THE OLD HOUSE

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The Old House

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A Novel

By

CÉCILE TORMAY

TRANSLATED FROM THE HUNGARIAN BY

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CHAPTER I

1

IT was evening. Winter hung white over the earth. Great snowflakes crept over the snow towards the coach. They moved ghostlike over the silent, treeless plain. Mountains rose behind them in the snow. Small church towers and roofs crowded over each other. Here and there little squares flared up in the darkness.

Night fell as the coach reached the excise barrier. Beyond, two sentry boxes buried in the snow faced each other. The coachman shouted between his hands. A drowsy voice answered and white cockades began to move in the dark recesses of the boxes. The light of a lamp emerged from the guard's cottage. Behind the gleam a man with a rifle over his arm strolled towards the vehicle.

The high-wheeled travelling coach was painted in two colours: the upper part dark green, the lower, including the wheels, bright yellow. From near the driver's seat small oil lamps shed their light over the horses' backs. The animals steamed in the cold.

The guard lifted his lantern. At the touch of

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the crude light, the coach window rattled and descended. In its empty frame appeared a powerful grey head. Two steady cold eyes looked into the guard's face. The man stepped back. He bowed respectfully.

"The Ulwing coach!" He drew the barrier aside. The civil guards in the sentry boxes presented arms.

"You may pass!"

The light of the coach's lamps wandered over crooked palings, over waste ground—a large deserted market—the wall of a church. Along the winding lanes lightless houses, squatting above the ditches, sulked with closed eyes in the dark. Further on the houses became higher. Not a living thing was to be seen until near the palace of Prince Grassalkovich a night-watchman waded through the snow. From the end of a stick he held in his hand dangled a lantern. The shadow of his halberd moved on the wall like some black beast rearing over his head.

From the tower of the town hall a hoarse voice shouted into the quiet night: "Praised be the Lord Jesus!" and higher up the watchman announced that he was awake.

Then the township relapsed into silence. Snow fell leisurely between old gabled roofs. Under jutting eaves streets crept forth from all sides, crooked, suspicious, like conspirators. Where they met they formed a ramshackle square. In the middle of the square the Servites' Fountain

played in front of the church; water murmured frigidly from its spout like a voice from the dark that prayed slowly, haltingly.

A solitary lamp at a corner house thrust out from an iron bracket into the street. Whenever it rocked at the wind's pleasure, the chain creaked gently and the beam of its light shrunk on the wall till it was no bigger than a child's fist. Another lone lamp in the middle of New Market Place. Its smoky light was absorbed by the falling snow and never reached the ground.

Christopher Ulwing drew his head into his fur-collared coat. The almanac proclaimed full moon for to-night. Whenever this happened, the civic authorities saved lamp-oil; could they accept responsibility if the heavens failed to comply with the calendar and left the town in darkness? In any case, at this time of night the only place for peaceful citizens was by their own fireside.

Two lamps alight. . . . And even these were superfluous.

Pest, the old-fashioned little town had gone to rest and the fancy came to Christopher Ulwing that it was asleep even in day time, and that he was the only person in it who was ever quite awake.

He raised his head; the Leopold suburb had been reached. The carriage had come to the end of the rough, jerky cobbles. Under the wheels the ruts became soft and deep. The

breeze blowing from the direction of the Danube ruffled the horses' manes gently.

All of a sudden, a clear, pleasant murmur broke the silence. The great life-giving river pursued its mysterious course through the darkness, invisible even as life itself.

Beyond it were massed the white hills of Buda. On the Pest side an uninterrupted plain stretched between the town and the river. In the white waste the house of Christopher Ulwing stood alone. For well nigh thirty years it had been called in town "the new house." The building of it had been a great event. The citizens of the Inner Town used to make excursions on Sundays to see it. They looked at it, discussed it, and shook their heads. They could not grasp why Ulwing the builder should put his house there in the sand when plenty of building ground could be got cheaply, in the lovely narrow streets of the Inner Town. But he would have his own way and loved his house all the more. The child of his mind, the product of his work, his bricks, it was entirely his own. Though once upon a time . . .

While Christopher Ulwing listened unconsciously to the murmur of the Danube, silent shades rose from afar and spoke to his soul. He thought of the ancient Ulwings who had lived in the great dark German forest. They were woodcutters on the shores of the Danube and they followed their calling downstream. Some acquired

citizenship in a small German town. They became master carpenters and smiths. They worked oak and iron, simple, rude materials, and were moulded in the image of the stuff they worked in. Honest, strong men. Then one happened to wander into Hungary; he settled down in Pozsony and became apprenticed to a goldsmith. He wrought in gold and ivory. His hand became lighter, his eye more sensitive than his ancestors'. He was an artist. . . . Christopher Ulwing thought of him—his father. There were two boys, he and his brother Sebastian, and when the parental house became empty, they too like those before them, heard the call. They left Pozsony on the banks of the Danube. They followed the river, orphans, poor.

Many a year had passed since. Many a thing had changed.

Christopher Ulwing drew out his snuff box. It was his father's work and his only inheritance. He tapped it lightly with two fingers. As it sank back into his pocket, he bent towards the window.

His house now became distinctly visible; the steep double roof, the compact storied front, the mullioned windows in the yellow wall, the door of solid oak with its semi-circular top like a pair of frowning eyebrows. Two urns stood above the ends of the cornice and two caryatid pillars flanked the door. Every recess, every protruding wall of the house appeared soft and white.

Indoors the coach had been noticed. The windows of the upper story became first light and then dark again in quick succession. Someone was running along the rooms with a candle. The big oak gate opened. The wheels clattered, the travelling box was jerked against the back of the coach and all of a sudden the caryatids—human pillars—looked into the coach window. The noise of the hoofs and the wheels echoed like thunder under the archway of the porch.

The manservant lowered the steps of the coach.

A young man stood on the landing of the staircase. He held a candle high above his head. The light streamed over his thick fair hair. His face was in the shade.

"Good evening, John Hubert!" shouted Ulwing to his son. His voice sounded deep and sharp, like a hammer dropping on steel. "How are the children?" He turned quickly round. This sudden movement flung the many capes of his coat over his shoulders.

The servant's good-natured face emerged from the darkness.

"The book-keeper has been waiting for a long time . . ."

"Is everybody asleep in this town?"

"Of course I am not asleep, of course I am not——" and there was Augustus Füger rushing down the stairs. He was always in a hurry, his breath came short, he held his small bald head on one side as if he were listening.

Christopher Ulwing slapped him on the back.

"Sorry, Füger. My day lasts as long as my work."

John Hubert came to meet his father. His coat was bottle green. His waistcoat and nankin trousers were buff. On his exaggeratedly high collar the necktie, twisted twice round, displayed itself in elegant folds. He bowed respectfully and kissed his father's hand. He resembled him, but he was shorter, his eyes were paler and his face softer.

A petticoat rustled on the square slabs of the dark corridor behind them.

Christopher Ulwing did not even turn round. "Good evening, Mamsell. I am not hungry." Throwing his overcoat on a chair, he went into his room.

Mamsell Tini's long, stiff face, flanked by two hair cushions covering her ears, looked disappointedly after the builder; she had kept his supper in vain. She threw her key-basket from one arm to the other and sailed angrily back into the darkness of the corridor.

The room of Christopher Ulwing was low and vaulted. White muslin curtains hung at its two bay windows. On the round table, a candle was burning; it was made of tallow but stood in a silver candle-stick. Its light flickered slowly over the checked linen covers of the spacious armchairs.

"Sit down, Füger. You, too," said Ulwing to his son, but remained standing himself.

"The Palatine has entrusted me with the repair of the castle. I concluded the bargain about the forest." He took a letter up from the table. Whatever he wanted his hand seized, his fist grabbed, without hesitation. Meanwhile he dictated short, precise instructions to the bookkeeper.

Füger wrote hurriedly in his yellow-covered note book. He always carried it about him; even when he went to Mass it peeped out of his pocket.

John Hubert sat uncomfortably in the bulging armchair. Above the sofa hung the portraits of the architects Fischer von Erlach and Mansard, fine old small engravings. He knew those two faces, but took no interest in them. He began to look at the green wall paper. Small squares, green wreaths. He looked at each of them separately. Meanwhile he became drowsy. Several times he withdrew the big-headed pin which fastened the tidy to the armchair and each time restuck it in the same place. Then he coughed, though he really wanted to yawn.

Füger was still taking notes. He only spoke when the builder had stopped.

"Mr. Münster called here. His creditors are driving him into bankruptcy"

Christopher Ulwing's look became stern.

"Why didn't you tell me that before?"

Füger shrugged his shoulders.

"I haven't had a chance to put a word in . . ."

The builder stood motionless in the middle of the room. He contracted his brows as if he were peering into the far distance.

Martin George Münster, the powerful contractor, the qualified architect, was ruined. The last rival, the great enemy who had so many times baulked him, counted no more. He thought of humiliations, of breathless hard fights, and of the many men who had had to go down that he might rise. He had vanquished them all. Now, at last, he was really at the top.

With his big fingers he gave a contented twist to the smart white curl which he wore on the side of his head.

Füger watched him attentively. Just then, the candle lit up the builder's bony, clean-shaven face, tanned by the cold wind. His hair and eyebrows seemed whiter, his eyes bluer than usual. His chin, turned slightly to one side and drawn tightly into an open white collar, gave him a peculiar, obstinate expression.

"There is no sign of old age about him!" thought the little book-keeper, and waited to be addressed.

"Mr. Münster lost three hundred thousand Rhenish guldens. He could not stand that."

Christopher Ulwing nodded. Meanwhile he calculated, cool and unmoved.

"I must see the books and balance sheet of Münster's firm." While he spoke, he reflected

that he was now rich enough to have a heart. A heart is a great burden and hampers a man in his movements. As long as he was rising, he had had to set it aside. That was over. He had reached the summit.

"I will help Martin George Münster," he said quietly, "I will put him on his legs again, but so that in future he shall stand by me, not against me."

Füger, moved, blinked several times in quick succession under his spectacles, as if applauding his master with his eyelids.

This settled business for Christopher Ulwing. He snuffed the candle. Turning to his son:

"Have you been to the Town Hall?"

John Hubert felt his father's voice as if it had gripped him by the shoulder and shaken him.

"Are you not tired, sir?" As a last defence this question rose to his lips. It might free him and leave the matter till to-morrow. But his father did not even deem it deserving of an answer.

"Did you make a speech?"

"Yes . . ." John Hubert's voice was soft and hesitating. He always spoke his words in such a way as to make it easy to withdraw them. "I said what you told me to, but I fear it did little good. . . ."

"You think so?" For a moment a cunning light flashed up in Christopher Ulwing's eye, then he smiled contemptuously. "True. Such

as we must act. We may think too, but only if we get a great gentleman to tell our thoughts. Nevertheless, I want you to speak. I shall make of you a gentleman great enough to get a hearing."

Füger bowed. John Hubert began to complain. "When I proposed to plant trees along the streets of the town, a citizen asked me if I had become a gardener. As to the lighting of the streets they said that drunkards can cling to the walls of the houses. A lamp-post would serve no other purpose."

"That will change!" The builder's voice warmed with great strong confidence.

Young Ulwing continued without warmth.

"I told them of our new brickfields and informed them that henceforth we shall sell bricks by retail to the suburban people. This did not please them. The councillors whispered together."

"What did they say?" asked Christopher Ulwing coldly.

John Hubert cast his eyes down.

"Well, they said that the great carpenter had always made gold out of other people's misery. The great carpenter! That is what they call you, sir, among themselves, though they presented you last year with the freedom of the city. . . ."

Ulwing waved his hand disparagingly.

"Whatever honours I received from the Town Hall count for little. They have laden me with

them for their weight to hamper my movements, so that I may let them sleep in peace."

"And steal in peace," said Füger, making an ironical circular movement with his hand towards his pocket.

"Let them be," growled the builder, "there is many an honest man among them."

The book-keeper stretched his neck as if he were listening intently, then bowed solemnly and left the room.

Christopher Ulwing, left alone with his son, turned sharply to him.

"What else did you say in the Town Hall?"

"But you gave me no other instructions. . . .?"

"Surely you must have said something more? Something of your own?"

There was silence.

Young Ulwing had a feeling that he was treated with great injustice. Was not his father responsible for everything? He had made him a man. And now he was discontented with his achievement. In an instant, like lightning, it all flashed across his mind. His childhood, his years in the technical school, much timid fluttering, nameless bitterness, cowardly compromise. And those times, when he still had a will to will, when he wanted to love and choose: it was crushed by his father. His father chose someone else. A poor sempstress was not what Ulwing the builder wanted. He wanted the daughter of Ulrich Jörg. She was all right. She was rich. It

lasted a short time. Christina Jörg died. But even then he was not allowed to think of another woman, a new life. "The children!" his father said, and he resigned himself because Christopher Ulwing was the stronger and could hold his own more vehemently. Unwonted defiance mounted into his head. For a moment he rose as if to accuse, his jaw turned slightly sideways.

The old man saw his own image in him. He looked intently as if he wanted to fix forever that beam of energy now flashing up in his son's eye. He had often longed for it vainly, and now it had come unexpectedly, produced by causes he could not understand.

But slowly it all died away in John Hubert's eyes. Christopher Ulwing bowed his head.

"Go," he said harshly, "now I am really tired." In that moment he looked like a weary old woodcutter. His eyelids fell, his big bony hands hung heavily out of his sleeves.

A door closed quietly in the corridor with a spasmodic creaking. Ulwing the builder would have liked it better if it had been slammed. But his son shut every door so carefully. He could not say why. "What is going to happen when I don't stand by his side?" he shuddered. His vitality was so inexhaustible that the idea of death always struck him as something strange, antagonistic. "What is going to happen?" The question died away, he gave it no further thought. He stepped towards the next room . . . his grand-

children! They would continue what the great carpenter began. They would be strong. He opened the door. He crossed the dining room. He smelt apples and bread in the dark. One more room, and beyond that the children.

The air was warm. A night-light burned on the top of a chest of drawers. Miss Tini had fallen asleep sitting beside it with her shabby prayer book on her knees. The shadow of her nightcap rose like a black trowel on the wall. In the deep recess of the earthen-ware stove water was warming in a blue jug. From the little beds the soft breathing of children was audible.

Ulwing leaned carefully over one of the beds. The boy slept there. His small body was curled up under the blankets as if seeking shelter in his sleep from something that came with night and prowled around his bed.

The old man bent over him and kissed his forehead. The boy moaned, stared for a second, frightened, into the air, then hid trembling in his pillows.

Mamsell Tini woke, but dared not move. The master builder stood so humbly before the child, that it did not become a salaried person to see such a thing. She turned her head away and listened thus to her master's voice.

"I didn't mean to. Now, don't be afraid, little Christopher. It is I."

The child was already asleep.

Ulwing the builder stepped to the other bed. He kissed Anne too. The little girl was not startled. Her fair hair, like a silver spray, moved around her head on the pillow. She thrust her tiny arms round her grandfather's neck and returned his kiss.

When, on the tips of his toes, Christopher Ulwing left the room, Miss Tini looked after him. She thought that, after all, the Ulwings were kindly people.

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A glaring white light streamed through the windows into the room. Winter had come over the world during the night and the children put their heads together to discuss it. They had forgotten since last year what winter was like.

Below, the great green water crawled cold between its white banks. The castle hill opposite was white too. The top of the bastions, the ridges of the roofs, the spires of the steeples, everything that was usually sharp and pointed was now rounded and blunted by the snow.

The church tower of Our Lady belonged to Anne. The Garrison Church was little Christopher's. A long time had passed since the children had divided these from their windows, and, because Christopher grew peevish, Anne had also given him the shingled roof of the Town Hall of Buda and the observatory on Mount St. Gel-

lert. She only kept the Jesuits' Stairs to herself.

"And I'll tell on you, how you spat into the clerk's tumbler. No, no, I won't give it!" Anne shook her head so emphatically that her fair hair got all tangled in front of her eyes. She would not have given the Jesuits' Stairs for anything in the world. That was the way up to the castle, to Uncle Sebastian. And she often looked over to him from the nursery window. In the morning, when she woke, she waved both hands towards the other shore. In the evening she put a tallow candle on the window-sill to let Uncle Sebastian see that she was thinking of him.

Then Sebastian Ulwing would answer from the other shore. He lit a small heap of straw on the castle wall and through the intense darkness the tiny flames wished each other good night above the Danube.

"The Jesuits' Stairs are mine," said Anne resolutely and went into the other room.

The little boy sulked for some time and then followed her on tiptoe. In the doorway he looked round anxiously. He was afraid of this room though it was brighter than any other and Anne called it the sunshine room. The yellow-checked wall paper looked sparkling and even on a cloudy day the cherry-wood furniture looked as if the sun shone on it. The chairs' legs stood stiffly on the floor of scrubbed boards and their backs were like lyres. That room was mother's.

She did not live in it because she had gone to heaven and had not yet returned home, but everything was left as it had been when she went away. Her portrait hung above the flowered couch, her sewing-machine stood in the recess near the window. The piano had been hers too and the children were forbidden to touch it. Yet, Christopher was quite sure that it was full of piano-mice, who at night, when everybody is asleep, run about in silver shoes and then the air rings with their patter.

"Let us go from here," he said trembling, "but you go first."

There was nobody in grandfather's room. Only some crackling from the stove. Only the ticking of the marble clock on the writing table.

Suddenly little Christopher became braver. He ran to the stove. The stove was a solid silver-grey earthenware column. On its top there was an urn emitting white china flames, rigid white china flames. This was beautiful and incomprehensible and Christopher liked to look at them.

He pointed to the brass door. Through the ventilators one could see what was going on inside the stove.

"Now the stove fairies are dancing in there!"

In vain Anne looked through the holes; she could not see any fairies. Ordinary flames were bobbing up above the cinders. The smoke slowly twisted itself up into the chimney.

"Aren't they lovely? They have red dresses and sing," said the boy. The little girl turned away bored.

"I only hear the ticking of the clock." Suddenly she stood on tiptoe. When she did so, the corners of her eyes and of her mouth rose slightly. She too wanted to invent something curious:

"Tick-tack. . . . A little dwarf hobbles in the room. Do you hear? Tick-tack. . . ."

Christopher's eyes shone with delight.

"I do hear. . . . And the dwarf never stops, does he?"

"Never," said Anne convincingly, though she was not quite sure herself, "he never stops, but we must not talk about it to the grown-ups."

Christopher repeated religiously:

"The grown-ups must never know. And this is truly true, isn't it? Grandpa has said it too, hasn't he?"

Anne remembered that grandpa never told stories about dwarfs and fairies.

"Yes, Grandpa has said it," the boy confirmed himself.

The whole thing got mixed up in Anne's brain. And from that moment both believed absolutely that their grandfather had said it and that it was really a dwarf who walked in the room, hobbling with small steps, without ever stopping. Tick-tack. . . .

"Do you hear it?"

The peaceful silence of the corridor echoed the ticking of the clock. It could even be heard on the staircase which sank like a cave from the corridor to the hall. And then the dwarf vanished out of the children's heads.

The back garden was white and the roof looked like a hillside covered with snow. Where the dragon-headed gargoyle protruded, the house turned sharply and its inner wing extended into the deep back garden. Mr. Augustus Füger lived there with his wife and his son Otto.

Mrs. Augustus Füger, Henrietta, was for ever sitting in the window and sewing. At this very moment, her big bonnet was visible, looking like a white cat on the window sill. Fortunately, she did not look out of the window. The garden belonged entirely to the children. Theirs was the winged pump of the well, theirs the circular seat round the apple tree. Their kingdom. . . . In winter the garden seemed small, but in summer when the trees were covered with leaves and the lilac-bushes hid the secret places, it became enormous. Through its high wall a gate led to the world's end; a grilled gate which grown-ups alone were privileged to open.

Sometimes Anne and Christopher would peep longingly for hours through its rails. They could see the roof of the tool-shed, the tar boiler and a motley of pieces of timber, beams, floorings, piles. What lovely slides they would have made if only one could have got at them! The

old folks called this glorious, disorderly place, where rude big men in leather aprons used to work, the timber yard. The children did not approve of this name, they preferred "world's end." They liked it on a summer Sunday best when all was quiet and the smell of the heated timber penetrated the courtyard and even the house. Then one could believe in the secret known to Christopher. It was not a timber yard at all. The grown-ups had no business with it. It was beyond all manner of doubt the playground of giant children who had strewn it with their building bricks.

"And when I sleep, they play with them," the boy whispered.

"One can't believe that just now," Anne answered seriously, "when everything is so clear."

Crestfallen, Christopher walked behind her in the snow. They only stopped under the porch in front of a door bearing a board with the inscription "Canzelei." * This word sounded like a sneeze. It tickled the children's lips. It made them laugh.

Anne and Christopher knocked their shoulders together.

"Canzelei. . . . Canzelei!"

The door opened. The clerk appeared on the threshold. He was a thin little man with a starved expression, wearing a long alpaca frock-coat; when he walked, his knees knocked together.

* Canzelei=office (German).

Anne knew something about him. Grandpa had said it when he was in a temper: Feuerlein was stupid! The only one among grown-ups of whom one knew such a thing beyond doubt.

The children looked at each other and their small cheeks swelled with suppressed laughter; then, like snakes, they slid through the open door into the office.

"He is stupid, though he is grown up," Anne whispered into the boy's ear.

"And I will spit into his tumbler!" Now they laughed freely, triumphantly.

Their laughter suddenly stopped.

Mr. Gemming, the draughtsman, had banged his triangular ruler down and began to growl. Augustus Füger tugged the sleeve-protector he wore on his right arm during business hours.

"Don't grumble, Gemming. Don't forget that one day he will be head of the firm, won't you, little Christopher? And you will sit in there behind the great writing table?"

Christopher looked fearfully towards the door that led to his grandfather's office. In there? Always? Quiet and serious—even when he wanted to play with his tin soldiers? With a shudder, he rushed across the room. No, he would rather not set his foot here again; nasty place that smelt of ink.

The door from which he had fled opened. Ulwing the builder showed a strange gentleman through the room.

The little book-keeper began to write suddenly. Gemming dipped his pencil into the inkstand. In the neighbouring room the pens scratched and the children shrank to the wall. The strange gentleman stopped. Anne saw his face clearly; it was fat and pale. Under his heavy double chin the sail-like collar looked crushed.

"Thank you," said the strange gentleman and cast his eyes down as if he were ashamed of something. He held out a flabby white hand to Christopher Ulwing. The hand trembled. His lips quivered too.

"Don't mention it, Mr. Münster. It is just business. . . ."

This was said by the builder under the porch, and they heard it in the office.

Gemming began to shake the point of the pencil he had dipped in the ink. Füger blinked and blinked. Both felt that Martin George Münster had fallen from his greatness to their own level. He too was in Ulwing's service.

When the builder returned, his crooked chin settled snugly in his open collar.

Suddenly he perceived the children.

"What are *you* doing here?" He would have liked to sit down with them on the heap of office books. Just for a minute, just long enough to let their hands stroke his face. He took his repeater out of his pocket.

"It can't be done." He still had to settle with

many people. Contractors, timber merchants, masons, carters—they were all waiting behind the grating, in the big room opening into the garden. And John Hubert had already twice thrust his head through the door as if he wanted to call him. He went on. But on the threshold he had to turn back. "This afternoon we will go to Uncle Sebastian. We will take leave of him before the floating bridge is removed."

The children grinned with delight.

"We shall go in a coach, shan't we?" asked the boy.

"We shall walk," answered Ulwing drily; "the horses are needed to cart wood!" And with that he slammed the door behind him.

"Walk," repeated Christopher, disappointed. "I don't like it. And I won't go. And I have a pain in my foot."

He walked lamely, rubbing his shoulders against the wall. He moaned pitiably. But Anne knew all the while that he was shamming.

CHAPTER II

THE old man and the little girl walked slowly down to the banks of the river. The little squares of the windows and the two figures under the porch gazed for a long time after them. A cold snowy wind was blowing from the white hills. Water mills floated on the Danube. Horses, harnessed one in front of the other, dragged a barge at the foot of the castle hill, and small dark skiffs moved to and fro in the stream, as if Pest and Buda were taking leave of each other before the advent of winter.

On the shore shipwrights were at work. When they perceived Christopher Ulwing, they stopped and greeted him respectfully. A gentleman came in the opposite direction; he too doffed his hat. Near the market place ladies and gentlemen were walking. Everybody saluted Ulwing the builder.

Anne was proud. Her face flushed.

"Everybody salutes us, don't they? Are there many people living here?"

"Many," said her grandfather, and thought of something else.

"How many?"

"We can't know that; the gentry won't submit to a census."

"And are there many children here?"

The builder did not answer.

"Say, Grandpa, you never were a child, were you?"

"I was, but not here."

"Were you not always in our house, Grandpa?" asked the child, indefatigable.

Ulwing smiled.

"We came from a great distance, far, far away, Uncle Sebastian and I. By coach, as long as our money lasted, then on foot. In those days the summers were warmer than they are now. At night we wandered by moonlight. . . ."

He relapsed into silence. His mind looked elsewhere than his eyes. The fortress of Pest! Then the bastions and walls of Pest were still standing. And he entered the city through one of its old gates.

"It was in the morning and the church bells were ringing," he said deep in thought.

Suddenly it seemed to him that he saw the town of times gone by, not as a reality, but as an old, old fading picture. White bewigged citizens in three-cornered hats were walking the streets. Carts suspended on chains. Soldiers in high shakos. And how young and free the Danube was! Its waters shone more brightly and its shore swarmed with ship-folk. Brother Sebastian went down to the bank. He himself stopped and looked at a gaudy, pretty barge, into which men were carrying bags across two

boards. They went on one, returned by the other. A clerk was standing on the shore, counting tallies on a piece of wood for every bag. The half-naked dockers shone with sweat. They carried their loads on their shoulders just as their fore-fathers had carried them here on the Danube for hundreds of years. The boards bent and swayed under their weight. The clerk swore. "There are too few men." He looked invitingly at Christopher Ulwing. But Christopher did not touch the bags. His attention was attracted by something in the sand which entered his eyes like a pinprick, the glittering blade of an axe. He remembered clearly every word he said. "Knock those two boards together. In an hour we can slide the whole cargo into the barge."

Down at the shore, brother Sebastian jumped into a boat. He pointed with his staff towards Buda. He called his brother, waving his hand.

"I remain here," was the determined answer, and he picked the axe up from the sand.

The clerk watched him carefully and nodded approvingly. A few minutes later, the bags slid speedily down the improvised slide, and the barge, like a greedy monster, gulped them up into its maw.

The boat and brother Sebastian left the shore. They were already in the middle of the Danube. The stream and the oars, chance and will, carried his life into the opposite town. Christopher Ul-

wing remained in Pest. Next day, he worked in the office of the ship-broker. Then he went into the timber yard. Then further. Advancing. Rising. And the town grew with him as if their fate had been one.

Vainly did Anne ask a thousand little questions; her grandfather did not answer. He walked far behind his present self.

They reached the boat-bridge. Here too the men saluted. The collector asked for no toll. At the bridge-head, the sentry presented arms.

"Why?" Anne had asked this question every time she had crossed the bridge in her short life.

"They know me," the builder answered simply.

What need was there for the children to know that he owned the bridge, had contracted for the right of way over the river; that the many rafts floating down the Danube were his as well as the land above them on the banks.

The bridge trembled rhythmically. The stream rocked the boats. It foamed, splashed, as if thirsty giant animals were lapping at the hulls of the many chained little boats. Lamps stood near the pillars. In the middle, a coloured spot above the water: the guardian saint of the river, the carved image of St. John Nepomuk. Beneath it, people passed to and fro, raising their hats.

Anne pointed to the saint: "People salute him too, even more than Grandpa." And she was a little envious.

When they reached the castle on the hill, the little girl began to complain: "I am hungry."

The stones of the narrow, snow-covered pavement clattered quietly under the builder's long, firm steps.

Around them decaying houses. Yellow, grey, green. Gilt "bretzels," giant keys, boots and horse-shoes dangled into the street from over the tiny shops, suspended from brackets which were ornamented with spirals of forged steel.

Above the shop of Uncle Sebastian, a big watch was hung. From far away Anne recognised the immobile golden hands on its face. The tower of Our Lady's Church cast its shadow just up to it. It pointed into the street like a black signpost. The house itself was probably older than the others. Its upper storey protruded above the ground floor and was supported by several beams above the pavement. On the bare wall, just behind the clock-sign, an inscription, with curious flourishes, was visible:

SEBASTIAN ULWING

CITY CLOCKMAKER

The shop was crowded. Neighbours, burghers from the castle, came here every afternoon to warm themselves. Uncle Sebastian sat before his little clockmaker's table. He was silent. His white hair, smoothed back from his forehead, fell on the collar of his violet tail-coat. His fig-

ure was tall and bent. According to old fashion he wore knee-breeches. On his heavy shoes the buckles were a little rusty; the thick white stockings formed creases. When he perceived Anne, he began to laugh. He caught her up in his arms and raised her high into the air.

"Where is little Christopher?"

"He has a pain in his foot," said the master builder, bowing to the company. Anne turned up her nose significantly. The children did not think Uncle Sebastian belonged quite among the grown-ups. He understood many things grandfather could not grasp. They put their heads together, secretively, affectionately. Anne began to dangle her little legs in the air and ask for gingerbread. Then she proceeded to investigate the shop.

At the bottom of it a semi-circular window opened on a courtyard. A deep leather armchair and a long table with curved legs stood in front of the window. The table was covered with a lot of old rubbish. The shelves too were laden with odds and ends. Watches and clocks covered the grimy walls.

Near the table, a lady tried to sell a *repoussé,* silver, dove-shaped loving-cup. Perceiving Christopher Ulwing, she curtseyed deeply.

"With your permission, I am Amalia Csik, from the Fisherman's bastion."

She wore a hat like a hamper. Everything on her was faded and shabby. Anne noticed

that whenever she moved a musty odour spread from her clothes. In the shop nobody took any notice of this. All these people were dressed differently from her grandfather.

"Even the little children are dressed in a modish way," the lady said disparagingly. "Of course, everything in Pest is different from what we have in Buda. . . . We, here in the castle, are faithful to our own ways, thank God. Are we not, your reverence?"

The castle chaplain nodded several times his yellow, bird-like head.

"I hear," said the lady, "that they have started a fashion paper in Pest."

"Yes, and they print it in the same type as the prayer books," grumbled the chaplain.

The lady gave a deep sigh.

"Notwithstanding that the devil himself is the editor of fashion papers."

"Of all newspapers," said the official censor of the Governor's council from beside the stove.

Christopher Ulwing raised one eyebrow in sign of derision. "Is it the censor who says that?"

"It is I," came the answer, emphatically, as if an incontrovertible argument had been thrust into the discussion.

"Literary people in Pest have a different opinion," grumbled the builder.

"Perhaps it would be better not to drag them in. As censor, I am a literary man myself. . . ."

The builder was getting more and more impatient. The censor turned to the chaplain.

"The written word must not serve the ideals of the individual but the purposes of the State and Church."

Christopher Ulwing went to the door. He would have liked to let a little fresh air into the place. Suddenly he turned back angrily: 'I suppose, gentlemen, you only approve of mediocrity?"

"Well said, Mr. Builder. Nothing but the mediocre is useful to the organization of the State. That which is above or below only causes uncomfortable disorder."

He did not himself know why, but, all of a sudden, Christopher's thoughts went to the bookshop of Ulrich Jörg in Pest. He remembered the young authors who frequented it; their plans, their manuscripts, detained in the censor's sieve. All those ambitious hopes, new dreams and awakening thoughts, younger than he, a little beyond his ken, but which he loved as he loved his grandchildren.

He turned his back furiously on the censor and went to the bottom of the room feeling that if he spoke he would say something rude.

The chaplain said with indignation:

"All those people from Pest are such rebels!"

The lady exclaimed suddenly: "There comes the wife of the Councillor of the Governor's council! She is wearing her silver-wedding hat!"

All thronged to the door. The shop became quite dark as the fat "Mrs. Councillor" passed in front of it. The chaplain and the others took their hats and followed her; let the people think they were in her company. Quite a crowd for Buda, at least six people went down Tárnok Street at the same time. Even the good lady with the big hat remembered some urgent business. She quickly concluded the sale of the loving-cup, bowed, and rushed after the others.

Christopher Ulwing came forward.

"What a bureaucratic air there is in Buda. I prefer your friends who come after closing hours: the lame wood-carver and the old spectacle-maker. Even if they do not carry the world forward, they don't attempt to push it back."

Sebastian laughed good-naturedly:

"These too are good people, only different from you on the other side of the river. We have time, you are in a hurry. You are for ever wanting new-fashioned things. Somebody who reads newspapers told the chaplain that your son spoke at the Town Hall. Now you want avenues, lamps, brick-built houses. . . . What are we coming to?"

The builder looked deeply and calmly into his brother's eyes.

"Brother Sebastian, we have to change or time will beat us."

The clockmaker became embarrassed.

"Ah, but old things, old ways are so pleasant."

Christopher Ulwing pointed to the loving-cup.

"This too is old, but this has a right to remain because it is beautiful. Do you remember, our father too made some like this. The time may come when you will get a lot of money for it. I should like to buy it myself."

Sebastian looked anxiously at his brother.

"Perhaps you won't sell this either." The builder again became impatient. "You buy to do business, but when it comes to selling. . . ."

The clockmaker took the dove-shaped cup into his hand. He held it gently, tenderly, as if it were a live bird. Then he shook his head.

"No, not yet. I will sell it another day."

"Why not now?"

"Because I want to look at it for some time," said Sebastian gently, as if he were ashamed of himself.

"That's the way to remain poor. To keep everything that is old, avoid everything that is new. Do you know, Brother Sebastian, you are just the same as Buda. . . ."

"And you are just like Pest," retorted Sebastian modestly.

They smiled at each other quietly.

Anne meanwhile was playing at the tool table and dropping wheels and watch-springs into the oil bottle.

Uncle Sebastian did not want to spoil her

pleasure but watched every movement of hers anxiously. When the child noticed that she was observed, she withdrew her hand suddenly. She stared innocently at the walls.

"I am bored," she said sadly, "I don't know what to do. Do tell me a story."

"I don't know any to-day," said Uncle Sebastian.

"You always know some for you read such a lot. . . ." While saying this she drew from the pocket of Uncle Sebastian's coat a well-worn little green book.

"Demokritos, or the posthumous writings of a laughing philosopher." This was Sebastian Ulwing's favorite book.

"Here you are!" cried Anne, waving her prey triumphantly. "Now come along, tell me a story."

The clockmaker shook his head. It still weighed on his mind that he and the builder could never understand each other. He was proud of his brother. He felt his will, his strength, but that was wellnigh all he knew about him. Had he rejoiced, had he suffered in life? Had he ever loved, or did he have no love for anybody? . . . He thought of Barbara, his brother's dead wife, whom Brother Christopher had snatched from him and taken to the altar, because he did not know that he, Sebastian, had loved her silently for a long time. His forehead went up in many wrinkles. . . . We human beings trample our

fellow creatures under our feet because we don't know them.

Anne took his hand and wrung it slowly. "Do tell me a story, do!"

Inside, in front of the courtyard window, the builder turned the pages of an old book.

Uncle Sebastian sat down and lifted Anne into his lap. Casting occasional glances on his brother's face, as if he were reading in it, he began to tell his story.

