

THE KLAUSENBURG

By Ludwig Tieck

[The following Gespenster-Geschichte, or Ghost Story, as Tieck himself has called it, is related to a circle of friends by a gentleman, Baron Blamberg, who was a friend of the unfortunate subject of the story. The ruins of the Klausenburg are, according to the words of the narrator, near the house where they are assembled. The story is often interrupted by the company, but their conversation has no connection with it, and has therefore been omitted.--C. A. F.]

It is about fifty years since that a rich family lived among the mountains a short distance off, in a castle, of which only the ruins are now to be seen, since it was partly destroyed by thunder and lightning, and the remainder was demolished in war. It is now only occasionally visited by huntsmen and travellers who have lost their way, and it is called the ruins of the Klausenburg. Proceeding up the solitary footpath through the pine wood, and then climbing the pathless crag, you stand facing its entrance, which is cut out of the living rock and secured by an ancient and strongly barred gate. On the outside is an iron rod with a handle apparently communicating with a bell on the inside. Having once wandered there while hunting, I pulled this handle, but received no answer to my summons from within. As this spot can only be approached with much difficulty, and it is almost impossible to climb the chasms and rocks on the other side, there are many legends and tales current among the vulgar about this singular Klausenburg the remains of which present an almost spectral appearance.

Among other stories, it is reported that more than a century ago, there resided within its walls a very wealthy, benevolent, and industrious man, who was much beloved by his friends and tenants. He had early in life retired from the state service to devote himself to the management of his estates, of which he possessed many, including

mines, and glass and iron foundries which he was able to work to great advantage, having abundant fuel from his extensive forests. Although beloved by his tenants, he was yet hated and envied by many of his equals, the more reasonable of whom disliked him because he avoided them, and they readily perceived that he despised them for their want of industry; while the more foolish believed, and even openly declared, that Count Moritz was in league with Satan, and was therefore successful beyond expectation in all he undertook.

However absurd the report, it was calculated at this early period to injure the character of this persevering man; as it was not many years after the time when people were burnt at the stake for witchcraft and for being in league with the evil one. Hence it was that the count in disgust retired from the world to the solitary castle of Klausenburg, and was only happy when conversing on his affairs with intelligent miners, machine makers, and learned men. Knowing the distrust with which he was looked upon by the old priests who held the livings in his different parishes, he but rarely appeared at church, a circumstance which but little contributed to raise his reputation in the neighbourhood.

It happened once that a band of gipsies, who at that time roved about in Germany with little molestation, came to these parts. The nobles of the country as well as the government were undecided and dilatory in checking this nuisance, and the boundaries of several states meeting here, the tribe could carry on their depredations with impunity and even unnoticed. Where they did not receive any thing, they robbed; where they were resisted they came at night and burnt the barns; and in this manner the fire on one occasion rapidly spreading, two villages were burnt to the ground. Count Moritz was induced by this circumstance to unite with some resolute neighbours, and to pursue and punish, on his own authority, the lawless tribe. Imprisonment, scourging, flogging, and starvation, were awarded by him without reference to any authority, and only some who were convicted of

arson were sent to the town for what was called the gipsy trial, and were then legally condemned to suffer capital punishment.

The count considering himself the benefactor of his country, could not help feeling mortified when his enviers and calumniators used this very circumstance to accuse him of the blackest crimes, and the most atrocious injustice. To this ingratitude he opposed nothing but calm indignation, and a contempt which was perhaps too magnanimous; for if a nobleman always preserves silence, calumny and falsehood will be more readily believed by the foolish and those who have no character to lose. If he could not prevail on himself to meet his opponents and to relate the circumstance in detail, he felt himself quite disarmed on discovering how much he was misunderstood in his family, and by the being who was nearest to his heart. He had married late in life, and his wife having a few days before presented him with a son, was still confined to her room. In her present weak state he could not dispute or urge with any force the justice of his proceedings, when she reproached him with the cruelty he had exercised towards these poor innocent men, who rather deserved his compassion than such hard persecution. When on leaving her chamber some old cousins told him the same thing in plainer terms, he could no longer suppress his rage, and his replies were so wrathful, his curses so vehement, the gestures of the irritated man so superhuman, that the old prattling women lost their composure and almost swooned. To prevent his sick wife from learning all this, he immediately sent them by main force to another of his estates and then rode to a solitary part of the mountains, partly to divert his thoughts and strengthen himself by the sublime aspect of nature, and partly to resume the pursuit of the gipsies. But what was his astonishment when he learned from his ranger that those noblemen who, in conjunction with him, had undertaken the war against these vagabonds had dispersed and retired to their seats without giving him notice!

Without being disconcerted at this, he again succeeded in apprehending some of them who were guilty of heavy crimes, and

ordered them to be bound and thrown into a secure dungeon. When after having dismissed his attendants, he rode thoughtfully back alone towards the Klausenburg, the aged castellan on his arriving at the gate gave him a packet which had been sent by the government. This he opened with anticipating vexation, and was so surprised by its contents that his anger rose, and he became infuriated almost to madness. The purport of the letters it contained was no less than a penal accusation for murder and high treason in consequence of the count's having, on his own authority, and as leader of an armed troop, seditiously opposed the government. Almost senseless, he dropped these preposterous letters, and then, recovering by a sudden effort, went to his apartment to read the impeachment more calmly, and to consider how he could defend himself. Passing the countess's chamber and hearing strange voices within, he hastily opened the door, and beheld--what he certainly did not expect, two dirty old gipsies dressed in rags, sitting by the bedside of the invalid, and foretelling her fate, while they frightfully distorted their hideous countenances. As might be expected, the countess was horror-struck at beholding her husband enter, for what he now did was truly barbarous. In his fury he scarcely knew what he did, and seizing the old prophetesses by their long gray hair, he dragged them out of the room and threw them down the staircase. He then commanded the servants, who came crowding round, to secure them to a stone pillar in the yard, to bare their backs, and chastise them with whips, as long as the strength of the ministers of his cruelty would hold out. His orders were executed.

Having locked himself in his room, he was horrified, on becoming calmer, as he reflected on the barbarities he had committed. From these thoughts he was aroused by a loud knocking at the door. He opened it, and a servant in evident terror entered, saying, "Oh! gracious count, I was afraid you were ill, or perhaps dead, for I have been knocking for a long time, without receiving any answer from your lordship." "What do you want?" "The eldest of these hideous witches," replied the servant, "insists on speaking to you for a minute before she leaves the castle. She will not be refused, and the most

severe threats and curses avail nothing with the old woman." The count ordered the ill-used woman to be led to his room. The appearance of the poor creature was frightful, and the count himself started back with horror, when she presented herself covered with blood, her face and arms lacerated, and a deep wound in her head, which was still uncovered. "I thank you," she said, "kind brother, for the Christian kindness that you have shown me in your palace. You are, indeed, a virtuous man, a persecutor of vice, an impartial judge, and a punisher of crimes; and I suppose you would call yourself an avenging angel in the service of your God. Do you know then, tender-hearted man, why we were sitting by the bedside of your wife? We had, indeed, told her fortune, but the real object of our visit was to speak to you, and you were not in your hospitable house. It was our wish to separate from the gang, and seek a humble and honest living. We know the haunt where the leader conceals himself, that notorious incendiary whom you have so long sought in vain, and intended to deliver him into your hands; but you are worse than the most atrocious of our gang, and as you have shown us to-day so much kindness, a curse for it shall light upon you, your family, and your offspring, to the third and fourth generation."

The count, who had now repented of his hasty wrath, wished to appease the awful woman, by speaking kindly to her, and offering her, by way of reconciliation, his purse well filled with gold. She cast an evil, though covetous look at the gold, and, grinding her teeth, threw the purse at the count's feet. "That mammon," she cried, "would have made me and my poor sister happy, but after the meal you have given us, I would rather gnaw the bark of trees than receive the wealth from your accursed hands." Various and many were the curses she continued heaping on him, and the torments and misfortunes she denounced against him and his house. When she had finished, she tottered down the stone staircase, all the servants fleeing from her as from a spectre.

