THREE VASSAR GIRLS IN THE TYROL.

THREE VASSAR GIRLS SERIES.

BY ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY.

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THREE VASSAR GIRLS IN THE TYROL.

ESTES AND LAURIAT, Publishers,
BOSTON, MASS.

AFTER THE STORM ON THE ORTLER SPITZ.

THREE VASSAR GIRLS

IN THE TYROL

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

AUTHOR OF

"A NEGLECTED CORNER OF EUROPE," "THREE VASSAR GIRLS ABROAD,"
"THREE VASSAR GIRLS IN ENGLAND," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY "CHAMP" AND OTHERS

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THREE VASSAR GIRLS IN THE TYROL.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

HEY were three friends at college, — or rather they formed a triangle containing two friendships and two enmities. Valerie and Dorothy each loved Elsie, and were equally beloved by her; but Valerie and Dorothy were not friends. They were each jealous of Elsie's fondness for the other; and when Valerie opened her friend's door and found Dorothy cozily established in the great arm-chair, she invariably made a pretext of having come to borrow a book or to inquire about a lesson, and this errand accomplished, hurried away. Dorothy felt the avoidance, and attributed it to scorn, whereas it was simply owing to Valerie's sensitive dread of Dorothy's sarcastic remarks. For Dorothy could be cruelly sarcastic in a perfectly well-bred way, barbing her shafts with exaggerated politeness which caused her victim to bleed inwardly while it left no pretext for grievance. Dorothy could not explain very clearly why she disliked Valerie, though Elsie had often challenged her to give a reason for her dislike. At one time she had

asserted that it was because Valerie was a foreigner. "She is so Dutchy," Dorothy had said.

"'Valerie is Dutch
And behaves as such;'

her ways are not our ways nor are her ideas our ideas."

"She is no more Dutch than you are," Elsie had replied with some warmth; "she is an Austrian, and her home is at Innsbruck in the Tyrol, miles away from the Netherlands."

DOROTHY.

"I merely used the term 'Dutch' as typical of the entire Germanic race, my dear. I feel as Cæsar did, — that whether they were Belgians, Helvetians, or Rhaetians does n't particularly matter; they are all barbarians."

"Oh, Dorothy!"

"Say un-American, if the other word offends you. Their life and thought and aims are all so different from ours; and Valerie is a countess, or at least her father is a count, and I despise that sort of thing. It is entirely contrary to our republican institutions."

"But it is not Valerie's fault that her father is the Count von Hohenberg; I am sure we would never have known the fact from her. She has done her best to become American by accompanying her father on his diplomatic mission to this country, and she shows her appreciation of our institutions by choosing to be educated at Vassar instead of in an Austrian convent."

All this was unanswerable; and Dorothy was obliged to admit

that Valerie took great pains to become American, and that she had so far conquered the difficulties of the foreign language that her English was scrupulously correct, almost bookish, displaying only by a slight accent and occasional mispronunciation that it was an acquired language. Dorothy's paraded disdain for titles had for its root a little feeling of envy, and she fancied Valerie arrogant because in Valerie's place she would herself have been so. Dorothy was just enough to admit many excellencies in Valerie. She shone especially in composition; her essays were models of rhetoric, being remarkable for their graceful style and a purity of language marked by an absence of commonplace expressions. It was English learned from reading the best authors, and not the conversational English of the day. Dorothy was also a fine essayist. Her productions were distinguished by originality of conception and a brilliant way of putting things. She shone in incisive, withering satire, and would have sacrificed her best friend for the sake of an epigram. The two girls disputed the head of their class, and divided honors in nearly every competition.

This rivalry was particularly galling to Dorothy. "It is not that I can't bear to be excelled," she said to Elsie. "I would n't mind it if it were *you*, dear; but to know that I am only on a par with Dutchy, who is handicapped with the difficulty of working in a foreign language, is too humiliating. I shall always hate her until I can definitely excel her; then I shall look upon her with calm indifference."

Valerie, on the other hand, admired Dorothy, and had made timid efforts to gain her friendship, but had been cut to the quick by the repulses with which Dorothy had met her advances. Elsie had made many attempts at reconciliation, but without success. Valerie had even once declared that Elsie must choose between them; but Elsie had assured her that on no consideration would she give up the friendship of either, and Valerie was fain to content herself with a divided heart. So the days passed, not always comfortably for Elsie,

who sometimes laughingly likened herself to the bumper destined to soften the shock between two railway cars. A hope of finally making the two friends animated her courage and stimulated her invention.

At first she invited them on excursions in company, adroitly arranging that they must occupy the same seat in the carriage or boat, or else she walked with an arm about the waist of each. Sometimes the two girls would converse in a manner encouraging to Elsie's desires; but more frequently they ignored each other's presence, and talked only with Elsie. The little peacemaker had had great hopes of a pet scheme the preceding summer, when she invited the rivals to visit her at her home in the Catskills. But Dorothy had heard that Valerie was also to be a guest, and had waited until Valerie's visit was over before putting in an appearance. This had been a great disappointment to Elsie, for she had relied on the help of her elder brother John, to whom she had confided the situation, to bring about a better understanding between her friends. John was the best-natured, best-intentioned fellow in the world; but manlike, he muddled everything. He had not been particularly attracted to Valerie, and he did admire wilful, bewitching Dorothy; but to aid his sister's plans, it happened that his conversation with the latter turned chiefly on the admirable qualities of Miss Hohenberg, and Dorothy imagined him deeply interested in her rival. She was not a weakly romantic girl, but she thoroughly admired and liked honest John. She told herself that this was just the sort of man to whom a woman could safely trust her happiness for life, and again a spark of envy was added to the pyre which was crackling around the feet of Valerie. She made no mean, underhand efforts to win him to herself during the long summer days when they were thrown together. She told herself proudly that she did not care for him; and she told John so as plainly by her manner, whenever, encouraged by a similarity of views, their conversation became more than usually

confidential, or his glance more admiring than seemed to her consistent with his supposed attachment to Valerie.

The two families had been long acquainted. Mr. Thorne, Dorothy's father, had great confidence in John Hartley's business ability and rectitude, and it was through his influence that the young man received that summer an appointment as paymaster of a western silver-mine.

John was to leave in a few days to assume his duties, and he was full of enthusiasm in regard to the enterprise. Mr. Thorne came up to talk the matter over during the last days of Dorothy's visit. "The Company's stock is rising rapidly in the market," Mr. Thorne said to John during this conversation. "I think that I will invest ten thousand dollars in it for Dorothy. As you will be in a position to know the prospects of the mine, I will not buy the stock now, but will place the money subject to your order. This is all that I feel that I ought to leave Dorothy in justice to my duties to my other children; and I give you power to look after her interests, to invest all or a part in the stock if you feel that it is perfectly safe, and to sell when you judge it advisable so to do."