"It happened a long, long time ago, even before I was born, in the time of the Turkish Pasha's rule. A gay city it was then, was Buda. In every street shops dealing in masks and fancy dresses were opened. When Carnival time came, folk used to walk a-singing in the streets of the castle; old ones, young ones, in gaudy fancy dress, with little iron lamps—such a crazy procession! The fun only stopped at the dawn of Ash-Wednesday. All fancy dress shops were closed and bolted. All were locked, except one in Fortune's Street which remained open even after Ash-Wednesday—all the year round.

"Singly, secretly, people went to visit it, at night, when the castle gates had been closed and the fires at the street corners put out. Among the buyers were some that had haughty faces. These bought themselves humble-looking masks. The cruel men bought kind ones, godless men pious ones, the stupid clever ones, the clever simple ones. But the greatest number were

those who suffered and they bought masks which showed a laughing face. That is what happened. It is a true story," growled Uncle Sebastian, "and it is just as true that those who once put a mask on never took it off again. Only on rare occasions did it fall off their faces, on dark nights when they were quite alone, or when they loved, or when they saw money. . . ."

Again he looked at his brother's face and then continued in a whisper:

"The business flourished. Kings, princes, beautiful princesses, priests, soldiers, burghers, everybody, even the Town Councillors, went to the shop. Its reputation had even spread down to the lower town. People from the other side of the Danube came too. After a time, the whole world wore masks. Nobody talked about it but all wore them and the people forgot each other's real faces. Nobody knows them any more. Nobody. . . ."

Uncle Sebastian didn't tell any more and in the great silence the ticking of the clocks became loud.

"I didn't like that story," said Anne, "tell me about naughty children and fairies. That's prettier. . . ."

The clockmaker probably did not hear the child's voice. He sat in his low chair as if listening for someone's steps, the steps of one who had passed away. He thought of his tale, of his brother, of Barbara, of himself.

The builder closed the book. He got up.

"Let us go. It is late."

And the two Ulwings took leave of each other for the winter.

On the bridge over the Danube the sixteen lamps were already alight. Their light dropped at equal distances into the river. The water played for a time with the beams, then left them behind. It continued its way in darkness towards the rock of St. Gellert's Mount. Only the chill of its big wet mass was perceptible in the night.

The snow began to fall anew. A light flared up here and there in the window of a house near the shore. The sound of horns was audible on the Danube.

On the bridge, Anne suddenly perceived her father. Young Ulwing walked under the lamps with a girl. They were close together. When they saw the builder and the child they separated rapidly and the girl ran in haste to the other side of the bridge.

Christopher Ulwing called his son.

Leaning against the railing, John Hubert waited for them; he was for ever leaning on something. When they reached him, he took hold of the little girl's free hand as if he wanted to put her between himself and his father.

Anne was afraid. She felt that something was going on in the silence over her head. She drew her shoulders up. The two men did not

speak for a long time to each other. They walked with unequal, apparently antagonistic steps and dragged the trembling child between them.

It was Christopher Ulwing who broke the silence. He shouted angrily:

"You promised not to go to her while I was alive! Can't I even trust your word?"

"But, sir, don't forget the child is here!"

"She won't understand," retorted the builder sharply.

Anne understood the words quite clearly, but what she heard did not interest her. Her thoughts were otherwise engaged. She felt keenly that two hands opposed to each other were pressing her on either side and that some community of feeling had arisen between her father and herself. They both feared someone who was stronger than they.

"I went to meet you, sir," grumbled John Hubert, "and met her by chance on the bridge."

Christopher Ulwing stopped dead.

"Is that the truth?"

"I never told lies." Young Ulwing's voice was honest and sad. It sounded as if he laid great weight on what he said because it had cost him so dear.

The builder, still angry, drew out his snuff box. He tapped it sharply and opened it.

For ever so long there had lived in this box a

quaint old tune. It woke at the blow and the snuff box began to play.

"Confound it," exclaimed Christopher Ulwing, and tapped it again to silence it, but the box continued to play.

The two men, as though they had been interrupted by a comic interlude, stopped talking. The builder returned the box into his pocket. Anne bent her head close to her grandfather's coat. There was now a sound in it as if a band of little Christopher's tin soldiers were playing prettily, delicately, far, far away.

Florian was waiting with a lantern at the bridgehead on the Pest side. Many small lamps moved through the silence. Snow fell in the dark streets.

But now Anne was leaning her tired head fully on her grandfather's pocket. "More!" she said gently over and over again and inhaled the music of the snuff box just as Mamsell Tini breathed in the lavender perfume from her prayer book.

CHAPTER III

WINTER came many times. Summer came many times. The children did not count them. Meanwhile an iron chain bridge had grown together from the two banks of the Danube. Even when the ice was drifting it was not taken to pieces; it was beautiful and remained there all the year. The Town Council had planted rows of trees along the streets. Oil lamps burnt in the streets at nightfall and the Ulwing house no longer stood alone on the shore. The value of the ground owned by the great carpenter had soared. Walls grew up from the sand. Streets started on the waste land, stopped, went on again. Work, life, houses, brick-built houses, everywhere.

Everything changed; only Ulwing the builder remained the same. His clever eyes remained sharp and clear. He walked erect on the scaffoldings, in the office, in the timber yard. He was a head taller than anybody else. They feared him at the Town Hall and the contractors hated him. He quietly went on buying and building and gradually the belief became a common superstition that everything the great carpenter touched turned into gold.

Indoors, in the quiet safe well-being of the

house, the marble clock continued to tick monotonously, but the children had long ago lost the belief that it was a lame dwarf who hobbled through the rooms. For a long time Christopher had even realized that there were no fairies. His grandfather had told him so. He shouted at him and took him by the shoulders:

"Do you hear, little one, there are no fairies to help us. Only weaklings expect miracles, the strong perform miracles."

Little Christopher often remembered his grandfather killing his fairies. What a terrible, superior being he seemed to be! He felt like crying; if there were no fairies, he wondered, what filled the darkness, the water of the well, the flames? What lived in them? And while he searched in bewilderment his eyes seemed to snatch for support like the hands of a drowning man.

He grew resigned, however, and called the "world's end" the timber yard, just like any grown-up. Under his rarely moving eyelids his pale eyes would look indifferently into the air. Only his voice showed signs of disillusion whenever he imitated his seniors and spoke in their language of doings once dear to him.

The years passed by and the magic cave under the wall of the courtyard became a ditch, the terrifying iron gate an attic door and the stove fairies ordinary flames. The piano mice too came to an end. When a string cracked now and

then in the house, Christopher opened his eyes widely and stared into the darkness which had become void to him.

"Anne, are you asleep?"

"Yes, long ago."

"I had such a funny dream . . . of a girl. She raised her arms and leaned back."

"Go to sleep."

Before Christopher's eyes the darkness (forsaken by dwarfs and fairies since he had given up believing in them) became incomprehensibly populated. He saw the girl of whom he had dreamt, her face, her body too. She was tall and slender, her bosom rigid, she lifted both her arms and twisted her hair like a black mane round her head. Just like the sister of Gabriel Hosszu before the looking-glass when he peeped at her last Sunday through the keyhole.

"Anne . . ."

The boy listened with his mouth open. Everything was silent in the house. Suddenly he pulled the blanket over his head. He began to tell stories to himself. He told how the King wore a golden crown and lived up on the hill in a white castle. It was never dark in the castle, tallow candles burnt all the night. His bed was guarded by slaves, slaves did his lessons for him, slaves brought a dark-eyed princess to him. Chains rattled on the princess. "Take them off!" he commanded. "You are free." The princess knelt down at his feet and asked what

she should give him for his pardon. "Take your hair down and twist it up again," he said, said it quite simply and smiled. And the princess took her hair down many times and many times twisted it up again. . . . He fell asleep and still he smiled.

He got into the way of dreaming stories. If, while day-dreaming, somebody addressed him unexpectedly, it made him jump and blush, as though caught in the act of doing wrong. Then he would run to his school books and try hard to do some work. He learned with ease; once read, his lesson was learnt, but he could not fix his attention for any time. Instead of that, he drew fantastic castles, girls and long-eared cats on the margins of his copy book. While he was thus engaged, his conscience was painfully active and reminded him incessantly that he was expected to study the reign of King Béla III or the course of the tributaries of the Danube. Perspiration appeared upon his brow. In his terror he could not do his work. Every boy up to the letter U had already been called up in school and he was sure that his turn would come next day.

As he had expected, he was questioned and knew nothing. A fly buzzed in the air. He felt as though it buzzed within his head. The boys laughed. Gabriel Hosszu prompted aloud, Adam Walter held his book in front of him, the master scolded. But, when the year came to an end, nobody dared to plough the grandson of

Ulwing the builder. Christopher began to perceive that some invisible power protected him everywhere. The master told him the questions of the coming examination. For a few coloured marbles Gabriel Hosszu prompted him in Latin. For a half penny little Gál, the hunchback, did his arithmetic homework.

"Things end by coming all right," thought Christopher, when the terrifying thought of school intruded while he drew cats or modelled clay men in the garden instead of doing his homework.

"That boy can do anything he likes," said old Ulwing, delighted with Christopher's drawings, and locked them carefully away in one of the many drawers of his writing-table.

This frightened Christopher. What did the grown-up people want to do with him? He lost his pleasure in drawing and gave up modelling clay men in the courtyard. He became envious of Anne. She had little to learn and nobody expected great things from her.

About this time Anne began to feel lonely. Her bewildered eyes seemed in search of explanations. She grew fast and her silvery fair hair became darker as if something had cast a shadow over it.

Mrs. Füger pushed her spectacles up into the starched frills of her bonnet and looked at her attentively.

"Just now you held your head exactly as your

mother used to. Dear good Mrs. Christina!"

Hearing this, Anne, who stood in the middle of the back garden, leaned her head still more sideways. However, it puzzled her that a person who was still a child could possibly resemble somebody who was so very old as to have gone to heaven. Mrs. Füger smiled strangely. In her old mind, Anne's mother, who had died young, could not age and remained for ever so; while this young girl, who had no memory of her mother, thought of her as incredibly old.

"Mrs. Christina was sixteen years old when young Mr. Ulwing asked Ulrich Jörg for her hand. Sixteen years old. When she came here she brought dolls with her too. She would have liked to play battledore and shuttlecock with her husband in the garden. Every evening she would slip in here and ask me to tell her stories."

As if she had been called, Anne ran across Mrs. Henrietta's threshold. The house smelt of freshly scrubbed boards. Many preserve bottles stood in a row on the top of the wardrobe. Now and then, the cracking of a dry parchment cover would interrupt the silence. Anne crouched down on a footstool and surveyed the room. It was full of embroidery. "Keys" was embroidered in German character on the keyboard, "Sleep well" on a cushion and "Brushes" on a bag.

"The Fügers must be very absent-minded people," mused the little girl; "it is obvious what all

these things are meant for, and yet they have to label them."

Mrs. Henrietta sighed. She could sigh most depressingly. When she did so, her nostrils dilated and she shut her eyes.

"Many a time did Mrs. Christina sit here and make me tell her ghost stories. She loved to be frightened—like a child. She was afraid of everything: of moths, of the cracking of the furniture, of the master's voice, of ghosts. At night she did not dare to cross the garden; Leopoldine had to take her hand and go with her."

"Leopoldine? Who was she?"

"My daughter." Mrs. Füger's eyes wandered over a picture hanging on the wall of the bay window. It represented a grave with weeping willows, made of hair, surrounded by an inscription in beads: "Love Eternal."

"Is she in heaven too?"

"No. Never mention her. Füger has forbidden it."

"Why?"

"Children must not ask questions."

"Mamsell always gives the same answer and says God will whisper to me what I ought to know. But God never whispers to me."

"Mrs. Christina talked just like that. She too wanted to know everything. When the maids cast fortunes with candle drippings she was for ever listening to their talk. Then she blushed, laughed and sang and played the piano. Then

the men in the timber yard stopped work."

Anne drew her knees up to her chin.

"Could she sing too?"

Mrs. Füger made a sign of rapture. "Sing? That was her very life. She entered this place like a song, and left it like one. It rang through the house and before we could grasp it, it was gone."

The little girl did not hear the old lady's last words. She was gone and suddenly found herself in her mother's room. She knelt down on the small couch. There hung on the wall the portrait, which she had always seen, but which she now examined for the first time.

The delicate water-colour represented a girl who seemed a mere child. She looked sweet and timid. Her auburn hair, parted by a shining line in the middle, was gathered by a large comb on the top of her head like a bow; ringlets fell on the side of her face. The childish outline of her shoulders emerged from a low-cut dress. Her hand held a rose gracefully in an uncomfortable position.

Anne felt that if she came back she could talk to her about many things of which Mamsell and all the others seemed ignorant. She thought of the daughters of Müller the apothecary, of the Jörgs and the Hosszu families, Gál the little hunchback, of the son of Walter the wholesale linen-draper, the Münster children. All had mothers. Everybody—only she had none.

And then, like a cry of distress, she spoke a word, but so gently that she did not hear it, just felt it shape itself between her lips. Nearer and nearer she bent to the picture and now she did hear in the silence her own faint, veiled voice say the word which one cannot pronounce without bestowing a repeated kiss on one's lips in uttering it: "Mamma!"

She turned suddenly round. Something like a feeling of shame came over her for talking aloud when there was nobody in the room, nothing but a ray of the sun on the piano.

Anne slid down from the couch and opened the piano. It was dusty. She stroked a key with her little finger. An unexpected sound rose from the instrument, a warm clear sound like the flare of a tinder box. It died down suddenly. She struck another key; another flare. She drew her hand over many keys; many flares, quite a din. She put her head back and stared upwards as if she saw the flaring little flames of the notes.

Somebody stroked her face. Her father.

"Would you like to learn to play the piano?"

She did not answer. It was without learning that she would have liked to play and to sing, so beautifully that even the men in the timber yard would lay down their work.

John Hubert became thoughtful.

"All the Jörgs were fond of music. Music was the very life of your mother."

Gently Anne opened her blue eyes with a green glitter in them.

"Yes," she said with determination, "I want to learn."

Next day, a gentleman of solemn appearance came to the house; his name was Casimir Sztaviarsky. He was at that time the most fashionable dancing and music master in town. He wore a coal-black wig, he walked on the tip of his toes, he balanced his hips and received sixpence per hour. He mentioned frequently that he was a descendant of Polish kings. When he was angry he spoke Polish.

After her lessons, Anne learned many things from him. Sztaviarsky spoke to her about Chopin, the citizens' choir in Pest, Mozart, grandfather Jörg who played the 'cello well and played the organ on Sundays in the church of the Franciscan friars.

The little girl began to be interested in her grandfather Jörg to whom she had not hitherto paid much attention. He was different from the Ulwings. The children thought him funny and often looked at each other knowingly behind his back while he was rubbing his hands and bowing with short brisk nods to the customers of his bookshop.

Anne blushed for him. She did not like to see him do this and her glance fell on grandfather Ulwing. He did not bow to anybody.

Ulrich Jörg's bookshop was at the corner of

Snake Street. A seat was fixed in the wall near the entrance in front of which an apple tree grew in the middle of the road. The passing carriages drove round it with much noise.

Anne thrust her head in at the door. Ulwing the builder removed his wide-brimmed grey beaver.

The perfume of the apple-blossom filled the shop. Grandfather Jörg came smiling to meet them; he emerged with short steps from behind a bookcase which, reaching up to the ceiling, divided the shop into two from end to end. The front part was used by ordinary customers. Behind the bookcase, shielded from the view of the street, some gentlemen sat, mostly in Magyar costumes, on a sofa near a tallow candle and conversed hurriedly, continuously.

They were more numerous than usual. A young man, wearing a dolman, sat in the middle on the edge of the writing table. His neck stretched bare from his soft open shirt collar. His hair was uncombed, his eyes were wonderfully large and aflame.

For the first time in her life Anne realized how beautiful the human eye could be. Then she noticed, however, that the young man's worn-out boots were battering the brass fittings of Grandfather Jörg's writing table while he was speaking and that his disorderly movements upset everything within his reach. She thought him wanting in respect. So she returned to the other side

of the bookcase and resumed the reading of the book her grandfather had chosen for her. It was about a Scotch boy called Robinson Crusoe.

More people came to the shop. Nobody bought a book. And even the old men looked as if they were still young.

The feverish, clumsy man behind the bookcase went on talking and at times one could hear the heels of his boots knock against the brass fittings. Anne did not pay any attention to what he said. The book fascinated her. One word, however, did reach her ears several times from behind. But the word did not penetrate her intellect. It just remained a repeated sound.

In the middle of the shop stood a gentleman. He had a bony face and he wore a beard only under his chin. And from the pocket of his tight breeches a beribboned tobacco pouch dangled.

The man next to him urged him on. "You can speak out, we are among ourselves."

The man with a bony face showed a manuscript. "I have searched in vain since this morning. People are afraid for their skins. There is not a printer in Pest who dares set up this proclamation.'

Ulrich Jörg leaned over the paper. His bald head reflected the light and the wreath of yellowish white hair round his ear moved in a funny way.

"This is not a proclamation," somebody whispered. "This means revolution!"

Ulrich Jörg stretched out his hand.

"My printing works will see this through." He said this so quietly and simply, that Anne could not understand why all these gentlemen should throng suddenly round him. But when she cast her eyes on him, he no longer looked funny. His small eyes glittered under the white eyelashes and his face resembled that of St. Peter in her little Bible.

Two boys rushed past the door. With shrill voices they shouted: "Freedom!"

Anne recognised the word she had heard from behind the bookcase. Mere boys clamoured for it too. How simple! Everybody wanted the same thing. Freedom! Somehow it seemed to her that there was some connection between that word and another. Youth! And yet another. Whatever was it? She thought of the awkward youth's feverish eye.

From the direction of the Town Hall people came running down the street; artisans, women, students, servants. The actors of the German theatre were among them too. Anne recognised the robber-knight and the queen. The queen's petticoat was torn.

"Hurray for the freedom of the press. Down with the censor!"

Ulwing the builder, who till then had seemed indifferent, nodded emphatically. He thought of the censor at Buda, then he could not help smiling to himself: from what a small angle does

man contemplate the world, the world that is so wide!

The pavement resounded with many hurried steps. More people came. They too were running, gesticulating wildly, colliding with each other. All of a sudden, a voice became audible outside, a voice like that of spring, penetrating the air irresistibly.

Somebody spoke.

The bookshop became silent. The men rose. The voice came to fetch them. The windows of the houses on the other side of the street were opened. The voice penetrated the dwellings of the German burghers. It filled the stuffy rooms, the mouldy shops, the streets, and whatever it touched caught fire. This voice was the music of a conflagration.

Christopher Ulwing went to the door. He stopped at the threshold. Behind him the whole shop began to move. Men thronged beside him into the street. Ulrich Jörg hurried with short, fast steps side by side with the big-headed shop assistant. All ran. The builder too, unable to resist, began to run.

From the street he shouted back to Anne: "You stay there!"

The bookshop had become empty and the little girl looked anxiously around; then, as if listening to music, she leaned her head against the doorpost. She could not see the speaker, he was far away. Only the sound of his voice reached her

ear, yet she felt that what now happened was strangely new to her. A delightful shudder rippled down her back. The voice made her feel giddy, it rocked her, called her, carried her away. She did not resist but abandoned herself to it and little Anne Ulwing was unconsciously carried away by the great Hungarian spring which had now appealed to her for the first time.

When the invisible voice died away, the crowd raised a shout. A student began to sing at the top of his voice in front of the shop. All at once, the song was taken up by the whole street, a song which Anne was to hear often in days to come. The student climbed the apple tree nimbly and waved his hat wildly. His face was aflame; the branches swayed under his weight and the white blossoms covered the pavement.

Anne would have liked to wave her handkerchief. She longed to sing like the student. General, infinite happiness was floating in the air. People embraced and ran.

"Freedom!"

A quaint figure approached down the street. He crawled along the walls with careful, hesitating steps. He stopped every now and then and looked anxiously around. His purple tail-coat fluttered ridiculously, white stockings fell in thick folds over buckled shoes.

Anne felt embarrassed, afraid. She had never yet seen Uncle Sebastian like this in the street, in Pest. Involuntarily, she shrank behind the

door. "Perhaps he won't see me. Perhaps he will walk on. . . ." And the thought of the feverish eyes, and the word she had connected with youth. . . . And the voice. . . . Uncle Sebastian was so old and so far away.

Anne cast her eyes down while the rusty buckles of a pair of clumsy shoes came slowly nearer and nearer on the pavement.

The student in the tree roared with laughter.

"What sort of scarecrow is this? What olden times are a-walking?"

Anne became sad and tears rose to her eyes.

"He is mine!" She sobbed in despair and opened her arms towards the old man.

Uncle Sebastian had noticed nothing of all this. He sat down on the bench in front of the bookshop, put his hat on the ground and wiped his forehead for a long time with his enormous gaudy handkerchief.

"I just came here in time. What an upheaval! What are we coming to! What will be the end of this?"

Again Anne felt a wide gulf between herself and the old man, and she moved all the closer up to him so that people who laughed at Uncle Sebastian might know that they belonged together.

CHAPTER IV

WIND had removed the vernal glory of the apple tree in front of the bookshop in Snake Street. Summer passed away too.

Anne leaned her forehead against the window pane. A sound came from outside as if a drum were being beaten underground. The heavy steps of the new national guard rang rhythmically along the ground. The house heard it too and echoed it from its porch.

In those times soldiers were frequently seen from the window, and when Mamsell Tini took Anne to the school of the English nuns, the walls were covered with posters. Crowds gathered before them. People stretched their necks to get a glimpse. Anne too would have liked to stop, but not for anything in the world would Mamsell Tini let her do so.

"A respectable person must never loiter in the streets."

A boy stood on the kerb of the pavement.

"What is there on those posters?" Anne asked as she passed.

"War news. . . ." and the boy began to whistle. An old woman passed on the opposite cor-

ner. She was wiping her eyes on the corner of her apron.

"War news. . . ." Anne stared at the old lady and these words acquired a sad significance in her mind.

At dinner she watched her grandfather and father attentively. They talked of business and in between they were perfectly calm and ate a hearty meal.

"Everybody is just the same as ever," she reflected. "Perhaps the war news is not true after all." Suddenly all this was forgotten. Her father just mentioned that the children would take dancing lessons every Sunday afternoon in Geramb's educational institute.

"It is a smart place," said John Hubert. "Baron Szepesy's young ladies go there and Bajmoczy the Septemvir's daughters." He pronounced the name "Bajmoczy" slowly, respectfully, and looked round to see the effect it produced on his audience.

Next Sunday, Anne thought of nothing but the dancing school, even when she was at Mass. She stood up, knelt down, but it meant nothing to her. She traced with her finger the engraved inscription on the pew: "Ulwing family." And they alone were allowed to sit in this pew though it was nearest the altar.

Gál, the wine merchant, stood there under the pulpit, and Mr. Walter the wholesale linen merchant of Idol Street had no pew. Even the

Hosszu family sat further back than they, though they owned water mills and the millers of the Danube bowed to them.

Anne classified the inhabitants of the parish according to their pews. During the exhibition of the Host, while she smote her chest with her little fist, she decided that her grandfather ranked before everybody else.

All this time, Christopher Ulwing inclined his head and prayed devoutedly.

When Anne looked up again, she saw something queer. Though turning towards the altar, little Christopher was looking sideways. She followed his eyes; her glance fell on Sophie Hosszu. Sophie leaned her forehead on her clasped hands. Only the lovely outline of her face was visible. Over her half-closed eyes her long black eyelashes lay in the shade. . . . Christopher, however, now sat stiffly, with downcast eyes, in the pew. Anne could scarcely refrain from laughing.

Later the hours seemed to get longer and longer and it appeared as if that afternoon would never come to an end. The children became fidgety. The maid brought some leather shoes from the wardrobe; Anne addressed her reproachfully:

"Oh, Netti, don't you know? To-day I am to wear my new prunella boots!"

Her apple-green cashmere frock was hanging

from the window bolts. The black velvet coat was spread on the piano. Since last year Anne had occupied her mother's former room. The nursery had become the boy's sole property. Christopher too was standing in front of the mirror. He was parting his fair, white-glimmering hair on one side; it was so soft it looked as if the wind had blown it sideways. He was pleased with himself and while he bent his soft shirt collar over his shoulders he started whistling. He never forgot a melody he had once heard. He whistled as sweetly as a bird.

The rattle of wheels echoed under the porch. The two "pillar men" glanced into the windows of the fast receding coach.

In Sebastian Square, in front of Baroness Geramb's educational institute, three coaches were waiting. On one of them a liveried footman sat beside the coachman. This filled Christopher with envy. He thought that it would be a good idea to bring Florian, too, next Sunday.

"Mind you don't forget to kiss the ladies' hands!" said John Hubert while they crossed a murky corridor. Then a tall white-glazed door led into a sombre dark room. Crooked tallow candles lit it up from the top of the wardrobes. Their mild light showed Sztaviarsky, hopping on tiptoe to and fro, and a row of little girls in crinolines and boys in white collars. Between the wings of another door and in the adjoining

room ladies and gentlemen sat on uncomfortable chairs. Through lorgnettes on long handles, they inspected each other's children.

Christopher at once perceived Sophie Hosszu among the grown-up people. Though Gabriel had told him she would be there, it gave him a shock.

"Go and kiss hands," whispered John Hubert. The boy leant forward with such zeal that he knocked his nose into the ivory hand of the Baroness Geramb. He also kissed the other ladies' hands. When he came to Sophie he stared for a moment helplessly at the young girl. Sophie snatched her hand away and laughed.

"But, Sophie!" said Baroness Geramb in her expiring voice and the ringlets dangled on the side of her face. She was not pleased with her former pupil. Christopher tripped over a hooped petticoat, and in his embarrassment felt as if he wanted to cry.

In the other room, Sztaviarsky held the two tails of his alpaca evening suit high up in his hands. He was showing one of the Bajmoczy girls how to bow.

"Demoiselle Bertha, pray, pray, attention," and then he murmured something in Polish.

There was a commotion at the door. "Mrs. Septemvir" Bajmoczy went to her daughter. Her silk dress rustled as it slid along the floor. She was tall and corpulent; her head was bent backwards and she always looked down on things.

This irritated Sztaviarsky all the more. He sucked his cheek in and looked round in search of a victim. "Demoiselle Ulwing, show us how to make a bow!"

"But I don't know yet. . . ." Anne said this very low, and had a feeling as if the floor had caught hold of her heel. She could only advance slowly on tiptoe. She bent her head sideways and her side ringlets touched her shoulders. Her hand clung to her cashmere petticoat.

The silence was interrupted by Sztaviarsky's voice:

"One . . . Two . . . complimentum."

Meanwhile John Hubert sat solemnly on a high, uncomfortable chair and, contrary to his habit, kept himself erect and never leaned back once. It seemed to Anne that he nodded contentedly. Everybody nodded. How good everybody was to her . . . and she started to go to Bertha Bajmoczy. But the Pole stopped her with a sign. The lesson continued.

Studies in school suffered seriously that week. Twice Christopher was given impositions.

The Sundays passed . . . In the Geramb educational institute's cold, sombre drawing room the children were already learning the gavotte.

It was towards the end of a lesson. The crooked tallow candles on the top of the wardrobe had burnt nearly to the end. Sztaviarsky was muttering Polish. Bertha Bajmoczy, wherever she stepped, tripped over her own foot. All of

a sudden, she began to weep. The young Baroness Szepesy ran to her; Martha Illey stood in the middle of the room and laughed wickedly; Anne had to laugh too. The boys roared.

"Mes enfants. . . . Silence!" Baroness Geramb's voice was more expiring than ever and her face was stern.

Silence was restored. Bertha wiped her eyes furiously. She happened to look at Anne.

"Since she came here everything has gone wrong."

Clemence Szepesy nodded and pinched her sharp nose. Anne paid no attention to this. She looked at her father in surprise. He stood beside Sophie Hosszu, leaning against the high, white panel of the door. While he talked, he kept one of his hands stuck in his waistcoat, which was adorned with many tiny flowers. With the other he now and then smoothed his thick fair hair back from his brow which it bordered in a graceful curve. He smiled. Until now Anne had never noticed that her father was still a young man.

The dancing lesson was over. Walking down the poorly lit staircase, she heard more talk behind her. Just where the curving staircase turned, she was hidden from those coming from above.

"Her grandfather was an ordinary carpenter," said Clemence Szepesy.

"*Par exemple,* what is that, a carpenter?"

"It's the sort of fellow," came the voice from above, "who worked last spring on the beams of our attics."

"Really such people ought not to be admitted into gentlefolks' society." It was Bertha's voice.

At first, Anne did not realise whom they were discussing—only later. How dared they speak like that of her grandfather! Of Ulwing, the master builder! Of him who sat in the first pew in church and before whom even the aldermen stood bare-headed!

She turned round sharply. Those behind found themselves suddenly face to face with her. They slunk away to the balustrade. Anne gazed at them bewildered, then her countenance became sad and scared. She had just discovered something vile and dangerous that had been hitherto concealed from her by those she loved. She was taught for the first time in her short life that people could be wicked; she had always thought that everybody was kind. Her soul had till then gone out with open arms to all human beings without discrimination; now it felt itself rebuffed.

On the drive home she sat silently in the coach. Her father spoke of the Septemvir Bajmoczy and his family. He pronounced the name respectfully, with unction. This irritated Anne at first. But her father's and her brother's content pained her only for an instant. She set her teeth

and decided that she would not tell them what had happened on the staircase. She felt sorry for them, more so than for herself, and for the sake of their happiness and peace of mind she charitably burdened her maiden soul with the heavy weight of her first secret.

CHAPTER V

SUNDAY had come round again. Christopher went alone with his father to the dancing lesson.

"I should like to stay at home," said Anne, in her timid, veiled voice. She looked so imploring that they let her have her way.

At the usual hour in the afternoon the bell sounded at the gate. Uncle Sebastian stood between its pillars.

Anne ran to meet him. From his writing table the builder nodded his head.

"Sit down." He continued to write close small numbers into a linen-bound book. He did not put his pen down till Netti appeared with coffee on the parrot-painted tray. The steam of the milkcan passed yellow through the light of the candle. The smell of coffee penetrated the room. The two old men now talked of days gone by.

"Things were better then," growled Uncle Sebastian every now and then, without ever attempting to justify his statement. Meanwhile he dipped big pieces of white bread into his coffee. He brushed the crumbs into his hand and put them into his waistcoat pocket for the birds.

It struck Anne that her grandfather never spoke to Uncle Sebastian as he spoke to adults, but rather in the way he had with her and Christopher. At first he seemed indulgent, later he became impatient.

"So it was better then, was it?" And he told the tale of some noble gentleman who had had one of his serfs thrashed half-dead because he dared to pick flowers under the castle window for his bride. The girl was beautiful. The gentleman looked at her and sent the serf to the army against Buonaparte as a grenadier—for life.

"Nowadays, the noble gentlemen go themselves to war, and in our parts they even share their land with their former serfs. Do you understand, Sebastian? Without compulsion, of their own free will."

"Are we noble too?" asked Anne from her corner of the check-covered couch.

The two old men looked at each other. They burst into a good-humoured laugh. The builder rose and took a much-worn booklet out of the writing desk. On the binding of the book a double-headed eagle held the arms of Hungary between its claws.

"This is my patent of nobility. I have sold neither myself nor anybody else for it."

Anne opened the book and spelt out slowly the old-fashioned writing:

"Pozsony. Anno Domini 1797. . . . Christopher Ulwing. Sixteen years old. Stature:

tall. Face: long. Hair: fair. Eyes: blue. Occupation: civil carpenter."

Anne blushed.

"That was I," and the master builder put his hand on the passport. Then, with quaint satisfaction, he looked round the room as if exhibiting with his eyes the comfort he had earned by his labour. For the first time Anne understood this look which she had observed on her grandfather's face on countless occasions.

"I am a free citizen," said Christopher Ulwing. The words embellished, gave power to his sharp, metallic voice. Unconsciously, Anne imitated with her small head the old man's gesture.

The thoughts of Sebastian Ulwing moved less quickly. They stuck at the passport.

"Do you remember? . . ." These words carried the old men beyond the years. They talked of the mail-coach which had overturned at the gate of Hatvan. Of the mounted courier from Vienna, how they made him drunk at the Three Roses Inn. The gunsmith, the chirurgeon and other powerful artisans held him down while the bell-founder cut his pig-tail off though there was a wire inside to curl it up on his back."

The builder got tired of this subject. He became serious.

"It was all pig-tails then. People wore them in their very brains. Withal, times are better now. . . ."

Sebastian Ulwing shook his head obstinately.

Suddenly his face lit up, as if he had found the reason for all his statements.

"We were young then." He uttered this modestly and smiled. "My head turns when I remember your putting shingles on the roof of the parish church. You sat on the crest-beam and dangled your feet towards the Danube. Wouldn't you get giddy now if you were sent there!"

Anne, immobile, watched her grandfather's hand lying near her on the table. And as if she wanted to atone for the injury inflicted by the strange girls, she bent over and kissed it.

"What's that?" Christopher Ulwing withdrew his hand absent-mindedly.

Anne cast her eyes down, for she felt as if she had exhibited a feeling the others could not understand. . . . Then she slipped unobserved out of the room. . . . In the sunshine room a volume lay on the music chest. On the green marbled cover were printed the words "Nursery Songs," surrounded by a wreath. On the first page a faded inscription, Christina Jörg, Anno 1822. Anne sat down to the piano. Her small fingers erred for some time hesitatingly over the keys. Then she began to sing sweetly one of the songs:

> Two prentice lads once wandered
> To strange lands, far away. . . .

Shy, untrained, the little song rose. Her

voice, veiled when she talked, rang out clear when she was singing. She herself was struck by this difference and it seemed to her that till this moment she had been mute all her life. She felt elated by the discovery of the power to express herself without risking the mocking derision of the others; now her grandfather would not draw his hand away from her.

> Two prentice lads once wandered,
> To strange lands, far away. . . .

Uncle Sebastian rose from his armchair and carefully opened the dining-room door. For a long time, the two old men listened. . . .

Christopher came home from the dancing class. He rushed to Anne noisily. His eyes gleamed with boyish delight. A faded flower was stuck in his buttonhole. His hand went for ever up to the flower. He talked and talked, leaning his elbows on the piano. Anne looked at him surprised; she found him handsome. Half his face was hidden by the curls of his girlish hair. His upper lip was drawn up slightly by the upward bent of his small nose. This gave him a charming, startled expression, not to be found in any other member of the Ulwing family. Instinctively, Anne looked at her mother's portrait. . . .

In the evening when bedtime came, Christopher searched impatiently for his prayer book.

He could not find it. He hid the flower under his pillow.

For a long time, he lay with open eyes in the dark. Once he whispered to himself: "Little Chris, I hope to see you again soon," and in doing so he tried to imitate Sophie's intonation. Then he drew his hand over his head slowly, gently, just as Sophie had done while speaking to his father.

He went into a peaceful rapture. He repeated the stroking, the words "Little Chris. . . ." He repeated it often, so often that its charm wore off. It was his own voice he heard now, his own hand he felt. They ceased to cause a pleasant tremor; tired out, he went to sleep over Sophie's flower.

When Ulwing the builder went next morning into the dining-room it was still practically dark. He always got up very early and liked to take his breakfast alone. A candle burned in the middle of the table and the flickering of its flame danced over the china and was reflected in the mirror of the plate chest. The shadows of the chair-backs were cast high up on the walls.