From this moment the count was a changed man. His energies were crushed. He lived as in a dream, having no wish, and being incapable of forming a single resolution. Those around him could not learn whether he was deeply shocked by the death of his consort, who died the night after that fatal day. Since that time he was scarcely ever heard to speak or to utter a sound, sigh, or complaint. He no longer concerned himself about any thing, and seemed perfectly indifferent when the government confiscated his largest estate to punish him as a rebel and violator of the laws. In his present state of mind, he abandoned himself to the guidance of those very priests whom previously he had so pointedly avoided; he frequented the church often, and was fervent in his devotions. He never looked round when people behind him called out, "There sneaks the old sinner, the traitor, the murderer, and rebel, back again into God's house." Now, likewise, some relatives profited by his listlessness so far as to deprive him by a lawsuit of another large estate, and there was every appearance that of all the large possessions of his ancestors, nothing would be left, for his only heir, a beautiful boy, had not a prudent guardian of the child done all in his power for him. From the unconcern of his father, the young count became daily more impoverished, leaving to his offspring but a small portion of the large property to which he had succeeded; but, notwithstanding these misfortunes, and also the breaking out of war, the next proprietor of the Klausenburg, and his family, maintained their rank, and were respected in the neighbourhood. By his industry, his success, and his marriage with a wealthy lady, he partly retrieved his fortune, and succeeded in his endeavours to revive and maintain the former splendour of his castle for some fifty or sixty years, so that his friends and relatives resorted to it as formerly, with delight, and he, at his death, left to his only son his remaining estates in good condition, besides large sums of money. Thus the curse of the gipsies appeared totally removed, the count and his son having completely forgotten former events, or, having, perhaps, never heard of the curse.

I was a spirited boy when I made the acquaintance of Francis, the last heir of the Klausenburg. This Francis, who was about a year my senior, was cheerful, amiable, and handsome, and the pride of his father, the persevering man who had partly restored the splendour of his ancestors. My playmate grew up to be, not merely the delight of his father, but of all around. He was manly, witty, and engaging, an accomplished dancer, and expert horseman, and in fencing, had not his equal. After being presented at court, he soon gained the prince's favour, by his natural vivacity, and in a few years was raised to the office of counsellor. Few men on earth had fairer prospects of a happy life. All mothers and aunts in the neighbourhood saw, and hoped to find in him, the future husband of their daughters and nieces, and at the assemblies in the capital he was the adored and chosen hero of the ladies, as he was the object of envy and persecution among the young fashionables. No one could conceive why he so long deferred his choice, and, for a long time, people would not credit the rumours that were circulated, that he had formed an engagement with the young princess. It was confidently whispered that the lovers waited only for some favourable chance, or occurrence, to acknowledge publicly their mutual affection and wishes. However, nothing of the kind happened, and years passed, and with them faded the rumours, and various interpretations of sage politicians.

Suddenly, when the affair seemed forgotten, my youthful friend was banished the court and capital in disgrace. All his former friends forsook him, and what was still worse, an intrigue countenanced by the government, involved him in a dangerous lawsuit, which threatened the loss of his fortune. Thus then this courted, admired, and universally caressed Francis, saw himself in the very worst position, and was obliged to confess that his career was closed, and that all his splendid prospects were darkened for ever.

About this time I saw him again; he bore his misfortune manfully. He was still as youthful and handsome as ever, and the serenity of his temper had suffered but little. We were travelling in this

neighbourhood, and the Klausenburg having gone to ruin, he built a pleasant house not far distant, on the slope of a hill, from whence he enjoyed a beautiful prospect.

He avoided speaking of former circumstances, but one evening, he was deeply affected by a letter announcing the decease of the young princess, who had died of a broken heart, or, as was afterwards said, had voluntarily sought death, because she could no longer bear the burden of her embittered life.

It was evident to me that a deep-seated melancholy had taken possession of my friend, and often showed itself; his mind, however, was not so affected as to display any symptoms of weariness of life, which made me hope that his misfortune and the evil fate that had attended him, would serve to purify his character, and give him that genuine deportment which is essential even to those who are not tried by calamity, and much more to those who have to pass through heavy trials.

There lived in the neighbourhood about that time a wild old woman who was half crazy, and who went begging from village to village.

The higher class called her jokingly, the Sibyl, the common people did not hesitate to call her a witch. The place of her residence was not exactly known; probably she had no certain place of resort, as she was constantly seen on the high-roads, and roaming in every direction in the country. Some old rangers maintained that she was a descendant of that notorious gang of gipsies whom Count Moritz many years before had persecuted and dispersed.

Walking one day in a beautiful beech-wood, and engaged in conversation which made us forget the world without, we suddenly saw, at a turn of the footpath, the old hideous Sibyl before us. Being both in a cheerful mood, we were rather astonished, but in no way startled. Having dismissed the impudent beggar by giving her some

money, she hastily returned, saying: "Will not you have your fortunes told for what you have given to me?"

"If it is something good that you can tell me, you may earn a few more pence."

I held out to her my hand at which she looked at very carefully, and then said, scornfully: "My good sir, you have a miserable hand which would puzzle even the best fortune-teller. Such a middling person, neither one thing nor the other, as you, I have never seen in all my life; you are neither wise nor stupid, neither bad nor good, neither fortunate nor unfortunate; without passions, mind, virtue, or vice; you are what I call a real A.B.C. scholar of Heaven's blockheads, and you will not in all your life have the slight merit of ever perceiving your own insignificance. From your paltry hand and unmeaning countenance nothing at all can be prophesied; a dry fungus, without it is first prepared and macerated, cannot even receive a spark. Therefore, Jack Mean-nothing, your dull nature will never live to see any thing worth telling."

My friend Francis did not laugh at the old woman's opinion and description of my character, but being attached to me, his anger arose, and he reproved her in strong terms. She listened very calmly to what he said, and then replied: "Why are you so angry? If you will not give me something more for my trouble and wisdom, let me go quietly. No doubt men do not like to have their inner-most heart exposed to the daylight. Is it my fault that there is nothing better in your friend's character? He is neither my son nor disciple." Thus the prophetess meant to justify and atone for her insolence by repeating it anew. My friend was pacified, and gave her a ducat, saying: "Make merry with that,--where do you live?"

"Where do I live?" she replied; "my roof changes so often that I cannot tell or describe it to you; not unfrequently it is open, and my companion is the howling storm; where men have not built houses

they usually call it nature. But I thank you, and must requite your kindness." Quickly and forcibly taking the unwilling hand of my friend, she held it firmly between her bony fingers and considered it for some time; then letting the arm drop, with a sigh, she said in a tone of voice expressive of deep sorrow, "Son, son; you descend from wicked blood, are an evil scion of evil ancestors; but fortunately you are the last of your race, for your children would be more evil still. What begins in evil must end in evil. Ah! ah! your physiognomy; your expression; your whole countenance; I feel almost as if I saw a murderer before me. Yes! yes!--you have killed a young, beautiful, and noble maiden. On her dying bed she long struggled with grief and anguish. O ye wicked men, can you not be faithful and keep your oaths. It is not only daggers, swords, and guns, that cut and kill; looks and sweet words will also do it. Oh, those seductive words, and all that pretended affection! Now this splendid frame that first dazzled your foolish eye, breaks, and is consigned to corruption. Beauty! oh thou fatal gift of Heaven! and besides, murderer, you are handsome enough to kill others. The curses of your father follow you now whether you dwell in the forest or in your finely tapestried rooms. See you not, feel you not, how, coming from the very heart, they waft misfortune and misery towards you as the stormy wind scatters the dry leaves in the valleys between the mountains? Where is your peace, your happiness, your confidence? All scattered like the drifting sand in the barren plain; no fruit can there strike root."

Suddenly the crazy woman shouted aloud and ran shrieking and yelling discordantly into the thickest part of the wood. When I looked round I was terrified on seeing my friend become pale as death. He shook so violently that he could not support himself, but sank on a hillock beside him. I sat down by him and endeavoured to comfort and quiet him.

"Is this madwoman," he exclaimed; "inspired by truth? does she really see the past and the future, or are those only mad sounds which she

utters in brutish thoughtlessness, and if it be so, have not such random words been perhaps the genuine oracles in all ages?"

He now gave way to tears and loud lamentations; he called loudly in the air, what hitherto he had so carefully and mysteriously locked up in his heart.

"Yes!" he exclaimed; "accursed be every talent, speech, grace, and all the gifts with which a malicious fate endowed us to ruin ourselves and others! Could I not have avoided her first kind look? Why did I suffer myself to be infatuated, to exchange glance for glance, and then word for word? Yes! she was lovely, noble, and graceful; but in my heart there arose together with better feelings, the vanity that even she, the most exalted, distinguished me. I approached her nearer, more boldly, more decidedly, and my pure exalted sentiments surprised and won her. She gave me her confidence. Her heart was so virtuous, so noble; all her youthful feelings were so tender and fervent; it was a paradise that opened to our view. Childishly enough, we thought that no higher happiness on earth could be offered us, the present heavenly moment sufficed. But now passion awoke in my heart. This she expected not, she was terrified and withdrew. This goaded my self-love, I felt unhappy, crushed, and ill. Her compassion was moved, and she no longer avoided me. By means of an attendant in our confidence, we were able to meet without witnesses. Our intercourse became more tender, our love more defined and ardent; but as these feelings were embodied in language, and expressed more definitely, the paradisiacal breath, the heavenly bloom was fled for ever. It was happiness, but changed in character; it was more earthly, more kindly, more confiding, but was not surrounded by that magic which had transported me formerly, so that I could frequently ask myself when alone, 'are you really happy?' Alas! my friend, as we saw each other so often, how many foolish and mad projects were then conceived!