JOHN.

John's eyes glistened. "I am touched by your confidence in me, Mr. Thorne," he replied; "I appreciate the responsibility, and I will be true to my trust."

Dorothy approved of the confidence which her father had reposed in John. They had many conversations during her visit with Elsie, and she obtained an insight into his sterling character and noble aims.

Dorothy was ambitious. She had a wild desire to excel, to do something grand and brilliant; as she expressed it, "to make the most of life."

They were talking on this subject during a horseback ride over a beautiful mountain-road.

"I want to do something magnificent!" Dorothy exclaimed, as they drew rein before a wide-stretching expanse of river and valley. "Life is so full of grand, wide opportunities. I could never be content to live a little humdrum life; I want to make my mark in some way, and I believe I shall."

John looked at her in admiration. "I believe you will," he said.

"And you," Dorothy asked, "have you never felt a desire to be famous?"

"Well, no," John replied, "not exactly. I mean to do my level best; but I don't think it 's likely any one will ever hear of it, and I don't know that it matters."

"I think it matters a great deal!" Dorothy exclaimed. "What is the use of living if we do not leave the world the richer for our having been here? One might as well be a vegetable, — better, for a turnip does make the world richer."

John passed his hand over his forehead.

"You have given me something to think of, Miss Dorothy. With your view of life, you can't think the career of a paymaster a very noble one."

"I suppose you will make money, and noble things can be done with wealth."

"That 's so," said John. He was thinking deeply. Dorothy had stirred springs that she knew nothing of. Her own ambition was

ignoble and cheap at this time compared with John's; but he looked at her through his own ideals, and said, "I shall at least be interested in watching your career, Miss Dorothy, and I have not the least doubt that you will do something magnificent. Of one thing you may be certain, — I will look after your money more sacredly than if it were my own. If I make nothing very remarkable of my own life, I shall feel that I am doing a little something in helping your career." He wanted to say more, but he did not dare to do so. The next day he left for Colorado, and shortly after Elsie and Dorothy returned to their duties at the college.

Valerie was there, and their old intercourse with its mingled sweet and bitter went on as usual, until one day in early spring Valerie stepped into the chemical laboratory, where Elsie was working out quantitative experiments, and entirely spoiled the result of one analysis by announcing that her father had been suddenly recalled to Austria, and that she must return with him.

Elsie laid aside her acid-stained apron, and with her arm about her friend walked out toward the grounds of the Floral Society, and up the steps of the beautiful new gymnasium into the rooms of the Philalethean Society. They were deserted at this hour, but they were the rooms which held the most cheerful associations for both Valerie and Elsie. They were both ardent supporters of their literary society, and really talented amateur actresses on the boards of their little theatre. They recalled different plays in which they had appeared together as they shifted the scenery in the little property-room. "I wonder what parts we will next play," Valerie said, as she picked up an Alsatian cap which she had once worn.

"You will have some very brilliant rôle, doubtless," said Elsie; "that of a princess or a duchess perhaps."

"I never cared for such parts," Valerie replied. "You know I always took peasant characters by preference."

"And how well you acted them, and what sport it is to act!

Shakspeare says the world 's a stage, and I mean to carry my acting over into real life."

Little did Elsie realize that from this very blunder was to come all the annoyance which she was to experience during the coming summer. Life is very real, and any "acting" is a great mistake.

They talked on a long time together of their approaching separation, promising, as girl friends do, never, never to forget each other.

"And you must visit me next summer at my home in Innsbruck," Valerie said. "I want you to know the Tyrol; it is the most beautiful country God ever made."

"I will go if I possibly can," Elsie promised; "and you must keep up your studies and come back with me for our last year, so that we can graduate together."

"This is my hope, Elsie dear; and if you come to us, and my mother sees what kind of a girl Vassar training develops, I am sure that she will be willing for me to return with you. I must do it if only to keep my place in your affection, or else Dorothy will supplant me."

"Never!" Elsie cried. "You have each your own little corner in my heart, and before our college course is over I shall make you two girls love each other as dearly as I love you both."

Valerie shook her head; and at first it seemed as if her fears were likely to come true, for after her departure Elsie and Dorothy were uninterruptedly together, and grew more and more attached to each other.

About this time an announcement was made in the Shakspeare class which awakened Dorothy's special interest. As it was the year of the representation of the Passion Play at Ober Ammergau the attention of the class had been directed to the miracle-plays of the Middle Ages, and an enthusiastic friend of the college had offered a special prize for the best essay on this subject written by an undergraduate of Vassar.[1] The prize was to consist of a gold medal, to be

[1] It is almost unnecessary to state that this contest is entirely imaginary.

awarded and presented at the next celebration of "Founder's Day," when the successful essay would be publicly read.

From this time Dorothy haunted the library, devouring everything which she could find upon the subject.

"I have all summer in which to write the essay," she confided to Elsie. "I have made voluminous notes, and if I can only throw them together in an original way I shall have something interesting."

But as Dorothy's confidence in her probable success increased, there was mingled with it a vague dissatisfaction which was at first inexplicable to Elsie. The cause was made clear at last when, a few weeks before the close of the college for vacation, Dorothy asked for Valerie's address.

"Do you intend writing her?" Elsie asked in surprise.

"Yes," Dorothy replied. "Some one ought to tell her of the competition; it is not fair that she should not have an equal chance of success."

"That is like you, Dorothy," Elsie exclaimed with admiration; "but as Valerie is not now a member of the class, and may not return next year, it is possible that she is not eligible for the competition. Still such kindness from you cannot fail to touch her. Now, indeed, I begin to see what I have so long hoped for."

Dorothy's face hardened. "Valerie will come back," she said, "and she must compete. I shall not care for the victory if she is not in the lists. This is the opportunity which I have waited for. You must not misunderstand me, Elsie. I do not inform Valerie of this prize through any affection for her or with any wish that she may obtain it; but simply that I may have the satisfaction of proving my pre-eminence in a fair combat. I shall tell her so very plainly, I assure you."

"Then you will hurt Valerie's feelings, and she will not accept the challenge."

Dorothy's foot tapped the floor impatiently. "Then I will make no explanation of my motive, but simply send the information."

"Do you realize, Dorothy, that Innsbruck is not far from Ober Ammergau, that Valerie will probably attend the representation of the Passion Play, and so will have a great advantage over you?"