Christopher Ulwing read the paper rapidly.

"Nonsense," he thought. "Send an Imperial Commissioner with full powers from Vienna? Why should they?" There was no other news besides that in the newspaper, crowded though it was with small print. As if the censor were at work again.

He carried the candle in his hand into the office. A big batch of papers lay on the table. John Hubert's regular, careful handwriting was visible on all of them. The builder bent over his work, his pen scratched spasmodically.

Facing him, the coloured map of Pest-Buda in its gilt frame became lighter and lighter. The whitewashed wall of the room was covered with plans. A couch stood near the stove and this was all covered with papers.

Steps clattered outside in the silent morning. Occasionally the shadow of a passing head fell on the low window and then small round clouds ran over the paper under Christopher Ulwing's pen. Others came and went. Time passed. All of a sudden many furious steps began running towards the Danube. The blades of straightened scythes sparkled in the sun.

The servants ran to the gate.

"What has happened?"

A voice answered back:

"They have hanged the Imperial Commissioner on a lamp post!"

"No—they have torn him to pieces. . . ."

"They stabbed him on the boat-bridge."

"Is he dead?" asked a late-comer.

The builder put his pen down. He stared at the window as if an awful face were grinning frightfully at him. "It has been coming for months. Now it has happened. . . ." Without any reason he picked up his writings and laid

them down again. He would have to get accustomed to this too. His crooked chin disappeared stiffly in the fold of his open collar and he resumed the addition of the numbers which aligned themselves in a long column on the paper.

Outside they sang somewhere the song Anne had heard for the first time from Grandfather Jörg's shop. In the kitchen Netti was beating cream to its rhythm. And in the evening, just as on any other day, the lamps on the boat-bridge were lit, not excepting the one on which a man had died that day. Its light was just as calm as the other's. The streets spoke no more of what had happened. In the darkness the Danube washed the city's bloody hand.

CHAPTER VI

ON Saturday a letter came from Baroness Geramb. There would be no more dancing classes.

All the light seemed to go from Christopher's eyes.

"But why?" said he, and hung his head sadly.

"Dancing is unbecoming when there is a war on."

"So it is true? The war has come," thought Anne, but still it seemed to her unreal, distant. Just as if one had read about it in a book. A book whose one-page chapters were stuck up every morning on the walls of the houses.

It was after Christmas. The Danube was invisible. A dense, sticky fog moved on the window panes. Christopher ran out shivering into the dark morning. As usual, he was late; he had to leave his breakfast and eat his bread and butter in the street. He had no idea of his lesson. Behind him Florian carried a lantern. On winter mornings he always lit the boy's way till he reached the paved streets.

On the pavement of the inner town a bandy-legged old man got in front of Christopher. On one arm he had a large bundle of grimy papers while a pot of glue dangled from the other. Peo-

ple in silent crowds waited at the corners of the streets for him; when they had read the fresh posters they walked away silent, dejected.

"What is happening? What do they want with us?" they asked.

People began to understand the grim realities of war; what was happening now roused their understanding. They thronged in front of the money-changers' shops. Soldiers' swords rattled on the pavement. Everybody hurried as if he had some urgent business to settle before nightfall.

Anne was at her music lesson when a huge black and yellow flag was hoisted on a flagstaff on the bastions of Buda. In those times, flags changed frequently.

"Freedom is dead," said Sztaviarsky and cursed in Polish.

"Freedom!" Anne thought of the two feverish eyes. So it was for freedom's sake that there was a war? She now looked angrily on the Croatian soldiers whom the Imperial officers had quartered on them. The red-faced sergeant was eating a raw onion in the middle of the courtyard. The soldiers, like clumsy big children, were throwing snowballs. They trod on the shrubs, made havoc of everything. They made a snow-man in front of the pump and covered the head with a red cap like the one worn by Hungarian soldiers; then they riddled it with bullets. . . .

The snow-man had melted away. Slowly the lilac bushes in the garden began to sprou' The Croatians were washing their dirty linen near the pump. They stood half-naked near the troughs. The wind blew soapsuds against their hairy chests.

All of a sudden an unusual bugle call was heard; it sounded like a cry of distress. Anne ran to the window. Soldiers were running in front of the house. In the courtyard the Croatians were snatching their shirts from the trough and putting them on, all soaking. They rode off after the rest and did not come back again.

A few days later, Anne dreamed at night that there was a thunderstorm. Towards morning there was a sound in the room as if peas by the handful were being thrown against the window panes—many, many peas. Later, as if some invisible bodies were precipitated through the air, every window of the house was set a-rattling.

"Put up the wooden shutters!" shouted the builder from the porch.

Christopher came breathlessly up the stairs. "School is closed!" His pocket bulged with barley sugar and he was stuffing it into his mouth, two pieces at a time.

John Hubert, who had run to school for Christopher, arrived behind him. His lovely, well-groomed hair was hanging over his forehead and the correct necktie had slipped to one side of his

collar. Gasping he called Florian and had the big gate locked behind him.

A candle was burning in the master builder's room, deprived of daylight by the shutters. Contrary to his habit, John Hubert, without waiting this time to have a seat offered to him, sank limply into an armchair.

"Thank goodness you are all here," he said, making a caressing movement with his hand in the air. "I came along the shores of the Danube," he continued hoarsely. "There were crowds of people and they said that the shells could not reach across the river. People from the shore sat about on stones. One was eating bacon. He ate quite calmly and suddenly he was without a head. For a time the corpse remained seated, and everything was covered with blood. . . ." Horrified, he covered his eyes with his hand.

"So it was a shell that fell into the confectioner's shop in Little Bridge Street?" said Christopher, stuffing barley sugar into his mouth. "The pavement was all covered with sweets as if the shop had been turned inside out. The whole school filled its pockets for nothing."

The builder smiled. Behind the barred gates life continued. John Hubert put his necktie straight and sometimes in the course of the day forgot completely what he had seen. When he sat down to meals, however, he became pale. He pushed his plate aside.

From time to time, the window panes rattled. Woeful distant shrieks flew over the roofs. They were followed by the anguish of numb expectancy. People counted. The silence became crystalline and quivered in the air.

"The shell has not burst!" They counted again, in helpless animal fear. Whose turn would it be next? On the banks of the Danube a stricken house howled out. Clouds of dust burst high up into the air. The sky became red, the colour of bleeding flesh.

The wind blew a wave of hot air, heralding disaster, into the courtyard of Ulwing the builder. Behind the locked gate nobody knew which neighbouring house was expiring in a last hot breath.

The Fügers hid in the cellar. John Hubert and the children had moved into the office, situated in the inner courtyard. The first floor became empty, except for Christopher Ulwing who remained in his bedroom, the single window of which opened into the deserted timber yard.

"The house is strong," said the builder to Mrs. Füger through the cellar window. "I built the walls well."

A furious crack came from the gate as if it had been flicked by a wet towel of gigantic dimensions. The windows broke in a clatter. The house shook to its foundations.

With frightened lamentations, people rushed out of the cellar. Little Christopher's snow-

white lips became distorted. The builder frowned as he used to do when contradicted by some fool. He went with long steps to the gate.

"No, no," shrieked Christopher, and began to sob spasmodically. But old Ulwing listened to no one. He kicked the side door open. One of the caryatids was without an arm. Under him lay a heap of débris of crumbled white-wash and a huge hole gaped from the wall. The shell had not exploded; it had stuck in the brickwork. The builder buttoned his coat up so as to be less of a target and went to the front of the house. He cast his eyes upwards. He contemplated the wrecked windows.

Foreign enemies had hurt his house in the name of their Emperor. He turned quickly towards the Danube. The bridge of boats was aflame. His bridge! He glanced at poor little Buda, from the heart of which the sister town, defenceless Pest, was shot to death. The town and Christopher Ulwing had been small and poor together; they had risen together, they had become rich, and now they were wounded together.

He began to curse as he used to do when he was a journeyman carpenter.

Around him, there was no sign of life. Nothing moved in the streets. Closed shops. Bolted doors. The town was a great execution ground. Like men under sentence of death, the houses held their breath and were as much abandoned in their misfortunes as human destinies. Now

every house lived only for itself, died only for itself. The glare of the burning roofs was reflected in different windows. Sticky smoke crawled along the walls. The bells of a church near the river tolled.

Rage and pain brought tears to Christopher Ulwing's eyes while he glanced over the grimy, falling houses. How many were his work! He loved them all. He pitied them, pitied himself. . . .

But this lasted only for a second. He clenched his fist as if to restrain his over-flowing energy. He would be in need of it! The muscles of his arm became convulsed and he felt these convulsions reflected in his brain. If necessary, he would start afresh from the very beginning. There was still time. There was still a long life before him.

CHAPTER VII

DAYS passed by. The bombardment ceased. Frightened shapes emerged from the cellars. Shrinking against the walls, they stared at the conflagration and when they had to cross a street they rushed to the nearest shelter.

The town waited with bated breath. In Ulwing's house, anxiety became oppressive.

Young Christopher did not get out of bed for a whole week. Sickly fright left its impression on his face. In daytime he lay speechless in a corner of the office. Fear prevented him from sleeping at night; and then he would slink to the windows.

The black chestnut trees stood gravely in the back garden. Now and then a distant flaring light would crown their summits with red. Their leaves, like flattened bleeding fingers, moved towards the sky. Between the bushes, something began to move. The pump handle creaked. A stable lantern appeared on the ground; in its light stood men carrying water to the attics. The builder was there too, working the pump handle in his shirt sleeves; he was relieved occasionally by John Hubert, who, however, wore

a smart coat and white collar which shone in the dark. Then all went away to rest. The courtyard became empty.

Christopher was again afraid. He grasped his neck. He felt as if some fine strings were quivering in it; this had happened frequently since the great clap had dealt the house a blow. In his brain the vision of that incident cropped up incessantly. He wanted to push it away but something reached into his brain and pulled it back.

He would have liked to go to Anne to tell her all about it. But would she understand? He could not bear the idea of being laughed at. He threw himself on his bed and pressed his head between his two hands. Why could he not be like the others? Why had he to think forever of things that the others could not understand?

In the next room, Anne lay sleepless too. Uncle Sebastian, living up there in the castle, was never out of her mind since she had had a glimpse of the spire of Our Lady's church through the side door, opened during the bombardment. The stairs felt cold under her feet and the door-handles creaked loudly through the silent house. Crossing the dining-room, she sank into a chair. She thought with terror of her grandfather. If he had heard it? He would never let her do it, yet, however much she was afraid, however much she trembled, it had to be done.

She reached the piano. She listened again, lit the candle, but dared not look round. Her teeth chattered pitifully while she opened the shutter. The window was broken. What if the wind blew the candle out? But the May night was deep and calm.

Anne felt in her arm a reminiscence of the old movement with which as a child she used to wave to Uncle Sebastian across the Danube. She waved her hand and closed the shutter behind the illuminated window.

Outside the window the light of the candle spread yellow into the night as if attempting to go across the river on the errand on which it had been sent.

In the mellow, shapeless darkness the castle formed a rigid compact shadow. No lamps burned in its steep streets. The houses were mute and fearful.

For days Sebastian Ulwing had not emerged from his shop. He spoke to no one, knew of nothing. He lived on bread and read Demokritos. Occasionally the gleam of torches came through the cracks in his door. Their rigid beam made the round of the shop and then ran out again. The heavy steps of soldiers resounded in the street. Sometimes the guns spoke and the house shook.

On that evening everything was in expectant silence. It was about ten o'clock. All of a sud-

den it seemed to Sebastian Ulwing that there had been a knock at his door.

What happened? His heart began to beat anxiously and he thought of the Ulwing's house. He could not endure the doubt, took his hat, but turned back at the threshold and, as he had done every evening, he walked again all over the shop. He wound up all the clocks, looking at them as if he were giving them food. Then, with his shaky helpless steps, he crawled out into the street.

May was all over the deserted castle. The clockmaker began to hurry. He raised his hat when he passed the church of Our Lady. He turned towards the Fisherman's bastion.

Beyond the wall, down below, the shore of Pest was black.

Sebastian Ulwing forced his eyes to find the direction of the Ulwing's house. He exclaimed softly. In the long row on the dark shore one window was lit. . . . He knew it was for him. His old heart warmed with gratitude.

Thoughtlessly, he leaned down and swept the rubbish together that lay about his feet. He piled it up on the wall of the bastion; then tenderly, with great care, he tore the title page from his "Demokritos, or a Laughing Philosopher." He took a match. He wanted to thank Anne for the signal. The paper flared up, the rubbish caught fire and the flame jumped up with a shining light.

Just then, the clockmaker felt himself kicked on the back. He heard a shot and fell on his knees near the bastion. He grazed his chin against the wall. Annoyed, he put his hand up to it. He felt sick. It occurred then to him to look behind. Nobody was near. The window of one house rattled. Under the church a light Austrian uniform disappeared in the dark.

When nothing more was audible, Sebastian Ulwing held on to the stones and got up. In front of the church he raised his hat again. Somehow, he could not put it back on his head: it dropped out of his hand. He looked sadly after it but did not bend down for it. For an instant he leaned against the monument of the Holy Trinity. As if it were a nail which had pegged down the square in the middle, only the monument remained steady; the rest turned round him slowly, heaving all the time.

"I am giddy," he thought and spat in disgust. He wanted to hurry, because he had already taken many steps and was still in the square. He felt like a man in a dream who wants to hurry on and remains painfully on the same spot.

In the shadow of Tarnok Street he saw light uniforms. This sight, like a painful recollection, pushed him forward. His shoulder rubbed against the houses and suddenly he stumbled into the shop. The match in his hand evaded

the wick of the candle with cunning undisciplined movements.

Sebastian Ulwing fell into the armchair. He closed his eyes. When he opened them again, everything seemed to be in a haze. "They make worse candles now than in olden times," he reflected, then he felt suddenly frightened. He was thirsty. Open the windows. Call somebody. He could move his body but partially. He fell back into the armchair. The effort covered his brow with sweat.

He seemed to hear the guns somewhere. What did that matter to him. All that concerned others seemed to him strange and distant now.

To pray. . . . A child's prayer came to his mind. He thought of the past but it tired him as if it forced him to turn his head. Life was so good and simple. That Barbara should have married Christopher was, after all, the right thing.

A painful confusion went on in his brain. Without the slightest continuity in his thoughts, he remembered that he owed the baker a halfpenny. He began to worry; he had just ordered a pair of shoes at the bootmaker's. "With bright buckles." He had said that. Who was going to buy these now? Then, for the first time, it struck him that nobody wore shoes like that nowadays. Tears came to his eyes. Against his will, his body fell forward. How rusty those

buckles on his shoes were . . . the one on the left foot was getting rustier every minute. Rust seemed to flow on it, red, dense. It was spreading over the white stocking . . . it flowed over the floor.

The candle burnt to the end. The flame flared up once more, looked round, went out. The heavy smell of molten tallow filled the shop and the head of Uncle Sebastian sank deeper and deeper between the leather wings of the armchair. . . .

Outside, with the coming day, the firing increased every moment. But this wild thunder was not speaking to Pest. From the heights of the hills of Buda red-capped soldiers bombarded the castle. The Imperialists retorted hopelessly.

The dawn was gray and trembling.

No news penetrated the locked door of Ulwing's house.

In the cellar Mrs. Füger was making bandages, with depressing sighs. The little bookkeeper sat on the top of a barrel and held his head sideways, as if listening. At every detonation he banged his heel against the barrel.

His son stared at him so rigidly that his short-sighted eyes became contracted by the effort. He yawned with fatigue. Now, old Füger's feet struck the side of the barrel at longer and longer intervals. Only by this did his son notice that

the firing became less frequent; by and by it stopped. Then once more the house shook. A last explosion rent the frightful silence in twain and broken glass was hurled with loud clatter from the windows.

"That was somewhere near!"

The builder could stand it no longer. He wanted to know what was happening. He rushed up the stairs. In the green room he tore the shutters deliberately open.

Opposite, the royal castle burned with a smoky flame and on the bastion, beside the small white flag of the Imperialists, a tri-colour was unruffled in the wind.

"Victory!" shouted Christopher Ulwing. His short ringing voice fell like a blow from a hammer through the whole house.

Anne began to laugh.

"Do you hear, Christopher, we have won!"

When in the brightness of May the flag was unfurled on the bastion of the castle and opened out like a bountiful hand, it scattered joy from its folds. Its colours were repeated in Pest and Buda. Tricolours answered from the houses, the windows, the attics, the roofs. Singing, the people rushed toward the chain-bridge which resounded with the irregular trampling of human feet. The tide swept Ulwing the builder with it. He went to his brother. So much to tell! So much to ask!

From the other shore, the people of Buda came

running. And on the bridge over the Danube the two towns fell into each other's arms.

At the foot of the hill there was a crush. A heavy yellow cart turned into the road. A thin, yellow-faced man was on the driver's seat. His moustaches hung in a black fringe on either side of his mouth. The cart was covered with canvas. The canvas was bespattered with dirty red spots. Human legs and arms protruded from it, swaying helplessly according to the movements of the cart.

The crowd had stopped singing. Men took their hats off. Those in front shouted in horror at the driver.

The jerks caused a corpse to slip slowly from under the canvas. Indifferent, the yellow coachman whipped his horses and the cart went on at a greater speed. The corpse's head now reached the ground. It struck the protruding stones of the roadway, jumped up with a jerk, and with glaring open eyes fell back into the street.

The crowd passed by in speechless horror.

Springless carts brought the wounded. The courtyards of decaying houses were full of red-caps, bayonets. On the pavement, shiny blue flies swarmed over a dead horse. From the ditch of the canal, the soles of two boots protruded. Carts covered with canvas everywhere. Their lifeless load swayed slowly in the sun.

Christopher Ulwing turned the corner of Holy Trinity Square. People stood in front of the

clockmaker's shop. The first storey jutting over the street cast a deep shadow in the glaring white sunshine.

The builder recognised Brother Sebastian's friends. The lame wood-carver leaned against the wall and wiped his eyes. The censor was there too. He pressed his hand against his face as if he had a toothache. Those behind him stood on tiptoe and stretched their necks. When they perceived him they all took their hats off.

The chaplain's pointed, bird-like face appeared in the open door. He walked with important steps to meet the builder. He spoke at length, with unction, pointed several times to the sky and shook his head sideways.

The big bony hands of Christopher Ulwing clasped each other over his chest, like two twisted hooks.

"How did it happen?"

Now they all stood round him and all talked at once. A curious, old-fashioned lady bowed suddenly in the middle of the road.

"With your kind permission, I am Amalia Csik. I am entitled to speak. They only heard it from me. You may remember I live on the Fisherman's bastion. Last night my husband felt unwell, because we hid in the cellar. The air was bad. So I went up into our rooms for some medicine."

The builder turned painfully towards the door of the shop. The people stood in his way.

"Hurry up," whispered the chaplain. The lady went on talking all the faster.

"Pray imagine, I saw the whole thing from my window. Someone lit a fire on the bastion. I recognised him at once: the clockmaker. I saw his face, the flame just lit it up. Then a shot rang out. And the clockmaker fell to the ground near the wall."

Christopher's heart contracted in anguish. His eyes reddened as if smoke stung them. "Poor Brother Sebastian . . ." and he could not help thinking of Anne.

The lady sighed deeply.

"You may imagine I was frightened out of my wits. I flew back to the cellar. There my husband explained everything. His reverence the chaplain knows it too, so do the others; it is they who broke into the shop after the siege."

The builder started again towards the shop.

The chaplain made him a sign to stop. He again lifted his hand to heaven. He spoke of the country. Of heroes. He turned his pointed bird-face upward as if inspired.

"And greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life . . ."

"Why do you say that?" The builder thought he could not stand the voice of the priest any longer.

The chaplain became more and more enthusiastic.

"The name of Sebastian Ulwing will live for-

ever in our memory. Buda, the grateful, will preserve the memory of its heroic martyrs."

The builder shuddered. He wanted to speak, but, with an apostolic gesture, the priest opened his arms to the assembled people.

"And do you who are brought here by your pious respect for a hero, tell your children and your children's children that it was a simple, God-fearing clockmaker who with signals of fire called the relieving Hungarian armies into the fortress, suffering death therefor by a deadly bullet at the hands of the foe!"

He had grown sentimental over his own eloquence. The builder, embarrassed, looked around him. Big coloured handkerchiefs were drawn. People blew their noses noisily. Mrs. Amalia Csik stood in the middle of the circle. She felt very important. She reiterated her story to every new-comer:

"It happened like this. . . ."

"He is the real hero, the hero of our street," affirmed the gingerbread maker from the next house. The baker too nodded and thought of the two loaves for which Sebastian Ulwing owed him.

For a moment the builder stared helplessly into the priest's bird-face. He was frightened by what he had heard. He was agitated, as if by his silence he had entered a fictitious credit dishonestly into his ledger. He passed his hand over his forehead.

"Reverend Mr. Chaplain, allow me. . . . My poor brother Sebastian was a peaceful citizen. He never took any interest in the ideals of the war of Liberation. He kept carefully out of revolutionary movements. . . ."

The priest pushed his open palm reprovingly into the air.

"Master-builder Ulwing, even the *humilitas christiana* leaves you free to receive with raised head the pious praise bestowed on your famous brother."

"Listen to me," shouted Christopher Ulwing in despair. "It was an accident. Believe me. You are mistaken. . . ."

The crowd became hostile in its interruptions. Those behind murmured. Amalia Csik began to fear for her present importance. She incited the people furiously, as if this stranger from Pest had attempted to deprive them of an honour due to them.

"He is so rich, and yet he left his brother poor. He never gave him anything. Now he wants to deprive him of his memory."

"We won't let him!" shouted the bootmaker from Gentleman Street and resolved not to claim from the builder the price of Sebastian Ulwing's buckle shoes.

The chaplain rebuked the builder severely:

"Nobody must grudge us the respect we pay to our hero!"

Christopher Ulwing's honest face assumed a

resigned expression. With a sweeping movement of his hand he announced his submission. An entry had been made in the books over which he had no control. After all, what does it matter why a man is proclaimed a hero? To signal, at the risk of one's life, to a little girl, or to soldiers, what is the difference?

"I thank you," he said, scarcely audibly. He took his hat off and, slightly stooping, entered the shop. Outside, on the clock-sign, sparrows were waiting for Brother Sebastian's crumbs. Indoors two candles burned. The silence was broken only by the ticking of the clocks; it sounded like the beating of many hearts. The heart of him who wound the clocks beat no more.

Night was falling when the builder descended from the castle.

"I shall come back for the night," he said to the spectacle-maker and the wood-carver, who had decided to sit up near their old friend. Then he stepped out smartly, making an effort to keep his head erect, but his eyes looked dimly upon the people. He walked as if nobody else existed, as if he were quite alone. It occurred to him that throughout all his life he had been alone. He did not mind; it was the cause of his strength. To expect nothing from anybody, to lean on no one. But what he felt now was something quite different. It was not the solitude of strength, but that of old age. The house in Pozsony with its dark corners; his mother's songs; his father's

workshop; his youth . . . there was nobody left with him to whom these were realities. When a man remains alone with the past, it is more painful than present solitude. It came home to him what it meant, now that everyone had gone to whom he could say: "Do you remember?"

Round him soldiers began to flow in. Rows of men, grimy with sweat and smoke. The drums beat. The crowd followed on both flanks. The whole road was singing.

In the windows of the houses handkerchiefs flickered like white flames.

Anne and Christopher had run to the window. Opposite, the sun had set already behind the castle. The outline of Buda, spires, gables, showed dark on the red sky. A black town on the top of the hill. On the bridge over the Danube a dark stream of steel poured over to Pest . . . soldiers with fixed bayonets. They too received the sun on their backs and had their faces in the shade.

Anne leaned out from the window.

At the head of the troops, the shape of a man dominated the floating throng. The one in the red dolman. The leader. . . . His horse was invisible. The living stream appeared to carry him over its head.

From the bridge end on the Pest side he looked back to the castle. The outline of his features shone up clear and strong, with Buda as its background. The sun, reflected violently from the

glasses of his spectacles, sent a vivid flame into the darkness.

"Do you see them?" shouted Anne and, looking at the leader she felt as if in his face she saw all the faces that followed him in the shade—the faces of the whole victorious army.

Ulwing the builder gently opened the front gate.

When Christopher heard that Uncle Sebastian was dead he began to weep. His sobbing was audible in the corridor. Anne gazed rigidly, tearlessly, in front of her.

"Shall I then see him never more?"

"Never."

Her little face was convulsed. She shut her eyes for a moment. She would have liked to be alone.

In the corridor, the Fügers were waiting with a miserable expression on their faces. The builder nodded silently to them. He went down the stairs. He wanted to be alone.

He stopped in the hall. A curious murmur was audible outside; it spread through the air with a penetrating force as if it had risen from the very foundation of things and beings, from between the roots of the town. He recognised it. It was the outcry of joy and sorrow; the breath of the town, and as Christopher Ulwing listened to it he felt keenly that the breath of the town and his own were but one. He rejoiced

with the town. He wept with the town. . . . The hatred for those who had hurt what was his own—his brother, his home, his bridge, so much of his work—took definite shape in his heart.

As if facing a foe, he raised his head aggressively. His eye struck a little tablet hanging on the opposite door, it bore the German inscription:

CANZELEI.

His jaw turned aside. His steady hand snatched at the tablet and tore it from its hooks. He took a mason's pencil from his waistcoat. He reflected for a second. Was it spelled in Hungarian with a T or a D? Then, with vigorous strokes he wrote on the door *:

IRODA.

*Iroda=office (in Magyar).

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN on quiet Sunday afternoons the bell sounded at the door of Ulwing's house, a sudden silence fell over all in the green room. Nobody mentioned it, yet each of them knew what came to the others' minds. This hour was Uncle Sebastian's hour.

Summer passed away. One morning, the bandy-legged little old man emerged again from the dawn and silently pasted on the walls the last pages of the great book.

Mamsell Tini protested in vain—Anne would stop. She read the poster.

"It is all over."

She went on, saying never a word, and her imagination, restricted by the walls of a town, ignorant of the free, limitless fields, showed her a quaint picture. She saw in her mind a great square, something like the Town Hall Market, but even larger than that. Around it, trees in a row. Grass everywhere, red-capped soldiers lying motionless in the grass. Her feverish eyes closed.

"It is all over. . . ."

One evening, grandfather Jörg was arrested

in his bookshop. He was led, surrounded by bayonets, through the town. Many people were taken like that in those times. Those who remained free spoke in whispers of these things. Anne heard something about grandfather Jörg printing some proclamation; that was why he had to go to prison. But nobody seemed to know exactly what happened. The printing press was closed down by the soldiers; the apple tree at the corner of Snake Street was cut down and in the bookshop young Jörg had to place the bookshelf in such a way that one could see from the street into the deepest recess of the shop.

It was many months before Ulrich Jörg was released. Meanwhile he had turned quite old and tiny.

The town too looked as if it had aged. People got accustomed to that. People will get accustomed to anything. The streets were full of Imperial officers and quiet women in mourning. . . . Slowly the traces of the bombardment disappeared. On Ulwing's house, however, the mutilated pillar-man remained untouched.

John Hubert disliked this untidiness.

"It has to stay like that!" growled the builder. He never told them why.

One day two students passed under the open window of the office. One of the boys said: "This old house has got a national guardsman; look at him, he has been to the war."

The pen of Christopher Ulwing stopped abruptly. What? People had already come to call his house old?

Where were those who shook their heads when he began to build here on the deserted shore, on the shifting sands? Since then a town had sprung up around him. How many years ago was it? How old was he himself? He did not reckon it up; the thought of his age was to him like an object one picks up by chance and throws away without taking the trouble to examine. Annihilation disgusted him. He rebelled against it. He avoided everything that might remind him of it. To build! To build! One could kill death with that. To build a house was like building up life. To draw plans; homes for life. To work for posterity. That rejuvenates man.

But the town had come to a standstill.

Ulwing the builder called his grandchildren into his room, and—a thing he had never done before—he listened to their talk attentively. He was painfully impressed by the discovery that among themselves they spoke a language differing from that which they used with him. So the difference between generations was great enough to give the very words a different meaning! Were all efforts to draw them together vain?

He thought of those gone before him. They too must have known this. They too must have kept it concealed. How many secrets there must be between succeeding generations! And each

generation takes its own secrets with it to the grave, so that the following may live.

These were Christopher Ulwing's hardest days. He built ruined houses up anew. He built himself up anew too. And while he seemed more powerful than ever, business men around him failed and complained.

"Building land will have to be sold; one can't stick to things in these times," said the contractors and looked enquiringly at Christopher Ulwing. "What was the great carpenter's opinion?" But his expression remained cold and immovable. Christopher Ulwing never opened the conversation except when he had to give orders; otherwise he waited and observed.

In the evening the window of the green room remained long alight. John Hubert and Augustus Füger sat there in the cosy armchairs in the corner and now young Otto Füger was present too, always respectful, always inquisitive.

"These are bad times," sighed the little bookkeeper, "one hears of nothing but bankruptcy."

"One goes down, the other up," growled the builder, "never say die."

"During the revolution it was possible to expect better times," said John Hubert, "but at present. . . ."

His father interrupted him.

"These things too will come to an end."

"The question is, won't these things end us first?"

"Not me and the town!" said the builder. "Do you hear Füger? Any building land for sale by auction has to be bought up. The houses for sale must be bought too. I have capital. I have credit. Everything must be bought up. Within five years I will set the whole thing in order."

"Five years. . . ." John Hubert looked at his father. Time left no mark on him.

Next day, Christopher Ulwing gave his grandson a book on architecture. Woodcuts of churches and palaces were in the text.

"We shall build some like that, you and I, when you are an architect."

"Write your name in it," said John Hubert. "Where is the date? A careful business man never writes his name down without a date."

"Business man!" This word sounded bleak in young Christopher's ears. He looked down crestfallen and drew his mouth to one side. He had retained this movement since the shell had struck the house.

As soon as he felt himself unobserved he put the book aside. He went to Gál's. It was still the little hunchback who did his mathematical work for him. After that, he bent his steps to the Hosszu's; he thought of his Latin preparation.

Christopher had some time since been transferred to a private school so as to receive his education in Hungarian. This was his grand-

father's choice. His father approved of the school because it admitted only boys of the best families. Christopher had new schoolmates. All were children of nobles. They were not the kind that would have envied young Müller, the apothecary's son, the possession of his jars and bottles, as the boys in Christopher's old school used to do. They would not have taken the slightest interest in gaudy strings and crude-coloured pictures like those Adam Walter used to produce from his pockets in playtime. They talked of horses, saddles, dogs. Practically every one of them was country-bred and had only come to town for school.

Christopher continued none the less to go on Sundays to the Hosszu's; he saw Sophie rarely; but when the young lady happened to come accidentally into Gabriel's room, the boy would blush and dared not look at her. But many were the times when he had gone a long way round through Grenadier's Street so that he might look up stealthily under his hat to the windows of the Hosszu house.

One afternoon, when he turned into the street he saw his father going in the same direction. He wore an embroidered waistcoat and walked ceremoniously. The boy stopped, stared at him, then ran away suddenly.

Since the dancing lessons John Hubert had paid several visits to the Hosszu's.

An accident revealed to him the cause of his

attraction. One day, on taking his departure, he left a new yellow glove behind him. He turned back on the stairs, but Sophie was already running after him. When she handed him the glove, her hand felt warm. John Hubert perceived suddenly that Sophie had lovely eyes and that her figure was slender.

After this, his visits to the Hosszu's became still more frequent. Mrs. Hosszu was knitting with two yard-long wooden needles near the window and never looked up, but if Sophie spoke in whispers to John Hubert she left the room hurriedly. Occasionally, she stayed out for a very long time. Then she opened the door unexpectedly, quietly. And she would look at the girl with a question in her eyes.

"Why does she look like that?" thought John Hubert and felt ill at ease.

That day it was Sophie's father who came in instead of his wife.

Simon Hosszu was a toothless, red-faced man. One of his eyes watered constantly for which reason he wore a gold earring in his left ear. He spoke of everything quickly, plausibly. He never gave time for thought.

While John Hubert listened to him he quite forgot that the name of old Hosszu had lately been mentioned with suspicion in business circles.

Hosszu owned water mills. The great steam mill did him considerable damage. None the less, he spoke as if the water mills had a great

future before them. He got enthusiastic. In confidence he mentioned brilliant strokes of business to be done—timber, plans of lime kilns. A brewery. A paper mill. . . .

"If I had capital, I should become a rich man."

John Hubert was bewildered by his audacious plans. He loved money, and the idea of presenting plans of his own to his father pleased him. He raised his brows. He tried to retain it all in his memory. On leaving he pressed the hand of Simon Hosszu warmly.

The anteroom was saturated with the smell of cooking. A dirty towel lay on the table. Sophie snatched it up and hid it behind her back. John Hubert took shorter leave of her than usual.

In the street he tried to think of Sophie's pretty face, but the odour of the kitchen and the dirty towel upset him unpleasantly. He began to think of Simon Hosszu's various plans. He could not understand what they amounted to. Now that he presented Hosszu's plans in his own language they seemed less convincing. They became dim and risky. He had to drop one after the other. The facts, no longer distorted by eloquence, glared at him soberly in their real light.

After supper he remained alone with his father in the green room; they spoke of various firms and enterprises; he beat round the bush for a long time.

Christopher Ulwing watched his son atten-

tively, with knitted brows. When John Hubert mentioned the name of Simon Hosszu, the expectant expression disappeared from the builder's face. He leaned back in his chair.

"Simon Hosszu is in a pretty bad way; he has exhausted his credit everywhere," and then he added, indifferently, as if speaking casually: "It is curious, up to now he has spared us. I can't understand what he has in mind."

John Hubert could not help thinking of Mrs. Hosszu, who knitted and never looked up, who left the room and appeared unexpectedly in the door. His father's voice rang in his ear: what had they in mind? . . . And Sophie? No, she was not in the conspiracy. He acquitted the girl in his mind. He felt distinctly that she was very dear to him.

His bedroom was beyond that of the children. Everything there was as perfectly in its place as the necktie on his collar. On the dressing table, brushes, combs, bottles, jars, all arranged in order.

John Hubert counted the money in his purse. He thought how his most cherished wishes had always been curbed. Now he burnt the natural desire of a virile man, which in his case was mingled with the fear of its imminent disappearance; the knowledge that the hours of his manhood were already numbered sharpened his craving. He longed for woman with an inten-

sity of which youth is incapable. He wished for a woman bending to his will, weaker than he, and the memory of a little sempstress crossed his mind. How he had loved her, for his dominion over her and . . . Then Sophie's image abruptly became confused with the fading picture of the poor simple girl.

Without any continuity he thought of his children. "Would Sophie be a good mother to them?" He asked himself in vain. He could not answer the question. Mrs. Hosszu, the dirty towel, Simon Hosszu's bad reputation, his shady propositions, his dangerous plausibility. . . . That influence frightened him and it became clear to him that henceforth his desire would be restrained by two hostile forces, the builder's will and his own sober brain. In his mind's eye he saw Sophie's lovely shaded eyes looking at him. They reproached him gently, just as the eyes of the other girl had done on the day they parted. John Hubert felt a bitter pain rend him from head to foot. The old pain, the pain of thwarted hopes so familiar to him since his youth.