"We talked, we conversed of the future of which those who ardently love never think in the early period of their ecstasies. Once an

opportunity of an alliance likely to add to the lustre of her house presented itself. What fury and bitter rancour were aroused in me! For only appearing favourably disposed towards this illustrious alliance, she suffered much from my anger. My passion was ignoble, as she deeply felt, more from her love to me, than from the sufferings it caused her. Oh! she was never able to erase from her soul this picture of my madness. To alleviate my sufferings and completely to reconcile me, she stooped to my mean and rude nature. Our hearts harmonised again, but from the lowering clouds that now surrounded me, I looked back with yearnings to that heavenly serenity that first shone dazzlingly upon me so. In imagination we lived as though affianced, and dreamt of our union, of unexpected bliss, of varied pleasures and turns of fate never to be realised. But these were misty visions, and we considered the greatest improbabilities as near and natural. The habitual thoughts of our love gradually destroyed necessary precaution. The looks of spies were watchful, and were sharpened by our imprudence. Rumours were circulated, which perhaps never would have reached the prince himself, had not his own glance suspected and discovered our connection. He now learnt more from his questions than he desired to know, and far more than was in accordance with truth. One evening he sent for me to attend him alone in his closet, and displayed to me in this serious interview all the nobleness of his great mind. Without reproaching me, he ascribed to himself alone the immediate cause of my presumption, saying that he had treated me with too much confidence, nay, almost like a son; that he had deviated too much from his rank and the laws of etiquette; that he had foolishly rejoiced in the thought of his daughter being able by intercourse with me to improve her mind. As he became more serious, I assured the agitated father by my honour, and by all that is sacred,-- which indeed was in accordance with the truth,--that our mutual passion had never led us astray, and that our better genius had never forsaken us. At this he became tranquil, and only replied by prohibiting as I had anticipated. I was not allowed to meet his daughter again privately. I was to endeavour by degrees to heal the wounds which our separation caused, to eradicate the affection, which

I had so rashly kindled, by my good sense and demeanour, and thereby to make myself worthy to regain the confidence and love of the prince.

"Suddenly I felt as if the veil had fallen from my eyes," continued Francis, "indeed, I may say, that by this interview, I was quite a changed being. Truth and reality had now, at length, with victorious power, asserted their ascendancy over me. Many periods of life may be compared to a vivid fantastic dream; we awake to sober consciousness, but still feel the reality of the vision.

"But, ah! my friend, this truth created a hell within me. My mind yielded to the noble father in every thing. He was right in the fullest sense of the word. If I admired Juliet, and recognised her worth, if she was my friend, and I sufficiently important to elevate her mind, what had that to do with our passion and my efforts to possess her? With this conviction I was now penetrated, and the feeling exerted a benign influence over me. But how different were her feelings! When such changes occur, women usually suffer from the consuming fire of passion. What letters did I receive from her, when I had communicated to her my resolution and the advice that we must submit to necessity! I almost repeated the words which I had heard from her beautiful lips when I urged my ardent attachment. She now listened in a spirit different from that which harassed her formerly; deaf to all advice, unsusceptible to every kindness, inaccessible to conviction, she only listened to the wild suggestions of her ardent affection. My reason seemed to her cowardice, my resignation baseness. She alone was exclusively to be considered in the question that agitated my heart. In short, she now played the same part that I had done formerly. Looking back upon my former conduct with repentance and shame, I hoped I should be able, by calm perseverance, to bring her gradually to the same conviction. But she frustrated my hopes. It was singular that I was made unhappy by possessing, in the fullest measure, what I had formerly considered my supreme felicity; and that my most fervent desire extended no further

than to be able to restore her to tranquillity, nay, even to produce coldness and indifference.

"So whimsical are the gods frequently towards us in the bestowal of their gifts.

"My letters grieved her deeper and deeper, as she showed by her replies. Thence it was that I could not but wish myself once more able to obtain a tête-à-tête with her in some evening hour, such as I had formerly enjoyed over and over again. By bribery, entreaty, and humiliation, I succeeded.

"But, oh, Heavens! how different was this Juliet from her who once had so enraptured and inspired me. With her grief, her mortified feelings and her offended pride she resembled a raving Bacchante. On approaching her, I said to myself: 'To this state then has my love, vanity, and eloquence, reduced her! Oh! ye men, who, by your power, are able to elevate these tender beings to angels, or change them to wild furies!' But these reflections came too late. If her letters were violent, her words were raging. Nothing in the whole world she desired, except my love. She cared for nothing; every thing seemed right and desirable,--flight into the open world, sacrifice of station, mortification of her father and family. I was terrified at this distraction, that seemed to fear and dread nothing. The more persuasive my manner, and the more desirous I was to convince her of the unavoidable necessity of submitting, the more furious in words and gestures she became. She would fly with me immediately. I felt it required nothing more than to express the wish, and she would have surrendered herself, in this distraction, totally and unconditionally. I was wretched from my inmost heart, indeed, all my energies were annihilated.

"I learned that the prince had only spoken to her in hints; the truth was known to her only from our correspondence. She blamed me, her father, and fate, and only became calm after a flood of tears. I was

obliged to promise to see her again in a few days in order to discuss the means of her flight. Thus my feelings were so changed that I feared this once adored Juliet, and, indeed, could not help despising her. And yet she was the same, and only the unhappy passion that I had infused from my heart into hers had rendered her thus infatuated, I trembled again to see her. I was at a loss what to say, what pretext for delay, or what excuses to invent. Thus some weeks passed, during which we only exchanged letters. To conclude, I saw her again. She seemed ill, but still in that excitement which would not listen to reason. She had provided a carriage, packed up her jewels, made the necessary preparations on the frontier, procured passports, and powerful protections in distant countries; in short she had done all that madness of an unbounded love could undertake. I treated her as an invalid who does not know her own state, humoured all her extravagances, and praised her most whimsical plans. Thus she thought we agreed, and in a week we were to fly during a masquerade while all were busied, and no one could be recognised. To satisfy her for the moment I agreed to every thing, but proposed in my own heart to quit the court and the town. While we were thus discussing our highly reasonable projects I suddenly perceived behind us the prince, who had been for sometime listening to our conversation. The scene which then took place I will not attempt to describe. The father's anger overstepped all bounds on finding me untrue to my promise, since he was convinced that I quite agreed to all the wild plans of his daughter. She cast herself at his feet totally unlike the beautiful being she was formerly, she resembled an automaton moved by powerful springs, a figure only manifesting life in convulsive gestures. It is astonishing that we ever outlive some moments. I was banished, obliged to fly into solitude, and for a long time heard nothing of the city or what occurred there, as I avoided all intercourse with men. When I in some measure recovered my tranquillity of mind, and was able to bear the sight of friends, I heard that she was suffering from an incurable disease, and that her life was despaired of by the physician. How whimsically does fate sport with man and all human intentions! I was informed that her father in the extremity of grief, would willingly

have given me his beloved child had he been able thereby to save her; that he would have despised the opinion of the world, and the objections of his family, could he by these means have saved his Juliet, by whose illness he had first learnt how much he loved her, and how much his life was bound up in hers. All was in vain,--she died in agonies, calling for me, and the disconsolate father heaped execrations upon me that will overtake me, ay,--as surely as her own."

These are, as nearly as possible, the affecting confessions of my unhappy friend. He added, in conclusion, that the whole of his property would be lost, unless he discovered a certain document for which he had long been searching, but which he could find nowhere.

There are sufferings during which it is foolish to make even the attempt at offering consolation. Such sufferings must be lived through, they are peculiar to human nature, and he who is not overwhelmed by them but survives them, will afterwards see that to pass such a severe reprobation was essential to his happiness.

"I am convinced," said my friend a few days afterwards when I took leave of him, "that these execrations and the prophesies of the old fury will visit me. My life will be consumed in illness, misery, delirium, and poverty. The spirit of the departed will tread in my footsteps and sow poison, where, perhaps, some joy might otherwise have sprung."

I began to comfort him, calling to my aid, hope and consolation from every source, because such apprehensions are generally imaginary, and may be combated. Hope is at least more infinite than the all-engrossing sensation of such visionary fear. We separated, and for a long time I heard nothing of my friend Francis. I lived in foreign countries and returned some years after the period in question.

We had not kept up any correspondence. I was therefore surprised and delighted by his first letter which I received in my own comfortable home. There was no allusion to his former sufferings; all was

forgotten. Time and fortune had transformed my friend into a truly new being. He wrote to me of his approaching marriage. The most beautiful girl of the country, young, cheerful, and innocent, had bestowed her affections upon him; and on the very day on which their vows were exchanged, he had, after years of fruitless search, discovered the important document which would complete their nuptial happiness. The melancholy time, he informed me, had vanished from his mind, his youth seemed renewed, and now only he began to live. In a week his marriage was to be celebrated, and he urged me to come and be a witness of his happiness.