"I realize it perfectly, and I have had my small temptations. You are not to think me better than I am. As I have not the same opportunity, my evil angel urged me not to write her of the competition until after the performances are over. The tempter argued that it was not at all my business to inform her. Why should I feel obliged to do it? She might hear of it in some other way. If she did not hear of it she might not attend the play, as so many people who live within hearing of the roar of Niagara never visit the falls. The chances and advantages seemed to counterbalance each other. If in going to the Tyrol she gained in an opportunity to hear the play, it was only fair that she should run the risk of not knowing her advantage. Why should I take pains to give her a better equipment for the contest than I could possibly have?"

"Dear Dorothy, you have had a hard struggle."

"But that sort of reasoning did not satisfy me. I knew that a victory under such conditions would be no victory, and that I should never be able to look at myself in the glass if I were capable of anything so mean."

Elsie smiled. "It would be a pity to have to turn your mirror face to the wall, since you have adopted that elaborate style of arranging your hair. But don't think, Dorothy dear, that I do not appreciate your punctilious sense of honor. I admire you all the more for this glimpse into your character;" and Elsie added in her own mind, "John shall know it just as soon as I can write him. — But, Dorothy," Elsie added aloud, "you must have the same chance that Valerie has. You must go to Europe with me this summer. You know I am to visit Valerie, and I am sure she would extend a warm welcome to you as well if — "

Dorothy shook her head vigorously.

"Then I could leave you at Ober Ammergau while I went on to Innsbruck. Do come, Dorothy. Aunt Jane is going to the Tyrol to try the efficacy of the grape cure for her rheumatism, and I am to travel in her company. Mother is very particular about my being properly chaperoned, though what a self-reliant girl, clad in all the womanly dignity of Vassar, needs of a chaperon is more than I can make out. I am certain that I shall be more of a help to Aunt Jane than she can be to me. Come, Dorothy, we will have such good times together."

ELSIE.

"It is just what I should like most to do, Elsie; but I don't like to ask Father to spend so much money on me this summer. You know that Belle is to be married next month, and Harry has just entered the firm of Gold and Glitter, while I have still another year at College.

"Father gave each of us three last summer what he considered our share of his fortune. I could write your brother to sell some of my mining-stock, but I do not think Father would approve of that. Mother has wanted a cottage at the seashore for ever so long, and Father told her that if no new expenses were sprung upon him he would build her one this summer. It will be a great thing for the younger children as well as for mother; and we older ones have agreed not to ask for another thing, — so you see there is no

hope of Europe for me." And Dorothy resolutely took up the novel "Quits," to read for a second time the Baroness Tautphoeus' description of the Passion Play.

If Dorothy's conscience was relieved by this act of justice, her mind was not altogether at rest. She realized keenly that her rival had the advantage, and she worked with feverish impatience, tearing up page after page as soon as it was written. "Do what I can," she exclaimed despairingly, "I cannot make anything new out of the subject! It is only a rehash of the encyclopedia. If I could only see the play, I might be able to set it forth in an original light. It makes me think of my little brother Charlie. His teacher gave him as a composition subject 'The Ancient Assyrians.' Of course he dug his essay out of books of reference, and it did seem rather unkind when his teacher complained that the composition was not very *original*. With such a subject what could the poor boy do? If he had been required to write of something which had fallen under the range of his observation, the criticism might have been made with more justice. I begin to feel that there is no use in trying. I might as well give up."

Just as Dorothy was in the depths of these gloomy reflections, she received a letter from Colorado, which ran as follows: —

CHAIN LIGHTNING MINES, May 30.

DEAR MISS THORNE, — Your mining stock is advancing rapidly in value. The prospects of the mine are booming, and the Company have declared an extra dividend to all stockholders. You will doubtless receive your share in a few days. I trust that you will be pleased with the amount. It is certainly a very neat sum when one considers the amount invested.

You may trust me to keep a sharp lookout in regard to your interests.

Elsie writes me that there is a possibility that you will accompany her on her European trip. Wishing you a safe voyage and much pleasure and profit on the other side, I am

Faithfully yours,

JOHN HARTLEY.

"A dividend!" Dorothy exclaimed; "but it cannot be enough. Father said that he intended to pay my college expenses for me to the end of the chapter; but he expects me to make the income of my stock cover all my needs in the way of clothing, travelling, charity, and all luxuries of every kind. He wishes me to learn to manage my business affairs, and he thinks I ought to save a little from each year's income. I am afraid I can't afford the tour." The girls consulted various authorities, and worked busily with their pencils, casting up the probable cost; and Dorothy came to the conclusion that to make the trip as she wished, and to leave plenty of margin for contingencies, she ought to have at least eight hundred dollars, — a thousand if she proposed to purchase her winter wardrobe and any presents in Paris. "I can hardly expect a dividend of ten per cent," Dorothy said ruefully, as she paused for an instant of suspense before opening the letter from the treasurer of the Company. Then she tore it open eagerly, and a narrow slip of pink paper fluttered out, — a check for fifteen hundred dollars.

CHAPTER II.

NO CHAPERON.

UNT Jane accompanied the girls as far as Interlaken, but as they had decided to preface their journeyings in the Tyrol by a brief visit to the Italian Lakes, she had gone directly on to Meran, and left them to make this side trip alone.

Dorothy had a friend at Baveno on Lago Maggiore, — a Mrs. Irving, who urged them to come to her for a visit, and to make this spot a centre for excursions. Before turning their faces southward, the girls had paused in the historic city of Lucerne. They interested themselves during the day in sight-seeing, and in the evening listened to concerts provided for the guests of the hotel in the great central hall. During a pause in the first of these entertainments, Dorothy found herself seated beside a chatty old gentleman, evidently an American; for he was proud of his nationality, and had found nothing in Europe which was not in his opinion surpassed in America.

"Talk about your Mont Blancs and your Grand Mulets," — he pronounced the latter name as though it were the fish mullets, — "they can't either of them hold a candle to Mount Hooker for actual measurement; and for apparent grandeur, give me Pike's Peak or the Cañon of the Arkansas. No, ma'am; home productions are good enough for me. Now, take the matter of girls; there

is n't a country in Europe can beat the American variety. I knew the moment that you came into this room that you were an American girl, and I said so to Gilbert, — that 's my son, the young man in the light mustache and eye-glasses talking to that Italian count

JUDGE AUSTIN.

over there. By the way, I don't take much stock in that count, and I said so; but Gilbert says he is all right. I said to Gilbert when you came into the room, 'Gilbert, there 's an American girl; and it makes an old man's heart swell with patriotic pride just

to see her walk across the floor. Did you ever see a marchioness do it better?' You see, Gilbert does n't think much of foreign titles and so forth; but I hope I have impressed one thing on his mind, and that is that he is not to present me with a foreign daughter-in-law unless she is a real genuine true blue sprig of the nobility. No pretty peasant-girls for me; I 've said it, and I 'll stick to it."

