common soldiers liked her too, because she took care of their sick wives and children.

Navarrete preferred to spend his time in his own regiment, so he did not meet the Zorrillos often until the mutiny at Schouwen and on the march through Brabant. He had never sought, and now avoided them; for he knew the sibyl was leaving no means untried to secure her partner's election. Therefore he disliked them; yet he could not help occasionally entering their tent, for the leaders of the mutiny held their counsels there. Zorrillo always received him courteously; but his companion gazed at him so intently and searchingly, that an anxious feeling, very unusual to the bold fellow, stole over him.

He could not help asking himself whether he had seen her before, and when the thought that she perhaps resembled his mother, once entered his mind, he angrily rejected it.

The day before she had offered to tell his fortune; but he refused point-blank, for surely no good tidings could come to him from those lips.

To-day she had asked what his Christian name was, and for the first time in years he remembered that he was also called "Ulrich." Now he was nothing but "Navarrete," to himself and others. He lived solely for himself, and the more reserved a man is, the more easily his Christian name is lost to him.

As, years before, he had told the master that he was called nothing but Ulrich, he now gave the harsh answer: "I am Navarrete, that's enough!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Towards evening, the members of the mutiny met at the Zorrillos to hold a

council.

The weather outside was hot and sultry, and the more people assembled, the heavier and more oppressive became the air within the spacious tent, the interior of which looked plain enough, for its whole furniture consisted of some small roughly-made tables, some benches and chairs, and one large table, and a superb ebony chest with ivory ornaments, evidently stolen property. On this work of art lay the pillows used at night, booty obtained at Haarlem; they were covered with bright but worn-out silk, which had long shown the need of the thrifty touch of a woman's hand. Pictures of the saints were pasted on the walls, and a crucifix hung over the door.

Behind the great table, between a basket and the wine cask, from which the sibyl replenished the mugs, stood a high-backed chair. A coarse barmaid, who had grown up in the camp, served the assembled men, but she had no occasion to hurry, for the Spaniards were slow drinkers.

The guests sat, closely crowded together, in a circle, and seemed grave and taciturn; but their words sounded passionate, imperious, defiant, and the speakers often struck their coats of mail with their clenched fists, or pounded on the floor with their swords.

If there was any difference of opinion, the disputants flew into a furious rage, and then a chorus of fierce, blustering voices rose like a tenfold echo. It often seemed as if the next instant swords must fly from their sheaths and a bloody brawl begin; but Zorrillo, who had been chosen to preside over the meeting, only needed to raise his baton and command order, to transform the roar into a low muttering; the weather-beaten, scarred, pitiless soldiers, even when mutineers, yielded willing obedience to the word of command and the iron constraint of discipline.

On the sea and at Schouwen their splendid costumes had obtained a beggarly appearance. The velvet and brocade extorted from the rich citizens of Antwerp, now hung tattered and faded around their sinewy limbs. They looked like foot-pads, vagabonds, pirates, yet sat, as military custom required, exactly in the order of their rank; on the march and in the camp, every insurgent willingly obeyed the orders of the new leader, who by the fortune of war had thrown pairs-royal on the drumhead.

One thing was certain: some decisive action must be taken. Every one needed doublets and shoes, money and good lodgings. But in what way could these be most easily procured? By parleying and submitting on acceptable conditions, said some; by remaining free and capturing a city, roared others; first wealthy Mechlin, which could be speedily reached. There they could get what they wanted without money. Zorrillo counselled prudent conduct; Navarrete impetuously advised bold action. They, the insurgents, he cried, were stronger than any other military force in the Netherlands, and need fear no one. If they begged and entreated they would be dismissed with copper coins; but if they enforced their demands they would become rich and prosperous.

With flashing eyes he extolled what the troops, and he himself had done; he enlarged upon the hardships they had borne, the victories won for the king. He asked nothing but good pay for blood and toil, good pay, not coppers and worthless promises.

Loud shouts of approval followed his speech, and a gunner, who now held the rank of captain, exclaimed enthusiastically:

"Navarrete, the hero of Lepanto and Haarlem, is right! I know whom I will choose."

"Victor, victor Navarrete!" echoed from many a bearded lilt.