It would have delighted me to have complied with his invitation, had not my uncle, who lived forty miles distant, and was then lying on his death-bed, called me from home. The prince, who bitterly hated and persecuted my friend, had died in the meanwhile, so that, in all human probability, there was the prospect that every thing ominous, menacing, and fatal, would fade away and be forgotten, and that spirits of fortune and delight would henceforth draw my friend's car of life.

My stay with my uncle, who was dying, was protracted. His sufferings lasted longer than his physicians had expected, and I was glad that my presence was so consoling and beneficial to him. After his death, I had various business to transact, to execute his will, to make arrangements with the remaining relatives, part of his fortune being left to me, and to settle all to our mutual satisfaction. As journeys were required for these matters, nearly eighteen months elapsed before they were completed. The journeys had carried me far from our neighbourhood, and I must confess that these circumstances, and the pressure of business, had almost caused me to forget my friend Francis. He had not written to me, nor had I heard any thing of him, and I was, therefore, convinced that it was well with him; that he was married and happy in his new condition. Being soon after near Switzerland, I made a tour to that country, and then visited a watering place on the

Rhine, to which my medical adviser had long before recommended inc.

Here I abandoned myself to amusements, enjoyed the beauties of nature during my rambles, and felt happier than I had been for some time. Being one day at the table d'hôte, I accidentally looked over the list of visitors, and found that my friend Francis, with his wife, had been a week in the town. I wondered he had not found me out, as my name must have struck him in the list. However, I accounted for his not doing so, by saying to myself that he had not looked over the leaves attentively, that he had not heard my name mentioned, or that possibly he might be seriously ill and would see no company. Satisfied so far, I called upon him, and was told he was not at home. I hoped to meet him in my walks, but perceived him nowhere. Calling the following day, I received the same answer, that he had gone out. I left my card, requesting he would pay me a visit or tell me when he would receive me. I heard nothing from him. The next morning early, I called again, and the servant again replied, with a troubled countenance, that his master was already from home.

Now I plainly saw, that Francis did not choose to see me, and had denied himself. I endeavoured to call to my memory, whether I had at any time given him offence; but, after the strictest scrutiny, could not find the least spot on my conscience respecting him. I therefore, wrote him rather a severe letter, requiring him to see me, and that not merely from friendship to me, but from the respect he owed himself.

When I called again, I was admitted, and having waited for some time in the room, I saw a stranger approaching from the adjoining chamber, not like a human being, but a tottering, trembling skeleton, with a pale, sunken countenance, which, but for the fiery eye, one might have taken for the face of a corpse. "Great God!" I exclaimed with horror, as I recognised in this spectre my friend Francis, that once handsome, noble fellow.

I sank terrified into a chair, and he sat down by me, took my hand between his withered fingers, and said, "Yes! my friend, thus we again meet, and you now understand why I wished to spare you this sad sight. Yes! friend, all those curses have been realised, and calamity has overtaken me, however actively I endeavoured to escape it; my life is exhausted by disease, as well as that of my youthful wife, once a paragon of beauty; I am a beggar, and all hope is gone for ever."

Still I could not recover from my astonishment; the first chilling terror was succeeded by the deepest compassion and ineffable sympathy in my soul, and my unfortunate friend saw my tears flow.

"But how has all this been possible?" I exclaimed, "Speak; confide all to your friend."

"Spare me," he said, in a faint voice, "let us throw a veil over these calamities, for what good can it do you to know the why and wherefore? You would not comprehend nor believe it, and still less could your advice or consolation avail any thing."

I could make no reply, his distress seemed so great, that he was, perhaps, right in what he said. Words, details, and complaints, are often only stings to the deadly wound. I requested him to introduce me to his wife. He led her in. She seemed to suffer equally with himself, but still showed evident traces of beauty. She was of a tall, noble figure, her blue eye was of a piercing clearness, and her sweet-toned voice was full of soul. After some conversation, the physician entered, and I took my leave, making it a condition, that in future he would not refuse to see me.

I required rest to collect myself, and, therefore, sought the most solitary spot to arrange my thoughts and feelings. How strange, in these moments, appeared human life, friendship, death, and health! In these, my dreams, I was interrupted by a friendly voice addressing me.

It was the physician, an elderly, good-natured man, who sat down beside me. "I have learned," he began, "that you are a youthful friend of our poor patient, and have sought you to consult with you, respecting his lamentable and enigmatical state. I have never met with a similar illness, I do not understand it, and, therefore, am but groping in the dark with my remedies; nor do I know whether the waters here are salutary to him or his sick wife, who seems wasting away from the same complaint. I have no name for this wasting fever, which defies all known remedies. Sometimes I could almost imagine them insane, did not reason absolutely manifest itself. But even should their minds be unimpaired, they are, doubtless, hypochondriacs. And the worst is, the count will not communicate freely, but, on the contrary, anxiously avoids all questions respecting his condition, and all inquiries as to its cause and commencement. I do not wish to irritate him, though my inquiries and questions have more than once had that effect, and yet it seems necessary to learn from himself the history of his complaint. I therefore request you, dear sir, to exert your influence with him, as his friend, that he may confess to us the origin of his illness. If I once knew this, it might, perhaps, be possible to afford relief to both of them. If the disease is mental, of which I feel almost convinced, the physician must be in their confidence to afford relief; but if this is withheld, he may cause even death, not only by his prescriptions, but by an unguarded word. I therefore conjure you to do all in your power to make him confide every thing to you." I promised all he desired, for I had long entertained the same opinion. But when, on the following day, I remonstrated with my friend, I found the task more difficult than I expected, as he was inaccessible on that point. He did not yield until I united tears to my entreaties, and his suffering wife joined with me, as the hope arose within her that the physician might be able to afford relief to her husband. He stipulated that whatever he should communicate should be communicated in private to me alone, undisturbed, and without even the presence of his wife, who would be much pained at the relation.

Thus was it arranged. My little room looking on the garden was so quiet and retired, that no intrusion was to be feared, and after a frugal supper I dismissed the servant, enjoining him not to admit any one. The invalid countess was left with her attendants, and a lady of my acquaintance kindly read some amusing work to her during her husband's absence.

We sat then in my well lighted little room, while the summer breezes murmured sweetly through the trees without. My sick friend was on the sofa, and the physician and myself were opposite, when Francis began slowly and with many pauses, (as speaking seemed painful to him) the following narrative:

"Yes, my friend, you see me again, ill and dying, and my wife, who but two years since was a paragon of health and beauty, is no less afflicted. The Klausenburg which more than once sheltered us so hospitably is become a desolate ruin; storms and fire have destroyed it, and whatever useful material remained was wrested from it by my cruel creditors in derision, and sold for a mere trifle. You know, my friend, the belief or rather superstition that followed me, but with this I will not weary our good physician, as it had no sensible influence on my immediate fate. I have moreover, so much of the marvellous to tell in the recent events that have befallen me, that it will be more than sufficient fully to convince the learned doctor that I am insane.

"Young as I was I had already resigned life, since I considered it completely at a close. But as it frequently happens that the power of a beautiful spring will revive a tree apparently lifeless, so that its branches again become verdant, and at last one blossom springs from them, so it happened with me. Travelling about in a misanthropical mood I stopped in a small town situate in a delightful country, and through my introductions made acquaintance with some interesting people. One of these, a distant relative, who received me most kindly, introduced me to his family, where, for the first time I saw my beloved Elizabeth, and at the second visit I had lost my heart and

peace of mind. But wherefore dwell on charms that are fled? Suffice it to say that I was enraptured, and flattered myself that my feelings were understood, and might perhaps in a short time be returned. Elizabeth was residing with an aged aunt; they were neither of them wealthy though they belonged to an ancient family. I was superior to the talk and astonishment of the townspeople, and I stayed a long while in this insignificant place, where there was neither a theatre to amuse, nor large assemblies, balls, and festivals to engage me. I was so happy that I only lived for, and enjoyed, the present moment. The family was very musical, and Elizabeth a truly accomplished performer on the piano forte. Her voice was highly cultivated, full-toned, and beautiful, and she agreeably surprised me by joining in my perhaps one-sided taste for ancient composition. Harmony, skill, and kind looks from her beautiful eyes,--all this so charmed me that weeks vanished like days, and days like hours in the poetical intoxication.