"Father, I assure you there is no cause for apprehension," remarked the young man in question; for the old gentleman had become so much in earnest that he had not noticed the approach of his son. "I solemnly promise you not to marry a peasant, and there is no possibility that any lady of rank will ever become interested in me."

GILBERT AUSTIN.

"I don't know about that, Gilbert," replied the old gentleman, regarding his son, fondly; "you have made the acquaintance of one count already, and you must not forget to present that letter of introduction to the Count von Hohenberg when you reach Innsbruck."

Dorothy started. The Count von Hohenberg was Valerie's father, and she listened with more interest than she had hitherto felt as the old gentleman calmly continued his observations.

"The count has a daughter that one might mistake for an American girl. I saw her once in Washington when her father was a member of the Foreign Legation, and I must admit that I have no fault to find with her. But pardon your old father's obliviousness, and let me present you to my young companion here,

a countrywoman of ours, I am proud to say. Allow me, miss, to introduce my son, Gilbert Austin, newly appointed United States Consul to Innsbruck. My name is Austin, too, naturally, — Judge Jonah Austin, ex-senator from Illinois. Now you know us, father and son, and I am happy to say that there is nothing in our history which I would be ashamed to have you know. It 's a clean record so far, though the Austins have always been in politics; and it is an old joke that Austin babies never creep, — they begin their walk in life by running for office."

It was impossible to resist the judge's frank good-humor; and as Elsie approached at this juncture, Dorothy, who was usually reticent to a fault, surprised herself by remarking, "Elsie, this gentleman is acquainted with our classmate, Valerie von Hohenberg."

"Indeed!" Elsie exclaimed with delight, "how small the world is! We are continually meeting people who know friends of ours."

"That is what I tell Gilbert. If you want to do anything disgraceful with the hope of running away afterward to some country where you will not be known, you had better take tickets to the moon; and even then you need n't feel safe, for our detective service will cable over a personal description, and like as not the first person you meet on stepping on the landing will be some enterprising tourist from the States, who has already received a "New York Herald" giving a full account of the crime, while our Government will get out an extradition treaty with the Lunatics quicker than a wink, and have you back again in State's Prison for a term of years."

All laughed; and Gilbert Austin asked, "How is it that Miss von Hohenberg, who I understand is an Austrian, was your classmate? You have been educated abroad?"

Elsie explained, and the young man seemed much interested when she informed him that she was on her way to visit her friend.

"Then we shall all probably meet at Innsbruck."

"You may see Elsie there, but I shall certainly not visit the Hohenbergs, even if I decide to go to the Tyrol," Dorothy replied with hauteur.

The music, which had been interrupted, now began again. A quintette of male voices rendered various Italian songs, to the accom-

"YUMPY, YUMPY, YAH!"

paniment of violins, mandolins, and guitars. One glee played by the very plump Italians seemed especially amusing. "How provoking that I cannot understand the words," Dorothy remarked; "that chorus with its repetition of something that sounds like 'Yumpy, yumpy, yah!' appears to be very jolly."

"I will ask my friend, Count Farniente, to translate it for me. I am afraid my knowledge of Italian is not sufficient to render it smoothly." Before Dorothy could object, the young man had brought forward and introduced a dark-eyed, dark-whiskered gentleman, whom Dorothy and Elsie had already remarked as being quite a favorite among the ladies. The count spoke amusing English, but his French was perfect, his manners were elegant, and his conversation agreeable. He devoted himself exclusively to Dorothy during the remainder of the evening, while Elsie chatted with the Austins. At the close of the concert the company promenaded for a time on the veranda, which overlooked the lake, and when they parted for the night the count asked if the young ladies would honor him by joining in a driving party and picnic excursion which he had planned for the next day. The two girls looked at each other doubtfully, but Gilbert Austin spoke up quickly, "You need not hesitate to accept. I saw you speaking with Mrs. Arthur Ponsonby this afternoon; she chaperons the party, which is quite a large one, and both of her daughters are in it. The count drives the first coach, — he is an excellent whip, — and I shall conduct the second. I hope you will come."

DOROTHY AT THE CONCERT.

"Mrs. Ponsonby appears to me to be a colossus of even British propriety," said Dorothy. "I think, Elsie, we may venture to accept."

The girls held a serious discussion over what it was best for Dorothy to wear, and decided on a pretty gray costume of velvet and cashmere which she had made in Paris, in direct imitation of one worn by a daughter of Carolus Duran in a portrait by her father, which she

had seen at the exhibition in the Champ de Mars. Poor Elsie had no choice, for the dress which she would have liked to wear had been left at Interlaken, her modest little trunk having been exchanged for one of Aunt Jane's. They had discovered the mistake too late to rectify it, for Aunt Jane was not intending to stop at Lucerne, but had left that same afternoon for Meran, and it seemed best to keep the trunk until they could join her. Dorothy was profuse in her offers of her own clothing, but Elsie felt that she would be more at home in her own brown travelling-dress than in borrowed finery.

The party was a very gay one. The greater part of the occupants of the hotel came to the doors and windows to see the start. The grooms held the heads of the restive four-in-hand until the count took the reins. "He is a great sport," Dorothy heard Mrs. Ponsonby whisper to a timid young lady, "and often drives six horses." Servants of the hotel were busily stowing away hampers of good things. "I wonder who the count has asked to sit beside him," Mrs. Ponsonby queried, but her daughters could only assure her that they had not yet been invited. The good woman's curiosity was set at rest when the count presently handed Dorothy to the coveted seat on the box. She looked very pretty there, with the consciousness that she was the observed of all observers heightening her color, and the wind playing with her hair and the soft gray plume on her hat. The count's lackey handed him a basket filled with bouquets of flowers, which the count distributed among the ladies on his coach, reserving a bunch of jasmine and orchids for Dorothy.

"The jasmine is my flower favorita," he said, "it grows all over the giardino of my palazzo in Venice."

Glancing back, and seeing that Gilbert Austin's coach was quite ready, with Elsie on the driver's seat, the count gave the signal for starting, and with a fanfare on the coach horn from Judge Austin, who stood up to deliver it and was projected unexpectedly into Mrs. Ponsonby's lap by the sudden start, they were all merrily off. Their

THE HOLLOW WAY AT KÜSSNACHT.

route took them along the shore of the lake via Küssnacht to Vitznau. Here they left their coaches and ascended the Rigi by the mountain railroad. A clear day gave them the unrivalled view in all its beauty.