Past and present were all the same to him. He would not make a clean cut between the two and he just had to continue to curb the aspirations of his soul. The ray of light that had shone on him during the past few months was now extinguished.

He proceeded to turn the key in his watch. He went on just as before. Gently ticking time

was again meaningless to him: work and compromise, that was all. And as he looked up into the mirror, his face stared at him, tired and old.

CHAPTER IX

THE Inner Town was preparing to celebrate the centenary of the chemist's shop at the sign of the Holy Trinity. The invitations were extended to distinguished members of neighbouring parishes.

A crowd gathered in front of the house of Müller, the chemist in Servites' Square, to get a glimpse of the arriving carriages. Through the house a faint smell of drugs was noticeable. The stairs were covered with a carpet. This put the guests into a festive mood. Under the influence of the carpet Gál the wine merchant and his wife, who lived on very bad terms with each other, went arm in arm up the stairs.

Just then Ulwing's carriage stopped at the entrance. At the door the chemist received his guests with many bows.

In the drawing-room new-fashioned paraffin lamps stood on the mantelpiece in front of the mirror. The room was packed with many crinolines. The guests' faces were flushed. They spoke to each other in low voices, solemnly.

The wife of the mayor diffused a strong perfume of lavender round the sofa. Sztaviarsky's worn-out wig appeared green in the light of the lamps.

The Hosszu family arrived. Sophie had become thin and wore a dress three years old. Christopher recognised the dress. He did not know why but he became sad. With an effort he turned his head away. He did not look at Sophie, he only felt her presence, and even that filled him with delight.

The three Miss Münsters walked in through the door in order of size. They were fat and pale. Broad blue ribbons floated from the bonnet of Mrs. George Martin Münster. The last to come were the family of Walter the wholesale linen-merchant. Silence fell over the company. The beautiful Mrs. Walter was usually not invited to anything but informal parties because the linen-merchant had raised her from the stage to his respectable middle-class home. She had once been a singer in the German theatre and this was not yet forgotten.

During dinner young Adam Walter was Anne's neighbour. The crowded dining-room was heavy with the smell of food. In the centre of the table stood the traditional *croque-en-bouche* cake.

Anne's eyes chanced to fall on Christopher. He seemed strikingly pale among the heavy, flushed faces. At the end of the table sat Sophie, mute, broken. Twice she raised her glass to her lips. She did not notice it was empty. Ignace Holt, the first assistant of the "Holy Trinity" Chemist's shop, leaned towards her obtrusively.

Adam Walter had watched Anne interestedly for some time without saying a word. He thought her out of place in these surroundings. He found in her narrow face a disquieting expression of youthful calm. It seemed to the young man as if the warm colour of her hair, a shaded gold, were spreading under her skin, invading her innocent neck. Her chin impressed him as determined, a refined form of the chin of the Ulwings. Her nose was straight and short. Her smile raised the corners of her mouth charmingly.

He looked at her forehead. Her fine eyebrows seemed rather hard.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked involuntarily.

The girl looked at him surprised. The eyes of Adam Walter were just as brown and restless as those of his beautiful mother. His brow was low and broad with bulging temples. Anne had known him since her childhood, but till now she had never spoken to him. All she knew about him was that he had once gone to the same school as Christopher, that he was a poor scholar and an excellent fiddler.

"Do you think that people confide their thoughts to strangers?"

"The brave do," said young Walter. "I want to say everything that passes through my mind. For example, that all these people here are unbearably tedious. Haven't you noticed it? Not

one among them dares say a thing that has not been said before. Not one does a thing his father and mother haven't done before him."

Adam Walter felt that he had caught the girl's attention and became bolder.

"They have no sense whatever. If one of them is taller than the others he must go about the world stooping so that no one shall notice it; otherwise, for the sake of order, they might cut his head or his legs off. They have to tread the well-worn path of common-places. Greatness depends on official recognition. Please, don't laugh. It is so. Just now old Münster told Sztaviarsky that 'The Vampire' and 'Robert le Diable' are the finest music in the world. Marschner and Meyerbeer. Rossini the greatest of all. Poor Schubert too. That is a comfortable doctrine. These composers can be admired without risk. They bear the hallmark on them. It is a pity it should all be music for the country fair. Schubert is like a spring shower. Many small drops, warm soft drops. Is it not so? Why do you shake your head? You love Schubert. I am sorry, very sorry. I only said all this to prove . . ."

He stopped. He stared into space.

"He exaggerates," thought Anne, and repressed what came to her lips. She thought of her grandfather who had built so much. And this young man? . . . His words demolished whatever they touched.

"You exaggerate," she said aloud. "I was taught that old age and those who were before us ought to be respected."

"That is not true," said Adam Walter with warmth. "I hate every former age because it stands in the way of my own. The past is a millstone round our necks. The future is a wing. I want to fly!"

Anne followed his words bewildered. What she heard attracted and repelled her. From her childhood, whenever anything came to her mind which conflicted with her respect for men and things, she pushed it aside as if she had seen something wicked. And this stranger bluntly put into words what she too had felt, vaguely and timidly.

Adam Walter spoke of his plans. He would go abroad, to Weimar. He would write his sonatas, his grand opera.

"What has been done up to now is nothing. What has been made is bad, because it was made. One must create. Like God. Just like Him. Even the clay has to be created anew. . . . Is it not so? The artist must become God, otherwise let us become linen-merchants."

His restless eyes shone quaintly. Anne remembered suddenly two distant feverish eyes and a word that recalled the word "Youth." All at once she felt herself freer. She turned to Adam Walter. But the young man's thoughts must have wandered to another subject, for he

drew his low forehead furiously into wrinkles.

"Do you know that my father is ashamed of my mother's art? And yet how she sings when we are alone, she and I! When nobody hears her. My father hides that lovely, imperishable voice behind his linens. And this is your middle-class society. It only values what can be measured by the yard and by the pound. These things hurt sorely."

He looked up anxiously. "Did you say anything? No? I beg of you to imagine she simply hides her voice. But perhaps you may not know. My mother was a singer."

Anne was embarrassed. Hitherto she had thought that was something to be ashamed of.

Walter asked her rapidly:

"Of course, you sing too. Sztaviarsky told me. True. I remember. Of all his pupils the most artistic. Are you going to be a singer?"

In the girl's heart an instinctive protest rose against the suggestion.

"But why not?" Adam Walter's voice became sad.

Anne did not realise that she answered the question by looking at Mrs. Walter, living forever isolated among the others.

"I understand," said the young man ironically, "your indulgence extends only to the life of others, but is limited where your own is concerned."

Anne knew that he spoke the truth. Her

thoughts alone had been freed to-day. Her movements were dominated and kept captive by something. Perhaps the invisible power of ancient things and ancient men.

The room became suddenly silent. Somebody rose at the big table. It was Gárdos, the wrinkled head-physician or "proto-medicus," as he was called. He knew of no other remedies for his patients but arnica, emetics and nux vomica. Ferdinand Müller half-closed his eyes as if expecting to be patted on the head.

Anne paid no attention to the proto-medicus' account of the hundred years' history of the Müller family and the "Holy Trinity" shop. She was toying with her own thoughts like a child who has obtained possession of the glass case containing the trinkets.

Others spoke after Mr. Gárdos. The top of the *croque-en-bouche* cake inclined to one side. The dinner was over.

In the next room two chemist's assistants had erected a veiled tablet. Sztaviarsky played some kind of march on the piano. The guests stood in a semi-circle. Ferdinand Müller unveiled the mysterious tablet. A murmur of rapture rose:

"What a charming, kind thought. . . ."

Tears came to the eyes of the chemist. The admirers of his family and the employees of his shop had surprised him with a new sign-board. There shone the two gilt dates. Between them a century. Underneath, a big white head of Æs-

culapius, bearing the features of Ferdinand Müller, the chemist. Nothing was wanting; there were his side whiskers and the wart on his left cheek. Only his spectacles had been omitted.

Anne and Adam Warner looked at each other.

They felt an irresistible desire to laugh and in this sympathy they became friends over the heads of the crowd.

Sztaviarsky played his march at an ever-increasing speed. The crinolines began to whirl round. Wheels of airy, frilly tarlatan, pink, yellow, blue. Dancing had begun round the piano.

For a brief moment Sophie found herself pressed against the wall near John Hubert. She raised her big, soft eyes to his, as if to ask him a question. But she found something cold, final, in John Hubert's looks. The girl turned away. Her eyes fell on Christopher.

It seemed to the handsome tall boy that Sophie stroked his face across the room. He looked at her sharply. The girl seemed again heartlessly indifferent. Tired, Christopher went into the next room. There some old gentlemen and bonnetted ladies were playing *l'hombre* round a green table. He went through Mr. Müller's study. Then came a quiet little room. Nobody was in it. The light of a white-shaded paraffin lamp was reflected in a mirror. He threw himself into an easy chair and buried his face in his hands. The sound of the piano knocked sharply

against his brain. At first this caused him pain. Then he remembered that the sounds of this *valse* reached Sophie too. They touched her hair, her lips, her bosom. They had invaded her. It was from her that they came still, a swaying, treble rhythm which mysteriously embraced the rhythm of love. They came from her and brought something of her own self with them.

Christopher leaned his head forward as if attempting to touch the sound with his lips to kiss it. Yes, it was swaying music like that he felt in his endless dreams. Similar rhythmical pangs wrought in him when he imagined that Sophie would come to him at night, offering her love. He hears her steps. Her breath is warm. Her bosom heaves and whenever it rises, it touches his face.

"Little Chris. . . ." Just like olden times. Just the same. "Now I am dreaming. I must not breathe, or all will be over." And in his imagination she caressed him again.

"Little Chris. . . ."

He started. This was reality. Sophie's voice. Her breath. . . . And her bosom heaved and touched his face.

"Do you still love me?" the girl asked.

In Christopher's tired eyes despair was reflected. So she knows? So she has always known what it has cost him such torture to hide? Then why has she not been kinder to him? Why did she leave him to suffer so much?

"Do you love me?"

"I always loved you," said the boy and his voice came dangerously near to a sob.

Sophie stroked him like a child requiring consolation.

"Poor little Chris. . . . And we are all just as poor."

Suddenly her hand stopped on the boy's brow, where his hair, like his father's, curved boldly over his forehead. He leant his head back and with a maidenly abandon gave himself up to Sophie's will. The girl leaned over him. She looked at him for a long while, sadly as if to take leave, then . . . kissed his lips.

A kiss, long restrained, meant for another. And yet, the annihilation of a childhood.

The boy moaned as if he had been wounded and with the first virile movements of his arms drew the girl to him. Sophie resisted and pushed him away, but from the threshold looked back to him with her big, shaded eyes. Then she was gone. A feeling rose in Christopher as if she had carried the world with her.

He went after her. When he passed the card players, he straightened himself out so as to look all the taller, all the more manly. He could not help smiling: they knew nothing. Nobody knew anything. He and Sophie were alone in the secret and that felt just like holding her in his arms among people who could not see.

They were still dancing in the drawing-room.

Sophie danced with Ignace Hold. Christopher could not quite understand how she could do such a thing now. And she looked as if she had forgotten everything. Nothing showed on her features, nothing. Women are precious comedians.

He looked at Hold. He turned with the girl in the usual little circle. His short round nose shone. He breathed through his mouth. The points of his boots turned up. On his waistcoat a big cornelian horse's head dangled, just on the spot where one of the buttons strained. "He is sure to unbutton that one under the table." Christopher felt inclined to laugh. Then suddenly he thought of something else; he heard someone talk behind his back. He began to listen.

"I should not mind giving him my daughter," said Ferdinand Müller; "he is wealthy and a God-fearing man. Those Hosszu people are lucky. They are completely ruined. Miss Sophie isn't quite young neither."

Christopher smiled proudly, contemptuously. They knew nothing. He sought for Sophie's glance to find in it a sign of their union, their mutual possession, from which all others were excluded.

But the girl was no longer among the dancers. Her absence made everything meaningless. He had to think of the quiet little room. "Our room" . . . and he went toward it. He stopped dead in the door. Sophie was standing there

now too, just as before, on the same spot. In front of her Mr. Hold. Christopher saw it clearly. He saw even the tight button, the carved horse's head on his waistcoat. Yet it appeared to him an awful hallucination. The horse's head dangled and touched Sophie. Ignace Hold raised himself to the tip of his toes. He kissed the girl's lips.

Something went amiss in Christopher's brain. He wanted to shriek, but his voice remained a ridiculous groan. The floor sank a little and then jumped up with a jerk. He felt sick as if he had been hit in the stomach. With stiff jerky steps he re-crossed the rooms; he looked like a drowning man seeking for something to cling to. In the drawing-room he smiled with his lips drawn to one side.

"I have a headache," he said in the ante-room to Müller the chemist.

When he reached the street, he began to run. He was in a hurry to get to the Danube. He rushed unconsciously through a narrow lane. Under the corner lamp he collided with something; he ran into a soft warm body. His hat fell off.

"Is it you?" screeched a female voice and began to scold.

"For whom do you take me?" Christopher was painfully aware of the proximity of the soft body. He stepped back and picked his hat up.

The girl began to laugh shamelessly. For a

time she scrutinized Christopher curiously. The boy's suit was made of costly cloth. His collar was clean. His necktie white. She tried to appear genteel.

"I was expecting my brother," she whimpered. "I live here near the fishmarket. Perhaps the young gentleman would see me home?"

"And your brother?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders. They were already walking side by side through the narrow lane. They emerged under the rare lamps as if ascending inclines of light. Then again they sank into darkness. Above the roofs the narrow sky appeared like an inverted abyss with stars at its bottom. Here and there a little light blinked indifferently, strangely, from a window. Just like human beings gazing from stout, safe walls on those excluded.

Christopher felt hopelessly alone. Even the sound of the girl's steps seemed foreign. The darkness was empty. All was falsehood behind the doors and windows: purity, grace, kisses. . . . Tears ran down his cheeks.

The girl stopped in front of the door of a low house. Her expressionless eyes looked into Christopher's. She saw that he wept. It was a familiar sight to her. At first they cry and are as docile as dogs. All that alters later on.

She began to balance her hips and pressed against him.

"Come in. . . ." Her voice was heavy and

like a bird of prey. She unexpectedly pressed her moist lips on the boy's mouth.

With disgust Christopher thrust her back. The girl fell against the door and knocked her head. But the boy did not care. He gripped his lips with his hands. There . . . just there, where he had felt Sophie's kiss before! Now there remained nothing of it. It had faded from his lips. Something else had taken its place. . . . He began to run towards the Danube. In his flight, he rubbed his hands against the walls as if to wipe off the moist warmth clinging to his palms.

He pulled up sharply at the corner lamp. Again it all rushed to his brain. He gave a cry and ran back. He wanted to strike the girl again, strike her hard, to mete out vengeance for his disgust. Incredible insults came to his mind, words which till then he did not know he knew, dirty words like those used by the scum of the streets. Words! They were blows too, blows meant for all womankind.

The girl was still standing in the door. Her body was leaning back. Her arms were raised and she lazily put up her hair dishevelled by the blow.

Christopher stared at her with wide-open, maddening eyes. He looked at her movements; she seemed to him a corpse which had regained movement and had come back to life. How her bosom swelled under her raised arms. . . . He stag-

gered and whined and stretched out a defending hand.

The girl snatched at the proffered hand. She dragged Christopher in through the door. The boy only felt that something had bereft him of his free will. Something from which it was impossible to escape.

Two rows of dark doors appeared at the sides of the filthy courtyard. Fragmentary, hideous laughter was audible behind one of them. A reddish gleam filtered through a crack.

Christopher's steps were insecure on the projecting cobbles. He stepped into the open reeking gutter. He shuddered. He was full of awful expectation, strained fear and tears of inexpressible pain.

The girl did not release his hand. She dragged him like her prey. At the bottom of the courtyard a door creaked. The darkness of a stuffy room swallowed them.

CHAPTER X

IN a city night is never fully asleep. Somehow, it is forever awake. Here and there it opens its eye in a window and winks. A door opens with a gaping mouth. Steps are about. Their echo strikes the walls of the houses and resounds to the neighbouring lane though no one walks there.

The great river breathed heavily, coolly. The stars spent themselves in the firmament. Christopher turned from the fishmarket to the embankment of the Danube. Now and then he stopped, then he walked on wearily, unsteadily under the slumbering houses. He went on, full of contempt. Was that all? So the grown-ups' great secret was no more than that? He pulled his hat over his eyes. He was afraid of someone looking into them.

Florian just opened the gate. His broom swished with uniform, equal sounds over the stones of the pavement. When the servant had finished and had retired to the house, Christopher slunk in unobserved by the side entrance.

He looked anxiously for a minute towards the stairs. Candle-light descended from above, step by step. He did not realize at once what it

meant. He only felt danger and hid in the wooden recess of the cellar stairs.

Heavy, firm steps came downward. They came irresistibly and their sound seemed to tread on him. He crouched down trembling. He saw his grandfather. He was going to work. He carried a candle in his hand. His shadow was of superhuman height on the white wall. He himself looked superhuman to the shrinking boy. Under the porch his shadow extended. It reached the courtyard. It continued over the wall. It must have dominated the houses too, the whole town. Christopher looked after it; he could not see its end and in his dark recess he felt himself infinitely small and miserable beside the great shadow.

Staggering with exhaustion he stole upstairs. On tiptoe. Along the corridor. One of the big stone steps was loose. He knew it well. He avoided it like a traitor.

He stopped for a moment before Anne's door. In the clear tranquillity he felt as if some dirt stuck to his face, his hand, his whole body; degrading, shameful dirt.

Later on, he lay for a long time with open eyes in the dark, as he used to in olden times when he was still a child. The darkness was as empty as his heart. What he had longed for was gone. All that remained in his blood was disgust and fatigue.

He was waked by the noise of the clatter of

heavy carts under the porch. The steps of workmen were going towards the timber yard. Ulwing the builder was not contented to buy land and houses. Now everything was cheap. He bought building material from the ruined contractors. Enormous quantities of timber, so that his firm might be ready when work started.

Christopher took no interest in this. At this time nothing interested him. Even when he heard that Sophie Hosszu had become the bride of Ignace Hold he remained indifferent. He just thought of the cornelian horse-head which dangled and touched Sophie.

A week passed away. Christopher spoke practically to nobody in the house, but whenever he addressed Anne, his expression was sarcastic, as if he wanted to vent on her his contempt for all that was woman. He had never felt so strong and independent as now.

Then . . . one night, like a re-opened wound, a soulless recollection struck him. The recollection was all body. A female body.

The gloom of the night became populated. Figures approached, more and more. The darkness became gradually a huge cauldron, in which bare arms swarmed, soft outlines, white shoulders, vulgar female faces.

Next day, Christopher went towards the fishmarket. He recognised the house. He knocked. And when he came away again from

the girl he had learned that for the future he would need money.

He thought of his grandfather, his father. He saw them working forever and ever and they never seemed to spend any money. What were they doing with it? They must have a lot. Strangers had told him so. Even the girl with the bestial eyes knew it, as well as the others, those with the painted faces who winked in such a way that only he saw it. How did they know him? What did they want? Why do they emerge from their dirty houses when he passes by? Why do they lie in wait for him at the street corners? Wait, offer themselves and follow him obstinately. . . . And at night when he wants to sleep their image comes. The room gets crowded. They sit on his bed. They press him to give them their pay. But whence is he to procure the money?

Suddenly he saw his grandfather before him, as he had seen him from the cellar entrance. The great shadow at early dawn. He shrank. He blushed for every one of his miserable thoughts. It was all dirt. He too was going to work, hard, honestly, like the old ones. He would be kind to everybody. Even to Anne he would be kind. And he would never again set foot in the house of the girl with the bestial eyes.

But when the hour struck, he again became restless. To restrain himself, he called to his mind the image of his grandfather going to work.

The image faded, became powerless and the frightful, hideous force attracted him anew. On the stairs he realised that it was useless to struggle; the fishmarket called him irresistibly.

Downstairs, in the porch, he found himself unexpectedly face to face with Anne and his father. Anne had a bunch of fuchsias in her hand.

"Come with us to the cemetery, to Uncle Sebastian," said the girl, getting into the carriage.

Only when he was in the street did Christopher realise that he had given no answer. He looked after them.

The carriage was disappearing in the direction of the Danube.

On the wooden pavement of the chain-bridge the sound of the wheels became soft. The bridge swayed gently, in unison with the river as if it had petrified over the Danube out of the elements of the water and recalled its origin. Anne had the feeling that the bridge and the river were but one and that the carriage was floating. Before her eyes the sun played on the iron supports of the bridge as if they were the strings of a giant harp. The sky looked ever so high and blue over the castle hill. Beyond, on the old battlefield, dense grass had grown out of the many deaths. Behind the acacia trees little double-windowed middle-class houses were visible: arched green gates, steep roofs, touching one another.

"How small everything is here. . . ."

John Hubert looked up.

"One day a city may rise here too. Pest was not even as big as this when your grandfather settled in it."

In front of the carriage the geese fled with much gabbling in all directions. Dogs barked. At the Devil's ditch a shepherd played the flute.

Anne looked about bewildered, thinking of an old toy of hers. The toy was a farm. The goodwife was taller than the stable and stood on a round disc. Trees, geese and the gooseherd all had round foundations. Instinctively she looked at the shepherd's feet and then laughed aloud. The whole place seemed unreal to her.

Farther on in Christina-town the houses separated. They stood alone, broad, gaudy, like peasant women, surrounded by kitchen gardens.

At the communal farm, they left the carriage. They continued on foot towards the military cemetery. The citizens of Buda had buried Uncle Sebastian there.

"Why?" asked Anne. "He was not a soldier."

"But he was a hero," answered John Hubert, though he had never been quite able to understand Uncle Sebastian's death. His father kept silence about the details. On the other hand, the citizens in the castle told confused stories of great deeds. He liked to believe what they said because it flattered him. And whenever the exploits of the clockmaker were mentioned, he observed modestly, but with satisfaction, that the

hero was one of his close relations. He grew used to the honour thrust on him. He bore it with erected head as he wore his high collars.

Anne remembered something. Three years ago, her grandfather had said to her, looking fixedly into her eyes: "The citizens of the castle consider Uncle Sebastian a hero. They may be mistaken. You are the only person in the world who is sure not to be mistaken if you believe him to be one." She remembered it well. He said no more. But from that day he, whom till then she had merely loved, became also the object of her admiration and the hero of all around her.

The trees grew between the graves like a wood, a wood where people were buried. Here it was not the graves that decided the trees' position; they had to take their places as the wood decided. And life here drew abundant strength from death's rich harvest. In many places the stone crosses had fallen or sunk into the moss. A weeping willow drooped over a crypt. It bent over it like a sylvan woman, whose green loose hair covered a face which was doubtless weeping in the shade.

Anne prayed for a long time at Uncle Sebastian's grave. Then they went on in silence. Around some graves the gilt spearheads of low railings sparkled in the grass. Railings, frontiers, even around the dead, to separate those who loved each other, to isolate those whom nobody loved. But Anne felt hopeful that in the

ground, underneath the obstructions erected by the living, the dead might stretch friendly hands to each other.

On the hillside the graves ceased. Death vanished from between the trees, life alone continued. The wood was their only companion in the summer's quietude.

On the edge of a small glen a straw hat lay on the grass. They looked up surprised. A bare-headed young man stood in the glen turning towards the sun. The approaching steps attracted his attention. His eyes were brown. His gaze seemed darker than his eyes. He appeared vexed. Then his eyes fell on Anne. Her small, girlish face tried hard to remain serious, but her eyes were already laughing ironically and her lips were on the verge of doing so. The stranger felt embarrassed.

John Hubert Ulwing raised his beaver, ruffled by the boughs. He asked for the footpath leading to the communal farm.

The young man indicated the direction. His handsome, manly hand was elegant and narrow. He wore an old seal ring with a green stone. He walked a few steps with the Ulwings. When they reached the footpath, he bowed in silence.

Anne nodded. The waves of her soft shepherdess hat of Florentine straw threw for an instant a shadow over her eyes. She was rather sorry the footpath had been so near. The steps behind her were already receding. She bent

down and picked a flower. Only now did she notice how many flowers there were in the wood.

She hung her hat over her arm. One more, one more . . . and the bunch grew in her hand. A Canterbury bell gave itself up, root and all. The roots, like infinitely small bird-claws, held on to the moist soil. For the first time Anne smelt the perfume of the earth. And when the carriage entered the porch between the two pillar men, it struck Anne that this was the first occasion on which wild flowers had come into the old house.

She met Christopher on the staircase. Her brother held his head rigid and seemed to be listening. She too heard her grandfather's voice. It came from far away, from the timber yard.

Amidst heaps of dry chips a carpenter had lit a pipe. The builder was just then inspecting the yard. He perceived the bluish little cloud of smoke in the air at once. The blood rushed to his head. He threatened the man with his fists. The carpenter, awestruck, knocked his pipe out and stamped on the burning tobacco. Next to him, a journeyman began to split a fine big oak beam; in his fright, he deviated from the right angle.

Old Ulwing's face became dark red with anger. He pushed the man aside and snatched the axe out of his hand.

"Look here!" he shouted in a voice that made

all the men surrounding him stop work. Then, like a captive bird of steel, with a swing the axe rose in his grip. The chips flew. The oak recognised its master and split at his powerful will.

Christopher Ulwing forgot everything. His chest panted and inhaled the savour of the oak. The inherited ancestral instincts and movements revived; though displaced for a long time by strenuous intellectual work and rendered superfluous by long prosperity, the gigantic strength of his youth awoke again. There was nothing in the whole world but the timber of the oak and himself. For a moment the men got a glimpse of the great carpenter whose former strength was the subject of endless and ever increasing tales, told by the old masters of the craft to the younger generation.

They saw him for one moment, then something happened. The raised axe fell out of his powerful hand and dropped helplessly through the air. It fell to the ground. The builder grasped his forehead as if it had been struck by the axe and he began to sway slowly, terribly, like an old tower whose foundation gives way. Nobody dared touch him. Meanwhile the workmen stared in amazement.

Füger was the first to regain his presence of mind. He tendered his shoulder to his chief.

John Hubert ran as pale as death across the yard.

Supported by two powerful journeymen car-

penters the master builder staggered along. His bent arms were round the men's necks. His elbows were higher than his shoulders. The face of the old man looked sallow and masklike between the youthful faces of the men, crimson with their effort.

"Not there," he said scarcely audibly when they tried to drag him to his bed in his room. He pointed with his chin to the window. They pushed an armchair in front of it.

Soon the shrivelled face of Gárdos, the protomedicus, appeared in the door. When he left the room, he made the gesture of respectful submission which is only known to priests and physicians. Priests make it at the altar, in the presence of God, physicians when they face death.

"The children. . . ." The builder made an effort to turn round. His halting look went slowly round the room.

Christopher clung trembling to the edge of the table. He had a feeling that if this great searching glance were to find him, it would strike upon his pupils and press his eyeballs inwards. Everything shrank in him. His body wanted to vanish into space.

So death was like this! He had never seen it yet, though he had guessed that it hovered everywhere and whispered fear into men's ears. It had whispered to him too when he was a child and he had to hide under his blankets or run out of the room when the candle went out. But then

he did not yet understand the sibilant voice and his fear went astray among phantoms, deep silence and darkness. For all that, it had always been death.

He saw the others near him in a haze. His father, Füger, Gemming and Feuerlein. The pointed long face of Tini was there too. It moved correctly, with an appearance of unreality, between the washstand and the armchair. It came and went. A wet towel in her hand. In the corridor the workmen. Subdued, heavy steps. Changing, frightened faces in the door. One pressed against the other, as if looking into a pit.

Suddenly he perceived Anne. How pale she was. Yet she moved calmly. Now she knelt down near the armchair and her face was clasped by two waxy hands. A grey head bent over her and gave her a long look, a look insufferably prolonged. If he were never to release her? If he were to take her with him?

Christopher sobbed. Someone pushed him forward. Now he too was kneeling near the armchair. Now, now . . . The fading eyes had found him. Two hands of wax reached searchingly into the air, the fingers stretched, tried to grasp something.

The boy fell to the floor without a sound. He was not aware that he was carried out of the room.

Slowly the room became dark. The steps of

the priest interrupted the solemn silence of the corridor. Steps came and went. The smell of incense pervaded the porch. The choir-boy's bell rang along the street. He rang as if he were playing ball with the sounds while one house was telling another the news:

"Ulwing, the master builder, is dying. . . ."

There was a throng on the staircase. The heavy, syncopated breathing of the builder was audible in the corridor. Upstairs in the room, anxious, tearful faces leant over the armchair.

Since the priest had gone, Christopher Ulwing had opened his eyes no more. He was speechless and in the silence his brain fought desperately against annihilation. It was too early. He was not yet ready. He rebelled against it. So many plans. . . . He wanted to say something. He sought for words, but could find none. . . . The words leading to men were lost. . . . Colours appeared suddenly between his eyes and the lids, hard splints of colour, which seemed to drop into them, pressing on his eyeballs. Yellow spots. Black rings. Red zigzags. Then he felt a pleasant, restful weariness, just like long ago, when he was a child and his mother carried him in her arms into his bed. And Brother Sebastian . . . they wandered together, quietly, without fatigue. . . . A town becomes visible, church-towers, houses; much waste land, on which he is going to build. It is morning and the church bells ring.

John Hubert bent over his father. He was still breathing. It seemed that his lips moved.

"It is morning!" The builder said that so loud that they all looked to the window.

Above the further end of the timber yard a wonderful gleam appeared. Füger looked at his watch: it was not yet midnight.

The gleam spread every minute. Red dust and sparks; at first one or two, then more and more.

The little book-keeper began to perspire. He recalled all of a sudden to his mind a man with a leather apron, knocking his pipe out and trampling on the burning tobacco. Now he remembered clearly the workman's heavy boots in the sawdust. With desperate self-accusation he remembered that after that he had thought no more of the matter. . . .

A man ran through the courtyard.

"Fire!"

The cry was repeated, every corner of the house re-echoed it. Under the steep roof the walls became orange. An unnatural red glow spread. Through the window panes light streamed suddenly into the rooms.

"Fire!"

Now they were shouting it in the street, persistently, sharply. Carts were thundering towards the Danube.

John Hubert rushed to the door. At the threshold it looked as if he were going to fall.

He staggered and turned back. He began to calculate, perspiring with fear. His brain added and multiplied confusedly, intensely. The loss was gigantic. The quantity of timber and building material was enormous. The firm might be shaken by it. Helplessly he stared at his father. But in the armchair there sat but the ghost of an old man, smiling like a mask into the light of the conflagration. Nothing more could be expected from him. His knees began to shake.

Anne was worn out and looked wearily towards the window. She did not dare to move her head. Something was giving way behind her brow.

Black figures were starting up on the walls of the yard. They pumped water on the fire. People were standing on the roofs of the opposite houses too.

Sooty horrors staggered in the air near the tar boiler. A suffocating smell of burning poured through the windows. The conflagration spread with awful speed. It raced towards the wall of the back garden.

A burning pile collapsed in the timber yard.

In the ominous light of the rooms Tini and the maidservants were gesticulating madly before the open cupboards.

Anne leaned against the wall. "They want to abandon the house, they want to flee."

"Save it, save it!" she shrieked with a bloodless face.

Augustus Füger dropped panting into the room. He brought news. Now he was gone. Now he was back again.

The fire had reached the roof of the toolshed. The air quivered with heat. Hoarse crackling, spasmodic hissing, mingled with the cries of many human voices.

The half-closed eyes of the builder rarely moved. He heard, he saw nothing that happened around him. He was mysteriously distant from all that.

Under the window the wasted leaves shrivelled up with a dry crackling sound. The pump in the courtyard creaked uniformly. A fire engine started to spray the hot walls.

In that instant a heavy, clipped voice floated through the air, like a round disc of metal. . . .

Something passed over the face of Christopher Ulwing.

"The church bells! It is morning and the church bells ring."

All looked at him awestricken. The hands of the builder gripped the armchair. John Hubert and Florian supported him on either side.

"Let me go!" That was the shadow of his old voice. He did not know that nobody obeyed him any more.

"To build . . . to build . . ." His chin went all to one side and his body straightened itself with a frightful effort. The dying Chris-

topher Ulwing towered by a whole head above the living. . . .

Then, as if something inside him had given him a twist, he turned half way round. John Hubert and the servant bent under his weight. In their arms the builder was dead. He had died standing and the gleam of the burning oak remained in his broken eyes.

New water carts arrived below. Bugles shrieked along the streets. Ladders climbed into the red air.

Long, panting snakes began to work: the pumps spat flying water among the flames. But the fire retreated reluctantly, slowly . . . gradually it collapsed with a hiss.

The alarm bell of Leopold's Town went on shouting its clamour, asking for help, calling, complaining. All parishes responded. The whole of Pest was alarmed. Sooty débris floated in the air rent by the tolling of bells. Smoke covered the yellow walls. The water from the pumps flew down the window panes.

In that night the old house became really old.

CHAPTER XI

ULWING the builder was carried out of the old house and the pillar-men looked into the hearse. Following behind, the mitred abbot, lighted wax candles, singing priests; the Mayor, the Town Councillors, the flags of the guilds; a big dark mass moving slowly under the summer sky.

The whole town followed Christopher Ulwing bare-headed and wherever he passed on his journey, the bells of many churches tolled. Then the door of the house was closed. The great master, the great silence, remained within.

It was on the day after the funeral that the new head of the Ulwing business took his father's seat for the first time at the writing-desk in front of the barred ground-floor window. The house was still full of the scent of incense, faded flowers and the cold smoke of the conflagration.

Nobody moved at that early hour. John Hubert was quite alone. Several times he put his hands quite unnecessarily up to his necktie, then, as if he had been pushed forward, he fell over the table and wept silently for a long time. He sat up only when he heard steps in the neighbouring room. While wiping his eyes, he noticed

that the china inkstand was not in its usual place. The sand had been put on the wrong side too. He made a mental effort and replaced everything as he used to see it in his father's time.

There was a knock at the door. He remembered that this little door, through which people had come for decades, respectful, bowing, pale and imploring to the powerful Christopher Ulwing, now led to him. He raised his head with confidence, but only for an instant; then, as if frightened by what life was going to demand from him, he lowered it again.

Augustus Füger stood in front of him. He had a parcel of papers under his arm.

John Hubert Ulwing hesitated. He would now have to make decisions, unaided, all by himself.

"These matters have all been settled according to the orders of the late master," said the little book-keeper, and in his crinkled face the corners of his mouth went down like those of a child ready to cry.

Absent-mindedly John Hubert signed his name. He wiped his pen and stuck it into the glass full of shot, as his father was wont to do.

And so it was thenceforth. The business went its old way with the old movements though around it little by little the world changed. New men, new businesses rose. The head of the Ulwing firm did not change anything and externally his very life became the same as his father's.

He seemed to age daily. When he rested, he closed his eyes.

The damage caused by the fire and the last bad years of business weighed heavily on his shoulders. He had to grapple with the liquidation of grandiose purchases, various charges, old contracts, and many other problems. These were all clear and simple to the old builder; they remained mysterious to him. Their solution was lost for ever with the cool, mathematical mind of the builder. With his bony, large, ruthless hands the power of the house of Ulwing had departed.

John Hubert tried to remedy all troubles by economy. That was all his individuality contributed to the business. Cheap tools. Cheap methods. He even restricted the household expenses and every Sunday afternoon looked through Mamsell Tini's books himself. This done, he called his son into the green room and spoke of economy.