"I spoke of the family. The aunt too was musical, and accompanied us when we sang. I also found myself benefited by becoming again conscious of the talents which I had so long neglected to exercise. Yes, indeed, talents, amiability, social gifts, and pleasing manners, &c."--continued Francis after a pause, during which he seemed lost in thought--"the vanity of possessing these graces have rendered me and others unhappy. Speaking of the family, I must now mention Ernestine, an elder sister of my wife's. Their parents had died early in life. They had lived at a distance from that small town, in what is called good style. This they did without considering their fortune, and the consequence was that they became impoverished and involved in debt. Where this confusion breaks in, where the necessity of the moment ever absorbs the security of the days and weeks, few men possess sufficient energy and resolution firmly to hold the rudder amid the tumult of a returning storm. And thus the wildest and most confused management had broken into this ruined household. The parents not only diverted themselves in banqueting, dress, and theatres, but, as it were, even with new and singular misfortunes. The latter were more particularly caused by their eldest daughter,

Ernestine. This poor being had, when only three years old, during the confusion and bustle of a banquet, unnoticed by any one, taken up a bottle of strong liquid, and drinking it, became intoxicated by it, and thus had unconsciously fallen down a high staircase.

"The accident had scarcely been observed, and was lightly thought of when discovered. The physician, a jovial friend of the family, instead of applying the proper remedies, joked on the occurrence, and hence it was that those consequences soon appeared in the child, which she could, in after years, justly attribute to want of affection in her parents. The chest-bone and spine were dislocated, so that as she grew up, she became more and more deformed. Being rather tall, the double hump was more striking, her arms and hands were excessively long and thin, and her lean body quite out of proportion to her long legs. Her face had a singular expression, the little lively and cunning eyes could hardly peep forth from beneath the bony vault of her forehead and the broad, flattened nose, the chin was peaked, and the cheeks were sunken. Thus this unfortunate being was a remarkable foil to her sister Elizabeth. Their aunt, when she heard the total ruin of the family, had interfered and assisted them as far as her limited means permitted. Thus the younger daughter was saved and continued healthy, since the father's sister had taken the children upon the death of their parents, for the purpose of educating them. The physical care of Ernestine came too late, but her mind was cultivated, and her talents were awakened. She showed herself intelligent, learned with ease, and retained what she had once acquired, evidently surpassing her sister in wit and presence of mind. Being fond of reading philosophical works, she exercised her judgment and showed so much acuteness, that she often startled even men by her bold and abrupt opinions; not being united to her own sex by beauty and grace, she not unfrequently exercised a more than masculine power. But what almost seemed to border on the marvellous was her great talent for music. Never had I heard the piano forte played in such a perfect manner; every difficulty vanished before her, and she only laughed when difficult passages were mentioned to her. No doubt the extraordinary

span of her hand and fingers assisted her in excelling all that can be done by an ordinary hand. Being also well versed in the art of composition, she composed with ease long pieces of music which we often executed to her delight.

"Could not such a being be happy independent of others? Certainly, if she had resigned herself to her lot, if she could have forgotten she was a woman. Unfortunately for her, all men forgot it who approached her, but she could never raise herself beyond the limit so as to belong to the other sex, or to none.

"This singular being attracted me in a peculiar manner, both by her excellencies and her repulsiveness. When they performed and I sang her compositions, there beamed in moments of excitement from her small eyes, a wonderful, poetic spirit, liked a veiled angel humbled in the dust, with benign yet terrifying splendour. This frequently made me forget that she was the sister of my Elizabeth.

"Elizabeth had before refused some suitors who had earnestly courted her. Entering once the anti-chamber unannounced, I heard both sisters engaged in a lively conversation, in which my name was mentioned. 'You will not accept him, I hope,' cried Ernestine; 'he suits neither you nor us; they say he is not very rich, but he is so proud, so self-sufficient, so convinced of, and so penetrated with, his own excellence, that he excites my indignation whenever he comes near us. You call him amiable, noble; but I tell you he is dogmatical and obstinate; and, believe me, his mental gifts are not so great as you seem to think.'

"With a gentle voice Elizabeth undertook my defence, but her sister discussed all the bad traits in my character so much the more, and passed all my faults in review. Finding that I was the subject of so much discussion, I would not surprise them by entering immediately, and thus I discovered, against my expectation, the dislike the eldest sister entertained for me. I therefore resolved to reconcile this

unfortunate being, for whom life had so few charms and joys, by kindness and benevolence. When they had ceased I entered, and the aunt also joining us we immediately commenced our musical exercises, by which means I could best conceal my embarrassment.

"After a few visits I actually succeeded in disposing Ernestine more kindly towards me. When it happened that we were alone, we were deeply engaged in serious conversation, and I could not help admiring both her mind and acquirements. I could not but agree with her, when she often spoke with contempt of those men who only esteem and love in woman the transient and mutable charms that pass away with their youth. She was also fond of railing at those girls who so frequently pass themselves off as phenomena, and only, as it were, wish to please as dolls of fashion and well-dressed blocks. She revealed without affectation the wealth of her mind, her deep feeling, and her lofty thoughts, so that, in admiration of her mighty soul, I hardly remembered her deformed person. She pressed my hand kindly, and seemed perfectly happy when we had thus chatted an hour away. I was not less rejoiced when I perceived how her friendship for me apparently increased every day.

"It struck me as a weakness in my beloved, that she was displeased at our intimacy. I did not understand this petty jealousy, and censured it when alone with her, as showing too much female weakness. On the other hand, I was pleased when Ernestine gave me evident proofs of her friendship, when my appearance delighted her, when she was ready to show me a book or piece of music, or told me how she had prepared herself for a conversation with me on some important subject. This genuine friendship seemed to me so desirable, that I anticipated great delight at the thought that she would, in our married state, complete the measure of our love by mutual confidence. Their aunt approved of my engagement with Elizabeth, and our vows were exchanged. On this occasion Ernestine was not present, being confined by illness to her chamber. I did not see her on the day following, and when I wished to call on her, my betrothed said, 'Do

not disturb her, dear friend, she is not quite herself, and it is better to let her passion subside.' 'What has happened?' I asked, astonished. 'It is strange,' replied Elizabeth, 'that you have not, long ere this, remarked how ardently she loves you?' I was struck dumb with terror and astonishment at this information, which startled me the more, since, strange to say, I had considered this intellectual being totally incapable of love; as though passion did not always run counter to possibility, truth, nature, and reason, if these opposed themselves, as, indeed, I had myself experienced in my own life in a similar manner. 'Yes,' continued Elizabeth, 'almost at the very time you entered our house, I remarked her partiality to you, but her predilection manifested itself more decidedly, when you began to show a preference for me, when you became more friendly, and thus gained my confidence. For a long time, she concealed her affection under a pretended dislike, which, however, did not deceive me. Oh! beloved, the mind and feelings, the enthusiasm and passions of this singular being possess such extraordinary power and intensity, that I have been compelled ever since I comprehended her character, to admire her as much as to fear her, and to stand in awe at her gigantic intellect. When, some years ago, I took lessons in music, and made rapid progress, according to the testimony of my instructor, she only ridiculed my childlike satisfaction as she called it. She had never before thought of learning music, and now devoted herself with all her energy to this accomplishment. She practised day and night, and her master no longer satisfying her, she availed herself of the presence of a celebrated composer, and became his pupil. I could not comprehend the mental as well as physical energy, with which she devoted herself unceasingly, almost without sleep and refreshments, and with unwearied zeal to the practice of this art. It was then she learned composition and gained her master's praise and admiration. It was not long, however, before she found fault with him, fancying his execution not sufficiently fiery and enthusiastic, his compositions not sufficiently original and impassioned. He submitted, and agreed with her. All men, she used to say, lie constantly in a half-sleeping state, being almost always, as it were, in a stupor, similar to the plant which

grows, blooms, and is beautiful, diffusing odour, and possessing powers, without consciousness. What would men accomplish were they truly awake in their wakeful state? And so she devoted herself to philosophy, reading works on medicine, anatomy, and other subjects, which are usually too abstruse and distasteful to her sex. We, as well as her acquaintance, could not help being astonished at her. And thus, dear Francis, she will certainly become insane in this passion of love, and destroy her own peace of mind.

"Elizabeth now also described to me all the extravagances she committed when she heard of our engagement; at first, she intended to destroy both herself and sister; then again she said she knew how to conquer me, so that I should love her and abandon Elizabeth, whom she excelled both in goodness and intellect.

"I was naturally grieved at this news, feeling full well how imprudently I had acted in making such friendly advances to Ernestine, in my endeavours to reconcile her. I was somewhat relieved, when, a few days afterwards, Elizabeth told me that her sister had apologised with tears for what she had spoken in anger, that she had conjured her not to communicate to me any thing of these aberrations, and only implored her to be allowed to accompany us to our future residence, as she could not possibly live without the company of her sister and myself, without our conversation and our music.

"Now plans and preparations were made, and the aunt accompanied us to the Klausenburg, to celebrate, with a few friends, our nuptials in quiet, as Elizabeth had always been excessively averse from pomp and display. I had had a few apartments and the ball-room prepared, as far as it was possible, the greater part of the castle being in ruins. But Elizabeth had a poetical predilection for old castles, solitary mountainous countries, and the historical legends connected with them. After the wedding, we intended to take up our residence in a

new house not far distant, and only occasionally to spend a few days or hours in the Klausenburg.