It was a happy day, such as light-hearted, quick-witted young people always enjoy. There was jest and story, compliment and badinage; and after the luncheon had been heartily appreciated, the count produced a guitar and proved himself a rival of the musicians of the preceding evening. Caroline Ponsonby followed, and then Gilbert Austin asked if any one could play the accompaniments to any of the Harvard songs. Dorothy took up the guitar, and the young man trolled forth "The Pope he is a happy man," and "It must be Schneider leads dot band," and "Clementine," Elsie and Dorothy joining with hearty good-will in the chorus. American college-songs were voted a great success, and Mrs. Ponsonby declaring that she had heard a great deal in praise of American negro melodies, Dorothy sang to great applause some Creole songs which she had learned from Mr. Cable. Elsie fancied that Mrs. Ponsonby did not enjoy seeing America carry off all the honors, and complaining that the seat on the box was too chilly for her, she induced Gilbert Austin to invite Caroline Ponsonby to take her place for the homeward drive. She was rewarded by a seat beside Mrs. Ponsonby, who entertained her by giving her detailed information in regard to the count's titles, possessions, accomplishments, and character. (I put the words in the order of the importance which they occupied in the lady's mind.) "In short, my dear, he is quite a catch," Mrs. Ponsonby concluded, "but he is fully aware of his own importance, and shows no disposition to marry. He is probably waiting for an heiress."

CAROLINE PONSONBY.

The day concluded, as the former one had done, with music in the hotel hall, and the girls retired, assuring the count and Gilbert Austin that it had been one of the very pleasantest of their European tour. So it might have remained in their memories had not Dorothy bethought herself that she intended to copy the words of one of the Italian songs, and descended again to the hall.

ON THE VERANDA.

It was deserted, but the music lay upon the piano, the gas was still burning, and she sat down to copy the words. The night was warm, and the windows were open; two gentlemen were smoking on the veranda, and their conversation was distinctly audible.

"Listen, Gilberto," said the count; "amigo mio, I am greatly interessa in Madamazella Dorothea. How differenta from the donna Inglezza!"

"My father has often told me that American girls have no equals."

"The signore is right. Tell me, Gilberto. These ladies make their journey to Lago Maggiore. Think you I could to presume to make — *il viggiare* — the — the — travel, in company, to be as their courieur, them to assist with their baggage, the procuration of their tickets; to make myself what you call generally useless?"

Gilbert Austin laughed. "It would n't do to propose such a thing; they are nice girls and would not accept any offer of assistance; they are perfectly able to take care of themselves."

The count responded with a deep sigh, and Gilbert Austin continued, "However, if you really want to continue the acquaintance, I don't see what is to hinder your going to Italy too, especially as

it is your own country. You can fall in with them on the way, and quite by accident, you know, find out which is their compartment on the train. If you like I will go with you; I am in no haste to get to Innsbruck, and I will talk to the bright one, while you chat with the other. They have no chaperon to extinguish us, and when young ladies travel without a chaperon, by that very act they invite a freedom of intercourse on our part which we should not presume upon if they were properly attended. Yes, I am sure we may venture, and I shall not be surprised if our company is even welcomed; we have certainly not been treated with rudeness so far."

Boiling with indignation, Dorothy could scarcely refrain from appearing before the young men, and taking them to task for what she considered their impertinent presumption. She was restrained from this act only by unwillingness to lay herself open to the charge of eavesdropping, and she hastened to her room, there to hold an indignation meeting with Elsie.

"I am sure I don't see that we have done anything so very disgraceful, or even imprudent. Nothing more so than those prudish Ponsonby girls at all events."

"Only this difference," moaned Dorothy, "that they have their mother to chaperon them. If only Aunt Jane had been here we might have been twice as giddy, and those horrid men would never have dared to misconstrue our conduct," and Dorothy buried her head in her bolster, calling piteously for Aunt Jane. A look of firmness came into Elsie's face as she proceeded to pick the lock of Aunt Jane's trunk with her buttonhook, and array herself quickly in that good woman's venerable head-piece with its rusty crape veil.

"Aunt Jane has arrived, children," she said, mimicking her relative's high-pitched voice. Dorothy sat up and uttered a little shriek of surprise, ending in hysterical laughter. "You don't mean to say—" she exclaimed.

"That I intend to enact Aunt Jane, and to chaperon you quite out of the reach of these presuming young men. Yes, my dear, I shall be such a dragon that if either of them appear on this trip I would like to see them offer to pay us the slightest attention. Mr. Austin has paid me the compliment of considering me bright; I will try to deserve it. See, I can do my hair up so, quite drawn away from my forehead, with draggly curls down over my ears, and I shall wear those London smoke-glasses you bought to protect your eyes from the snow-glare at Chamonix. Then with this crape veil drawn down primly, I defy recognition. Fortunately, here is a black shawl of Aunt Jane's, and her old-fashioned fan and mitts, a box of caraway seeds, her knitting, and all sorts of little stage properties."

"But is it practicable? How shall we arrange it?"

"We will leave by the first boat to-morrow morning instead of the day after to-morrow, as I told Mr. Austin we intended to do. I will slip out of the house first, and you will find me waiting for you at the boat. You can pay the bill and come down in the hotel omnibus, with our luggage. If either of our young friends offer to see you off they will see you placed under the protection of a respectable old lady, and will, I think, hardly dare to make any offer of their company. I need only keep the disguise when we feel that we are in the society of those who think the less of us for not having a chaperon."

"But do you think you can sustain it if Mr. Austin and the count should happen to take the early boat?"

"You know I always take the old-lady parts in our theatricals at Vassar. I can manage the voice, I know, and I rather hope for an opportunity of crossing swords with Mr. Gilbert Austin."

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE PLAN WORKED.

NO one paid any attention to the bent, little old woman who slipped out of the hotel in the early morning, and, after taking a cup of coffee at the café next door, walked down to the steamboat-landing and bought two tickets for Altdorf, — no one but a good-natured old gentleman who was taking his morning constitutional along the shore of the lake, and who heard her ask at what time the boat would be in. Something in the voice appeared to attract him, for he turned quickly and answered the question.

"You are nearly an hour ahead of time, ma'am, and as promptitude is an American virtue I take it for granted that I am speaking to a fellow-countrywoman."

Elsie was much embarrassed by this unexpected meeting with Judge Austin, and tried her best to get away from him, but he trotted good-naturedly at her side, delighted with having found some one to whom he could expatiate on America.

"You are a very brisk walker, ma'am," he puffed; "from New England, I take it. New England women have an energy about them which is recognizable the world over. Now, few other ladies of your time of life would think themselves able to make a European tour alone."

The remark so amused Elsie that it gave her the courage to reply more truthfully than was apparent. "I am not, perhaps, so old as I look, and I am not travelling alone; my niece will join me in a few minutes."