Christopher sat with tired eyes, bored, in the armchair and paid no attention. Absent-mindedly he extracted the big-headed pin from the crocheted lace cover, and then, quite forgetting how it came into his hand, threw it under the sofa.

Netti brought the coffee on the tray with the parrot pattern, and lit the paraffin lamp. All of a sudden Christopher was there no more.

He did not care any more for Gabriel Hosszu, nor for little Gál. He went to the technical

high-school. He had an intrigue with an actress, and the noble youths from the country estates, whose acquaintance he had made in the private school, were his friends. He spoke with them cynically about women. In a back room of the "Hunter's Horn" Inn, he watched them for hours playing cards.

He tried it one day himself. He lost. . . . He wanted to win his money back. His pocket was empty, his groping hand only touched his tobacco-box. He snatched it away. His grandfather had kept snuff in it. He was ashamed of the idea that had occurred to him, and he thrust the box back into his pocket.

A man with thin lips asked him from the other end of the table:

"Well?"

Christopher reached again into his pocket. "I shall win it all back and never gamble again." He drew out the box and banged it on the table. The knock roused the box. In an old-fashioned, chirping way, it sang the little song which it had learned about a hundred years ago from Ulwing the goldsmith. It sang it just in the same way but nobody paid any attention to it. When the music was over, Christopher had lost his game.

In the stifling cigar smoke his breath became heavy. Voices. Sickly, wine-reeking heat. A long grey hand removed the snuff-box from the table.

Christopher rose. He just heard someone say

behind his back: "He plays like a gentleman." He passed wearily beside the tables. He seemed indifferent. Only in the street did he realise what had happened and his heart shrank with the anguish of deep sorrow. Was he sorry for himself or for the loss of the tobacco-box? He didn't know. It had belonged to his grandfather and now a stranger owned it. . . . How often had he seen it in those bony old hands, which had been raised for a blessing when they were stretched towards him in the hour of death.

He shuddered with torture and fear. "I am a scoundrel"; he repeated this several times so as to shame himself. Then he made a solemn vow that he would never touch cards any more. Never, never, again. . . . This calmed him to some extent.

When he drew out his new leather case next day, he noticed that Anne followed him with her eyes. He observed this several times. Impatient anger rose in him.

His father left the room. Anne turned to him.

"Have you lost it?"

"Of course I have!" Christopher was glad to be able to speak out. He felt relieved, he felt as though the responsibility for the whole thing were lifted from his shoulders.

Anne hung her head.

"Do you know where you lost it? . . .Yes?

. . ." Her eyes shone. "What if you promised a reward to the finder?"

"That requires money," said Christopher sadly.

Anne ran to her cupboard. She took a small box from under her linen.

"It is not much, just my presents. It has been accumulating slowly for a long time. Little Chris, go quickly. It will be all right. Promise the whole lot."

Christopher was pleased and ashamed at the same time. He reached out for Anne's hand. But the young girl snatched it back. She stretched herself up to the big boy and tendered her cheek. Christopher kissed it and ran away.

Anne looked after him. How she loved her brother! Now, perhaps Christopher understood all that she could not tell him. He lived for ever among men and men are ashamed of feeling. To hide it they whistle and look out of the window. She too had been brought up with these ideas. She was taught that feeling is deep and great only so long as it keeps mute and becomes at once petty and ridiculous when it raises its voice; so pitiably petty that it makes one blush and run out of the room. It must never be shown. Nor did the others in the house ever display it, nobody but Uncle Sebastian, long, long ago. And yet how intensely she longed now and then for somebody who would show her affection.

Her eyes wandered to her mother's portrait. If only she would drop that painted rose from her hand! If only for once she would caress her! Only once, one single once, when she was alone in the room . . . so lonely . . . always alone. Since Adam Walter had gone away, nobody remained with whom she could talk. A new song, a new book came now and then from him in distant Weimar. Then silence again for weeks.

Aimlessly Anne went down the stairs, across the garden to the great wall. Since the fire the timber yard had been removed to the end of the town. Behind the fencing, where in olden times rude strong men in leather aprons worked the timber, nothing was left but waste ground.

The memories of her young life came slowly, dimly at first, then they raced in vivid crowds.

Sunday afternoons. Stories and Uncle Sebastian. The scent of newly-hewn oak logs and her grandfather. Music, dreams, her mother's portrait. That was all. Years . . . years of childhood.

She sat down on the seat round the apple tree and leaned her head against the tree's trunk.

The sky was green between the leaves. The apple tree was in blossom. Her grandfather Jörg's shop came to her mind. And a voice and a song. How confused all this was. She thought suddenly of two feverish eyes, but somehow saw them in Adam Walter's face. Then

Mrs. Walter. . . . The voice of Bertha Bajmoczy and railings around men. Small iron railings even in the cemetery. They ceased on a hill-side. A glen between the trees. She might turn her face towards it. And from the foot-path why should she not turn back, just simply look behind her without any cause, when there was nobody left in the glen. . . .

She looked up. She felt eyes resting on her: Otto Füger was standing in the bushes. From her childhood she had known this shifty, obstinate look. It was everywhere, over her father's writing-table, in the porch, sometimes even at night, outside, under the window.

The expression of the short-sighted eyes became at once persistent and obsequious. Anne would have liked to cast it from her. She nodded and went into the house.

In the evening, she sat up late for Christopher. He did not come. This night seemed longer to her than any others, it whispered to her anxious, fearful premonitions.

Next day, Christopher confessed to his sister that he had gambled and lost. And Anne also learned that she would never see her grandfather's snuff-box again.

CHAPTER XII

IT was still spring, but summer had already touched the Danube and in the middle of the river the Palatine Island sprang into bloom like a floating forest.

Anne had no presentiment that she went to meet her own summer when one day she walked on the bank of the Danube towards the island. Christopher, who accompanied her, had, as usual, been late. The party they had arranged to join was nowhere to be found. They remained alone on the shore, deliberating for a short time, and then made signs to the ferryman. On the other shore a boat moved under the boughs which spread over the water and was rowed slowly across the river.

People from town came to the pier. Anne heard approaching voices. One person pronounced her name; another repeated it in astonishment.

"Anne Ulwing. . . ."

She turned round reluctantly. Christopher raised his hat.

A boyish-looking slender girl came towards them along the grey pier.

"Don't you recognise me?" she asked Anne.

"Of course it is a long time since we met. Do you remember?"

Now she remembered: it was Martha Illey.

"The dancing lessons. . . ."

These words set Anne's eyebrows rigid and hard. Martha Illey turned quickly sideways: "Thomas!" and introduced her brother.

Anne saw a refined manly hand in the sun. It wore an old-fashioned seal ring with a green stone. She looked up, but the man's face seemed quite strange to her. Then the recollection of her solitary meditations vibrated through her and scared her. She felt that she was blushing. Confusion passed over her countenance like a cloud. It was already gone. Her charming smile raised the corners of her mouth ironically.

Thomas Illey laughed too but did not look quite sure of himself. The sun, reflected from the water, trembled in his eyes. He turned to Christopher.

"Your sister and I are not strangers to each other. She caught me one day when I went out of town in search of sunlight, sunshine, trees and earth. Even then she made fun of me. . . ."

Underneath the pier the ferryman landed. Then the boat started with them towards the island. Anne felt that all her troubles had remained on shore and that she was light and free. The little craft floated in molten gold and the oars stirred up gold too. And while the water

carried her, it also carried her thoughts away through its wonderful glitter.

"I like to hear the Danube," said Martha Illey. "Do you remember, Tom? We used to listen to it at home. It murmurs just like the woods of Ille."

"I too love the Danube," said Anne's veiled voice. "My ancestors come from somewhere near its sources. From the great forests. . . ."

Christopher thought uncomfortably of woodcutters and, embarrassed, kicked his sister to stop her from saying any more.

Anne smiled.

"They came thence, down on the banks of the river, as if the Danube had called them." She reflected for an instant and then added quietly: "I have never yet heard the murmur of forests. It seems to me that the river sings something. Always the same thing and when it comes to the end of its song nobody can remember the beginning."

Christopher looked attentively at the cut of Illey's clothes. Where did his tailor live? Then he observed his narrow shoes and hid his own feet under the seat. He began to copy Illey's gestures carefully. He also imitated the modulation of his voice. He seemed so confident of himself and so distinguished.

Illey looked over the water while he spoke:

"Who knows why this river is called the Blue Danube? It does not carry the sky but the

earth. How it turns up the soil and takes its greenish-yellow colour from it. . . ." He leant over the side of the little boat; the water splashed up against the boat's prow. "It reminds you of the murmur of forests and of music," he said smilingly, "to me it sounds like cattle drinking."

"Cattle?" Anne could not help laughing.

They reached the island. The ferryman caught hold of the bough of a willow. The keel of the boat slid creaking into the gravelly shore.

The drooping twigs brushed Anne's face. She caught at them with her mouth and a green leaf remained between her teeth.

From the noisy, active brilliance of the river they entered moist green quietude. The grass was high and soft, the trees drooped low; and under them, in the dense shade, winged flakes of silver floated. Like a small, buzzing bell of gold, a wild bee flew up into the air.

"We shall have to look for the others," said Anne to her brother. She became suddenly dispirited.

Christopher made a wry face. Martha insisted.

"Let us remain together," said Thomas Illey. His voice had nothing unusual in it, yet it had an effect on Anne as if it caught hold of her and held her back. Now nobody thought any more of separation. Moss yielded softly under their feet. The boughs, like waves, opened and shut up again behind them.

"As if we walked at the bottom of a green lake. . . ."

"The shade, too, is as cool as water."

"This year summer was late. We had to wait a long time for it."

"Ever so long. But now it has come at last."

"It has come. . . ." Anne said nothing more and looked suddenly sideways at Illey. She felt uneasy. He seemed again quite strange to her. He whom she had seen in the glen behind the cemetery had been handsomer and more attractive. Thomas Illey's sharp, lean face gave the lie to her memory.

The trees became sparser. They came to a meadow. Illey took his hat off. The sun shone on his face.

Anne stopped, her eyes became large and blue as if filled to the brim with the sky and her memory melted for one instant into reality. Now she could not understand how it had been possible for her to think that Illey had been changed by her imagination. He was his own self . . . exactly like the one she had not forgotten. His dark hair shone. His noble head curved in a fine line into his neck, like a thoroughbred's. Anne's eyes caressed him timidly. That was not the broad muscular nape of the Ulwings. The lords of Ille had never carried heavy loads.

She saw what she had believed was lost. And as she passed by his side, she felt as if a ripple of

trembling, happy laughter pervaded her and rose to her lips and filled her eyes.

The restraint in her melted away. After all, they had known each other for a long time. They had so much to tell each other.

Thomas Illey also talked more freely.

Anne learned that his parents were no longer living; that he was born down south on the banks of the Danube, on the lands of Ille. Far away, in a big country house where one's footsteps echoed under old portraits. The garden looked in through the windows. One could hear the Danube and, in autumn mists, the horn of the chase. In the tillage silver-white oxen with wide horns, behind them farmer serfs of Ille as if all had risen from the furrow.

All this was foreign and curious to Anne, but she liked to listen to Illey's voice. Only gradually did she begin to feel that what he talked about absorbed him entirely as if it dragged him away from her side on the shady path. If that were true! If he really happened to go away! She asked him spontaneously;

"But you will come back from there again?"

"Come back?" The man stopped for an instant. The glitter died away in his eyes. "I can go there no more. Ille has ceased to be ours."

Anne scarcely heard him. She knew only that he would not go away, that he would stay here. Illey smiled again. He smiled in a queer, painful way. The girl noticed this.

"What is the matter? Nothing. . . . Why do I ask? I thought a twig had hit you."

"Trees won't hurt me."

He spoke of the oaks of Ille. They stood in front of the house. They soughed in the wind. They told each other something that the children could not understand, just like the grown-ups when they talked Latin in the drawing-room. Beyond the gate of the courtyard, a row of poplars swayed in the wind. The poplars moved like plumes. At the bottom of the garden there was a cherry tree with a swing on it. The ropes had cut into the bark of a branch and left their mark forever.

The face of Thomas Illey became younger as he spoke. He looked at Anne.

"In the glen where we first met, there is a cherry tree too and it resembles the one with the swing. Here is another."

He pointed to a tree with his stick.

Till then they had apparently been eager to speak, as if wanting to keep in touch though their ways had been wide apart. Now, however, their voices failed; they had reached the present. The dense bushes hid the other two from their sight. They perceived that they were alone.

The island was silent, as if spell-bound. And in the spell their looks met timidly.

Time rested for an instant, then continued its flight.

The laughing face of Martha Illey peeped out

of the dense leaves. She waved a bunch of wild flowers over her head. Christopher had picked them for her and she had arranged them so deftly that the very fields could not have done better.

Anne looked at the nosegay. Then she cast her eyes down on her bosom: she would have liked to wear a nosegay there, to take it home . . . but Thomas Illey gave her no flowers.

Around them the bushes entangled themselves into an impenetrable wilderness. The path became mossy, reached some steps and disappeared. Beneath, the worn-out centuries-old stairs; in the overgrown hollow, gentle sacred ruins. Among the stones a gothic window. Green, cold church walls; the ancient monastery of St. Margaret.

A low-flying bird was startled out of the princess's cell. From the road along the water voices became audible. There were people beyond the ruins.

Anne recognised the chocolate-coloured umbrella of Mrs. Müller, the chemist's wife. It was an umbrella with a spring and was now tilted to the side like a round fan. The old-fashioned beaver of Gárdos, the proto-medicus, was visible too. So was Mrs. Gál's chequered shawl and the Miss Münsters' forget-me-not hats.

"There they are!" said Anne. Christopher caught hold of her arm and pulled her back.

On the road the excursionists walked in couples, panting, hot, as if doing hard work.

Next to Ignace Hold his wife walked tired and

weary. Sophie had become ugly. Only her eyes were like of old, those beautiful soft eyes.

Christopher looked after her for a long time.

The side whiskers of the chemist floated in the breeze from the river. Mrs. Ferdinand Müller was holding forth on the prospects of the camomile crops. Little hunchback Gál, the mercenary wine-merchant, complained that less wine was consumed now in Pest than of old.

"I want drunkards!" he shouted, and laughed at his sally.

Behind them two shop assistants carried a basket. Long-necked bottles protruded from it.

Anne looked at Thomas Illey. She was struck by his height and proportions. His face seemed elegant in its narrowness. She felt drawn towards him.

"Let us go after them," she said in a whisper, as if to appease her conscience.

"Later on. . . ." Christopher laughed and went in the opposite direction. He began to talk of Art. He said he would like to be a painter. He would paint a landscape, a wood. A fire would burn under the trees and in the flames small, red-bodied fairies would sway. He would also paint a high, white castle. On the top of a mountain, a high, solitary mountain. On the bastion a white woman with shaded eyes would stand, her hair alone would be black and float in the wind like a standard. He changed his subject suddenly. He spoke of music: of

Bach and Mozart. Cleverly he managed to remain in his depth; then he started whistling the tune of a *valse,* gently, sweetly. He casually mentioned that it was his own composition.

He also spoke of travels, though he had never made a journey, of architecture, of books he had never read, laughing in between with childish boisterous laughter.

Anne looked upon him as if he were a conjurer. How amiable he could be when he wanted to, and for the moment she saw in him the Christopher of old, with his fair hair shining like silver, and his pale face.

Then again Thomas Illey alone was near Anne. At the upper point of the island it felt like standing on an anchored ship. In front of them a narrow pebbly strip of land, cutting the stream in two. The river split. It ran down gurgling on both sides. Suddenly the water stopped and the island began to move. The island had weighed anchor . . . the ship started carrying them towards the shoreless Infinite.

The sun sank behind the hills. Anne started and gazed after it.

"It is going. . . ."

On the cool, glasslike sky the silver sickle of the new moon appeared.

They turned back, but they searched in vain for the excursionists. Near the farm scraps of paper and empty long-necked bottles lay on the downtrodden lawn.

The ferryman was waiting for them among the boughs. Christopher was tired, weary of the rôle he had supported so long. He knew now that he could do the trick if such were his pleasure. The magic of the ancient name of Illey had worn off; he ceased to be impressed by the fact that a bearer of it had once been Assistant Viceroy and talking to Illey gave him no more satisfaction than talking to any of his usual club friends.

Since they had got into the boat, Anne too had become silent. It was the evening of a holiday and to-morrow would be a workaday again. . . . The bright smile died off her lips. She glanced back to the receding island and, taking her gloves off, put a hand into the water as if to caress the river. The ripple lapped at her hand.

Illey sat on the prow and looked into the water. In the faint, silvery moonlight the rings glittered on Anne's bony, boyish little hands. A sapphire: a blue spark; a ruby: a drop of blood. The river could not wash them off the girl's finger.

"How the current draws," said Anne. Half unconsciously Illey also touched the water. And the Danube, the common master of the destinies of remote German forests and great Hungarian plains, seemed for an instant to try and sweep the hands of their children together.

The boat reached the shore.

CHAPTER XIII

THE old house was in flower. Never before had so many roses blossomed in the garden. Anne wanted it so. She carried the flowers into the house and went, faintly smiling, from room to room. She looked at every object curiously as if she were seeing it for the first time. The furniture, the pictures, they all seemed different now; she looked at them with different eyes, with the eyes of one for whom she waited. Had not somebody said to her the other day, on the pier of the Danube, "Au revoir. . . ."

Since then she had not met Thomas Illey. And yet she had never taken so many walks with Mamsell Tini. Sometimes she was quite tired and still she wanted to go on, towards the pier on the Danube, through the inner town. A clean-cut profile behind the window of a carriage rumbling by: her heart rose. But no, it was another mistake. A slender form near the corner; when it came nearer it was a stranger.

The days grew hot, the nights were close.

A window of the Ulwing's house opened softly in the moist early morning. The shadows were still deep on the front. Opposite, sunlight was

streaming golden over the castle hill, as if it shone through a window of amber.

Anne leaned out into the clear sunrise. She looked towards the island. When she turned back again the rays of the yellow morning sun had reached the bottom of the hill and came floating across the Danube.

Steps approached. Tramping boots, the slap-slap of naked feet. At the corner a three-storied building was under construction. The name of an unknown contractor hung from the scaffolding. Shouts, hammering . . . On the other side of the street another new house. That was built by the Ulwings, but it made slow progress. Many houses. . . . Workmen poured into the town from the countryside. The streets were loud with *patois* talk. The old, fair, German citizens seemed to have disappeared.

A peasant girl in a bright-coloured petticoat passed under the window beside a mason. The ample petticoat rustled pleasantly in unison with the heavy footsteps of the man. Anne looked after them. "Lucky people, they are together!" She thought of herself and remembered a dream. She had dreamt it last night, though she had imagined that she had not slept at all.

In her dream she walked a strange street by herself. That was unusual and frightened her. Only one person was visible in the deserted street, at the far end of it. She recognised him by his elegant, careless gait. She followed him, faster

and faster, but the distance between them remained the same.

The street began to stretch and become longer and longer.

And he looked quite small, far, far away. She could not reach him though by now she was running breathlessly. She wanted to shout to him to stop, stretching her arms out after him.

She awoke. The dream had vanished, but in her heart there remained the longing, urgent movement of her outstretched arms.

She looked at the portrait of her mother. Her mother was no longer older than she; they were now of the same age, she and the scared-looking child-woman. She had outlived her mother's years. If she were here. . . . No, not even to her could she speak of this, to nobody, never.

She threw herself on to the couch and covered her face with her hands. With half-shut eyes, she stared at the flowered linen cover. It began to spread round her. It was linen no longer; it became a meadow, a meadow all covered with flowers and someone was coming towards her from the other end. She did not turn in his direction, yet she knew that he was coming. Her heart beat violently. She raised her head in astonishment. Everything was new, she herself was new. All of a sudden she felt a desire to sing, sing out to the sunshine of something that was greater than she, too great to be retained in her bosom.

To sing. . . . But the house was asleep. She alone was awake. That was delightful . . . to be alone. She felt an irrepressible smile on her lips. "I love him . . ." she whispered it softly, but she felt as though in these words she had sung all her songs.

Downstairs the side entrance creaked gently. Christopher had just come home. He looked round and then stole into the office, into the room where his father used to work in the master-builder's life time. Since Christopher had somehow managed to pass through the technical school, that was his place. Worn out, he leaned his elbows on the writing-table. His shirt was crushed and his face looked crushed too.

Otto Füger came in to him, but he was unable to alter his despairing attitude. Helplessly his mouth went sideways.

"What has happened?" asked the younger Füger.

Christopher looked up wearily. It was all the same to him who questioned him and what he answered. At this moment he would have confessed his misery even to Florian. He had to speak to somebody . . . it is a relief to speak.

The straight soft lips of Otto Füger's mouth went wide apart. His eyes became round. He had long suspected that Christopher gambled.

But what he had lost last night was more than he thought possible. Too much. . . . He steadied his staring features. He wanted to know all there was to know.

"Is that all the trouble?"

Christopher looked at him suspiciously. He expected reproaches. That was what he wanted; that would have shamed him, appeased him. It would have relieved him of the weight of responsibility. Otto Füger felt that he had been tactless. He put on a serious, worried expression.

"This is a misfortune. A great misfortune. If the late Mr. Ulwing knew . . . !"

Yet, he could have said nothing more crushing. Christopher bent his head.

"Don't think . . . I am not bad. I am only unlucky, damned unlucky."

Young Füger walked up and down the room and seemed deep in thought though he knew full well what he was going to say.

Christopher's eyes followed his movements with painful attention.

"Help me," he said hoarsely when silence became insufferable. "Help me, for God's sake; give me some advice."

That was exactly what Otto Füger wanted. He looked round cautiously, then stopped in front of his chief's son.

"The name of Ulwing is good," he whispered, "in Paternoster Street they will lend on it

whatever you want. What are letters of exchange for? Of course, it's wrong," he added hastily, "but for once . . ."

"In Paternoster Street, at the money changer's?" Christopher looked up a little. "And my simple signature is sufficient? How is it I never thought of it! Shall I go there?"

When Otto Füger was left alone, he took his spectacles off, breathed on them and while he wiped them kept them quite close to his eyes. He sat down to the writing-table. Slowly he began to draw on the blotter. First he drew flourishes which became by degrees the letter U . . . Ulwing & Co. These were the words he wrote finally and he thought that he would be the Co. He would work, but no more in the dark, no more for others, like Augustus Füger, for whom he felt an intimate contempt. His father had the nature of an old-fashioned servant, who grows old in the yoke, remains a beggar for ever and works for another man's pocket.

He effaced what he had written on the blotter and got up respectfully from the table. John Hubert was crossing the room. The head of the firm waved his hand amicably. Otto Füger wrinkled his eyebrows. "What an old hand he has. The whole man is old. Won't last long." And he looked after him with the slow, strangled hatred that is only felt by the poor who have to sell their brains to enrich the rich.

"He can't last long. And the other? . . ."

He started anew writing on the pad. Ulwing & Co. He wrote it many times and erased it carefully.

That afternoon Christopher brought Anne a small gold chain. He bought Mamsell Tini a silver-plated statue of St. Anthony, gave Florian some money and sent him to the circus. He was generous and whistled happily.

At the money changers' in Paternoster Street everybody bowed respectfully when he mentioned that his name was Christopher Ulwing. They never asked for any security, nor did they make any enquiries. The pen trembled slightly between his fingers, but the owl-faced little clerk who presented the bill of exchange never noticed it.

Now he was going to pay all his debts. He began to count. How much would there be left over? He owed money to two usurers in King Street. He would take his watch out of pawn. He thought of the suspicious old hag who waited for nightfall to open her door at the bottom of the courtyard of a disreputable house. He had promised a bracelet to a girl. Greater sums began to come to his mind. Many old debts he had forgotten. He whistled no more. He tried to suppress the unpleasant thoughts; they had no justification, for had he not plenty of money in his pocket? Somehow he would manage to get his house in order. As for cards, he would never touch them again.

Then he stared wearily into space; he felt irritated. He had lost all faith in his own pledges. He had broken as many promises as he had made. He must pledge his word to somebody else. Where was Anne?

Anne stood outside near the stairs and, leaning against the balustrade, looked into the porch. She did not change her attitude when her brother stepped beside her.

"What are you doing here?" asked Christopher to attract her attention. He needed her, he wanted to speak to her. Now, at once, because later on he might not have the courage to do so.

"Anne. . . ."

The young girl turned round, but her look strayed beyond him.

"Somebody has come, the front door bell rang." At this moment she lived her own life so intently that her heart could not hear the silent cry for help of the other life.

Christopher stopped near her for a little while, then he gave a short whistle. The moment when he had decided to open his heart had passed. He was rather pleased that he had not tied himself with embarrassing promises. He remained free.

Anne scarcely noticed when he left her. She leaned again over the balustrade. The corners of her eyes and lips rose imperceptibly. Her small face took on a strange expectant expression.

And on that day he for whom Anne had waited really came.

They sat in the sunshine room, stiff, in a polite circle, as if a hoop were on the ground between them.

Thomas Illey had brought his sister with him. Christopher was also there and Anne imagined that they must all necessarily notice her panting breath, and the blood forever rising to her cheeks.

She began to observe herself carefully, but found her voice natural, her movements regular, as if someone else acted for her. She grew calm; the confused sounds in her head turned into words. Thomas Illey's voice became distinct from the others and reached her like a touch.

It gave her a tremor. It attracted her irresistibly, she had to turn her face to him. Illey's eyes were shining and deep. Only for an instant did he look so, then he seemed to make an effort and a cloud of haughty reserve fell over the radiant warmth of his look, concealing it from the rest of the world.

But Anne did not forget that look, when her father came up from his office. Thomas Illey spoke to John Hubert only, who sat just as solemnly on the thin-legged flowered chair as he did long ago besides the Septemvir Bajmoczy in the drawing-room of Baroness Geramb.

They spoke of the city. Of new railways. Steamers for the Danube. Building. Politics.

Anne did not understand much of this. In

the Ulwing family national politics only meant a good or bad business year. They were considered a means or an obstruction, whereas to Illey they seemed interesting for their own sake.

His sparse, tense speech became voluble.

"In vain they trample on us, in vain they throttle us," he said and his expression became hard. "The great freedom of the nomads is the ancestral home of my race. We sprang from that. It cannot be forgotten. . . ."

Anne looked at him intensely and while she listened distant memories came slowly from the twilight of her mind. Grandfather Jörg's former shop, feverish men and the mysterious powerful voice which, unintelligible, had once carried her soul for a cause she could not understand. Now it seemed to her that Thomas Illey gave words to the voice and that she began to understand events of her childhood.

John Hubert too followed Illey's word attentively and thought of his father, Ulwing the builder. What he had done and felt for the town, Illey felt for the country and would like to do for the whole country. How was that possible?

He smiled soberly. "They are all the same, the Hungarian gentry. Every one of them wants to save the whole country, yet if each of them grappled with a small part of it, they would achieve more." He criticised his guest

quietly within himself, yet listened to him with pleasure, because his words roused confidence and his thoughts could find support in the power of words.

"Do you really think it is possible that our economic life should ever revive again?" John Hubert was now thinking of his business only. He spoke of the price of timber, building material and labour conditions.

Martha smiled absent-mindedly in the corner of the flowered couch. Christopher interrupted nervously but his father did not heed him.

Thomas Illey listened politely. Anne noticed that he glanced towards the mantelpiece, at the clock under the glass globe. Frightened, she followed his look. She had never yet seen the hand run so mischievously fast. And she now had a foreboding of what the hours were to be to her when she was without him.

She must say something to Illey before he went, something that would bring him back again. She did not know that she got up, she did not know that she went to the piano.

"Yes, sing something," said Martha.

"Do sing!" cried Christopher, delighted to interrupt his father.

Anne glanced shyly at Illey. He looked imploringly. Their eyes met. They were far from each other and yet the girl felt that she was nearest to him and was going to say something

to him, to him alone. She did not know what. But under her hand Schubert's music was already rising from the piano.

"Greetings to thee, greetings to thee. . . ."

Blood rose in a pale pink cloud to Anne's temples. Her face became radiantly beautiful, her pure youthful bosom rose and fell like a pair of snowy, beating wings and her voice sounded clearly, rapturously, like a deep, all-powerful passion. It expressed tears, triumphant youth, the unconscious, glorious avowal of all her love.

Christopher looked at her in amazement. He had never heard his sober, serious sister sing like that. All looked at Anne. Not one of them understood what had happened, yet they felt a strange warm light thrill through them.

"How beautiful she looks when she is singing!" thought Thomas Illey.

People do not see each other always, only now and then for a moment. Thomas Illey saw Anne in this moment. He turned a little pale and felt as if a hot caressing hand fanned the air near his face. He lost control over his eyes and passionately they took possession of the girl.

Though Anne did not understand all that was in this look, it moved her deeply.

Then the song came to an end. The following silence cooled Anne's soul. Her greenish blue eyes looked frigidly into the air, her eyelids became immobile. When she turned to Illey her

face was reserved, impenetrable. She wanted to screen what she had shown of herself, as if she were ashamed of it.

The others too assumed this ordinary expression. Everybody returned to everyday soberness. Netti brought the lamp in. It was evening.

Before the week was over Thomas Illey called again at the old house. He came alone, Martha had gone into the country.

"To the mother of her fiancé," said Illey. "It is an old engagement. The wedding will be in autumn. Then that worry will be over too."

He said no more about it. On the whole he spoke little. Nor did Anne say much, but the silence between them was bright and happy.

Tini's knitting needles clattered rapidly underneath the lamp-shade; and the expression of her long, stiff face was that of an elderly person contemplating spring through the window.

Now and then Anne started, as if his look had called to her by name. She smiled at Thomas over the embroidery screen, then bent her head down again and the stones of her rings sparkled at regular intervals as she drew the silk upwards.

John Hubert came up from the office. Mamsell Tini stuck her knitting needles into the ball of wool. She got up. Her steps died away in the corridor and John Hubert spoke again about business, the town and building.

When this happened Anne began to hear the ticking of the clock. If only once she could be alone with Thomas, she would go to the clock, push its hand back and that would tell him all she dared not express in words. But they were never alone. She could only speak to him when she was singing.

Did he understand it? Did he like to hear it? She did not know. Illey was different from everyone she had known hitherto. When their eyes met in silence she felt herself quite near to him. When they spoke to each other it seemed to her that they were far, far apart and that their voices had to travel a great distance, the words being dulled on the way.

Anne began to grow fond of silence which she could fill with the warmth of her heart.

Summer passed away.

Thomas Illey came more and more frequently and stayed longer and longer. John Hubert surrendered his evening stroll to remain in his company. Tini produced the best china cups from the glass cupboard when he was expected. Florian ran to open the door.

The days became shorter. Now and then Netti lit a fire in the stove.

One evening Illey was even more taciturn than usual.

Tini dropped her ball of wool. While she bent down for it Thomas turned suddenly to Anne and said in a very low whisper:

"I shall soon leave Pest. Give me a word that I can carry with me."

Mamsell was now sitting up again, stiff and straight, on her chair and her knitting needles knocked each other diligently.

Anne's hand had slid down from the embroidery frame and her eyes became dull as if all their lustre had melted away.

"You are going?" Her voice was very dim.

"What did you say?" asked Miss Tini, absent-mindedly. She stuck one of the knitting needles sideways into the knot of her hair and began to count the stitches.

Illey watched with silent despair the slow-moving lips of Mamsell as he impatiently twirled the old seal ring round and round.

"I am going to Martha's wedding. I have some other business too, so who knows when I can come back again."

Anne looked at the ring and then lifted her eyes to Thomas. She would have liked to tell him, implore him, to take her with him too, to abide faithfully by her as he clung to that ring and never leave her alone again.

"Come to-morrow with Christopher to the Palatine's Island," said Illey suddenly. His voice became harsh and commanding. "We shall meet at the pier." Then he continued, more softly: "Do sing something. . . ." He said this as if to clear the air of the grating vibrations of his former words.

"You really want me to?" Anne's eyes blazed up. The dominating voice had made her feel as though Thomas had laid hands on her, as though he had bent her wrist with tender force. That unconscious delight of women in the humiliations of love flashed through her. She blushed and asked:

"What do you like? Schubert, Mozart or Schumann?"

"The voice of Anne Ulwing," answered Illey simply, looking straight into her eyes.

When the song died away, Thomas rose.

"Au revoir," said Anne, and her hand, like a little bird snuggling up in its nest, took refuge in his strong, warm grip. They remained like that for an instant. Then Anne was again alone. She ran back to the piano.

Even now she was still singing for Thomas. She sent her voice after him, to follow him down the stairs, to attend him part of the way. Perhaps he would hear it and turn back.

She drew aside the muslin curtains of the window. Lamps were already burning in the streets. Someone on the other side. Anne leant eagerly forward.

It was Otto Füger.

For a short time the younger Füger remained standing there, and turned his head in the direction whither Thomas Illey had gone.

From the office window a beam of light stretched to the street. In what had once been

the study of Ulwing the builder the green-shaded lamps were lit up.

This evening John Hubert remained exceptionally long at his writing desk. He sat there in a state of collapse and his colourless skin formed two empty folds under his chin. His hand lay inert on a bundle of papers which had been presented to him for signature.

He rose heavily. He was looking for the second time through the door which led to the adjoining office. Once Augustus Füger used to work there, but, since an attack of apoplexy had paralysed the little book-keeper's right arm, his son Otto occupied his place.

"Where can he be?" mused John Hubert, looking through the door into the empty office.

He returned to his seat at the writing desk. His eyes gazed at the plan of Pest-Buda, but he did not see anything of it. Every now and then his head twitched, as if he sought to shake up behind his forehead the dull, dense matter that refused to act. He sighed and desisted from the effort. He shut his eyes. But now that he wanted to rest, his brain became active and a whirling chaos moved about it. He thought suddenly of Christopher.

Otto Füger entered quietly through the door. Cold rage was in his eye and his lips were compressed and straight. But as soon as he came within the light of the lamps he was already smiling.

John Hubert continued his reflections aloud:

"Somebody mentioned Christopher's name today at the money-changer's. The clerk spoke of him behind the counter. When I turned to them they caught their breath. I can't understand it." He looked anxiously at young Füger. "Do you know anything?"

Otto Füger did not answer at once. At this moment he hated furiously everybody living in that house. He hated the others because of Anne and on account of that stuck-up Illey whose looks always passed above his head. Now he had his chance to revenge himself on them for having been born in the back-lodgings of an insignificant book-keeper, for being poor and striving vainly. He looked humbly to the ground and feigned to suffer from the painful necessity of his disclosures.

"It is hard on me to have to betray Mr. Christopher. I have always tried to restrain him, I have implored him. . . ."

"What is going on behind my back?" John Hubert's voice bubbled out heavily between his blanched lips.

When the whole truth was revealed to him, he repeated painfully:

"He gambles . . . the whole town knows it. . . . He loses . . . bills of exchange? . . ." He asked terrified: "What is the amount?"

"One hundred and eighty thousand florins. . . ."

For an instant, John Hubert straightened himself in the chair, then his body collapsed slowly to one side. His high collar alone kept his relaxed, waxy face in position. In a few minutes he had turned quite old.

Otto Füger watched his chief cunningly. He judged from his altered attitude what was the right thing to say.