"We arrived; the gate was opened to us, and the first object that met our view in the court-yard, from amidst the ivy that twined the high walls, was the old mad Sibyl, whom you, my friend, knew some years ago. My wife was terrified, and I shuddered. 'Welcome! Welcome!' cried the old hag, jumping about with wild gestures; 'there comes the destroyer, the woman murderer, and brings his two brides with him, whom he will murder also.' 'How do you come here?' I exclaimed. The porter replied, 'She must have climbed down the other side of the cliffs, which form the extreme wall of the small garden, and must have concealed herself among the shrubs and ruins.' 'You are right, you are right,' screamed the old hag, 'it is pleasant to live there.' Terrified as we were, Ernestine seemed merry, for she did not cease laughing.

"During the days on which we celebrated the festival, Ernestine did not appear; she had vanished; and being anxious about her, we despatched people in search of her, when, on the third day, she returned on foot, merry and in high spirits. She told us she had not been able to withstand the inclination to roam about in the mountains, as she always had had a desire to do so. 'But thus alone, without informing us?' said Elizabeth. 'Alone!' she replied, 'No! I have kept constant company with that old prophetess whom you so unkindly sent away. There I have learnt many things quite new, that I never even read of, and we have become very good friends.'

"We looked at her with astonishment. I formed an idea without expressing it, that Ernestine was mad. So awful and ominous was her return to our residence, such sad forebodings crowded in our minds, that, in spite of my happiness, I felt no confidence on life, and Elizabeth could not regain her cheerfulness.

"In other respects we were reconciled, and enjoyed the present moment, and the beauty of the surrounding woods and mountains. Our few guests, as well as the aunt, had left us, and we might have lived contented and in happy union in this delightful solitude, had I not observed that my wife avoided her sister as much as circumstances permitted. When I asked her the reason of this, she answered after some hesitation: 'Dearest, I am terrified at Ernestine; she has become quite malicious, though formerly she had not the least disposition that way. Whenever she can vex me, spoil any thing, or even expose me to danger, so that I may be startled, stumble, or even fall; or if any stones fall in my way she shows the most malicious joy, as she did when she lately set the curtains of my bed on fire by bringing the candle too near them. She has told me laughing, that the country people talk of travellers and rangers having seen two spectres by moonlight, or in the morning-dawn in the lonely parts of the forests, whom they describe as terrible hideous beings; that these were herself and the old gipsy, and that she only wished that the circumstance might appear in print, in order that she, with her own signature, Ernestine Fräulein von Jertz, might contradict the story of ghosts, and state that she was one of the imagined spirits. Is not all this terrible?'

"'Dear child,' said I, 'I must now tell you, in confidence, that I believe she is mad.'

"'Is any malice, when it becomes a passion, any thing but madness?' remarked Elizabeth, very naturally.

"On the approach of autumn we left the Klausenburg to take possession of our new house, for, to my terror, I discovered a disposition to melancholy in my wife, for which our solitude seemed any thing but beneficial. While we were once walking through the ancient apartments and the gothic hall, which was in tolerable preservation, and our footsteps echoed in the solitary room, my wife started with a sudden shudder. I asked the reason.

"Oh! it is awful here,' she replied, trembling; 'I feel as if invisible spectres haunted this place.' I was terrified, and the thought that my wife's mind, like that of her sister, might perhaps have suffered, stared at me like a monster.

"When residing in our new house, we often missed Ernestine, and on inquiry, found that she staid in the Klausenburg and the ruins of the old castle. Although we had been living on an unpleasant footing, still my wife, as well as myself, could not help wishing her with us when she was away. But how different was my life from that which I had once pictured to myself when I courted Elizabeth!

"Other domestic calamities united with our sufferings to increase our grief. That document, which, really constituted my fortune and supported my existence, which proved that large sums were paid, and some still owing to me, as well as all the deeds and papers which had been produced as proofs after the death of Count Moritz,--all these important papers which I had discovered after a long troublesome search, and had in my hands but a short time before, had again disappeared. I had always kept them carefully locked up, and it was my intention to travel to town and deliver them to my solicitor in person, as on them the recovery of my estates depended. They were gone; and much as I meditated and reflected, I could not discover, nor even find a trace of the way in which they had been purloined. When at length I communicated my anxiety to my wife, she did not seem surprised, and told me calmly, 'Can you still doubt? I have no doubt as to what has become of them. Ernestine has profited by some moment of your absence when you might have left your escritoire open, or some other forgetfulness, to take the papers away.'

"Not possible!' I cried with horror. 'Possible?' she repeated. 'What is impossible to her?'

"As these documents were wanting, our long standing law-suit proceeded but slowly, and I felt sure that I must lose it whenever it

was decided. I therefore availed myself of an opportunity which the court afforded me, by proposing to quash it, that I might defer the decision to some future period. Still I could not help questioning Ernestine and informing her of my suspicions. I was horrorstruck at the manner in which she heard me communicate a suspicion, which would have shocked any innocent mind. When I had overcome my embarrassment and had concluded, she burst out in such laughter that I lost all composure. Recovering again, I urged her to reply, but she only said, with a sarcastic coldness, 'My dear brother-in-law, there are here only two cases possible, as you must yourself see, notwithstanding your short-sightedness, namely, that I am either guilty or innocent. Is it not so? If I have committed the robbery, I must have been induced by weighty reasons, or goaded to such an act by malice, or something else. And then I ought to say: yes! I have done it, pray do not take it amiss. Now you must confess that this would be more than stupid. If I were a fool I might have done it without any particular intention,--may be to light the kitchen fire with them; or because I was pleased with the red seals, and might now say: there, take these pretty papers back, considering they have some value for the dear count. But a fool I have not been up to this moment; and if I am malicious, I am of course not silly enough to confess the deed. Or again, assuming the second case that I am innocent, then you, sir brother-in-law (pray don't contradict me), are the simpleton for putting such unbecoming questions to me.'

"I could not answer the spectral being. When I saw that Elizabeth no longer took any pleasure in playing the piano that I procured from abroad in our retirement, and asked the reason of it, she said, sadly, 'Dearest, if I do not wish to incur deadly vexation, I must no longer play.' 'How so?' 'Because Ernestine has flatly forbidden me. She says that in a house where there lives such an accomplished pianist as herself, she could not allow any one else even to strike a note.' This presumption was too much for my patience. I ran to her chamber and asked her ironically to play me something, since she would not allow any one else to touch the instrument. She followed me, laughing

loudly; and truly she played in such a masterly style, that my anger was turned into admiration and rapture. 'Well!' she said, gravely, when she had finished, 'one may have in one's own house all enjoyments for which connoisseurs would travel fifty miles, and yet one can be satisfied with such bungling and such hammering up and down the keys with clumsy fingers. Oh! fools and idiots, who, rogues as they are, talk of art and only mean vapour; they can only sip the nectar, and the wonderful becomes but trash in their rude hands. If I did not feel a constant disgust for life, if men were not repulsive to me, I should never cease laughing.' From that time she often joined in our music, at most permitting Elizabeth and myself to sing, though she maintained that we possessed neither school nor method. Thus the winter passed away. I was already poor, and with the prospect of being reduced quite to beggary; Elizabeth was sickly, and the serenity of my life was gone.

"It was almost to be called a relief to our existence, when on the approach of spring, Ernestine became ill, and was shortly so much worse that she could not leave her bed. She grew more irritable as her illness increased, and nothing vexed her more than that she could not visit the Klausenburg, of which she had become so fond. One warm day I sent her in the carriage, she searched long in the rooms, loitered among the shrubs and ruins, and returned much worse than before. It was now evident that she could not recover. The physician said that he could not understand her disease, nor the state of the sufferer, for the vital powers were so strong in her that all the symptoms usually indicating death did not show themselves, and there was a probability of her speedy recovery; in a few days, however, he gave up all hope.

"We now really looked forward to a quieter future. Although we felt pity for the unhappy being, yet we could not deny that she had a disturbing effect on our life and the happiness of our love. We heard that she was near death, but as she had arranged with her doctor and nurse that we should not disturb her we had kept away. All of a sudden she much desired to see me, but requested that Elizabeth

should not be present. I went and said as I entered: 'Dear friend, you will doubtless be kind enough to give me back the documents which you took from my escritoire to vex me.' She looked at me significantly with her dying eyes, which now seemed larger and sparkled brighter than formerly. There was something so singular, bright and glaring in her look, that any one having witnessed it would never wish to see any thing more terrible and inconceivable. After a pause she said: 'Brother, do these foolish trifles still occupy your head? Yet it is no wonder, every one lives as he can. Sit down, my friend,' she continued, with an air of contempt; I complied and sat down by her bed.