"No offence, ma'am," exclaimed the judge, "I meant no offence; on the contrary, you are one of the youngest looking women for your years I ever met. Whatever your age may be, ma'am, you don't look it; I assure you, you don't look it."

"There you spoke the truth without intending to do so," thought Elsie, and she added aloud, "My niece said the very same thing to me this morning. 'No one would believe, Aunt Jane,' she said, 'that you are as old as you are, or that you could take as long a walk as I can—'"

"That's all very true, ma'am; the younger generation can't equal the old stock for all their athletics. But don't you really think that when people get on in years, like you and me, they are best off at home? This trapesing from Dan to Beersheba suits my son Gilbert, but I have had enough of it. I shall stay over here until I see him settled in Innsbruck, but I wish I could be at home in time for the fall elections. I don't want Denis to rule over me, or any other newly-naturalized foreigner to represent Illinois. I have never missed voting at an election since 'Tippecanoe and Tyler too.' You remember that campaign, ma'am? Oh! yes, you *must* remember it." And so the good man prattled on until the boat arrived and Elsie sought refuge on board. He escorted her politely to a seat on deck, carrying her cap-box and reticule for her.

Just as he stepped on shore Dorothy alighted from the hotel omnibus. "What, off so soon!" he exclaimed, "Gilbert will be disappointed; he is going on to-morrow, and hoped to have the pleasure of your company."

"Kindly bid your son good-by for me," Dorothy replied with

THE BURGENSTOCK FROM THE FOOTPATH BETWEEN VITZNAU AND GERSAU.

much dignity. "Pray thank him for his kind intentions; but as Aunt Jane, with whom I am travelling, is rather a strict chaperon, I fear she would hardly approve of his joining our party."

"Then the very interesting old lady with whom I have been talking is your aunt? Let me take you to her. I am sure she would like Gilbert if she knew him. I may be able to smooth matters so that she will look more kindly on him when he finds you, as he certainly will, at Altdorf."

And the well-intentioned old gentleman poured into Elsie's ears a eulogium on his son, ending by asking, —

"At what hotel shall you stop at Altdorf? You have not decided? No matter; there are only a few, and Gilbert will be sure to find you;" and, with a benevolent smile he added in a lower tone, "I hope, ma'am, you will not be too strict with the young people. We must remember how we felt when we were young." The steamer was on the point of leaving, and he hurried on shore, where he stood waving his hat until they were out of sight.

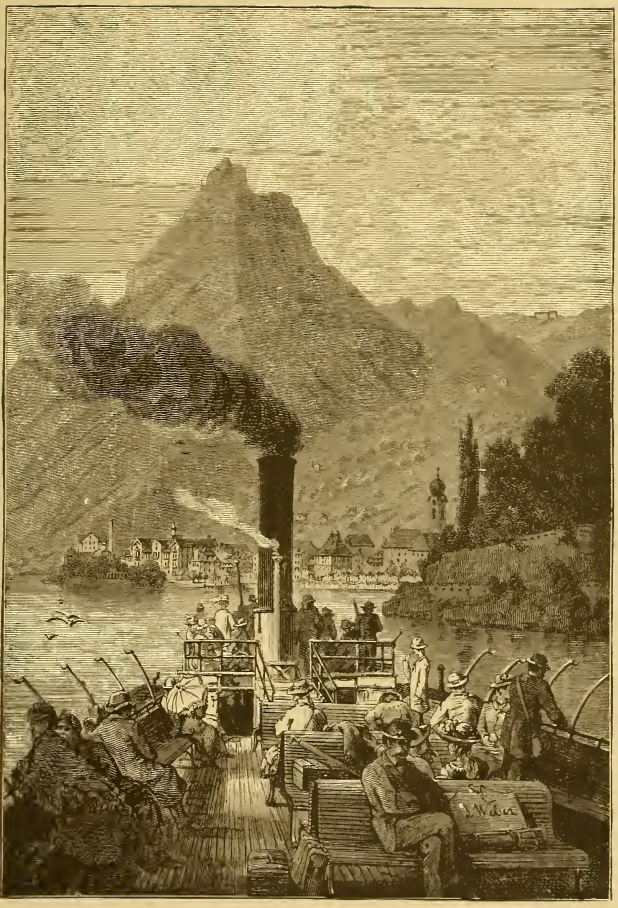
Elsie shook with suppressed laughter, and Dorothy was in high glee. "This proves that your disguise is perfect," she whispered; "but as these disagreeable young men are not on board I do not see why you should stifle behind that stuffy crape veil. Come down into the cabin and change Aunt Jane's bonnet and shawl for your own hat and sack. I have them here in this hand-bag. There has been so much confusion attendant on the embarkation that I do not think any one will notice Aunt Jane's disappearance, or if they do they will simply think that she has gone ashore."

The change was quickly made, and Elsie, restored to her own personality, felt much more at home, and enjoyed the beautiful scenery of the Lake of the Four Cantons with its environing mountains, — the Rigi on the left, Pilatus on the right, and in front of them the Bürgenstock, the Buoschen Horn, and the Stanser Horn. A curtain of mist hid from their view the grand panorama of the distant Bernese Ober-

land, which should have been visible behind Pilatus, but as the girls had just come from this region they did not greatly regret the deprivation of the usual view. Dorothy had made the usual easy ascensions, and she was disappointed that their somewhat hasty leave-taking had prevented her from climbing Pilatus, and adding its name to those already inscribed upon her alpenstock. As she sat fingering this trophy it slipped from her hand and rolled to a little distance. A gentleman sitting beside her promptly regained it for her, and asked

THE AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER.

if he might read the names upon the staff. "I am a little of an Alpinist myself and am always interested in this sign of pilgrimage. Ah! you have been up the Faulhorn; that is not generally considered a lady's mountain. You must have felt amply repaid for your exertion, for the view which you gain from the summit is one of the finest in all Switzerland. You see I do not climb mountains simply to say that I have plodded up so many thousand feet. To me the view is the main object, and I take my little camera with me and let it have a peep at whatever I think worth seeing."



GERSAU, LAKE OF LUCERNE.

"Have you any of your photographs with you?" Dorothy asked, interested in spite of herself. The young man took a roll of proofs from his pocket. "Here is the record of a recent trip in the Tyrol," he said, handing them to her one by one for inspection.

"I did not know that the mountains of the Tyrol were so grand. One does not hear so much of them as of the Swiss Alps."