But Zorrillo interrupted these declarations, exclaiming, not without dignity, while raising his baton still higher. "The election will take place to-morrow, gentlemen; we are holding a council to-day. It is very warm in here; I feel it as much as you do. But before we separate, listen a few minutes to a man, who means well." Zorrillo now explained all the reasons, which induced him to counsel negotiations and a friendly agreement with the commander-in-chief. There was sound, statesmanlike logic in his words, yet his language did not lack warmth and charm. The men perceived that he was in earnest, and while he spoke the sibyl went behind him, laid her hand on his shoulder, and wiped the perspiration from his brow with her handkerchief. Zorrillo permitted it, and without interrupting himself, gave her a grateful, affectionate glance.

The bronzed warriors liked to look at her, and even permitted her to utter a word of advice or warning during their discussions, for she was a wise woman, not one of the ordinary stamp. Her blue eyes sparkled with intelligence and mirth, her full lips seemed formed for quick, gay repartee, she was always kind and cheerful in her manner even to the most insignificant. But whence came the deep lines about her red mouth and the outer corners of her eyes? She covered them with rouge every day, to conceal the evidence of the sorrowful hours she spent when alone? The lines were well disguised, yet they increased, and year by year grew deeper.

No wrinkle had yet dared to appear on the narrow forehead; and the delicate features, dazzlingly-white teeth, girlish figure, and winning smile lent this woman a youthful aspect. She might be thirty, or perhaps even past forty.

A pleasure made her younger by ten summers, a vexation transformed her into a matron. The snow white hair, carefully arranged on her forehead, seemed to indicate somewhat advanced age; but it was known that it had turned grey in a few days and nights, eight years before, when a discontented blackguard stabbed the quartermaster, and he lay for weeks at the point of death.

This white hair harmonized admirably with the red cheeks of the camp-sibyl, who appreciating the fact, did not dye it.

During Zorrillo's speech her eyes more than once rested on Ulrich with a

strangely intense expression. As soon as he paused, she went back again behind the table to the crying child, to cradle it in her arms.

Zorrillo--perceiving that a new and violent argument was about to break forth among the men--closed the meeting. Before adjourning, however, it was unanimously decided that the election should be held on the morrow.

While the soldiers noisily rose, some shaking hands with Zorrillo, some with Navarrete, the stately sergeant-major of a German lansquenet troop, which was stationed in Antwerp, and did not belong to the insurgents, entered the wide open door of the tent. His dress was gay and in good order; a fine Dalmatian dog followed him.

A thunder-storm had begun, and it was raining violently. Some of the Spaniards were twisting their rosaries, and repeating prayers, but neither thunder, lightning, nor water seemed to have destroyed the German's good temper, for he shook the drops from his plumed hat with a merry "pew," gaily introducing himself to his comrades as an envoy from the Pollviller regiment.

His companions, he said, were not disinclined to join the "free army"--he had come to ask how the masters of Schouwen fared.

Zorrillo offered the sergeant-major a chair, and after the latter had raised and emptied two beakers from the barmaid's pewter waiter in quick succession, he glanced around the circle of his rebel comrades. Some he had met before in various countries, and shook hands with them. Then he fixed his eyes on Ulrich, pondering where and under what standard he had seen this magnificent, fair-haired warrior.

Navarrete recognizing the merry lansquenet, Hans Eitelfritz of Colln on the Spree, held out his hand, and cried in the Spanish language, which the lansquenet had also used:

"You are Hans Eitelfritz! Do you remember Christmas in the Black Forest, Master Moor, and the Alcazar in Madrid?"

"Ulrich, young Master Ulrich! Heavens and earth!" cried Eitelfritz;--but suddenly interrupted himself; for the sibyl, who had risen from the table to bring the envoy, with her own hands, a larger goblet of wine, dropped the beaker close beside him.

Zorrillo and he hastily sprung to support the tottering woman, who was almost fainting. But she recovered herself, waving them back with a mute gesture.

All eyes were fixed upon her, and every one was startled; for she stood as if benumbed, her bright, youthful face had suddenly become aged and haggard. "What is the matter?" asked Zorrillo anxiously. Recovering her self-control, she answered hastily "The thunder, the storm...."

Then, with short, light steps, she went back to the table, and as she resumed her seat the bell for evening prayers was heard outside.

Most of the company rose to obey the summons.

"Good-bye till to-morrow morning, Sergeant! The election will take place early to-morrow."

"A Dios, a Dios, hasta mas ver, Sibila, a Dios!" was loudly shouted, and soon most of the guests had left the tent.

Those who remained behind were scattered among the different tables. Ulrich sat at one alone with Hans Eitelfritz.