"'You fancy,' she now began in a repulsive, cutting tone, 'you will get rid of me; but do not deceive yourself by flattering yourself too soon with such an idea. Death, life, non-existence, continuation! what useless, unmeaning words! When I had scarcely passed my childhood, I could not help laughing at men, if I saw them fretting about continued existence after death. They drag in and heap up like towers, proof after proof, probabilities and wishes, entreaties, prayers, and the mercy of the Almighty; they talk of many fine talents which cannot on this side of the grave, as they call it, be possibly perfected, much less brought to maturity,--and all these preparations are but to hush their base cowardice and fear of death. Poor wretches! If I collect myself, become conscious of my various energies in every direction, and then call to eternity, to the Creator and the millions of spirits of the past and the future, I will be immortal! I will!--what more is necessary, and what omnipotence can interfere to destroy my eternal, almighty will? What further security of being immortal and eternal does the man want who has any consciousness? How, and in what manner, that is another question. What farce we shall then play, what mask, what party-coloured wig, what gibbous labyrinth of entrails we shall then possess, what etiquette and court taste of ugliness and beauty will then be introduced, is uncertain. But, my good friends, as my own power, without any thing more, preserves me immortal, the same energy and free-will may bring me back to you whenever and as often as I like. Believe me, ye fools, the spectres, as you call them, are not exactly

the worst or weakest spirits. Many a one would fain return, but he has as little individual character there as here, and hence the impossibility of doing so. And to you,--you paragon, rogue, vain, amiable character, full of talents, you bud of virtue, you barterer of beauty, whom I was compelled to love so intensely, yea, compelled despite of my inmost soul, which told me that you did not deserve it,--to you, smooth skinned, straight grown, human animal, I shall ever be quite near, believe me. For this love and jealousy, this rage after you and your breathing, and conversation, will urge me to the earth, and this will be, as the pious would say, my purgatory. Therefore, no leave-taking; we shall meet again!"[1] Thus saying she offered me her cold, dead hand.

"When life was extinct I returned to Elizabeth, but took care not to communicate any thing of the frantic ravings of the deceased, as her nerves were already excited by great anxiety, and she often suffered from spasms.

"We now lived in still retirement in a rural solitude which, in spite of our reduced finances, might have become delightful had I not remarked that the morbid and melancholy mood of Elizabeth was on the increase. She became pale and wasted, and I often found her weeping when entering her chamber unexpectedly. When I asked her the reason of this, she told me she knew not herself what was the matter with her, that she always felt sorrowful without being able to say why; that when she was alone she felt quite awed, it seemed so terrible to her that her sister had been obliged to end her existence in such a frantic passion, and that often when entering or sitting alone in her chamber it was as if Ernestine stood near her; she fancied she heard her singing, felt her breath, and her looks appeared to force themselves through the empty air.

"I quieted her, left her rarely by herself, read to her, we took walks together, and sometimes paid visits to our acquaintance in the neighbourhood. As she became calmer she recovered by degrees her naturally beautiful complexion. Feeling once unwell and lying

comfortably stretched out on the sofa, while she was reading an interesting story to me, I said, how beautiful and melodious is your voice; will you not sing again for once? For a long time you have not opened your music books, your instrument is locked, and your beautiful fingers will at length become quite stiff.

"You know," she replied, 'that a few months ago my sister flatly forbade me to practise music; we were obliged to concede to her ill health and thus I have become quite out of practice.'

"Sing now,' I cried, 'the delight will be the greater to me for its novelty.'

"We looked out a cheerful, pleasing piece of music, to avoid any thing melancholy, and Elizabeth poured forth, with a truly heavenly voice, the clear light tones, which thrilled bliss into my heart. Suddenly she stopped, and was again seized with that violent hysteric fit of weeping which had so often terrified me. 'I cannot,' she cried, deeply moved, 'all these sounds rise up before me like fiends; I always feel my sister quite near me, her dress rustling against mine, and her anger terrifies me.' I felt clearly that my peace of mind as well as hers was destroyed.

"Our physician, a very judicious man, and a friend of ours, when she confessed all these feelings, her trembling, and the anxiety which almost incessantly preyed on her and undermined her health, applied every remedy to calm her, physically and mentally. This honest and judicious persuasion had a good effect, and his medicines proved salutary. When summer came we were much in the open air. We were once taking a drive to the estate of an acquaintance who told us that he intended to give a musical festival, composed of friends and some virtuosi. My wife's great talent for music being known, we were invited, and she promised to play and sing; being then surrounded by strangers, flattered by both sexes and in a cheerful mood. I was the more rejoiced at this as our physician made it a part of his advice that she should forcibly combat these gloomy feelings and this

hypochondriacal anxiety. She determined to follow his advice. Very pleased and rejoiced, we returned to our humble residence. Elizabeth with spirit went through the difficult pieces of music, and the idea that she might in this way, perhaps, recover her youthful vigour delighted me.

"A few days after this, while I was reading a letter, that had just arrived, the door was suddenly burst open, and Elizabeth rushed in, deadly pale, and fell as if dead in my arms. 'What is the matter?' I cried, seized with horror. Her eye wandered wildly round, her heart palpitated almost to bursting, and she was some time before she regained her voice and breath.

"'Oh! heavens,' she at length exclaimed, every word being expressive of horror, 'in there, while I practised--in a cheerful mood--I accidentally cast a look in the glass--and I saw behind me Ernestine looking at me with that strange smile, and having her withered arms folded across her chest. I know not whether she is still there, I hardly know how I reached here.'

"I gave her in charge of her maid; she retired, and the doctor was immediately sent for. I went into the other room, and found the music books scattered under the instrument. Elizabeth must have thrown them down in her fright.

"'Of what avail are reasoning, joke, and consolation, diet and medicines against perfect madness,' said I to myself, and yet I could not help thinking of the words with which her dying sister had threatened us.

"The news of my wife having been taken ill reached our friend's ears, and was likely to prevent the musical festival taking place. His wife came a few days afterwards with a female singer to inquire after Elizabeth's health. Not having said any thing, even to the doctor, of the apparition which my wife imagined she had seen, we of course did

not mention this singular circumstance to our visitors. To all appearances my wife having quite recovered from her fright, we walked in our small garden with our friends conversing about the festival, and the baroness and the singer at length proposed to practise some music in my wife's presence, that they might have her opinion, though she might not perhaps be able to join.

"We therefore returned to the drawing-room, and as it became dark, candles were lighted. The singer sat at the instrument to accompany herself, on her right was the baroness, I was just behind, and my wife was on her left. We could not help admiring the voices and the style of the singers. The music by degrees became more animated and impassioned, and I had once already omitted turning the page, when, just as the next leaf was played, a long bony finger appeared on it, quickly turned the leaf at the right time, and the melody proceeded. I looked round and beheld the terrible Ernestine standing close by me behind the baroness; I know not how I kept my composure, but I looked searchingly and almost unmoved at the terrific apparition. She smiled at me with that malicious expression which, even when living, made her countenance repelling. She wore her usual dress, her eyes were fiery, and her face was white as chalk. I felt almost a satisfaction in the gloomy sensation of awe, remained silent, and was glad that Elizabeth did not perceive the spirit. Suddenly there was a shriek of terror, and my wife fell fainting on the ground, while the withered finger was just going again to turn the page. The music of course ended, my wife was in a fever, and our friends who had not seen the spectre returned home."

Here the invalid paused. The physician looked significantly at me, shaking his head.

"And you have," he at length said, "never before told your present doctor any thing of that apparition."

"No," replied Francis, "you may call it shame, or fear of his cold, searching understanding; you may call it weakness or what you please; suffice it to say I could not prevail on myself to make this confession."

"But it was very necessary," said the physician, "for how could he judge correctly of your illness without that information?"

"From that time," resumed Francis in a faint voice, "we determined to quit the neighbourhood in hopes that the furious spectre would not follow us beyond the mountains. But while we continued in our house we often saw her, mostly in the music-room. Our doctor being with us one morning, he sat down to the instrument and played some passages extempore. Suddenly the terrible spectre again stood by my wife's chair, and laid her cold withered hand on her shoulder. Hysterics and faintings again followed."

"And did your doctor see it also?"

"No," said Francis, "she appeared behind him, but I saw her distinctly then, as I often did afterwards by broad daylight. We had only to touch the keys of the instrument when she immediately appeared, so that to strike a note was a summons. When I once revisited the ancient Klausenburg, I found her sitting upon a stone staring at me. Thus persecuted, terrified, and in constant fear and anxiety, we have become ripe for death, and the physician despairing of our recovery advised us at last to visit this watering-place, as a last resource for restoring our shattered health. But hitherto we have not found any beneficial result. And who can assure us that the spectre may not here haunt us also. She intends to destroy us, and the most inconceivable things are possible to her strong will. I believe we need only sing an air, or play a sonata even at this distance, and she would make her appearance."

"I will answer for that, count," cried the doctor in a firm voice, "our faculty knows how to keep such malicious spirits at a distance."

Here our conversation ended; we sent the patient home in a sedan chair to his hotel, and I accompanied the physician.