"They deserve to be much better known. The Ortler Spitze in the Tyrol is nearly as high as Mont Blanc, and much grander in appearance. The Dolemite region presents a wonderful succession of savage serrated peaks, rising like the sharp teeth in the jaw of some huge dragon. The Dolemites are frequently visited by members of Alpine clubs desirous of distinction, for it is harder to climb their precipitous sides than most of the Swiss mountains. Even the Matterhorn, since the chains have been added, is an easier ascension than the hardest of the Dolemites. As some one else has said, very practicable roads have been made in Switzerland to the most impracticable places. The Swiss have done everything to make their country the travellers' paradise, leading him by a succession of easy grades to stupendous heights, while the Tyrol has been left in an absolute state of nature, so that one may undergo terrible fatigue and even danger in scrambling over rocks and through underbrush, leaping crevasses and skirting abysses, to reach a comparatively insignificant elevation. I am rather glad however that it is so, and I intend to make another foot-tour through the Tyrol later in the season. The Ortler Spitze has been calling me for some time; I have resisted its fascination so far, but I feel that I shall succumb before the summer is over."

"Are the Tyrolese mountains all so difficult?" asked Dorothy. "Are there none which a lady could climb?"

"The Stelvio Pass is the highest carriage-road in Europe, and there are several easy mountains near the Brenner. The Amfortspitze is one, and there is Mt. Campiglio not far from Botzen, with a comfortable hotel at its foot; but in most of the out-of-the-way places

you will miss the luxurious provisions for comfort which one finds in Switzerland. Still, if you don't mind roughing it a little, I recommend the Tyrol to you most heartily." He bowed, and as they were passing the entrance into the Lake of Küssnacht, left to take a photograph of the charming view, and, apparently meeting with acquaintances at the other end of the boat, did not return to them.

"Now there is a young man," said Elsie, "with no nonsense about him."

"Don't be too sure of that," Dorothy replied gloomily; "men are all more or less alike; I hate them all."

"Brother John too?" Elsie asked timidly.

"No; but your brother is so nice and brotherly with all girls, and makes it so very evident that he does not desire to be anything but a brother, that one feels perfectly safe with him."

Elsie gave a little sigh. "I suppose she would hate John too, if she knew the truth," she thought; and then she asked, "At what hotel shall we stop at Altdorf?"

"I don't think we had better stop at any hotel," Dorothy replied. "I believe that Judge Austin is right in supposing that his son would be sure to find us. There are other boats which will make the trip later in the day; they may follow us before to-morrow, and I advise not stopping at Altdorf and getting on as rapidly as possible."

"There is a train which leaves for Lago Maggiore by way of the St. Gotthard Pass, directly on the arrival of this boat," said Elsie, consulting her railway guide. "I wonder whether we shall be able to catch it?"

"We must. I will run ahead and buy the tickets if you will find a porter to transfer the luggage."

It was a merry and successful scamper, and the two girls found themselves seats in a compartment reserved for ladies just as the engine gave a quick snort in reply to the whistle of the guard, and the train moved with increasing speed toward Italy.

TRIEB, LAKE OF LUCERNE

There was an English lady in their compartment with a sweet little girl named Gladys, who amused them much by her prattle. Their carriage bore the conspicuous label Nichtraucher (not a smoker). The child had been attracted by it, and remarked after an interval of contemplation, "What a funny sleeping-car this is, Mamma."

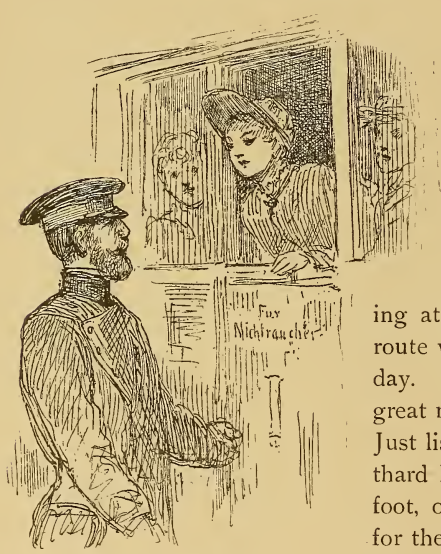
"It is not a sleeping-car, Gladys. What put that idea into your head?"

"Then what makes them call it a night rocker?" And she could not understand the laughter which greeted her simple inquiry.

The St. Gotthard Pass with its approaches is one of the most remarkable examples of engineering in the world. Fortunately the daylight lasted long enough for them to see the wonderful succession of twists and turns, bridges and viaducts, circular and semi-circular tunnels, by which the train dashed into the heart of a mountain and issued at a spot almost directly above its entrance. Now they looked up at the church of Wassen perched high above them on the right side of the road, and in a few minutes they found themselves looking down upon it on their left. They played at hide-and-seek with the impetuous torrent of the Reuss, the railroad appeared to tie itself into loops and knots, and the magnetic needle of Elsie's little compass had never before in so short a time whisked about in such an apparently fickle manner. Finally they plunged into the great St. Gotthard Tunnel, nine and a quarter miles in length. For twenty minutes they pursued their way through the centre of the mountain six thousand feet below its summit, and just as the sun was setting they dashed out into the semi-Italian town of Airolo.

GLADYS.

The hotel, though not of the best, was crowded, and the girls were given a room in the *dépendance*, a large dreary house with a stable on its first floor. The night was chilly, and they were so wearied by the exciting flight of the day that they were glad to seek early repose under their great down quilts.



EN ROUTE FOR ITALY.

Early the next morning Elsie was awakened by Dorothy's exclaiming, "Do get up; it is a lovely day. I have been looking at what Baedeker says of the route which we passed over yesterday. It seems that we made a great mistake in making it by rail. Just listen to this: 'The St. Gotthard Road should be traversed on foot, or in an open carriage, both for the sake of the scenery and for the opportunity it affords of examining the interesting railway.'"

"Well," yawned Elsie, "now that we are here you don't propose returning in order to do it over again, do you?"

"Not exactly; but I would like to walk back up the mountain as far as the Hospice. It takes only three hours, as it is much nearer Airolo than Goeschenen, the northern terminus of the tunnel, and we can get back in time for the two o'clock train, which will allow us to spend the night at Locarno as we proposed. The views must be magnificent, and think how well 'Hospice of St. Gotthard' will look on our alpenstocks."

ON THE AXENSTRASSE, LAKE OF LUCERNE.

"That alpenstock of yours is a regular fetich," Elsie replied; "but I like the plan, and we will start as soon as we have had our coffee. We must take our waterproofs, and I will add Aunt Jane's shawl to the bundle, for it is sure to be several degrees colder on the mountain than in the valley."

They found the scenery rather more grand and imposing than beautiful. The Val Tremola, up which they walked, was a desolate valley, and they could well believe the information that avalanches were frequent in the spring, and that in the winter the snow-drifts were often thirty to forty feet high. They saw snow on several of the mountain-peaks near them.