The lansquenet had declined Zorrillo's invitation to join him; an old friend from Madrid was present, with whom he wished to talk over happier days. The other willingly assented; for what he had intended to say to his companions was against Ulrich and his views. The longer the sergeant-major detained him the better. Everything that recalled Master Moor was dear to Ulrich, and as soon as he was alone with Hans Eitelfritz, he again greeted him in a strange mixture of Spanish and German. He had forgotten his home, but still retained a partial recollection of his native language. Every one supposed him to be a Spaniard, and he himself felt as if he were one.

Hans Eitelfritz had much to tell Ulrich; he had often met Moor in Antwerp, and been kindly received in his studio.

What pleasure it afforded Navarrete to hear from the noble artist, how he enjoyed being able to speak German again after so many years, difficult as it was. It seemed as if a crust melted away from his heart, and none of those present had ever seen him so gay, so full of youthful vivacity. Only one person knew that he could laugh and play noisily, and this one was the beautiful woman at the long table, who knew not whether she should die of joy, or sink into the earth with shame.

She had taken the year old infant from the basket. It was a pale, puny little creature, whose father had fallen in battle, and whose mother had deserted it.

The handsome standard-bearer yonder was called Ulrich! He must be her son! Alas, and she could only cast stolen glances at him, listen by stealth to the German words that fell from the beloved lips. Nothing escaped her notice, yet while looking and listening, her thoughts wandered to a far distant country, long vanished days; beside the bearded giant she saw a beautiful, curly-haired child; besides the man's deep voice she heard clear, sweet childish tones, that called her "mother" and rang out in joyous, silvery laughter.

The pale child in her arms often raised its little hand to its cheek, which was wet with the tears of the woman; who tended it. How hard, how unspeakably, terribly hard it was for this woman, with the youthful face and white locks, to remain quiet! How she longed to start up and call joyously to the child, the man, her lover's enemy, but her own, own Ulrich:

"Look at me, look at me! I am your mother. You are mine! Come, come to my heart! I will never leave you more!"

Ulrich now laughed heartily again, not suspecting what was passing in a mother's heart, close beside him; he had no eyes for her, and only listened to the jests of the German lansquenet, with whom he drained beaker after beaker.

The strange child served as a shield to protect the camp-sibyl from her son's eyes, and also to conceal from him that she was watching, listening, weeping. Eitelfritz talked most and made one joke after another; but she did not laugh, and only wished he would stop and let Ulrich speak, that she might be permitted to hear his voice again.

"Give the dog Lelaps a little corner of the settle," cried Hans Eitelfritz. "He'll get his feet wet on the damp floor--for the rain is trickling in--and take cold. This choice fellow isn't like ordinary dogs."

"Do you call the tiger Lelaps?" asked Ulrich. "An odd name."

"I got him from a student at Tubingen, dainty Junker Fritz of Hallberg, in exchange for an elephant's tusk I obtained in the Levant, and he owes his name to the merry rogue. I tell you, he's wiser than many learned men; he ought to be called Doctor Lelaps."

"He's a pretty creature."

"Pretty! More, far more! For instance, at Naples we had the famous Mortadella sausage for breakfast, and being engaged in eager conversation, I forgot him. What did my Lelaps do? He slipped quietly into the garden, returned with a bunch of forget-me-nots in his mouth, and offered it to me, as a gallant presents a bouquet to his fair one. That meant: dogs liked sausage too, and it was not seemly to forget him. What do you say to that show of sense?"

"I think your imagination more remarkable than the dog's sagacity."

"You believed in my good fortune in the old days, do you now doubt this true story?"

"To be sure, that is rather preposterous, for whoever loyally and faithfully trusts good-fortune--your good fortune--is ill-advised. Have you composed any new songs?"

"That is all over now!" sighed the trooper. "See this scar! Since an infidel dog cleft my skull before Tunis, I can write no more verses; yet it hasn't grown quiet in my upper story on that account. I lie now, instead of composing. My boon companions enjoy the nonsensical trash, when I pour it forth at the tavern."

"And the broken skull: is that a forget-me-not story too, or was it...."

"Look here! It's the actual truth. It was a bad blow, but there's a grain of good in everything evil. For instance, we were in the African desert just dying of thirst, for that belongs to the desert as much as the dot does to the letter i. Lelaps yonder was with me, and scented a spring. Then it was necessary to dig, but I had neither spade nor hatchet, so I took out the loose part of the skull, it was a hard piece of bone, and dug with it till the water gushed out of the sand, then I drank out of my brain-pan as if it were a goblet."

"Man, man!" exclaimed Ulrich, striking his clenched fist on the table.