While walking in the quiet of night through the dark avenues of trees, he said to me, "Dear sir, we are too much excited to sleep, favour me with your company to my lodging; a powerful aromatic cardinal^[2] will keep up our spirits, and I will there tell you my opinion respecting our two invalids, of whose recovery, after what I have heard, I no longer doubt. I would almost promise that in two months I shall send them home in tolerably good health."

I was astonished at this, as I had given up all hope of the recovery of my friends. Our strongly-spiced beverage much enlivened us; and the doctor continued: "The mental disease of your friend is to me one of the most interesting psychological phenomena that has ever passed under my observation. He, as well as his wife, are labouring under a singular madness; and if we once succeed in attacking it rightly, then, in weakening, and finally in eradicating it altogether, the physical recovery will follow of itself. Though I did not know your friend formerly, yet, from his communications, I can exactly and truly construe his character and fate. He is naturally good and tender, the latter rather preponderating; and, like most men of this disposition, is more subject to vanity than those of firmer character. He has been handsome and amiable, possessed of talents, and persuasive manners, and has, therefore, been everywhere well received, so that, being a general favourite, and naturally pliant, he may have turned the head of many a pretty girl. Meeting, at last, with his beautiful wife, he determined to change his condition, and her naturally sensitive and nervous nature was delighted to call so amiable a gentleman her husband. And, as usually happens to enthusiasts, so is it in this case; they do not find in matrimony that transcendent felicity which they anticipated; a slight discord takes possession of the tender cords of the

nerves, which impatiently look forward to new vibrations. The ugly, deformed sister felt, like most persons of the sort, jealousy and envy against the preferred, flattered, and fondled wife. She plainly showed her indignation, and confessed that she hated the count. This amiable conqueror of hearts now employed all his art to overcome this hatred. He succeeded, and the poor deluded creature even fancied that she had excited his affection, while his vanity exulted in the triumph. This heartlessness could not but mortify and shock the unfortunate Ernestine. An inward rage consumed her, she fell a victim to her unfortunate passion; and, dying, she uttered the menace to persecute them in every possible way. This is plainly madness. This madness, as has often been observed, is hereditary, and relations, brothers, sisters, and children, are seized with it whenever it is manifested in a member of the family. So in the case of your friend. Perhaps the affectionate count has not been quite silent on the subject to his wife; and she, being already in a delicate state, has indulged these fancies, and with anxious curiosity pursues the gloomy feelings produced by her nerves. Thus, what is more natural than that she should soon find an occasion on which she fancied she really saw her sister? The fears of his wife were communicated to him, anguish of mind at his misfortunes heated his imagination, and he also sees the apparition. Thus they go on, until both have nearly destroyed themselves by a mere phantom. If we can dissipate this phantom, they may be restored to health."

"Dear doctor," I replied, "I know not whether I have a particular propensity for superstition, but your reasons do not satisfy me. Much that has been handed down, both by tradition and writing, on this curious subject, cannot be mere fancy or invention, however much our reason may be opposed to it. There are, no doubt, states of the mind and of the nerves, as well as diseases, during which certain persons see what is veiled from all others. What is spirit? What notions does this word suggest? Do we know the nature, talent, or power, which these millions of differently constituted souls possess, after having shaken off their earthly frame? Do we know by what possibility this or that strong mind, by the power of his will, or anxious repentance, or

a secret tormenting yearning after home, forms from his imagination a visible frame, such as he used to wear?"

"And supposing you to be quite right, what would you profit by it?" exclaimed the zealous doctor. "If any one who is in a discontented mood, or state of excitement, sees any thing, it is, indeed, only and always his own fancies, his own internal phases, which appear before his bodily eye. This may happen to any one at times. We have in the morning a vivid dream; we certainly awake, and still, for a moment, we see the child for whom we yearned, the lily or rose which delighted us, or an old friend who is a hundred miles distant. Perhaps it never yet happened that, to one of the many ghost-seers, his aged father or grandfather appeared as a youth or bridegroom, the murderer as a boy in his innocence, the wild spectre of an aged prisoner as a blooming virgin. Why, then, do not these spectres, for once, change their shape?"

"Because," rejoined I, "they perhaps can express their imagination only in the last state immediately preceding their change."

"Ah! this is idle," exclaimed the doctor, impatiently; "yield the point quietly rather than vainly endeavour to refute me. Assist me rather in restoring your friend."

"In what way can I do so?"

"It is only by some violent means that a happy beginning can be made. Believe me, in the deepest recesses of our minds there are still growing some weeds of vanity, concerning which we fondly deceive ourselves, by fancying that the external surface is the proper soil for them to luxuriate in. Even in moments of terror, in the horror of death, or during tormenting disease, we are tickled by the consciousness that, notwithstanding these, we experience something apart--that we see apparitions which awaken anxiety. Nay, we go further; we wish them back again, and as it were call them forth; our plastic and pliant

nature, and our almost inconceivable fancy obey, and again such a bugbear is conjured up. Assist me then in persuading and disposing our invalid to have music in the count's or your own apartments; let us procure an instrument, and as the countess cannot sing, she will at least play. That they may not cause an excitement, should they again be seized by this mania, no one but yourself and I must be present, or at most her attendant in case of a relapse. But it will not happen in my presence, as I shall have my quick eyes everywhere. By these means our patients will gain confidence and tranquillity, and by a daily repetition, and the use of stronger remedies we shall cure their wild fancies."

"And if not?" I replied, with anxious doubt.

"Well then, by heavens!" he replied, with a loud laugh, "if I, without having previously taken too much, see any thing, then--"

"Then?"

"Then, baron, you shall call me a fool, which, viewed in the proper light, we are all by nature."

Thus we parted, and it required much persuasion to prevail upon my afflicted friend to consent to our experiment. His wife, to my astonishment was more easily persuaded. She said, not without reason, "I feel it, my life is drawing to a close, all help is vain, the nearer death is, the better. So much the better if a new terror can crush me like a stroke of lightning. And if the event which I anticipate does not take place, then my last days will at least be free from this fear and anxious horror; I shall be able to amuse and divert myself, and it remains in the hand of Omnipotence whether I and my husband shall have further hope of recovery."

The third day was fixed upon for music, and a late hour in the evening was appointed, because the countess, like most persons suffering from

fever felt it strongest at that time, and would thereby shorten the night, as she seldom slept till morning. An instrument had been placed in the room; more lights than were required were burning, and the adjoining chamber likewise was brilliantly lighted, in order that no doubtful shadow might be produced in the dark. Besides the easy chair and sofa in the sitting-room, there was a couch, on which the countess reposed in the day. The piano was placed against the wall, between two windows, looking over the garden and some vineyards beyond. After tea, the door being locked, the waiter and servant were dismissed; no one remained but the countess's attendant, a strong young woman, whom we begged to keep up her spirits.

The countess took her seat at the instrument. The doctor stood beside her, in order to observe her, as well as to overlook both rooms, while I sat and stood alternately on the other side. Francis, in his morning-gown and slippers, walked slowly up and down behind us, and the attendant leaned against the open chamber-door.

At first the countess played faintly, uncertainly, and timidly. But by degrees the beauty of the composition, and the consciousness of her talent inspired her, and she played with precision and fire a humorous and melodious fantasia. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were flushed, and a smile, full of soul, played upon her once beautiful mouth. The doctor cast a triumphant glance at me, and by the strong light, the mien and feature of every one in the room were distinctly visible. All praised the performer, and the doctor gave her something to revive her. She was as if inspired with new life, and confessed that she had not felt so well for the last year. Poor Francis was in raptures, and his tearful eyes were full of hope.

With the same arrangement we proceeded to the second piece, while she played still more confidently, and with less exertion. Bravos and applause accompanied her--when suddenly--a terrible shriek was heard--how shall I describe it? Never were my ears rent by such terrific sounds--it was some time after that I perceived that Francis

had uttered it--the candles burned with a blue flame, but yet there was light enough.--And what a spectacle!--Francis, with foaming mouth, and eyes starting from their sockets, was clasping a horrible spectre; and wrestled with the withered hideous form. "You or I," he now cried, and it clasped him with its bony arms so firmly, pressed its crooked deformed body so strongly against his, and its pale face so firmly against his chest, that we all heard how in this struggle his bones were crashing. The attendant had hastened to assist the countess, who had fainted. The doctor and myself approached the count, just as he threw the spectre with gigantic force on the couch, which creaked under her. He stood erect. It lay on the couch like a cloud, like a dark cover, and as we approached, it was gone.

Francis now felt all his bones broken, his last strength was annihilated. In three days he was no more, and the physician found his body much bruised. The countess never recovered from her state of delirium, and two days afterwards she followed her beloved and unfortunate husband to his early grave.

C. A. F.

[1] It is not impossible that this extraordinary speech may be intended for an exposition of the doctrine of Fichte.--J. O.

[2] A beverage usually prepared of wine, brandy, sugar, and pine-apples, or other fruit.