"We must not despair, sir. At bottom Mr. Christopher is a good, God-fearing young gentleman. It is all the fault of bad company. I always told him so. Those young gentry fellows from the country preyed on him. They have got rich Ulwing's money. But don't punish him, sir. I beg of you, let me bear your anger, for have I not sinned more than he for keeping it quiet?"

He hung his head penitently, as if expecting judgment.

"You are a good fellow, Otto," said John Hubert, deeply touched.

"We will save the reputation of the firm," young Füger said solemnly. "As for Mr. Christopher, if I may venture to give advice, we shall have to tear him from the tempters. Perhaps abroad. . . ."

"Send him abroad? Yes," John Hubert became suddenly determined. "That was once the plan of my late father. You advise Frankfurt? All right, let it be Frankfurt."

The book-keeper had not expected to get his

way so easily. He became more enterprising.

"He had better go among unpretentious working-class people, till he settles down. Meanwhile you might like to choose for Miss Anne some level-headed business man as a husband; he might enter the firm as a partner and relieve your mind, sir, of all the worries."

That was a new hope. John Hubert pulled his necktie up. "A serious man of business to stand by Christopher. Somebody belonging to the family. Anne's husband. . . ." Thomas Illey's image intruded unpleasantly on his memory. "We must prevent them from meeting again." Life had been so exacting to him that now he would insist on getting his own back. He had always been merciless to himself, now he would show no mercy to others.

"Yes, that would free me from all care," he murmured as if taking counsel with himself. "Anne's husband. . . . But who is it to be?"

Otto Füger smiled modestly. He took his spectacles off, breathed on them and wiped them while holding them up to his left eye.

John Hubert, for reasons unknown to him, thought of the son of Martin George Münster. Charles Münster would bring capital into the business, he had brains. . . .

He clapped Otto Füger on the shoulder.

"Thank you!"

Young Füger looked after him dejected. He had expected something else.

Next day Christopher left the old house. And at the pier of the Danube Thomas Illey waited in vain for Anne.

White frost fell over the autumn roses in the garden.

CHAPTER XIV

RAIN had collected in the gargoyle and gave off a hopeless gurgle as if someone were sobbing under the steep double roof.

Out of doors the autumn evening fell sadly. On the window panes of the sunshine room raindrops ran down like tears on a transparent grey face.

Silence reigned in the deserted old nursery. Since Christopher's departure Anne had been very lonely. She would often rise from the work table during the afternoon and go quietly to the door. She opened it quickly, nobody was there. She looked down into the depths of the staircase. The house was silent. She decided to count up to a hundred, then wait no longer. Twice she counted up to a hundred, and even after that she looked back from the threshold.

At night when Netti lit the lamp and Florian bolted the front door, Anne's eyes more than once filled with tears. She felt a prisoner. Life remained outside the walls of her prison. Again a useless day had drawn to an end, that at its dawning had promised so generously. It tortured her artfully while it lasted, and in the end achieved nothing.

Thomas Illey came no more.

Anne's little face became quite pale and thin. She began to be afraid. Perhaps Illey went to someone else now, perhaps he was angry? The last time he saw her he asked her so earnestly to go the next day to the Danube pier. And she could not go, could send no message, could not write. Christopher had to leave and their father was very strict with both of them.

"Why does he not come? Where is he?"

She pressed her face against the window pane. Whenever the front door bell rang the blood rushed to her heart. She waited, then hung her head wearily.

In the sunshine room the furniture began to whisper. The walls too remembered. The door handle was familiar with Thomas's hand. The shaded lamp, the clock under the glass globe, they all told her that they had seen him many times.

Anne turned her face away. The memories wounded her. She clasped her hands in prayer for respite from her tortures.

Hours passed. Tini came in and started to read her fortune with cards. "All your sorrows will come to an end, my little dove," she said when she finished her game.

"I have no sorrows," answered the girl and tried to hold her head high.

John Hubert's voice said:

"Anne, a visitor!"

Of late Charles Münster had often come to the house. In the evening he sat comfortably in the green room, approving everything John Hubert said, and when he could think of nothing to say, he carelessly twirled the thumbs of his big, red hands.

Those hands annoyed Anne. They became embarrassed, blushed like human faces, struggled, while Charles Münster remained placid and tedious in his inordinately long Sunday coat.

"Why does he come?" wondered Anne wearily, while sitting opposite him.

One day she learned that too; Charles Münster had asked her father for her hand.

"It is a very honourable proposal and very advantageous," said John Hubert to his daughter. "The house of Münster has a good reputation and is serious. The young man is intelligent and owns some capital."

Anne's heart sank while she looked at him and then the blood rushed to her face. All her life she had striven to repress her will; she had always obeyed, but what she was now asked to do roused her to rebellion.

"No, never!" And her voice rang out like a hammer dropping on steel.

John Hubert was startled. That was the voice of Ulwing the builder.

"I spoke too soon," he thought, vexed. "I ought to have waited a little longer."

Then he waited. Outside the snow was falling already.

In the next few weeks Anne's face became more and more transparent. She did not sleep at night. She sang no longer, nor did she laugh and during the long evenings she sat silent in the green room, while her father worked at the writing table with the innumerable drawers.

John Hubert had now to use spectacles for reading. He pushed them up on his forehead and looked stealthily at Anne. Gradually he became anxious. He thought of his own life. He had never been happy, had never made anybody else happy.

"Are you ill?" he asked suddenly.

"No."

"Have you any pain?"

Anne did not answer but her eyes asked him why he tortured her. John Hubert bent down. He turned the pages of his ledger. Anne heard him sigh anxiously.

"Have you had bad news from Christopher?" she asked, going to the writing table. "No? Is it the business? . . . Speak to me about it, for I too am an Ulwing."

John Hubert closed the book in which he had been reckoning.

"You would not understand it."

"But I could learn to. . . ."

"You just go on embroidering, singing. You

have no need to know about business. It is not suitable for women. God has created you for other ends." But this sentence aroused his conscience. He became embarrassed.

"You have not yet forgotten Thomas Illey?" he whispered casting his eyes down.

"I have not forgotten him."

A few days later Grandfather Jörg came in the evening to take Anne to a concert. In the carriage the old gentleman began to mention Charles Münster.

"Is he too like all the others?" the girl thought and looked sadly at her grandfather. Once he had been to prison for sympathizing with the freedom of others; and now he spoke against his grandchild's freedom.

In the concert hall the crowd was already large. Innumerable candles burned in the gilt wooden chandelier. Their flames wove a peaceful yellow light in the air. On the platform the piano stood open. The orchestra was tuning up and this sounded like birds with sharp beaks pecking at the stringed instruments.

A few reporters stood near the wall. Anne heard them agree in advance as to what they would say in next day's papers. In the stalls well-known merchants from the inner town, wives of rich citizens, officers in uniform, and right in front bejeweled ladies in huge crinolines, noble gentlemen in Hungarian national costume.

The family of Müller the chemist nodded to them. The Münster daughters were there too. In the back rows the newcomers moved their chairs. Some laughed and cleared their throats, then suddenly, as if moved by a common spring, all the heads turned towards the platform. Then all became silent.

Anne glanced over the faces. The crowd seemed to her like an empty vessel gaping towards the piano in expectation of being filled with sounds and emotions. Her heart was full of her young distress and she felt afraid that at the first sound her sufferings would overflow through her eyes.

All of a sudden she became strangely restless, as if some one had touched her from a distance. She turned her head quickly. The blood throbbed in her veins as her look met the dark, sad eyes of Thomas Illey. And the two glances united through space.

Waves surged between them. A wild tumult of cheers broke out. The round of applause echoed like a thunderstorm from the walls.

The great artist stood on the platform, high above everybody. His long white hair waved softly round his marble brow. He inclined his wiry body before the homage.

Then the piano burst out under his hands. And the sounds sang, crept, stormed furiously, coaxed voluptuously, and dissolved in a smile. The artist with the marble brow conjured up

harmonies from the piano that had not existed before him and were not to be after him.

The crowd listened with bated breath, spellbound. And the music continued like a swelling tide. Then it became tender like a dying echo. It broke forth again with superb impetuosity. Sounds wrought in fire rose and those who heard them lived the creative moments of Beethoven, Sebastian Bach and Weber over again. These sublime moments were resuscitated by the master whose playing was forever the begetting of gods.

Anne Ulwing's soul was carried on glowing wings by Beethoven's Appassionata to Thomas over the heads of the crowd. She felt that the waves of the music swept them together and that they became swallowed up in some boundless glittering veil.

The hall was delirious again. People stood up. Some rushed to the platform and continued to applaud there.

The artist began to play a composition of his own. And then, as if his marble countenance had been set aflame, fire shone on his brow, fire streamed from his eyes and the creative artist wandered and was alone by himself.

Anne turned towards the piano. This was different from anything she had ever heard. Long-forgotten words recurred to her mind: "One has to create like God. Even the clay has to be created anew."

Applause rose again, but the clapping seemed more restrained. It was addressed to the virtuoso, not to the creator.

"They don't understand him," said Anne disappointed.

"It is not yet safe to admire this music. It came too early . . ." and again the words of Adam Walter came to her mind.

Then everything was forgotten. Her eyes searched for Thomas in the crowd thronging towards the exit. In the dust-laden heat of the cloak-room people pushed each other. Under the porch the doors of the carriages slammed. A hoarse voice shouted the names of the coachmen.

Anne saw Florian and made a sign to him. Ulrich Jörg was already in the carriage.

"I should like to walk," said the girl hurriedly. The old gentleman was sleepy. The horses of the next carriage became restive in the cold. The door banged. Anne felt herself free.

"Let us go. . . ."

Florian's broad, good-natured face turned to her for an instant in wonder. Then he followed her obediently in the snow.

A motionless figure stood at the street corner under a lamp peering into the windows of the passing carriages. Suddenly he looked no longer towards the carriages. His dark sad eyes rested on Anne. He held his hat low in his hand and snow fell on his thin face.

They clasped each other's hands and the peace of their mind was like the languid moment, still incredible, when a bodily pain has abruptly ceased to torture.

The sound of rolling carriages spread in all directions. Occasional laughter flared up among the human voices, dying away at a distance. After that, only the snow was falling in slow, shiny flakes. By tacit agreement they started, side by side, into the great whiteness.

Anne did not feel the cold. The furs slid down her bare shoulders and her low shoes sank deep into the snow. Illey gazed at her in rapture, then pulled himself together. He wanted to appear calm, but his voice was strangely changed.

"When I saw the posters of the concert, I began to hope that we might meet. It all happened more wonderfully than my wildest hopes."

Anne too tried to control herself.

"So you really did not go for the music's sake?" she asked in a whisper, smiling.

"I never go to concerts," said Illey candidly. "I don't understand the higher music."

Anne turned to him anxiously:

"Then you did not understand what I sang to you?"

"I did not understand the music, but I understood her who produced it."

Anne's thought became confused. Till then she had thought that they met, united in music.

. . . And now Thomas told her that he did not understand the only language which her soul, her blood could speak. . . . It did not matter, nothing mattered so long as he was here, if only he could be at her side.

She drew her head back a little and with eyes half shut looked longingly at Illey's shoulders as though she would, by the intensity of her regard, build a nest there for her little head.

Thomas began to walk at a noticeably slow pace. Then Anne too noticed the snow-covered lamp in front of the Ulwing's house.

"I have sought this moment for a long time," said Illey quickly. "I was seeking it on the island when I waited for you so long—till the stars appeared and the ferryman lit a fire for the night. Next day I was there too. I have pulled the bell at your door many times. I saw your face through the window, I heard you play the piano, yet I was told you were not in. Florian avoided my eyes when he said that. I understood. It was not desired that I should come."

"And I was expecting you." There was so much suffering in Anne's veiled voice that all became clear to Illey.

At this moment they came in sight of the house. They stepped so slowly that they remained practically on the same spot, yet the distance grew smaller. The porch moved out of the wall and came to meet them rapidly, dark through the

glittering whiteness. The two pillar-men came with it too. They leaned more and more from under the cornice and looked down on them.

The porch stopped with a jerk. They had reached the end of the street. Anne's heart stood still with anguish. One more moment and they would be together no more.

Florian dropped the latch key. He fumbled slowly, very slowly with his hand in the snow and never looked up once while doing so.

Thomas Illey bent to Anne:

"We cannot live any more without each other," and he kissed her hand.

Snow was falling slowly and through the snow-white veil they looked silently into each other's eyes.

When Anne walked up the stairs she took Thomas's kiss with her lips from her hand.

Next day she told her father all that had happened and when in the afternoon the front door bell rang Florian opened the door with a broad beaming face to Thomas Illey.

Anne heard his steps. The steps passed her door, along the corridor, towards the green room.

Thomas Illey spoke little. His voice was serious and firm. John Hubert listened to him standing and only offered him a seat when he had finished.

"An honourable proposal. . . ." This reminded him that he had used the same words to Charles Münster. He laughed and then spoke

out conscientiously, as he had decided beforehand. He spoke of the loss caused by the fire, of bad years of business. Of Anne's dowry. His voice became feeble:

"I am very sorry but I cannot withdraw any capital from the business. The estate must remain undivided. This was decided by my late father. I cannot depart from this."

Illey waved his hand politely, disparagingly.

"This is not my affair. It concerns Miss Anne alone."

John Hubert stared at him with undisguised astonishment. The charm of the ancient name of Illey re-asserted itself on him: he no longer leaned back in his armchair. He sat straight up solemnly and felt sorry he had till now been so business-like.

"But what about the property of Ille," he chose his words carefully, "I understand that it is, unfortunately, in strange hands. . . ."

Illey turned his head away. He realized that he had just been showing off before the other and felt ashamed. This mild-eyed good old business man reminded him of that which had attracted him at first to Anne. It was no good denying it; in those times he thought that the Ulwings were rich and that the ancestral property of Ille might again become his own. He now tried to justify himself for those old thoughts by the longing for the land of his forebears. There was one hope. He thrust it aside.

John Hubert looked at him expectantly.

"Did Mr. Illey not think of buying the property back?"

Many a proud, disinterested word came to Illey's mind. To rise above everything, even above himself. To ask for nothing, only for Anne whom he loved. He turned his sharp gentlemanly face to John Hubert. He looked him straight in the eyes, as if making a vow:

"I think no longer of buying Ille back."

John Hubert enquired politely after his family.

Thomas slowly turned the old seal ring on his finger. He began to speak of his father. He died young of heart disease. His mother followed him. Then the property got into the auctioneer's hands. Only a swampy wood remained. Nobody wanted that. And a little money. He wanted to learn to work. This brought him to town. He wanted to regain possession of the land through his own exertions. Had it not given them their name, or had it not received its name from them? However it was, the land of Ille and the Illeys had belonged to each other for nearly a thousand years.

Thomas looked down wearily. He thought that the fate of the Lord-Lieutenant's grandchildren had overtaken him too.

"I studied law," he said quietly, "like the rest of us; politics absorbed me and I did not learn

to work for money. That is in our blood. It is only when work is done gratuitously that the Hungarian nobility does not blush to work. Those of us who gave themselves for money became bad men; the good ones were ruined."

John Hubert nodded absent-mindedly. He was quite reassured now that he had ascertained that Thomas Illey did not intend to withdraw Anne's dowry from the business. He proffered his hand to him.

"It is settled. You do not think of buying Ille back. You won't meddle with the business. Now we can look at the ledgers and the balance sheet."

Thomas smiled. He wanted to see nothing but Anne, and John Hubert opened the door of the sunshine room to him. There everything was bright and warm.

When the new spring made earth and sky bright and warm around the old house, Mamsell Tini stuck a wreathed veil into Anne's hair. Now, like a white cloud, the veil floated through the old rooms, caressed the doors and walls. Anne kissed her father.

"Thank you, father," said the girl. "I am so happy."

Tears came into the eyes of John Hubert. Life had no more joys in store for him. . . .

In the corridor stood old Füger, and Mrs. Henrietta in a starched bonnet, and Mr. Gem-

ming. Poor little Feuerlein, deeply stirred, wiped his eyes. None bowed more respectfully to Thomas Illey than Otto Füger.

Above, high above the roofs, the bells clanged loud from the church steeple of Leopold's town, bells that had so often spoken of the destinies of the Ulwings. And under the porch the two pillar-men looked down into the flower-laden carriage.

The porch repeated once over the sound of the parting wheels, then the house fell into silence. Anne carried her quiet laugh away with her on her honeymoon. Everything became quiet, the men, the days.

John Hubert was quite alone. A letter from Christopher, one from Anne. He read them both many times over, smiled and shut his eyes. Nowadays, he was always sleepy. He looked at the clock. Too early to go to bed. He walked up and down in the quiet rooms.

From the green room the light of the lamp reached the dining room. The sunshine room received light from a lamp in the street which spread over the ceiling. The old nursery was quite dark.

John Hubert folded his hands behind his back and walked slowly from darkness into light, from light into darkness. He thought of his life. It had been like that too, but now that he looked

back on it there seemed to have been more darkness than light.

He could not understand what made him think of this just now when his head was weary enough. For an instant he intended sending for the doctor. Then he felt too tired to do it.

While he slowly turned the key in his watch, he felt giddy, yet he put all the various objects from his pocket into the alabaster tray. His keys, his penknife and the cigar case embroidered with beads. This he carried as a habit, having renounced smoking several years ago.

Next day was Sunday. He did not get out of bed. From time to time Tini came in to ask if he wanted anything. He opened his eyes, nodded, but said nothing.

Gárdos, the physician, reassured him.

"It will pass away; it is only a little overwork," and prescribed nux vomica.

"No, you must not write to the children."

During the week John Hubert was up. On Sunday he again stayed in bed and felt better there. A letter came from Anne. He smiled at it. So there was one person in the world who owed him her happiness. . . . He smoothed his blanket down and turned to the wall.

A loud buzzing woke him at night. His head turned, the bed turned, so did the room. And he breathed with difficulty. He wanted to unbutton his shirt collar, but did not succeed. He

sat up suddenly and with his accustomed movement put his hand several times to his neck as if to put his necktie right.

Then he fell back and moved no more.

That night John Hubert Ulwing died, correctly, without much ado, just as he had lived.

CHAPTER XV

THE house was empty and silence nestled between its walls. It was a memorable event for the corridor to hear the sound of steps. The ticking of the marble clock resounded through all the rooms, no noise impeding its progress.

Thus did Anne find the house when she came back with her husband from the interrupted journey which was to remain in her memory like a broken dream.

Days without thoughts. Gentle words. Pure, girlish fears. Then she became accustomed to Thomas's embraces. The news of her father's death roused her and she could dream her dream no more. It was gone for ever. Another came.

Real life took its place and the first year passed away.

Slowly the peace of the old house became bright again. Now and then the rooms began to laugh timidly. They stopped suddenly, ashamed of themselves, as if remembering those who had left by the door never to come back again.

Another year went by.

The yellow walls of the old house were warm in the sun. In the garden the beds put forth

blossom-laden rosebushes, climbing garlands of roses.

The rooms now laughed freely with the rippling laughter of a child. And the house smiled to itself, like some good old patriarch who has regained youth.

At that time Anne sang some wonderful little songs. She had never learned them, they came of themselves and their soothing rhythm was like the rocking of a cradle. Then she lifted her son with that mysterious movement, which is more exalted than the gesture of love, a movement secretly known by her arms long ago. And she thought that it was this that linked all humanity. An endless, blessed chain, a chain wrought of women's arms over the earth, beginning with the first woman and to end with the last child.

"Mamma," babbled little George. Anne repeated in whispers the word which was bestowed on her, which she herself had never uttered to her mother; she looked at the fading portrait of Mrs. Christina. She began to listen. The street door opened. Steps came along the corridor. . . .

"Thomas, I was longing for you!" She would have liked to say more, something warmer. She wanted to tell him her love, but the words were bashful and changed as they crossed her lips. She leaned towards her husband, ready to be kissed.

Illey did not notice it; he was thinking of something else. He began to read a letter.

"From home. . . ."

"From home? . . . Is not this your home?" Anne's head, held till now sideways in a listening attitude, rose slowly.

Thomas saw nothing, heard nothing when Ille was in question. Everybody, the old steward, the bailiff, the agent, the priest, anybody who was in difficulties, came to him, as if he were still the landlord. He did their errands and his eyes shone when he spoke of them.

Anne looked at him motionless. A feeling came over her of which she could never rid herself whenever Thomas spoke of Ille. It seemed to her that her husband abandoned her and went far away to some other place.

"Thomas," she whispered, as if to recall him.

Illey smiled inattentively. He was still reading the letter. Anne's face became grave and cold. The tenderness which had till then flowed bootlessly from her shrank back painfully into her heart.

"No, don't go away. Come here. Read this. . . ."

But Anne would not go nearer him. She held her head rigidly erect. After the vain inclination to tenderness she hoped to regain the balance in this way.

"It doesn't matter, Thomas," and animosity

sounded in her voice, "after all I don't know those people of yours."

"Why do you speak like that?" He looked at her reproachfully. Again Anne's voice baffled the hope in his soul, with which he thought of Ille, which still gained, against his will, the upper hand over him. . . . If he were to tell her everything, if he explained to her that everything belonging to Ille was grown to his heart, that he was craving for his land . . . would she understand? The words shaped themselves so intensely in his mind that he nearly heard them sound. But they seemed abasing, as if they were begging. He felt that he could never utter them.

In that moment Anne saw her husband's countenance hard and frigid.

"Why are you angry, Thomas?" Her eyes wandered to the letter from Ille. "Don't you understand? It will all be empty talk. All this is so strange to me."

"You are right!" Illey gave a short reproachful laugh. It dawned on him suddenly that Anne was strange to all that which lived so vividly in his blood and his past. Strange, and perhaps she wanted to remain so.

While they were silent it seemed to both of them that they had drawn further apart from each other, though neither of them had moved. Then it was Thomas who turned away. Anne looked after him.

In the beginning, when they could not under-

stand each other, they forgot it in an embrace. Later on, the weak, helpless cry of a baby in the next room was enough to remove everything from their minds and to make them run to it side by side; before they had reached the door they had grasped each other's hands.

On this occasion each of them remained alone. The words he had spoken weighed cold on Anne's memory; those he had kept back made her anxious. She played with her little son absent-mindedly. She fumbled idly in her work-table's drawers. She gave that up too. She wanted to go to her husband, lean her head against his shoulders, and ask and answer till there remained nothing between them that was obscure and uncertain.

But Thomas had visitors. From the green room the voice of gentlemen reached the dining room and the smoke of their pipes pervaded the place. They talked of the reconciliation of the King and the country, of the coronation, of those who performed it, of Parliament, of great national transformations.

Since the constitution had been re-established, Illey had entered the service of the State; he worked in the Ministry of Agriculture. Anne heard him in the adjoining room make some remarks on intensive culture.

How coolly and intelligently Thomas spoke, while her own heart was still heavy and sore. Suddenly her husband's laughter reached her

ears through the closed door. Her eyebrows stiffened and straightened, as if she had been hurt. . . .

It was about this time that Thomas Illey began to go shooting more often. His friends who owned property in the country invited him. Down there in Ille, in his swampy wood, game was plentiful. When he was free from his office he took his gun and was off. Then he came home again happy, with a sunburnt face.

In the green room arms stood in the old cupboard where Ulwing the builder used to keep his plans. Above the couch the portrait of the architects Fischer von Erlach and Mansard were replaced by English prints of hunting scenes. Cartridges were kept in the small recesses of the writing table with the many drawers. A finely wrought hunting knife lay in front of the marble clock.

Anne sometimes felt that Thomas did not love the old house or the green room or the cosy, well-padded good old furniture.

"I say, Anne, these chairs here stand round the table like fat middle-class women in the market. They hold their arms akimbo and are nearly bursting with health."

He laughed quietly.

"Is it possible you cannot see how funny they are? At home, in Ille, there is a similar armchair in the nursery. We called it 'Frau Mayer' and put a basket on its arm."

Anne blushed a little and, disconcerted, looked at the chequered linen covers.

"They insult us," she said, as if speaking to the armchair, "though we belong together. . . ." She thought suddenly of the staircase in the Geramb house, of Bertha Bajmoczy . . . the old indignity . . . the old resentment. Then, as if her grandfather's voice echoed in her memory, "I am a free citizen."

She raised her head. Her young neck bent back disdainfully.

"How beautiful you are, like this," said Thomas and his voice altered.

The woman's shoulder trembled. That was the old voice that thrilled her like a touch. They looked at each other for a moment and then she disappeared in Thomas's embrace.

Anne felt that in her husband's arms all her cares vanished, that she herself passed away. Her head fell back, no longer with pride but with that feminine movement which expresses the conquest of the conqueror.

"My love. . . ."

They held each other for a long time tightly embraced and the silence of rare and secret reunions came over them. When the silence broke, the reunion was ended and they both withdrew into themselves.

Later in the day, Anne came running through the rooms with a telegram and joy rang in her voice:

"From Christopher!"

"Is he still in Baden-Baden?" sneered Thomas.

"He is coming to-night."

"It is time . . ."

Anne cast her eyes down sadly. She always felt some irritation in Thomas's voice when he spoke of Christopher and that pained her. It was true that since their father's death Christopher had travelled a great deal, but Otto Füger sent him regular reports and when he was home he worked.

Business must have been excellent. There was more luxury in the house than ever. Christopher had replaced the old boards by parquet flooring. Carpets were laid on the stairs and two pairs of horses stood in the stable. A manservant served at table in Netti's place. Florian opened the gate in livery. Anne received as much money as she liked for housekeeping, that was all she understood. But if Thomas was not content, why did he keep silent? Surely it would have been his duty to look through the business books. Why did he shrink from it?

Anne believed that he despised the business and, as in her mind the business and the name of Ulwing were inseparable, she felt affronted by her husband's aloof indifference. In the beginning, she had frequently raised the question with Thomas. He always maintained a repelling silence.

She turned to him, but her husband, as if divining her thoughts, anticipated her.

"Let us leave that alone, darling. I won't interfere with the affairs of the Ulwing business." He thought of what her father had told him when he asked for his daughter's hand. A man must keep his word even if he has not given it formally. He put his arms out and drew his wife onto his knee.

"Let us stay together. I have to leave to-night, I am going shooting to-morrow."

Anne put her arms round Thomas's neck. However much she desired it, she would not ask her husband in words not to go away from her. But to-day she knew something that was sure to retain him. She smiled into his face.

"Do you know what day to-morrow is?"

Thomas became cheerful.

"Of course, Sunday. I can go to shoot."

"The third anniversary of our wedding," whispered Anne.

"Is that so? To-morrow?" Thomas's eyes became affectionate with grateful remembrance and he pressed his wife passionately to his breast. He felt her slender body bend from his knee into his arms. Her small, cool face, nestled close to his. Her hair smelt of violets. It made him reel. . . .

"He does not say he will stay at home," thought Anne, "he never says anything." Her

soul felt degraded by the caresses bestowed on her body. "Never anything but this. . . . I don't want it." She pushed her husband brusquely away and arranged her hair.

Thomas felt a cold void in his lap. For a moment he looked disconcerted into the air, then he collected himself. His love was a request from a man, not the humble supplication of a beggar. He frowned obstinately.

"When does your train start?" asked Anne, exhausting herself in the effort to appear unaffected.

The woman's voice appeared quite strange to Illey. "She does not ask me to stay. She sends me away from her," and his countenance became at once dark and hostile from the memory of thwarted desire. He pulled out his watch. He returned it to his pocket without looking at it. He began to hurry. He made his guns ready. The cartridge bag exhaled something left in it by the woods. The straps cracked delicately, just like out there, when they rubbed together over one's shoulders; and his thoughts were no more in the room, but were wandering far afield over boundless, free lands, under the shining sun.

Anne said no more and left the room.

In the evening, while putting her little son to sleep, she thought of past anniversaries. . . . Since when had life changed so much between her and Thomas? The change must have come slowly, she had not noticed it.

The child was asleep. Anne opened the door of the sunshine room and, after a long time, unconsciously sat down to the piano. She did not play, she did not sing, just leaned her head on it as if she were leaning it on somebody's shoulder.

When Christopher arrived he found his sister there near the mute instrument.

Anne looked at her brother aghast. How he had changed of late. Clothes of an English cut hung on his body. His once lovely hair with the silver shine had thinned round his deep blue-veined temples. The light eyelashes appeared heavy over his exhausted eyes.

"And Thomas, gone a-shooting?"

"Have you been ill?" asked Anne, sitting down opposite to him in the dining room.

"What makes you think so? No, just a trifle." Christopher ate hastily, speaking all the time in a snatchy way. "There is nothing the matter with me, only my nerves are bad just now when I shall stand most in need of them. I want to achieve great things. I have learned many new things. But they require nerve."

He lit a cigar; the match moved queerly between his fingers. "In the past life depended on the muscles of man, so development of muscles was the principal aim of education. Now we have to rely for everything on nerves, and nobody looks after them." His mouth twitched slightly to one side. "Tell me, Anne, do you

feel sometimes as if strings quivered in your neck high up to the brain?"

"No, I don't feel that," said Anne, and stared at him.

Christopher laughed, ill at ease.

"Nor do I feel it, I only heard it spoken of. A friend of mine . . . you know . . . nerves."

Anne pressed her folded hands convulsively, but her face remained calm.

"Tell your friend that he is ill and that he better attend to it at once."

Christopher blew the smoke into the air.

"The old ones had more resistance than we. Our generation received so many shocks when young. Do you remember the shell striking the house? And the fire . . . those among us who were weak were broken by it, those who were strong became stronger. You became stronger. You are lucky, Anne, and it is good to be near you, you are so sure and cool."

"Then do remain always near me, Christopher."

"Yes. By the way, do you sometimes start up in terror at night? You understand, one can't ask these things from a stranger . . . and do you never feel when you are alone, that somebody is standing behind your back? He stands near the wall and watches what you are doing."

Anne looked horrified at her brother.

"But that is folly. . . ."

"Stove-fairies and piano-mice," said Christo-

pher and smiled wearily towards the green room. "And little George?" He laughed with forced mirth, "he must be quite a little gentleman. I brought him a horse from Paris. It has an engine inside, you wind it up like a clock and then it runs. What wonders people invent nowadays!"

He began to speak of cities, countries . . . of the French Emperor, the Paris Stock Exchange, the dresses of the Empress Eugénie. All the time he smoked one cigar after another; after a time weariness disappeared from his voice and his eyes became livelier. When he went downstairs he whistled. Anne heard it clearly but it did not reassure her.

Since his sister's marriage Christopher had lived on the ground floor. He had adapted two rooms of the old office which had been empty since the business had dwindled.

Flowers stood on the chest of drawers in the deep vaulted room. He knew Anne had put them there. It was she who had put the lace mat on the night table. For an instant he felt happy at being home again and gave orders to the servant not to wake him in the morning; he wanted to sleep. Then he remembered that he had business on the morrow with his book-keeper. He had signed many bills in blank during his journey, so that Otto Füger might send him some money. He had lost incessantly at Baden-Baden and his stay in Paris had made a serious

breach in his purse. To-morrow all that would have to be reckoned up. Hazy ignorance was comfortable, but the reckoning day was loathsome.

He wanted to chase away unpleasant thoughts. They were like wasps, returned to the attack, and stung him.

And the business? How had the various enterprises prospered while he had been away? The weekly reports were in his valise. He had never found time to read them through. It didn't matter. He had studied the Stock Exchange in Paris. People got rich there in one day. All that was required was a cool head. One must not lose one's nerve. How much money he had seen! How much!

He extinguished the candle. He lay on his back with open eyes. For a time his thoughts gave him a rest. The darkness was quite empty. How many things had passed through his darknesses! Ancient fairies and dwarfs. Sophie, his first love. Girls from the streets, actresses, women, beautiful grand ladies, cold and indifferent in day time, passionate and exacting at night. Enough. They interested him no more. The only thing that mattered to him now was money, the mighty mass of money which flows incessantly between the hands of men, like a great dominating river, from one end of the world to the other. One had only to dig a channel for the river and it would flow wherever one liked. He

saw it on the Paris Stock Exchange. How much money. . . .

The darkness of Christopher's night was suddenly empty no more.

Money! . . . That was the whole secret. . . . . And he began to long for it as he used to yearn in days gone by for women.

CHAPTER XVI

THE hanging lamp over the table in the green room had been lit.

Anne's hand fell slowly from the child's cap she was crocheting. She had been aware for a long time of the irregular sounds of Christopher's steps. Her brother walked restlessly up and down the rooms. Occasionally he bumped into the open wings of doors, then again he would make aimless, unnecessary circuits round the furniture.

Anne noticed that Thomas dropped the newspaper he was reading upon his knees. He too was listening to the disordered steps.

Again Christopher came in collision with a door, then he stopped nervously near the table.

"Land fetches a big price nowadays." While he spoke he lit a cigar and the smoke came in puffs from his lips. "It will never again fetch as much. We ought to sell some of the building sites; we have too many; at any rate I know of a better investment."

Anne did not like the idea. She would have liked to keep everything as it had been left to them by their grandfather.

"Our grandfather would be the first to exploit this exorbitant boom," said Christopher with un-

necessary temper. "You don't understand these things, my dear."

Anne sighed.

"You are right. Speak to Thomas about it."

"To me?" Illey laughed frigidly. Looking at Christopher his expression became haughty. "I understand that you gamble on the Stock Exchange and that you win. Take care. It is always like that at the start and then fortune turns. People only stop it when they have broken their necks."

"You have to remain cool, nothing else," growled Christopher, "one must not lose one's nerve. Anyhow, that has nothing to do with it. What is your opinion about selling building sites?"

Thomas shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no opinion. I am unacquainted with the circumstances." He was aware that his obstinate reticence was nothing but the expression of his disappointed hopes. Yet he could not alter it.

Christopher was delighted that everything went so smoothly. As a matter of fact he had already sold some of the sites. Now that the deed was done, he was given the required consent. He breathed more freely. He would sell the old timber yard too. Otto Füger was a clever go-between.

Anne took up her work again. Thomas's aloof indifference revolted her. She had lost her

confidence in Christopher. She suspected Otto Füger, but she did not understand business. She had never been taught anything but to sing, to embroider, to play the piano and to dance.

She decided that when her little girl was born, she would make her learn everything that her mother did not know. And while still young, she should be taught that people can never be entirely happy. She would tell it to her simply, so that she could understand and not be obliged later on to hug to herself something that nobody wants and that is always unconsciously trampled on by those to whom it is vainly proffered.

But the little girl, for whom Anne was waiting in the old house, never came. In spring the second boy was born and he was christened Ladislaus Thomas John Christopher in the old church, now rebuilt, at Leopold's town.

After that Anne was ill for a long time. The cold gleam, which had formerly made her glance so hard, disappeared from her eye. The lines of her fine eyebrows softened down. Her boyish bony little hands became softer, more womanly.

Then she was about again, but the shadow of her sufferings remained on her face.

Thomas was courteous and attentive. He brought her books. For hours he read to her aloud, without stopping, as if driven; he seemed to fear Anne's gaze which his eye had to face when he put the book down. What did this gaze want? Did it say anything, or ask, or beg,

or command? No, Anne wanted nothing more from him. The time was past when. . . . He buried his face sadly in his hands.

Year by year Thomas became more taciturn and if Anne asked him whether anything hurt him or if he had any worries, he shook his head impatiently. No, there was nothing the matter with him; that was just his Hungarian nature.