"Do you suppose a dog can't scent a spring?" asked Eitelfritz, with comical wrath. "Lelaps here was born in Africa, the native land of tigers, and his mother...."

"I thought you got him in Tubingen?"

"I said just now that I tell lies. I imposed upon you, when I made you think Lelaps came from Swabia; he was really born in the desert, where the tigers live.

"No offence, Herr Ulrich! We'll keep our jests for another evening. As soon as I'm knocked down, I stop my nonsense. Now tell me, where shall I find Navarrete, the standard-bearer, the hero of Lepanto and Schouwen? He must be a bold fellow; they say Zorrillo and he...."

The lansquenet had spoken loudly; the quartermaster, who caught the name Navarrete, turned, and his eyes met Ulrich's.

He must be on his guard against this man.

The instant Zorrillo recognized him as a German, he would hold a powerful weapon. The Spaniards would give the command only to a Spaniard.

This thought now occurred to him for the first time. It had needed the meeting with Hans Eitelfritz, to remind him that he belonged to a different nation from his comrades. Here was a danger to be encountered, so with the rapid decision, acquired in the school of war, he laid his hand heavily on his countryman's, saying in a low, impressive tone: "You are my friend, Hans Eitelfritz, and have no wish to injure me."

"Zounds, no! What's up?"

"Well then, keep to yourself where and how we first met each other. Don't interrupt me. I'll tell you later in my tent, where you must take up your quarters, how I gained my name, and what I have experienced in life. Don't show your surprise, and keep calm. I, Ulrich, the boy from the Black Forest, am the man you seek, I am Navarrete."

"You?" asked the lansquenet, opening his eyes in amazement. "Nonsense! You're paying me off for the yarns I told you just now."

No, Hans Eitelfritz, no! I am not jesting, I mean it. I am Navarrete! Nay more! If you keep your mouth shut, and the devil doesn't put his finger into the pie, I think, spite of all the Zorrillos, I shall be Eletto to-morrow.

"You know the Spanish temper! The German Ulrich will be a very different person to them from the Castilian Navarrete. It is in your power to spoil my chance."

The other interrupted him by a peal of loud, joyous laughter, then shouted to the dog: "Up, Lelaps! My respects to Caballero Navarrete."

The Spaniards frowned, for they thought the German was drunk, but Hans Eitelfritz needed more liquor than that to upset his sobriety.

Flashing a mischievous glance at Ulrich from his bright eyes, he whispered: "If necessary, I too can be silent. You man without a country! You soldier of fortune! A Swabian the commander of these stiffnecked braggarts. Now see how I'll help you."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Ulrich; but Hans Eitelfritz had already raised the huge goblet, banging it down again so violently that the table shook. Then he struck the top with his clenched fist, and when the Spaniards fixed their eyes on him, shouted in their language: "Yes, indeed, it was delightful in those days, Caballero Navarrete. Your uncle, the noble Conde in what's its name, that place in Castile, you know, and the Condesa and Condesilla. Splendid people! Do you remember the coal-black horses with snow-white tails in your father's stable, and the old servant Enrique. There wasn't a longer nose than his in all Castile! Once, when I was in Burgos, I saw a queer, longish shadow coming round a street corner, and two minutes after, first a nose and then old Enrique appeared."

"Yes, yes," replied Ulrich, guessing the lansquenet's purpose. "But it has grown late while we've been gossiping; let us go!"

The woman at the table had not heard the whispers exchanged between the two men; but she guessed the object of the lansquenet's loud words. As the latter slowly rose, she laid the child in the basket, drew a long breath, pressed her fingers tightly upon her eyes for a short time, and then went directly up to her son.

Florette did not know herself, whether she owed the name of sibyl to her skill in telling fortunes by cards, or to her wise counsel. Twelve years before, while still sharing the tent of the Walloon captain Grandgagnage, it had been given her, she could not say how or by whom. The fortune-telling she had learned from a sea-captain's widow, with whom she had lodged a long time.

When her voice grew sharp and weaker, in order to retain consideration and make herself important, she devoted herself to predicting the future; her versatile mind, her ambition, and the knowledge of human-nature gained in the camp and during her wanderings from land to land, aided

her to acquire remarkable skill in this strange pursuit.

Officers of the highest rank had sat opposite to her cards, listening to her oracular sayings, and Zorrillo, the man who had now been her lover for ten years, owed it to her influence, that he did not lose his position as quartermaster after the last mutiny.

Hans Eitelfritz had heard of her skill and when, as he was leaving, she approached and offered to question the cards for him, he would not allow Ulrich to prevent him from casting a glance into the future.

On the whole, what was predicted to him sounded favorable, but the prophetess did not keep entirely to the point, for in turning the cards she found much to say to Ulrich, and once, pointing to the red and green knaves, remarked thoughtfully: "That is you, Navarrete; that is this gentleman. You must have met each other on some Christmas day, and not here, but in Germany; if I see rightly, in Swabia."

She had just overheard all this.

But a shudder ran through Ulrich's frame when he heard it, and this woman, whose questioning glance had always disturbed him, now inspired him with a mysterious dread, which he could not control. He rose to withdraw; but she detained him, saying: "Now it is your turn, Captain."

"Some other time," replied Ulrich, repellently. Good fortune always comes in good time, and to know ill-luck in advance, is a misfortune I should think."

"I can read the past, too."

Ulrich started. He must learn what his rival's companion knew of his former life, so he answered quickly, "Well, for aught I care, begin."

"Gladly, gladly, but when I look into the past, I must be alone with the questioner. Be kind enough to give Zorrillo your company for quarter of an hour, Sergeant."

"Don't believe everything she tells you, and don't look too deep into her eyes. Come, Lelaps, my son!" cried the lansquenet, and did as he was requested.

The woman dealt the cards silently, with trembling hands, but Ulrich thought: "Now she will try to sound me, and a thousand to one will do everything in her power to disgust me with desiring the Eletto's baton. That's the way blockheads are caught. We will keep to the past."

His companion met this resolution halfway; for before she had dealt the last two rows, she rested her chin on the cards in her hands and, trying to meet his glance, asked:

"How shall we begin? Do you still remember your childhood?"

"Certainly."

"Your father?"

"I have not seen him for a long time. Don't the cards tell you, that he is dead?"

"Dead, dead:--of course he's dead. You had a mother too?"

"Yes, yes," he answered impatiently; for he was unwilling to talk with this woman about his mother.

She shrank back a little, and said sadly: "That sounds very harsh. Do you no longer like to think of your mother?"

"What is that to you?"

"I must know."

"No, what concerns my mother is....I will--is too good for juggling."

"Oh," she said, looking at him with a glance from which he shrank. Then she silently laid down the last cards, and asked: "Do you want to hear anything about a sweetheart?"

"I have none. But how you look at me! Have you grown tired of Zorrillo? I am ill-suited for a gallant."

She shuddered slightly. Her bright face had again grown old, so old and weary that he pitied her. But she soon regained her composure, and continued:

"What are you saying? Ask the questions yourself now, if you please."

"Where is my native place?"

"A wooded, mountainous region in Germany."

"Ah, ha! and what do you know of my father?"

"You look like him, there is an astonishing resemblance in the forehead and eyes; his voice, too, was exactly like yours."

"A chip of the old block."

"Well, well. I see Adam before me...."

"Adam?" asked Ulrich, and the blood left his cheeks.

"Yes, his name was Adam," she continued more boldly, with increasing vivacity: "there he stands. He wears a smith's apron, a small leather cap rests on his fair hair. Auriculas and balsams stand in the bow-window. A roan horse is being shod in the market-place below."

The soldier's head swam, the happiest period of his childhood, which he had not recalled for a long time, again rose before his memory; he saw his father stand before him, and the woman, the sibyl yonder, had the eyes and mouth, not of his mother, but of the Madonna he had destroyed with his maul-stick. Scarcely able to control himself, he grasped her hand, pressing it violently, and asked in German:

"What is my name? And what did my mother call me?"

She lowered her eyes as if in shame, and whispered softly in German:

"Ulrich, Ulrich, my darling, my little boy, my lamb, Ulrich--my child! Condemn me, desert me, curse me, but call me once more "my mother."

"My mother," he said gently, covering his face with his hands--but she started up, hurried back to the pale baby in the cradle, and pressing her face upon the little one's breast, moaned and wept bitterly.

Meantime, Zorrillo had not averted his eyes from Navarrete and his companion. What could have passed between the two, what ailed the man?

Rising slowly, he approached the basket before which the sibyl was kneeling, and asked anxiously: "What was it, Flora?"

She pressed her face closer to the weeping child, that he might not see her tears, and answered quickly "I predicted things, things....go, I will tell you about it later."

He was satisfied with this answer, but she was now obliged to join the Spaniards, and Ulrich took leave of her with a silent salutation.

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