But when he took his son on his knee he told him tales of big forests, an ancestral country house, an old garden. Fields, horses, harvests in the glaring sun . . . and his face became rejuvenated and he held his head as of old, in the little glen, when he turned towards the sun.

Anne had become accustomed not to be told these things by her husband. Nor did she mention Ille when letters in a female hand came thence and one handwriting, with its shapeless, rustic characters, repeated itself frequently. When once it happened that Otto Füger brought the mail up, Anne found one of these letters on the piano. She took it into her hand and the contact made her tremble. She had to struggle against herself; was it pride, honesty, or cowardice? She put the envelope untouched on Thomas's table. She did not question him, she did not complain, but she never spoke of Ille again.

From that time the name of this strange land became a ghost in the house. They never pro-

nounced it, but it was ever there between them.

It seemed to Anne that even now it was stealing, hostile, through the silence, drawing Thomas away from her. Desperate fear possessed her; she felt that she was going to be left alone in icy darkness with no way out of it.

"Thomas," she said imploringly, as if calling for help, "why can't we talk to each other?"

Illey raised his head from between his hands.

"Are you reproaching me with my nature again?"

Anne perceived impatient irritation in her husband's voice.

"I did not mean it like that"; the woman stopped short as if a hand had been put rudely before her mouth.

Night was pouring slowly into the sunshine room. They could not see each other's faces when Thomas began suddenly to listen; he seemed to hear suppressed sobs. . . . No, it was imagination; his wife never cried. They had been silent for such a long time that Anne had merely fallen asleep in the corner of the couch. Illey rose and closed the door noiselessly behind him.

During Anne's illness Thomas had moved from the common bedroom into the back room which had once belonged to Ulwing the builder. When she improved, he did not himself know why, he remained there. His wife did not oppose it and he was fond of the room. From the

window he could touch the leaves of the chestnut tree and after rain the smell of the damp earth in the garden reached him.

He sat on the window sill. Outside, the trees whispered.

Thomas's mind was gone from among the closed walls. Desire carried his soul beyond the town. He strolled alone and was met by a breeze smelling of rain. How he loved that! How he loved everything out of doors: the smells, the colours, the sounds, the steaming bogs of boiling summer, the frozen roads of winter, where one's footsteps ring and the branches crack as they fall. Then the wind rises from the soughing reeds and life trembles over the world. In the furrows, the water soaks into the ground. The wood resounds with the amorous complaint of birds. Call . . . answer. Do they always find their mate?

In his heart Thomas nearly felt the silence of the woods. The seed of reproduction falls in this trembling, solemn peace. Birds float slowly in the sunshine. When the hour of the crops comes, summer is there. Harvest is in full swing everywhere and his blood is haunted with inherited memories. How often, how often, he has stopped at the edge of somebody else's wheat-field and clenched his fist. Nowhere in the world is anything growing for him.

This memory brought sad autumn weather to his mind. A deep sad fall . . . and he comes

in a mist towards the town. He comes like an escaped convict brought back to his prison. Again the paved streets and narrow strips of smoky sky. Office, blotches of ink, paper and the old house, which is strange to him, and the lovely cold woman who does not understand him.

Dim recollections stole upon him. Again he seemed to feel Anne's two little protesting hands on his breast and that unsympathetic look which had more than once repelled his desire.

He stretched his hand out of the window towards the chestnut tree. He picked a young shoot. The bough yielded itself easily, moist, fresh. . . .

He thought of someone who had yielded herself as easily as the young shoot. She had been bred there on his old land, the daughter of the keeper in the swampy wood. Humble, as the former serf-girls had been with his ancestors, pretty too, with laughing eyes. She never asked what her master was brooding about, and yet she knew. The woods, the meadows, she too thought of them and she sang of them with the very voice of the earth. One did not need to listen, one could whistle, she expected no praise. No more do the birds. . . .

Thomas could not remember how it was at first that he desired the girl. He simply wanted her, like the perfume of the woods, the soft meadows under his feet. His inherited man-conscience did

not reprove him. He did not think there was any sin, any unfaithfulness in it, for he did not love this girl. He really believed that he did not wrong Anne or deprive her of anything to which she attached any importance.

He leaned again out of the window. He looked up to the sky. He would see it to-morrow above the woods. . . . Then he reached for his hat. A rare event with him, he longed to hear some gipsy music. He wanted to be solitary, somewhere where the fiddle played for him alone.

He hesitated before Anne's door. Should he go in? Perhaps she was still asleep. . . .

His steps sounded in the sunshine room. Anne jumped up. If Thomas were to open the door she would throw herself into his arms . . . but the steps passed by.

She started to run after him, then stopped wearily before the threshold. She would abase herself uselessly. And as she stood there she remembered something. A dream. A desolated strange street. One solitary person at the furthest end. Thomas . . . and she runs after him, but the distance does not become less. The street becomes longer. Thomas seems always further and further away and she cannot reach him. . . .

She thought of her girlhood, the time full of promises. Was this to be their realization? Would everything remain forever like this?

Would she and Thomas never come together again? Live with each other and look at each other and remain strangers?

She shuddered as though she were cold.

Then she noticed that for a long time someone had been ringing the front door bell. Who could it be? The old friends came no more to her. Thomas was taciturn with them too. They may have thought it conceit and all stayed away. The relations of the Illey family were avoided by Anne. The voice of Bertha Bajmoczy stood between her and the descendants of the old landlords.

A knock at the door. A lamp was burning in the corridor and the shape of a man appeared in the opening.

It was Adam Walter.

"After all this time. . . ." And Anne thought how wonderful it was that the old friend should come back just this day when she felt her life so poor and lonely. Joy came to her heart for a moment. It seemed to her that her youth, her girlhood, had returned to her, with everything that distance embellished.

Adam Walter was grave and serious like a man who has painful memories to bury in himself. Yet his eyes followed Anne's movements eagerly while she reached to light the lamp. He longed and feared to see her face again.

"She has suffered since I have seen her," thought Adam Walter, "and it has beautified

her." Anne's veiled voice and her look broke open in him a wound which he thought had long ago healed. He too remembered his youth, when he went away from her all unsuspecting, when he worked, when he dreamed. Then he heard that Anne had married and in the same instant he realized that he loved her. He had loved her always.

She seemed strangely tall and slender to him. The flame flared up.

"To be here again with you . . . it's too good to be true."

"You ought not to speak like that." Anne smiled her old, young smile, "or do you still say everything that passes through your mind? Do you remember the Ferdinand Müllers? And the new sign, the white head of Æsculapius? How we laughed. . . ."

"In those times everything was different," said Walter dryly.

Anne looked at him. "He too has become old. How hard his looks are," and the smile that had rejuvenated her vanished from her face.

And Walter's voice became ironical.

"And I thought I would create like God, just like Him. Then my opera failed, nobody wanted my sonatas. Nobody . . . and now I am humbly thankful to become assistant professor in the National Academy of music." He laughed lifelessly. "But perhaps it was bound to be like that. When a man in his youth wants

to become like God, he becomes at least an assistant professor in the end; who knows that if he had started with the ambition of becoming an assistant professor he would have ended by becoming nothing at all."

Anne looked sadly down. "So he too has failed to grasp what he reached for. Does nobody grasp it?"

"Once upon a time we were all revolutionaries," said Walter, "for is not youth a revolution in itself? We are all borne to the executioner: one for a thought, the other for a dream, and . . . all of us for love. It sounds mad, but it is so. Man must die many deaths in himself to be able to live. I was just the same as the others and those that are young to-day are as we were in old times. In its unlimited conceit youth of every age believes that it has discovered the rising of the sun and all youth shouts vehemently that its sun will never set. That is as it ought to be. When the sun comes to set, the youth of another age believes the same thing. Men drop out, but their faith remains in others, and in others again, and that is the thing that matters."

It seemed to Anne, that Adam Walter, who once, when he was young, had guided her thoughts to freedom, now taught her the art of compromise.

Again Walter attempted to be ironical, but his voice failed him.

"Man is full of colours, brilliant colours, when he starts. They all wear off. Only grey remains. The awful grey spreads and becomes greyer and greyer till it covers the man and his life."

"Oh, Walter, how sad all this is. . . ."

"To me it is sad no more. I have got over it. Don't be sorry for me, please. Even for the grey people there are still some lovely things in this world. The grey ones see other people's colours. They alone can see them truly. Since I have renounced creating myself, I enjoy peacefully, profoundly, other people's creations. Before, I was aggressive and impatient, now I love even Schumann and Schubert, and all those who have dreamed and who woke from their dreams."

Anne sat with half-closed eyes, bent a little, and her pale hands were interlocked over her knee.

"Have I grieved you?" asked Walter hesitatingly.

The woman shook her head.

"You have made me understand my own life. . . ."

"So she is no happier than I am," thought Walter, and for the moment he felt irrepressibly reconciled to his fate. Then he was ashamed of the feeling. He had no right to it. Anne was not to blame for his state of mind. She knew nothing of it.

"Do sing something. . . ."

She looked at him with large, beaming eyes. It was a long time since anybody had said this to her.

They began to talk of music. And this changed them into their old selves; they were boy and girl again, just as on Sundays in the old days.

"Come again soon and bring your violin with you," said Anne when they took leave of each other. Then it struck her that neither of them had mentioned Thomas.

Adam Walter and Thomas Illey never became friends. They met with courteous rigidity. Adam Walter smiled disparagingly at Illey's views, while Illey's mocking gaze tried to call Anne's attention to the musician's ill-cut clothes and shapeless heavy boots.

It mattered little to Anne. The piano stood mute no more in the sunshine room and a bright ray of light was cast on her life by the revival of music, which indifference and want of appreciation had silenced for so long. Its resurrection was her salvation. Her soul ceased to be strangled by the torture of enforced silence; it found relief and took flight on the wings of songs, attended, through many quiet evenings, by Walter's soul cast into the music of his violin.

Christopher looked in occasionally. He patted his old school-mate on the back and whistled softly to the music while he ran through Stock Exchange reports in the papers. Soon

after his uneven steps passed again through the corridor.

He could not find peace anywhere. Calculations swarmed in his head. They appeared, but before he was able to grasp them they scattered and vanished. He had no idea if he was winning or losing and he dared not look at his accounts. Money became dearer and dearer. Banks restricted their credit. Suspicious rumours from Vienna reached the Stock Exchange of Pest. Quotations fluctuated and declined slowly, but he lacked the resolution to wind up his transactions. He was still waiting, still buying. He became intoxicated with the fascination of risks and blind hopes. His nerves were in a constant state of tremulous tension. The lust for gain became the torturing passion of his soul.

His grandfather had been the money's conqueror, his father its guardian and he, it seemed, was to become its adventurer. No matter, chance helped adventurers.

His nights became very long. Restlessly, Christopher turned his head from one side to the other on his hot pillow. He rose early. He was no longer contented to send his agents on 'Change. He wanted to see the confusion, hear the noise, feel the universal pulsation of money as evinced in the excitement of the crowd.

He rushed through the office. Otto Füger had become manager with full powers. He ar-

ranged the cover for speculations, he received and paid out money in the name of the firm. Christopher had no time to see to anything. In unbusinesslike handwriting he put his name to anything. Then he rushed away, leaving the doors open behind him.

It was a lovely May morning.

At the Exchange in Dorothea Street brokers stood on the stairs and transacted their business, leaning against the balustrade. Men stood in small groups in the acid, stuffy air of the cloak-room. Subdued talk was heard here and there. An old fat man with his hat perched on the back of his head, passed wheat between his fingers from one hand to the other. Near the window a red-haired broker held some crushed maize in the palm of his hand. He lifted it up, now and then, and at intervals pushed his tongue out between his yellow teeth. Scattered grain crackled under people's feet.

Doors banged in the big hall of the Stock Exchange. The lesser fry was pushed back. There was a crush round the bankers' boxes. Slowly the masters of the Exchange arrived. People saluted them respectfully, as if they were paid for it. The unimportant ones used to read their faces, the gestures of their hands. The great ones looked indifferent, though they were the men who held the secrets which mean money. Nervous heads swayed round a fat, owl-like face. Those behind pressed eagerly forward.

Near Christopher a red-eyed, seedy-looking man shrank to the wall. A worn out, long, silk purse was in his hand. He began to suck the ivory ring of the purse; people collided with him and the ring knocked against his teeth; but he went on sucking it.

"I sell. . . ."

"I buy. . . ." cries came from all sides like the shrieks of hawks.

Somebody's hat fell on the floor . . . it was trampled under foot. A freckled hand waved a bundle of papers.

"I sell . . ." it came denser and denser. The brokers of the big banks shouted themselves hoarse. The noise increased. The stocks fell.

"Now . . . now is the time to buy," thought Christopher in deadly excitement. His shrieks joined the general pandemonium.

"People's Bank, ninety-two. . . ."

"Eighty. . . ." bellowed a brute voice.

"Seventy-six. . . ."

Arms rose. Hands moved from their wrists, flabby, like rags.

"Industrial Bank. . . ."

"Credit Institute. . . ."

"Forty-five . . . forty-two."

Faces were aflame. The gamble became a wildfire, roasting people's skins. Rumours spread through the hall. Nobody knew whence they came, they simply were suddenly there and then scattered all over the place.

A deafening uproar followed. People blindly believed anything. Prices fell. Somebody bought. Blind confidence returned.

"I buy. . . ."

Unconfirmed news of disaster came again. The whole 'Change became a whirlpool, as if it had been stirred round. Nobody knew what was happening. Telegram forms flew over the place. Fists beat wildly on the air. . . . Everything was upside down.

A man with sweaty face flew like an arrow into the crowd.

"There is a Black Saturday in Vienna! News has just arrived. There is a slump all over Europe." Quotations fell head over heel.

A big broker tried to stem the tide. It swept him away. It was all over. . . . In a few seconds people, families, institutions, were ruined. Lost were the easily-won fortunes of the day before, never seen by those who owned them. Lost were the old fortunes amassed by the hard work of several generations. . . .

Christopher leaned his snow-white face against the wall. Near him, the seedy-looking man continued mechanically to suck the ring of his purse. He could not take his eyes off him. He stared at him while he was ruined.

The brokers came panting. No, it was now impossible to sell anything. What stood for money an hour ago had become a valueless scrap of paper.

The porter of the Stock Exchange rang the bell. The death-knell.

Christopher could only mumble. Nobody listened to him, his own agents left him there. Only the weird man looked at him with funny, bloodshot eyes.

Then strange faces passed quite near to his face. A sickening smell of perspiration moved with them in the air. Christopher's eyes became rigid and glassy. Faces . . . faces of a strange race. Some smiled pale smiles. These had won. Everything would be theirs, it was only a question of time. Theirs the gold, the town, the country.

And the grandson of Ulwing the builder, ruined, tottered through the gates of the Stock Exchange among the new men.

Life became confused and dreary. After Black Saturday, the Stock Exchange differences were enormous. No bright Sunday shone for Christopher. He had to pay, and, as he had never reckoned, he attacked Anne's fortune too. This was a secret between Otto Füger and himself. He said nothing of it to Thomas.

He clutched like a drowning man. He wanted to turn everything into money. To hide the truth, to keep up appearances as long as possible . . . fighting, lying. Sometimes Otto Füger whispered into his ears and then he shrivelled up and looked horrified at the door.

"No, no, tell them to-morrow. . . . It cannot be done to-day!"

From day to day, from hour to hour, he kept things going and the strings of his nerves tightened in his neck. To gain time, if only minutes . . . even a minute is a long time for a man clinging to his life.

Summer passed like this and then, in autumn, came the terrible wave of bankruptcy affecting the whole building trade. The firm of Münster became insolvent. Many of the new businesses went bankrupt. Christopher alone kept himself still going and one afternoon he carried his last hope to Paternoster Street.

No one took any notice of him in the office. One inferior clerk to whom he told his name stared over his head. He had to wait a long time before he entered the manager's office.

The manager was reading a letter at his writing-table and seemed to take no notice of his presence. Christopher could not help remembering how different everything had been when he signed his first bill in this same office. The smoky low room had disappeared and the business occupied the whole building. It had become a bank.

His eyes were arrested by the fat, owl-like head of the all-powerful manager. He recognised in him suddenly the little owl-faced clerk who in those old times cringed humbly before

him. The proportions of his face had doubled since, and so had his body; there was scarcely room enough for him in the armchair.

The director came to the letter's end. He lowered his head like a bull preparing to charge and his dull eyes looked suspiciously over his spectacles at Christopher.

"I have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Ulwing? Yes . . . of course, of course, I know the firm. A connection dating from our youth. . . . Once I happened to have the good fortune of meeting a certain old Mr. Christopher Ulwing. Any relation of yours? A powerful man, a distinguished man."

"My grandfather. . . ."

The manager became at once very polite. He offered Christopher a seat.

"Can I be of any service to you?"

Christopher was startled by this question, though he had naturally expected it. He cast his eyes down, pale, suffering. He would have liked to defer the answer. Until it was given there was still one last hope. After that none might be left.

Owl-face moved the side-pieces of his gold-rimmed spectacles which made an impression on his fleshy temples.

"I am at your orders," he said a little impatiently, looking at the clock on the wall.

Christopher made an effort.

"I want a loan."

The manager at once became cold and haughty.

"Everybody wants one nowadays. Black Saturday has ruined many people."

"I don't deny that it has caused some temporary embarrassment to my firm too. . . ."

"I know," said the manager drily.

The whole face of Christopher was anxiously convulsed.

"A short loan would help me considerably. . . ."

"What security do you offer? The name of Ulwing?" Owl-face smiled, "that I am afraid is no longer enough. . . ."

"My books are at your disposal, allow me . . ." stuttered Christopher. He felt clearly that he was humiliating himself before a stranger, though he knew but dared not confess to himself that it was useless. He also knew that it was hopeless to argue and still he argued.

The manager looked coldly into his eyes.

"The Bank is carefully informed of everything."

Christopher drew his head between his shoulders as if expecting a blow. He twisted his mouth helplessly to one side.

"You came too late to me, much too late," continued Owl-face. "Is it not a fact that the house alone remains the property of the Ul-

wings? It is true it could not be sold at present. Times are bad, but if I remember aright the grounds are exceptionally large, well situated in the middle of the town, and could bear a heavy mortgage."

Christopher hung his head in desperation. The manager looked at him over his spectacles expectantly. For an instant, kind, human pity appeared in his eyes, then he sighed and dropped his hand with a heavy movement on his knee.

"I can lend you money on the house. That is the only way I can do it."

With a motion of his hand, Christopher waved the suggestion away. He was in the mire, but he had strength enough to escape drowning in it. He struggled no more with himself. He felt he could never touch the house. At least let that be preserved clear for Anne. The house, the dear old house. . . .

The banker rose when he had shaken hands with Christopher and went with him to the door.

"I was a great admirer of Mr. Ulwing the builder. I am sorry I cannot oblige his grandson. Perhaps another time," he added in a murmur, as if he did not believe it himself.

Christopher smiled convulsively, painfully. Even when he reached the street this smile remained on his face and tortured his features. He caught hold of the corner of his mouth and pulled it downwards, sideways.

He did not know where he went. He ran

into people. An old gentleman shouted at him angrily:

"Can't you look out, young man?"

Christopher looked at him wearily. He thought how this old man was younger than he, because he would live longer than he.

When he reached home, he threw himself on his bed. Curiously, he fell asleep at once. The heavy dreams of exhaustion took possession of him. Sweat ran from his brow.

When he woke, it was quite dark in the room. At first he knew not where he was, nor what had happened. Then, with a shock, he remembered. He moaned like a suffering animal that cannot tell its pains. . . . He could stand solitude no more. Already he was on the threshold. On the staircase he looked at his watch. Eleven o'clock. He knocked timidly at the door of the sunshine room.

"Anne, are you asleep?"

"Yes, a long time ago," answered his sister inside. The door opened. Anne tried to look gay, but her eyes were sad.

"Do you remember, Christopher, how often you asked that question in the old times from your little railed bed?"

"And you answered then as you did now. Then too I was afraid."

Anne looked him straight in the eyes.

"What do you mean?"

Christopher laughed curiously.

"Can't I make a joke when I am merry? And what are you doing so late?" He looked at the table. Under the shaded lamp lay account books and bills.

"I have learnt about accounts," said Anne wearily, "so many bills have accumulated lately. The tradesmen worry me and I receive no money from the office. I cannot understand why Otto Füger delays things like this." She stopped suddenly, thinking of something else. "Did you hear?" and she began to run towards the nursery.

Christopher dragged his steps behind her.

On the chest of drawers a night-lamp was burning. In the deep recess of the earthenware stove water was warming in a jug. Anne leaned over one of the beds and her voice sounded softly in the silence of the room:

"Here I am. . . ."

Christopher's heart was touched by these three short words, which meant so much. He too had, once upon a time, slept in the very same little bed, he too had waked with a start, had been afraid, but no mother's voice came to say: "Here I am." He had never known a light cool hand caressing for caresses' sake, two warm womanly arms embracing chastely, nor the clear smile that has no design. He did not know her who understands all and forgives all, and who says when one is miserable: "Here I am!" Yet just that might have been enough to alter his life.

"They are lucky," muttered Christopher as he went back to the sunshine room. Anne, before shutting the door behind her, put a piece of paper between the two wings. She never forgot that. The loose old doors had glass panes and rattled if a carriage passed down below in the street; this frightened little Ladislaus.

"This ought to be set right. . . ."

Christopher sat in silence in the corner of the sofa with the many flowers. He paid no attention. Under his motionless eyelids he looked wearily all round the room. He noticed suddenly that Anne said nothing. Why did she not speak? She would help him if she said something, anything, words, ordinary matter-of-fact everyday words, which had a sound, which lived and caught hold of his mind, which held him back if only for a minute at the brink of the abyss which threatened him and filled him with horror.

"Anne, tell me a story."

She looked up from the little drawer into which she had locked her bills.

"Tell you a story? What are you thinking about? How can I tell a story who am living within four walls?" she smiled and put her hand on her brother's shoulder.

"Well, little Chris, once upon a time there was an old house: in that house lived a woman who never could sleep her fill, because her two sons waked her up early every morning. . . ."

Christopher's face twitched as he rose.

"You are right, let us go to sleep. . . ." He bent down and kissed his sister's hand. "Good night, Anne, and . . ." He wanted to say something more, but turned his head away with an effort and left the room.

In the corridor he stopped near the loose stone slab and tried it. It was still loose. The ticking of the marble clock accompanied him once more down the stairs.

In his deep, vaulted room a candle was burning, but the small flame could not cope with the big room and left cavelike dark corners. A big white spot attracted Christopher's eyes. While he had been with Anne, the servant had made his bed and his clothes for the morrow were lying there ready on a chair. He could not bear this sight. To-morrow. . . . He choked. In that moment a delicate crackling reached his ear. He turned towards it.

The fire was burning in the stove and shone through the old tiles. Christopher went up to it, leaned his hand on the stove and looked through the ventilators. Small flames flickered among the logs. He looked at them for some time with extraordinary interest, then raised himself with a sigh.

Life had deprived him of everything. Whenever he inspected closely things he believed in, he always found them to be delusions, just like the stove fairies. He had been running after delusions too when he had fallen. He had

broken when he fell; it was useless to try to stand up again; he could do it no more. Even if he could, what good would it be? All the people he had come in contact with had broken a piece off his soul, taken it with them and cast it away. Where was he to seek the scattered pieces? . . . What was left to him was too little for life. A little honour, very little. A little pity for Anne . . . nothing else.

His hand slid from the stove. Why warm it now, it was no longer worth while. . . .

He went to the writing-table. Then, as if disgusted, he pushed the papers away from himself. He turned back at the threshold. He threw a packet of letters into the fire. He put his watch and his empty purse on the table. No, he had nothing else on him.

In the garden the autumnal leaves rustled gently, as if somebody's teeth chattered in the dark. Christopher slunk with bent back out of the gate . . . only the two pillar-men looked after him.

"Just like a thief." Somehow, he could not understand why, his grandfather's funeral came to his mind. The mayor, the city councillors, the flags of the guilds. The priests sang and the bells tolled. . . . He leaned back, then he went on with his unsteady, heavy steps.

The night was dense. In the mist the city looked like a reflection in grey, murky water. The light of the gas lamps faded away into the

air, the walls of the houses faded, the people's faces faded. With a shudder Christopher turned up the collar of his coat.

He reached the Danube. He sought his way between the barrels and bags of the docks. Then he sat down on the lowest step, put his arms around his shins and leaned his forehead on his knees. He only wanted to rest for an instant. Just for a short time.

He opened his eyes. Why did he wait? All that was worth waiting for had gone.

In the damp air, the Danube seemed to rise. . . . It approached him with a soft black movement. He shrank back instinctively, as if to escape, and his hands clung in horror to the stones.

Suddenly this passed away. The great river became beautiful and calm. The lamps of the shore dipped swaying stairs of fire into the deep. The river ceased to be hostile to Christopher. It whispered to him and, as if recognising him, it called him, as it had called the Ulwings of old.

The tired soul of Christopher responded to the appeal and his body followed his soul.

After that he never came back again.

CHAPTER XVII

THINGS and events in which Christopher had had a hand passed slowly, painfully into oblivion. Hope was exhausted and the old house awaited no more the homecoming of the last Ulwing.

Anne knew everything. . . . The huge fortune of Ulwing the builder was shattered before anybody had raised its gold to the sun. This fortune had never shone and those still living only realized its immensity when they saw its ruins.

Thomas choked when he told Anne the truth. He was horrified by the words he had to pronounce, he feared he would break his wife's heart.

Anne listened to him silently with bowed head, only her face became deadly pale and her eyes turned dim like the eyes of one dangerously ill.

"For a long time I have feared this would happen," she whispered gently, and straightened herself up with a great effort as if to face the misfortune. She seemed suddenly taller than usual. Her expression became clear and brave and the fine lines of her chin strong and determined.

"Don't spare me anything, Thomas. I want

to know all." After that she only said that Christopher's creditors were to be paid in full; she would have no stain on the name of Ulwing.

During the period that followed, Anne bore her ruin with the same dominating will power that Ulwing the builder had shown in building up his fortune. Thomas Illey discovered in Anne something he had not known hitherto. An incomprehensible strength exuded from her, the tenacious strength of the woman, which can be greater among ruins than when it is called upon to build.

Nobody ever heard her complain of the loss of her fortune, nor did anybody ever see her weep. Only on the sides of her forehead a silvery gleam began to appear in the warm, shaded gold of her hair.

Thomas Illey was now forced to concern himself with the Ulwing business. He asked for leave from his official duties and in front of the grated ground-floor window of the builder's former office he worked hard with his lawyer among the muddled books. He arranged matters with the creditors, and the firm of Ulwing, known by three generations, ceased to exist.

The small tablet was removed from the office door. The employés were paid off. Of the ancient ones, only a few remained, old Gemming and Mr. Feuerlein. The eyes of the clerk were very red when he took leave of Anne. In the corridor, he turned back several times; he stopped

on the stairs; with knees knocking together he went round the garden and took a white pebble with him as a keepsake.

When they had gone, Otto Füger alone remained in his place for the liquidation. Thomas rang for him. He asked for explanations. Vague excuses were the answer.

"He knows nothing about it," thought Otto Füger and waited impatiently for the hour when he would be free.

Illey appeared always cool. He did not grope, and never lost his head. He listened quietly to the end and stuck his hands into his pockets while Füger took leave with deep obeisances.

But he went unusually slowly up the stairs. When he turned from the sordid details of the dissipation of this huge fortune, he was driven to frenzy by the thought that an infinitely small portion of it would have saved him the torture of his invincible longing for the lands of Ille which had tarnished the years of his youth. He was wrung by a bitterness that robbed him of speech when he came to face Anne.

She looked at him.

"Are you tired, Thomas?"

Illey shook his head and pressed his open hand for an instant to his chest, as if something weighed on him in the left breast-pocket of his coat.

Anne struggled silently with her thoughts.

She was convinced that if Thomas had made up his mind years ago to do the work he had done now, Christopher might be alive, the firm might be alive, and the fortune too.

They accused each other without exchanging a word. Only when a long time had passed did they notice, both of them, that their silence had become cold and horrible and that they could not alter it.

After a few days the lawyer stopped his visits. Thomas locked up the business books and had the shutters fixed in the old study of Ulwing the builder. He seemed quite calm now, only his face was thinner than usual. In the outer office he stopped in front of Otto Füger and looked motionlessly down on him.

The former book-keeper became embarrassed.

"Sad work," he stuttered, while he took off his spectacles and wiped them energetically, holding them near to his eyes.

"Scoundrel," said Thomas Illey with imperturbable calm, "you did your stealing cleverly."

Otto Füger stared at him confounded. He was not prepared for this. His lips parted, he wanted to protest.

Illey looked down on him from head to foot. He exclaimed:

"Clear out!" and, as Füger did not move, he gripped him by the shoulders and without apparent effort, thrust him out of the door. The spectacles had fallen to the ground; as if he

would not touch them with his hand for fear of pollution, Thomas pushed them with the tip of his shoe to the threshold.

Otto Füger spoke excitedly under the porch: "Defamation of character. . . . We shall meet again. Then we shall see. I'll have the law on you. . . ."

He never did. It was not in his interest to make a scandal. He was a rich man now.

In the old house life became quiet and economical. The offices on the ground floor were let to strangers. The lodgings of Mrs. Henrietta and the stables were transformed into a warehouse by a wine-merchant. He built up the windows and doors towards the back garden and made an entrance from the street. Horses and carriages passed to strangers. Of the servants only Florian and Netti remained, and old Mamsell Tini, who wiped clandestine tears from her long, rigid face.

Of late years the whole neighbourhood of the house had changed. In place of the old timber yard strange apartment houses had risen and their grimy walls looked hideously and impertinently into the garden. Between the Ulwing house and the Danube a narrow street with four-storey buildings. From her window Anne could no longer see the lovely, wide river, the Castle hill, the spires, the Jesuits' Stairs up which she once used to climb to Uncle Sebastian. Morn-

ing came later to the rooms than formerly. The houses opposite sent their shadows into the windows. The sun shone into them no more and night fell earlier than of old.

Anne thought often that if her grandfather were to come back he would feel strange in his old town and would not find his way home.

The town grew rapidly and the years flew still faster. Everything became faster than in the old times. Anne remembered how, when she was a child, time passed smoothly, calmly, while now it rushed by as if it went downhill.

Thomas had a high and influential post in his office. For a long time the two boys had been going to school, and Anne, hearing their lessons, learned more than she had known before.

In the garden the flowers began to bloom; the holidays came; then it was again winter.

Christmas eve.

Not the former Christmas of childhood when all was wonder, when the Christmas tree with shining candles was brought from woods beyond the earth by angels above the snow-covered house tops. This was a Christmas suitable for grown-up people, a sober Christmas.

The boys smiled at the old tales. They themselves had decorated the tree the evening before. After supper they both felt sleepy and gathered their presents quietly together in the sunshine room.

George had received a watch and books and

a real gun from his father. His mother had given building bricks to little Ladislaus.

"Hurry up. It is late," said Thomas.

Sleep suddenly forsook the boys' eyes. "Next Christmas I shall ask for things to build a bridge with," decided the smaller boy with true childlike insatiability.

George shrugged his shoulders.

"If I were you I should ask for horses like those we saw in the shop window the other day. When I was little they did not make such lovely toys as they do now."

"You are for ever thinking of horses," retorted the little son. "I want to build bridges. When I am grown up I shall build a bridge over the Danube and get a lot of toll from everybody."

"Don't be silly," said the elder, "as if one could not get rich with horses!"

Thomas smiled and looked at his wife.

"They have got your grandfather's fine blood in them."

Anne looked after the boys. The younger was fair and blue-eyed like the Ulwings. His bony little fist resembled his great-grandfather's powerful hand and when he got into a temper his jaw went to one side and his eyes became cold.

"Yes, but their appearance and movements are yours, the shape of their heads too," said she, and, a thing she had not done for a long time, she stroked Thomas's head where it curved in

such a noble, fine line into his neck. She did it out of gratitude, because she loved his blood in her sons. Then her hand slid into her husband's shoulder and an inordinate longing came over her to lean her forehead on it. But what would Thomas think of it? After all these years? Perhaps he would be astonished and misconstrue it? She blushed faintly and recovered herself. She remembered that whenever she was seeking pure tenderness, Thomas gave her something else. Men never understand women when they ask them for something for their soul.

Anne stood a moment longer near her husband and then, as if overflowing with feelings she could not express, she moved irresistibly towards the piano.

"You want to sing?" asked Thomas, out of humour now. "Has not Adam Walter promised to come? You will be able to have plenty of music then."

Anne stopped and looked at him over her shoulder. The corners of her eyes and lips rose slowly, sadly.

"Come and sit by me," said Thomas, "let us talk."

"Talk. . . ." The word repeated itself on Anne's lips like a lifeless echo. Was not this word only a name, the name of something that never came when called for?

They looked at each other enquiringly for a little, then there was resigned silence. There

had been so many short words and long silences between them, during which they were going further and further apart, retreating into their own souls instead of coming nearer to each other, that they had to make a fresh start if they wanted to talk to each other. A start from a painfully long distance and . . . this was Christmas eve.

"Do you hear?"

Anne shuddered and looked shiveringly towards the dark rooms.

A delicate sound repeated itself obstinately, like the sound of a tiny drill working in the depth of things. It started over and over again. For an instant it came from under the whitewash of the ceiling, then up from the floor, from the windows, from the beams, from everywhere.

"Do you hear?" asked Thomas and his hands stopped in the air in the middle of the movement.

"I have heard it for a long time," Anne's lips trembled while she tried to smile. They both became silent again and the weevil continued its work in the old house.

Thomas started when the steps of Adam Walter resounded from the corridor. He went to meet him and took the violin case out of his hand.

"Welcome, dear troubadour," then, as if he had himself noticed his careless irony, he added: "Do sit down, my dear professor," and offered cigars to his guest.

"But of course, you want to make music.

My wife has already started, an hour ago, to air the piano." He laughed quietly, looking mockingly at the end of Walter's necktie which pointed rigidly into the air beside his white collar.

"What is the news in town?"

"I only see musicians," said Walter with good-natured condescension, "and they are fighting at present over the score of the artist Richard Wagner's Parsifal. They are coming to blows."

"Do tell me, professor, do you really take those things seriously? Do you consider Art something quite serious?"

Adam Walter wrinkled his low brow. He smiled with mocking forbearance.

Anne looked at him as if making a request that he should not continue the subject. It was always painful to her when her husband talked of these things. She found him on these occasions hopelessly inconsequent, obstinately perverse. She did not like to see him like that.

"I know you are angry if I say so," Thomas continued lightheartedly, "but my Hungarian breed can see nothing in Art but an explanatory imitation of Nature. We have no need of artists to stand between us and living nature. Any shepherd or cowherd can see the sunset of the great plain without the need of having its beauty worked into verses."

Walter turned away as if he tried to escape Anne's irresistible imploring look. He wanted to answer, for he felt he ought to answer.

"I understand music only. I can speak of that alone. That is not an explanatory imitation of nature, it is man's only artistic achievement which lives in him, and comes out of his very own self."

"I think so too," said Anne gently. "Every art represents what exists, music alone creates what has never existed."

"How they agree," thought Thomas, vexed. Then, rather disdainfully:

"Do not the musicians learn from the reeds, the thunder, the wind, the birds?"

"Nature only knows harmony and discord," answered Adam Walter, "melody has been created by man. Nature knows no melody."

"Don't say so, professor; have you never walked in the woods? Have you never slept on the moss near a brook?"

Adam Walter shook his head.

"I am afraid we don't understand each other."

"It seems impossible," said Illey. "You are one of those who like the painted landscape more than the real, live country. I don't want to smell the violet in the scent bottle, but at the edge of the woods."

Walter looked suddenly at Anne and then, as if comparing her with Thomas.

"Mr. Illey, you seem to me like the music of the Tsigans."

"Tsigan music," repeated Anne thoughtfully, "and I, what am I?"

"You are a song by Schubert," answered the musician.

"The two don't fit well together. . . . Do light a cigar, professor. But, of course, you want to make music."

But that day Adam Walter did not draw his violin from its case. A small nosegay was in it. It was meant for Anne, but it remained there too. He took it away with him, out into the snow, back into the white Christmas night.

When he came again he brought a larger bunch of flowers. It was a poor, ungainly bunch wrapped up in a newspaper. He put it awkwardly on the piano near Anne, and became more and more embarrassed.

"Please don't thank me, it is not worth it. I thought of it quite by chance."

Something flashed into Anne's face which resembled pain. She did not hear Walter's voice any more, she knew no more that he had brought her flowers; all she remembered was that Thomas never, never gave her flowers.

"Why? . . ." and her hands raised doubtful, dreamy chords from the piano. Her tender, meek face became unconsciously tragical. She began to sing. . . . A deep question sang through her voice. The whole life of a woman sobbed in it, complained, implored. It rent the heart, it clamoured for the unattainable, the promises of past youth, the dream, the realization.

Adam Walter became obsessed by the rapt womanly voice. He went to the door, shut it carelessly, then leaned immobile against the wall. . . . He stood there spellbound, even after the last sound had died away. He was not in time to harden his features into calmness, and Anne understood his expression, because she was suffering herself at the time. She received with a grateful smile the tenderness which came to her. . . . They remained like that for an instant. Anne was the first to awake. And as if she wanted to wake him, she looked towards the door.

"I closed it," said Walter humbly, "in order that your voice should be nobody's but mine. . . ."

Then he left and she gazed for a long time into the growing darkness. Her tenderness, which she had thought long extinct, was now ablaze.

Thomas came in. Anne remembered that her husband was going to shoot and knew he came to take leave.

"Has the troubadour gone?" Illey looked round the room. Suddenly he saw the flowers on the piano. "Now he has started to bring you flowers?"

Anne looked at him.

"Do you know, Thomas, it has struck me that you never give me any flowers."

"You don't think I am going to give you

flowers grown on somebody else's land?" Illey laughed harshly and left the room without a kiss, without a word of farewell.

They had never yet parted like this. Anne looked after him amazed.

"Have a good time!" she shouted and did not recognize her own voice. It could be cold and indifferent.

When Thomas descended the stairs, the sound of Anne's piano reached him. A sad song echoed through the house. . . . He slammed the street door furiously, as if he sought to slay the music. He looked up from the cab. He suddenly remembered that Anne once used to look after him from the window. Once . . . a long time ago. . . .

"She is probably pleased now when I go and she can live for her music. That is what draws her and Adam Walter together." He rejected roundly the image of Walter. He did not want to think of him and Anne at the same time, yet the two images would get mixed up in his brain and he felt as if he had been robbed.

The sound of the cab had passed. In the twilight of the sunshine room the music had broken off. Anne began to nurse the burning bitterness with which she thought of her husband. Could he not see that she suffered, that her smiles, her calm, her indifference were all his? Did he not know her face was all a mummery?

A mask . . . fearfully she raised her hand to her face as though she would snatch something from it. . . .

At that moment a dawning light glimmered in the depths of her mind, mounting up through innumerable memories. An old, once meaningless tale worked its way out slowly from oblivion. First she only saw the setting: the small clockmaker's shop, her grandfather in front of a large, semi-circular window, the old hand of Uncle Sebastian, the violet-coloured tail coat, the buckled shoes. She heard his voice again. Broken, unconnected words came to her mind, reached her heart . . . and then, suddenly, there was light.

"No, people don't know what their neighbour's real face is like. . . . Everybody wears a mask, nobody has the courage to take it off, nobody dares to be the first because he cannot know whether the others will follow his example, or stone him."

Anne's thoughts repeated in despair the words of the old story: "Everybody wears a mask, everybody. . . ." And perhaps the proud alone were the charitable, for they wore the mask of silence.

"Thomas," she uttered his name aloud, as of old, when their love began. It seemed to her that she had found a torch which, on the dark road, lit up her husband's real face. She began to expect him, though she knew he could not

come back so soon. She waited for him through many long hours. Next day too she waited.

Evening came. Adam Walter arrived and again brought some flowers in his violin-case.

Anne became absent-minded and restless. The flowers only brought Thomas to her mind. Adam Walter's voice seemed strange to her and his ardent glances irritated her. To-day not even music could bring them together.

While reading the music, Anne listened continually for sounds below. A cab stopped at the door. Steps in the corridor. She rose involuntarily and stretched her arms out as if she wanted to stop someone who passed by. . . . The noise ceased outside and her arms felt weary.

Adam Walter watched her attentively and at the same time peered relentlessly into his own mind. He too felt now what so many others had suffered; he thought with physical pain of the other who was expected and passed by. . . . An expression of despair passed over his face. Then, as if sneering at himself, he raised his low brows and put his violin aside.

She started and looked at him enquiringly.

"I can't to-day." Walter's voice attempted to be harsh and repellent, but his eyes were hopelessly sad.

Anne did not detain him when he started to go. She felt relieved; now there was no more need to control her expression, her movements. She ran towards her husband's room.

Thomas stood with his back to the door in the middle of the room.

"So you no longer even come to see me?" she asked, and there was warmth in her voice.

"I knew you had company. I wanted to be alone."

Anne stepped back but she did not leave the room as she would have done at any other time. Thomas started walking up and down. Several times he touched his left breast pocket and pressed his open hand against his chest. He stopped suddenly before Anne.

"I thank you for staying," he said excitedly. "I must speak to you."

Anne looked at him frightened. "Has anything happened to you?"

"No, nothing. Listen. . . . Ille is for sale."

Thomas sat down on the window sill as if he were tired. He related how he was shooting over the swampy wood. One of the beaters told him that the property of Ille was again up for auction. Those to whom it belonged were ruined and had left the place. He could not resist and he walked all over the property, a thing he had never done before. An old farm hand recognized him. He called him young master as in old times, though his hair was turning grey. The bailiff recognized him too. And he saw the big garden, the roof of the house, the free Danube, the barn, the tree with the swing, whose bark still showed the marks of the ropes.

"You understand, Anne, all this is for sale, cheap, it could be ours. And there my life would have a purpose. You know, for the sake of the boys. . . . A family survives only if it is rooted in the soil. It is hopeless for a tree to cast its seeds on the pavements of cities; lasting life is impossible there. The families of city folk are like their houses and last but three generations. Country people are like the earth. The earth outlives a house. . . . If only I could go home, everything would be different."

Astonishment disappeared from Anne's face and an indescribable terror appeared in its stead.

"And the house! We shall have to leave here!"

"Don't be frightened," said Thomas icily. "I do not want you to leave the house for my sake. I never asked you for a sacrifice. Nor will I now. But I can't stand this any longer."

Every word wounded Anne.

"Why do you hurt me like this?"

"So you would come with me?" He looked at her incredulously, inquiringly. "Is it possible? You would come with me, to me, now when I have grown old and your love for me has passed away?"

Anne smiled sadly.

"Don't you think, Thomas, that the memories of the road we have trodden together are as strong a tie as love?"

He again drew his hand over his left breast

pocket and then let it slip quickly to his waist as if it had been done accidentally.

This movement caused Anne some anxiety. She remembered that it had become frequent lately. She thought no more of her troubles.

"What is the matter with you? What has happened?" She turned back the frilly silk shade of the lamp with a rapid movement.

They looked at each other as if they had not met for a very long time. . . . When did their ways part? When, for what word, for what silence? Neither of them remembered. It must have been long ago and since then they had walked through life side by side, without each other.

Anne leaned over Thomas. It seemed to her that they had met at last on the dark road and that she saw, through Uncle Sebastian's story, into the face she had never understood.

"You have suffered too, Thomas. . . ." And as if he were her child she took his head tenderly between her hands. She pressed it to her bosom and gently stroked his grey-sprinkled hair, his wrinkles. She wanted to ask forgiveness of Thomas for the marks left by their sad misunderstandings. Every touch of her hand demolished one of the barriers that had stood between them and had obstructed their vision.

"I have not been kind to you," he said sadly, "I passed from your side because I thought of nothing but of my craving for my land."

"And I thought something quite different," answered Anne, in a whisper. "You said nothing and I am not one of those who can question. We both kept silent and that was our misfortune. I see now that silence can only cover things, but cannot efface them. Dear God, why did you not tell me your heart's desire? Why did you not speak while we were still rich?"

Thomas took his wife's hand and kissed it.

"I was afraid you would not understand. You understand me now—and it is not too late."

"But how could we buy Ille?" she asked anxiously.

"Do you remember that swampy wood? Once nobody wanted it, now I am offered a good price for it. That would go some way and I might take the present mortgage over."

Anne's eyes opened wide with fear. She thought of Christopher who had been swallowed up by financial obligations.

"I shall work," said Thomas and his voice became quite youthful, "and pay off the debts."

"Debts," repeated Anne mechanically and the practical blood of Ulwing the builder rose in her.

"No, Thomas, we don't build on debts!" She said this with such force as she had never before put into her speech with her husband.

Thomas stared at her darkly for an instant. Then his figure bent up in a curious way and while he turned aside he made a gesture as if casting something away.

This gesture went to Anne's heart. In her despair, she must make another effort, fight a last fight at the cost of any sacrifice. And while her bewildered mind was seeking for a solution, her eye followed her husband's glance instinctively, through the window, to the garden where, under the evening sky the steep roof descended near the gargoyle.

Both looked at it silently. The two wills were fighting no more against each other and Anne felt with relief that they thought in unison. She buried her face in her hands convulsively, as if pressing a mask on it, a mask heavier than the old one, one she would have to bear now, for ever, for the rest of her life. Then she looked up.

"We must sell the house."

In that moment, within the ancient walls, a cord, strained for a long time, suddenly snapped in great, invisible pain.

CHAPTER XVIII

STRANGE steps walked through the house, indifferent, careless steps. They passed along the corridor and went up even to the attics. Down in the courtyard bleak business voices bargained and depreciated everything. They said that the ground alone had any value that could be discussed. As for the building, it did not count—a useless old chattel, no longer conforming to modern requirements.

Anne looked round as if fearing that the house might hear this. She felt tempted to shout to the agents to clear out of the place and never dare to come back again. Let old Florian lock the gate. Let the days be again as secure as of old, when there was no fear that they must break off their lives in the old house and have to continue elsewhere.

In the green room an agent knocked at the wall and laughed.

"Strong as a fortress. The pickaxe will have hard work with these old bricks."

Anne could listen no more. She moved herself to the furthest room and hid so that Thomas might not look into her eyes. Why destroy her husband's bliss? He was so contented and

grateful. He worked, planned, discussed, bargained. At the auction Ille had fallen to him and his eyes glistened marvellously when he spoke of it. "Soon our house at home will be ready, and the farm too. Everything in its old place, the furniture, the pictures, the servants, the bailiff, the agent, even the old housekeeper. The crops are promising. . . . Are you pleased, Anne? You rejoice with me, don't you? The earth will produce for us."

Feverishly, disorderly haste spoke in his voice, in his actions. Anne was tired and slow; it took her a long time to go from one room to another; there was so much to be looked at on her way. . . .

Thomas prepared for re-union and counted the days impatiently; Anne took leave and woke every morning with fear.

"Nothing has happened yet." She looked round, and, being alone, she repeated it aloud so that the walls might hear it. . . . Then again she was frightened. "Perhaps to-day . . . to-night. . . ."

Then the day came.

A stranger walked with Thomas in the back garden. He trod on the flower beds and turned his head several times towards the house. Anne saw his owl-like face from the staircase window, watched his movements anxiously. He too bargained and depreciated everything. She began to hope: perhaps he would go away like the

others, life would remain in its old groove and the day which was to be the last day of all would never come.

The owl-like face began to ascend under the vaults of the staircase and smiled. It looked into the sunshine room. Vainly Anne fled from it; she met it again in the green room.

The stranger, feeling quite at home, leaned now against the writing table with the many drawers and said something to Thomas.

Anne did not understand clearly what was said, but she felt as if a sharp, short blow had struck her brow. Her brain was stunned by it. Thomas's voice too reached her ear confusedly, but she saw with despairing certitude that his countenance brightened.

When an hour later the banker from Paternoster Street left, the old house was already his.

For days the dull pain behind Anne's brow did not cease. Everything that happened around her seemed unreal: the sudden departure of the people from the ground floor, the packing up of everything all over the house.

The time for delivery was short. The greatest haste was necessary.

The old pieces of furniture moved from their places, as clumsily, painfully, as old people move from their accustomed corners. Below, in front of the house, rattling furniture vans stopped now and then.

Anne looked out of the window. Barefooted,

sweating men carried the piano out of the door. The pampered household gods stood piled up in a heap in the middle of the pavement, amidst the crowd of the street. A man sat on the music chest. Christopher's old desk lay upside down on top of the chest of drawers, just like a dead animal, its four legs up in the air.

In these days, Thomas travelled repeatedly from home, for he wanted himself to supervise the placing of the furniture of the old house in the manor house of Ille.

The boys were made noisy by their expectation of new and unknown things. They spoke of Ille as if it were the realization of a fairy tale — a fairy tale told by their father.

"They don't cling to the old house," thought Anne and felt lonely. She liked best to be by herself. Then her imagination restored everything to its old place in the dismantled rooms. The shapes of the furniture were visible on the wall papers. The forsaken nails stretched out of the walls like fingers asking for something. In the place of Mrs. Christina's portrait a weary shadow looked like a faded memory.

Another piece of furniture disappeared, then another. . . . The writing-table with many drawers remained alone in the green room. Anne drew the drawers out one by one. One contained some embroideries made in cross-stitch. How ugly and sweet they were! She remembered them well, she had made them for her

grandfather. Then some clumsy old drawings came into her hands, quaint castles, girls, big-eared cats; two silvery, fair curls, in a paper, tied together; beneath them an old distant date in her grandfather's faded writing.

Whenever the clock struck she started and touched her forehead as if it had struck her to hurry her on.

In another drawer she found a diploma of the Freedom of the Royal Free City of Pest and a worn little book. On its cover a two-headed eagle held the arms of Hungary between its claws.

. . . Pozsony. A. D. 1797, Christopher Ulwing . . . civil carpenter. . . .

While she turned the pages a faint, mouldy odour fanned her face. Her memory searched hesitatingly:

> "Two prentice lads once wandered
> To strange lands far away."

Suddenly the torpor of her brain was dispelled. Reality assumed its merciless shape in her conscience. She had to leave here, everything would be different. . . . Unchecked tears flowed down her cheeks.

She had no courage to pack the contents of the drawers, nor the heart to have the open boxes nailed down. Anything that seemed final filled her with horror.

Somewhere a door creaked. Anne woke to her helplessness. She pretended to hurry and strained her efforts to hide her feelings before those she loved.

The boys were preparing for their examinations. Thomas noticed nothing. In the egotism of his own happiness he passed blindly beside Anne's shy, wordless pain. He was pleased with everything, only his wife's apathy irked him.

A half-opened drawer, an empty cupboard, could stop Anne for hours. In her poor tortured brain memories alone had room. Everything spoke of the past. Even in the attics she only met with memories.

Uncle Sebastian's shaky winged armchair; the grimy engravings of Fischer von Erlach and Mansard; the out of date coloured map of Pest-Buda. . . . She took the map to the light of the attic window. For a long time she contemplated the lines of the short crooked streets, the Danube painted blue, the small vessels of the boat-bridge, the small churches, the many empty building plots.

She could not find her way on the map. Over her childhood's memories a new big city had risen, had swallowed in its growth the old streets, removed the markets, spread beyond the limits of the tattered map, spread even beyond the cold, confident dreams of Ulwing the builder.

Wearily Anne went down the stairs and evening found her again immobile in front of an open cupboard. She sat on the ground and on her knee lay an old shrunken cigar case, embroidered with beads. . . .

Steps approached from the adjoining room. She became attentive and really wanted to be quick, but forgot that she was engaged in filling an empty box and with rapid movements she instinctively returned everything to its usual place in the cupboard.

Thomas stopped near her.

"What do you think, how much more time do you require?"

"There is still much to be done," answered Anne guardedly. What it was she could not have told.

"In a week the house has to be handed over," muttered her husband nervously.

Anne looked up at him.

The lamplight lit up Thomas's face. How old and worn out he looked! His well-shaped mouth seemed pitifully dry and between his cheek bones the sunken crevices were darkened with purplish-blue shadows.

Anne thought her eyes deluded her and got up.

Thomas snatched at his chest and again made the ominous movement with his hand. Anne could no longer believe that it was accidental.

As if to escape her maddening anxiety she flung herself into his arms and pressed her head to his chest.

Thomas stood motionless as if he had lost consciousness. He breathed heavily and stared anxiously into space above his wife's head. His heart beat faintly a rapid course, stumbled suddenly, and for an instant there was an awful, cold silence in his chest.

Anne listened with bated breath. Under her head, the rapid irregular gallop started again.

As if he had only then noticed his wife's proximity, Thomas stretched himself out and pushed her away impatiently. Anne remembered that this was not the first time this had happened. The awful truth dawned on her.

"It is nothing," he said and made an effort to laugh, but his laughter died away under Anne's pitiful look.

"Thomas, since when?"

"A long time ago."

"For God's sake, why did you not tell me?"

"I thought it would pass away at Ille. . . . Open the window. It is rather worse today. . . ." His face became ashen-grey, his eyes appealed for help. With a single gesture he tore his shirt-collar open.

Anne flew through the room.

"Call the doctor! The doctor. . . ."

It sounded all through the house when Florian slammed the street door.

Hours came and passed and left their marks on the faces of the people in the old house. Thomas was already in bed. On the vaulted staircase Anne talked for a long time with Dr. Gárdos, the son of the old proto-medicus.

The doctor's voice was strangled; his words scarcely reached Anne and yet they annihilated everything around her. Had she not yet lost enough? Was there no mercy for her?

Dr. Gárdos looked at her full of pity.

"Miracles might happen. . . ."

The corners of Anne's eyes drew up slowly and horror was in her expression. She shivered and then went back through the corridor with strained, stiff lips. When Thomas as in a dream reached for her hand, she bent over him with her wan, crushed smile.

Dawn was slow to come and it was a long time before evening fell again. Nothing altered in the house, only the day opened and closed its eyes.

Thomas lay motionless in his bed. Anne watched his every breath anxiously, thought of the passing hours and of the day that drew threateningly nearer, on which the house was to be surrendered.

She asked for delay. It was refused. She had to accept the advice of young Doctor Gárdos.

The empty little lodgings in the house opposite . . . there was no choice, they must move there. They would have to rough it, there

would be room enough for a few days. For the doctor had told her, quite calmly, that it was only a matter of a few days.

"So there are still miracles," thought Anne. "Yes, it is only for a short time and then . . . everything will come right again." She felt relieved and thus the last day in the old house passed away.

It was evening. The two boys had already gone with Tini into the lodgings opposite. Thomas slept. Anne and the old servant sat up with him; they did not dare to look at each other.

The windows were open; in the corridor, near the wall, the marble clock ticked, on the floor. The last thing left in the old house. Florian insisted on carrying it over himself into the new lodgings.

Anne counted the strokes of the clock. "In three hours . . . in two hours. . . ." She rose quietly, slid along the corridor, down the stairs. In the back garden, between the high, ugly walls, the old chestnut tree, the winged pump, the bushes were all still in their places . . . and one could rest on the circular seat of the apple tree. Everything was as of old, even the ticking of the old clock came down into the garden.

Anne leaned her head against the trunk of the tree; without taking her eyes off Thomas's window, she took leave of all things around her.

Suddenly, as if somebody's speech had broken

off in the act of saying farewell, the silence became absolute. The clock had stopped.

Anne ran up the stairs. Now she remembered. Last night she had forgotten the clock and now the butterfly pendulum, which she had seen alive, lay dead between the marble pillars. She passed her hand wearily over her brow. So the little dwarf had gone too! Had Time itself forsaken the old house?

She opened the door of the green room. The candle light floated round her up and down. Her steps echoed sharply from the empty walls. She stopped in front of the tall white doors with the glass panes. On the panel rising notches were visible. When they were children, Christopher and she, their father had marked their growth every year. She went further, trying the door-handles carefully. Some were meek and obedient, others creaked and resisted. She knew them . . . they had had their say in her life. She knew the voice of everything in the house. The windows spoke to her when they were opened; the board of the threshold too had something to say beneath her tread, always the same thing, ever since she could remember. But that was part of its destiny.

She slipped along the walls. She passed her hand over the faded wallpaper, over the grey stove, even over the window sills. She put the candle down and looked through the small panes

of glass towards the Danube, just like old times. But the fronts of the houses opposite repelled her looks.

A carriage rattled through the street: it sounded like the crack of a whip. Anne clung close to the walls and under the harmonizing influence of the quiet night, the intimate physical contact brought something suddenly home to her that had lived in her unconscious self dimly, unexpressed, for the whole of her existence. In that moment she understood the bond that existed between her and the doomed old house. The bricks under the whitewash, the beams, the arches, all were creations of one single force and she felt herself one with them as if she had grown from between the walls, as if she were just a chip of them, a chip privileged to move and say aloud what they had to suffer in silence.

She thought of the finished lives, continued in her who had survived everybody. Mysterious memories of events she had never witnessed invaded her mind. Grafts from memories treasured up by the house of the Ulwings.

Since the clock had stopped, time ceased to exist for Anne. A painful trembling of her own body brought her back to reality. The whole house trembled. The bell rang in the hall.

Blood rushed to Anne's benumbed heart. Her knees gave way as she returned through the rooms. One after another she closed the doors behind her, looking back all the time. Near the

door of the nursery a folded piece of paper lay on the floor. She picked it up and pressed it carefully between the glazed wings, as she used to do, so that they might not rattle when carriages passed below.

She only realized what she had done when the door-handle dropped back to its place, when the door was closed, the door whose rattling would wake no one any more. Anne sobbed aloud among the empty walls. The rooms repeated her sob, one after the other, gently, more and more gently. . . .

The street door opened below. Dr. Gárdos' commanding voice was audible on the staircase. Two men followed him, carrying a stretcher on their shoulders. Anne came face to face with them in the corridor. She swayed, as if she had been hit on the chest, then she seemed quite composed again. She opened the door and gently wakened her husband.

The stretcher, with Thomas on it, floated across the road in the early dawn as over a narrow blue river. One shore, the habitual one, was the old house, the other, the strange dark house, the strange new life in which Anne felt she had no root.

She passed the gate quickly, with her head bent. Only in the middle of the road did she stop and hesitate. She turned back suddenly.

The two pillar-men leaned out under the urns of the cornice. Their stone eyes turned to her,

as if they stared straight at her accusingly and asked a question to which there was no answer.

Florian turned the big old key slowly in the door. For the last time, the very last time. . . .

CHAPTER XIX

THE new inhabitants of the strange, small lodgings found everything hostile and bleak in their new surroundings.

An open gas flame whistled in the narrow anteroom. The neglected doors were shabby and the dark rooms only remembered people who had not cared for them and were for ever moving on.

The first week passed by. Anne did not leave Thomas's bedside and still dreaded going to the window. All this time her soul lead a double life: one for Thomas, one for the house.

After a sleepless night she could stand it no longer. She stole gently to the window and bent hesitatingly, fearfully, forward.

She felt relieved. In the grey morning the old house still stood intact. . . . She noticed for the first time that its yellow walls stood further out than the other houses and that they obstructed the road. She was shocked to realize how old and big it was. Its steep, old-fashioned roof cast a deep shadow out of which the windows stared at her with the pitiful gaze of the blind.

While she looked at them one by one, she never ceased listening to her patient. Suddenly it seemed to her that Thomas's breath had become

weaker. She glided back trembling. Henceforth this became Anne's only road. It was a short road but it embraced Anne's whole life.

One morning a queer noise roused her from the sleep of exhaustion. There was silence in the room, the noise came from the street. She rose from the armchair in which she spent the nights and went on tiptoe to the window.

Workmen stood in front of the old house. Some men rolled tarred poles from a cart. The front door was open as if gaping for an awful shriek of agony. A gap had formed between the tiles of the attics and men walked upon the roof.

Anne covered her eyes. Had she to live through this? She could not run away. She would have to see it all. . . .

Thomas started up from a restless dream.

"What is it? What is happening?"

There was no word which could express what happened there, on the other side of the street, or if there was one, Anne could not find it. Without a word, she went back to the bed and drew her old sweet smile, like a veil, over her face. She was overwrought, she drew the veil too hard . . . and it broke and covered her no more.

Thomas reached for her hand. In that instant he realised the immensity of Anne's sacrifice. Till now he had faith in himself and believed he could attract his wife's soul to what he loved. Illness had wrung this hope from him

and he felt ashamed, his pride suffered, that he should have been the cause of Anne's sudden sacrifice.

His dying eyes looked at her earnestly, with boundless love. Anne's back was turned to the light and while Thomas stroked her hand she spoke of Ille. She planned. . . .

Next day the post brought a little bag. It contained wheat . . . golden wheat from Ille. Thomas passed it slowly, pensively, between his fingers and while the source of life flowed in poignant contrast between his ghostly, lean hands, tears came to his eyes.

In these moments, in these days, under the cover of the worn torn smile Anne's face became old.

Out there, the roof of the old house was already gone and hemmed in between scaffoldings; like a poor old prisoner, the yellow front was waiting for its fate. To Anne's imagining the house complained behind its wooden cage and knew that it had been so surrounded only to be killed.

The pickaxes set to work. The bricks slid shrieking down a slide from the first floor. Labourers, Slovak girls, came and went on the scaffolding and they too carried bricks on hods.

Every passing day saw the house grow smaller. The labourers tore holes in the walls and left the rest to crumble down. That was the quickest way.

The dull noise went to the marrow, and with every wall something fell to pieces in Anne's heart. It seemed to her that she became feebler after every crash, that the efforts of generations collapsed in her soul, great old efforts, with which the first Ulwings, the ancient unknown ones, had all carried bricks for the builder—bricks for the house.

She thought of her father. He kept the walls standing. And of Christopher—he began to pull the building down. And now the end had come.

The crevice grew alarmingly in the yellow wall. By and by the whole front became one crevice. One could look into the rooms. From the street people stared in and this affected Anne as if impertinent, inquisitive strangers spied into the past of her private life.

Here and there the green wallpaper clung tenaciously to the ruins. A round black hole glared in a corner from which the stove pipes had been torn remorselessly: the tunnel of Christopher's stove-fairies. In some places the torn up floor boards hung in the air and the dark passages of the demolished chimneys looked as if a sooty giant finger had been drawn along the wall.

On the further side, the row of semi-circular windows in the corridor became visible. The trees of the back garden stretched their heads

and looked out into the street. Then one day they stood there no longer. When the heavy waggon drove jerkily with them through the gaping door, Anne recognized each, one by one. On the top lay a crippled trunk and the boards of the cracked, round seat spread from it in splinters.

Everything went quickly now; even the two pillar-men lay on their backs on the pavement of the street. When evening came and the labourers had gone, Anne snatched a shawl and ran down the stairs. She wanted to take leave of the pillar-men. She bent down and looked into their faces. The light of the street lamp which used to shine into the green room, lit up the two stone figures. They looked as if they had died.

Steps approached from the street corner. Anne withdrew into the former entrance. Two men came down the street. The elder stopped; his voice sounded clear:

"Once this was the house of Ulwing the builder."

The younger, indifferent, stepped over the head of one of the stone figures.

"Ulwing the builder?" Suddenly he looked interestedly at the mutilated walls.

"Ulwing? . . . any relation of the clockmaker of Buda?"

"His brother."

"I never heard that he had any family," murmured the younger, continuing his way, "Sebastian Ulwing did great things for our country."

Anne looked after them. Was this all that remained of the Ulwing name? Was the memory of his work already gone? The heroic death of Uncle Sebastian, a doubtful legend, was that all that was remembered?

Men came again. Carriages, life, the noise of the town.

Anne went back, across the road, towards the strange house.

That night Thomas became very restless. He tossed from one side to the other and asked several times if Anne was there. He did not see her, though she sat at the side of the bed and held his hand in hers. She held her head quite bravely, there was not a tear in her eyes. She did not want Thomas to read his death sentence from her face.

In the morning Anne felt her hand tenderly pressed.

"Are you here?" asked the pallid, dying man. "All the time I was waiting for you to be here."

In a few moments Thomas's features altered amazingly. A shadow fell over them and Anne looked round vainly to find out whence it came. Yet it was there and became darker and darker in the hollow of his eyes, round his mouth.

"I am going now," said Thomas, "don't shake your head. I know. . . ."

She could not answer nor could she restrain her tears any longer.

"Weep, Anne, it will do you good and forgive me if you can. I did not understand you, that is what made your life so heavy at my side." He shut his eyes and remained a long time without moving; only his face was now and again convulsed as if something sobbed within him. Then he drew Anne's head to his heart.

"Here . . . close, quite close. . . . This was yours, yours alone. . . . Anne. . . . Anne. . . ." repeated his voice further and further away, "Anne. . . ."

That was the last word, as if of all the words of life it were the only one he wanted to take with him on the long, lone road.

Before night came Thomas Illey was no more.

That night Anne kept vigil between two dead. Her husband . . . and the old house.

When day broke somebody came into the room and flung his arms around her. Her son. Thomas's son.

Leaning on his arm Anne left the strange house behind Thomas's coffin. And the younger boy, fair and blue-eyed held her hand close and clung to her.

Thomas was borne away. It was his wish to be buried in Ille. Anne and the two boys went in a carriage through the town to the station.

It was a warm summer night. The gas lamps were already alight. Here and there electric

globes hung like glowing silver-blue drops from their wires. Illuminated shops, show windows, large coffee houses with glaring windows. Servites' Place, Grenadier's Street . . . and on what had once been the Grassalkovich corner an electric clock marked the time.

The carriage turned a corner, the pavements on both sides swarmed with pushing crowds. 'Buses, carriages, the hum of voices, glaring posters, people. Many people, everywhere.

Further on there was a block in the traffic. The scaffoldings of new-built houses encroached on the pavement. Damp smell of lime mixed with the summer's dust. Under the scaffoldings hurrying figures with drawn-up shoulders. Sudden shouts. A jet of water sprayed the hot pavement in a broad sheaf.

A mounted policeman lifted his white-gloved hand. For an instant everything stopped, then the crowd became untangled and rolled on like a stream.

Anne's eyes passed vaguely over the signs of the shops. She found no familiar name. The Jörgs, Münster, Walter, were nowhere. Other names, other people. And the Ulwings?

A forgotten corner lamp, an old tree surviving in the row of young trees bordering the streets, a condemned, quaint old house, uncouthly timid among the powerful new buildings . . . these might possibly know something of Ulwing the builder but men knew him no more.

The carriage reached its destination. It stopped at the railway station.

In the smoky hall Florian and Mamsell Tini sat on the luggage. Somewhere a bell was rung and a voice proclaimed the names of unknown places that people went to . . . lived in.

Anne, standing on the platform, saw a dark van coupled to the train. They had to wait a long time . . . the train started late. People came hurrying. Only he who travelled in the black van to Ille was in no hurry.

The furious bell sounded again.

Anne leaned out of her carriage door though she wanted to see no more; all was over for her and far, far away. Her tired aimless look was suddenly arrested.

Someone came to her, came to her out of the past . . . from far away.

Adam Walter stopped in front of her carriage and, without a word, uncovered himself. He stood still there near the line when the train had gone. He looked long, long after the trail of smoke.

The long dark night dissolved into dawn and fields and trees. . . .

Now and then little sentry huts appeared as if something white had been flashed beside the rushing windows of the train. The barriers at the crossings were like outstretched arms. Racing telegraph poles, signal wires shining like silver. The shrubs rocked in the wind caused by

the train and the shadow of the smoke floated broad over the sunlit cornfields.

Then all was reversed. The train stopped.

People had been waiting for a long time at the small station of Ille. Blue spots, bright peasants' petticoats, shining white chemisettes. All the round holiday hats were doffed simultaneously like a flock of black birds.

Bareheaded, dumb, the people of Ille stood before the wife of Thomas Illey. Hard brown hands offered themselves and the tearful eyes looked at her as if they had always known her.

"God brought you back home to us." The deeply furrowed face of an old peasant bent over her hand.

Those behind gathered round the boys. One peasant woman stroked George Illey's arm.

"Oh my sweet soul, you are just like your father."

Anne looked round bewildered. She felt some strange new emotion. The ground she stood on was the ground of Ille, the trees had grown from it, the people too, everything was part of it, her sons, Thomas's memory. . . .

A deep rustic voice said:

"Our master has come home."

The crowd opened a way for the metal coffin, carried by four stalwart youths to a cart. They placed it on a pile of oak boughs, then all started

behind it. At the cross roads the cart turned towards the chapel. The carriage took the road through the row of poplars.

Anne's eyes followed the cart. The wheels were invisible under the branches hanging down from it. Rich green life carried death. The crown of the oak carried Thomas Illey towards the cemetery.

The bell of the chapel called gently to heaven. The churches of the villages responded in the distance. One told the other all over the country, that the master of Ille had come home.

Along both sides of the road the poplars stood erect like a guard of honour, full of old traditions. The carriage turned another corner and pebbles flew up under the wheels. There, surrounded by oaks, stood the old manor house of Ille, and in the cool white-washed hall steps resounded under the portraits of ancient lords of Ille.

Anne started wearily, then suddenly stopped, deeply shocked. As though the house had been prepared for a gay festival . . . it was all decked with flowers. Her eyes were hurt by the glare of the bright colours and her pent-up sorrow moaned within her. She pressed her hands to her bosom . . . the flowers pained her.

"Why did you do it? Why? Just now?"

The old housekeeper left the row of women servants.

"It was the order of our good master. It was his will that every flower should be picked when our mistress came home."

In Anne's pale, transparent face the corners of her eyes and lips rose in silent pain. It was as though she gazed into a mysterious abyss of which she had known nothing till this day. Now she saw Thomas's soul, now that he had given her every flower that had not grown on someone else's land. He was dead when he gave, but he gave. . . .

If only one could answer those who are gone; if only one could speak when speech is no more possible. . . .

Anne remained alone in a small vaulted room. Above the couch of many flowers hung the portrait of Mrs. Christina. The piano, the small work-table were there too, and everything was in the same position as it had been in the sunshine room.

She leaned her brow against the window railing and from among her old household gods looked out into the new world. A verdant breath of the large garden fanned her face. The trees whispered strange things to each other.

Anne thought of the swing-tree and her gaze wandered over the garden as if in search of it. Then she heard something call to her. It became clearer and clearer. Beyond the trees, there spoke with quiet distant murmur, a faithful old voice: the Danube . . . the fate of the

Ulwings. The past spoke. This was all that was left to her; nothing more. . . .

In that instant the tramp of strong young steps recalled her from the past. Through the glaring summer sunlight her two sons came down the gravelled path.

She looked at them and her head rose.

THE END

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