On arriving at the Hospice they found it converted into a meteorological station. There was an inn near by at which they ordered luncheon, and then Dorothy stepped across the road to look into the old mortuary chapel. There were crumbling bones here of the travellers who had been found frozen to death long before the tunnel had carried the highway under instead of over the mountain. Dorothy was musing rather sadly on the fate of these unfortunates when she was startled by a familiar voice just outside the door.

"Yes, the Hospice was founded by Carlo Borromeo. They made him a saint for his good deeds; but I should not like to be a saint at such a price. You see he was a richissimo signore, talented, noble, and he renounced the world to enter the Church. Povaretto! I could not do that."

The door opened, and Gilbert Austin and Count Farniente stood before her. All three were greatly surprised, and Gilbert Austin was the first to speak. "How did you get here? Not as we came, I am very certain. We reached Altdorf yesterday afternoon and spent the evening searching for you; concluded that you had gone on to Italy; took the early train this morning as far as Goeschenen, and a carriage to Hospenthal, where we breakfasted, and then set out to cross the mountain on foot."

Dorothy explained that she had climbed it from the southern side, which is not considered so fatiguing. "I fancy that our luncheon is waiting us," she added, turning to leave the chapel, "and as you have already had your midday meal, that it will be of no use to ask you to share it."

"We will join you after your breakfast, if your aunt will permit it," Gilbert Austin replied as he accompanied her toward the inn. "My father says that you are no longer quite your own mistress, and that I must not expect a continuance of our former intimacy."

"I was not aware that we had become remarkably intimate, and I assure you that nothing was further from my intention."

Gilbert Austin adjusted his eye-glass and stared at her with astonishment. Becoming convinced that she was seriously displeased with him, he besought her to tell him the reason. "My father led me to believe that you would present us to your aunt," he added; "is she with you?"

Dorothy was about to reply that Aunt Jane was not fond of making ascensions and had remained at her hotel, when to her surprise the grotesque bonnet appeared at the inn window, and Elsie called to her in her sharpest accents, —

"Dorothy, Dorothy, child; come here this instant!" And as Dorothy obeyed, she added in a voice distinctly audible to the two gentlemen, "Don't you know any better, child, than to be picking up acquaintances like that?"

The two young men looked at each other ruefully as Dorothy disappeared, the count saying, — "The signorina does not seem in a mood to be supplicated, and her aunt is a lady to inspire sentiments of awe rather than of admiration."

"I should not care a fig for the old lady," Austin replied, "but Miss Dorothy herself appears to be offended. If her little friend is here I shall find out what is the matter, but Miss Dorothy has the manners of a duchess and is quite unapproachable."

"WONDERFUL SUCCESSIONS OF TWISTS AND TURNS."

"You have well said," replied the count, "that she has the manners of a duchess, but is that the reason she is not to be approached? It does not so seem to me."

In the mean time Dorothy had given Elsie a hug. "You charming girl! How did you manage to get into that bonnet just in the nick of time?"

"I put it in the shawl-strap before we started. I had an uneasy feeling that it was not safe to be without it, and as I happened to be looking out of the window, I saw you before you saw me. The luncheon is served. Let us hurry and take it before they come in, for I do not want them to see me without my veil. I will sit with my back to the door so as to have time to muffle my face if they enter."

"I suppose," said Dorothy, "that we shall be obliged to walk down the mountain together, and will it not seem a little out of character for a lady of your years to be so uncommonly vigorous?"

"I have thought of that," Elsie replied. "I saw two men with a *chaise à porteur* hanging about the inn door a few minutes ago; perhaps we can engage them to carry me."

"An excellent idea! And your niece will walk dutifully at your side."

Dorothy found the men, and Elsie seated herself in the chair just as the count and Gilbert Austin approached the door.

"Allow me, madam," said the young consul in his politest accents, "to present my friend, Count Farniente."

"But no one has presented you, young man," Elsie replied sharply.

"I had hoped that your niece would perform that kind office for me," Austin replied, with an appealing glance toward Dorothy, "or that the conversation which my father had with you yesterday might be considered in the light of an introduction."

Aunt Jane's only reply was to request the porters of her chair

to move forward; and Austin turned with a discomfited air toward Dorothy, on whom the count was pouring forth a flood of compliment.

"After the rebuff which your aunt has just given me, I suppose we must not accompany you," Austin said, as soon as he could gain the opportunity. "I only hope that both you and she may

THE FALSE AUNT JANE.

be granted repentance and better minds, and that we may be permitted to call upon you at your hotel this evening, if indeed we are not stopping at the same house."

"I cannot make any promises for Aunt Jane," Dorothy replied, obeying a signal from Elsie to follow her. The two young men walked beside her for a little way.

GORGE OF THE TICINO. AIROLO.

"Your friend Miss Elsie did not leave Lucerne with you, my father informed me," said Gilbert, rather to prolong the conversation than from any interest in the young lady in question.

"Elsie never cared for Italy," Dorothy replied evasively; "her chief object in coming abroad was to visit her friend in the Tyrol." To prevent Austin from asking any further embarrassing questions, she turned to the count and remarked, "You were speaking, when you entered the chapel, of Carlo Borromeo. What relation does his name bear to that of the Borromean Islands?"

"It is the same family," replied the count, delighted by this encouragement to converse, "one of the most ancient of our Italian nobility. The present count is a friend to me. His favorite home is on the Isola Bella. Ah! it is rightly name. The signorina has said that she is on her way to Baveno. The Isola Bella is justly opposite with the other islands Borromeo. If the countess is at Isola Bella, I will not delay to bring her to call upon the signorina. Then you will have invitation to visit her lovely home and to —*andare in barca* upon the lake."

"You are very kind," Dorothy replied gently. "I will speak to Aunt Jane of your delightful offer; and remember that whatever may be her reply I thank you." With a slight inclination of her head to Austin, and a pretty, imperious wave of the hand which forbade them to follow, she ran on and rejoined her pretended aunt.

The girls talked little on their way down the mountain, for one of the bearers understood English. They reached their room in ample time to gather their belongings together and to walk to the station before the departure of the train, Elsie resuming her girlish attire before leaving the room. She noticed that Dorothy wrote a note and then tore it into small pieces; but she did not seem to be in a talkative mood, and it was not until they were comfortably settled in the cars that Elsie remarked to her,—

"I think that I snubbed Mr. Gilbert Austin pretty successfully, don't you, dear?"

"Almost too successfully," Dorothy replied.

"POOR JOHN."

"What do you mean?" Elsie asked in astonishment.

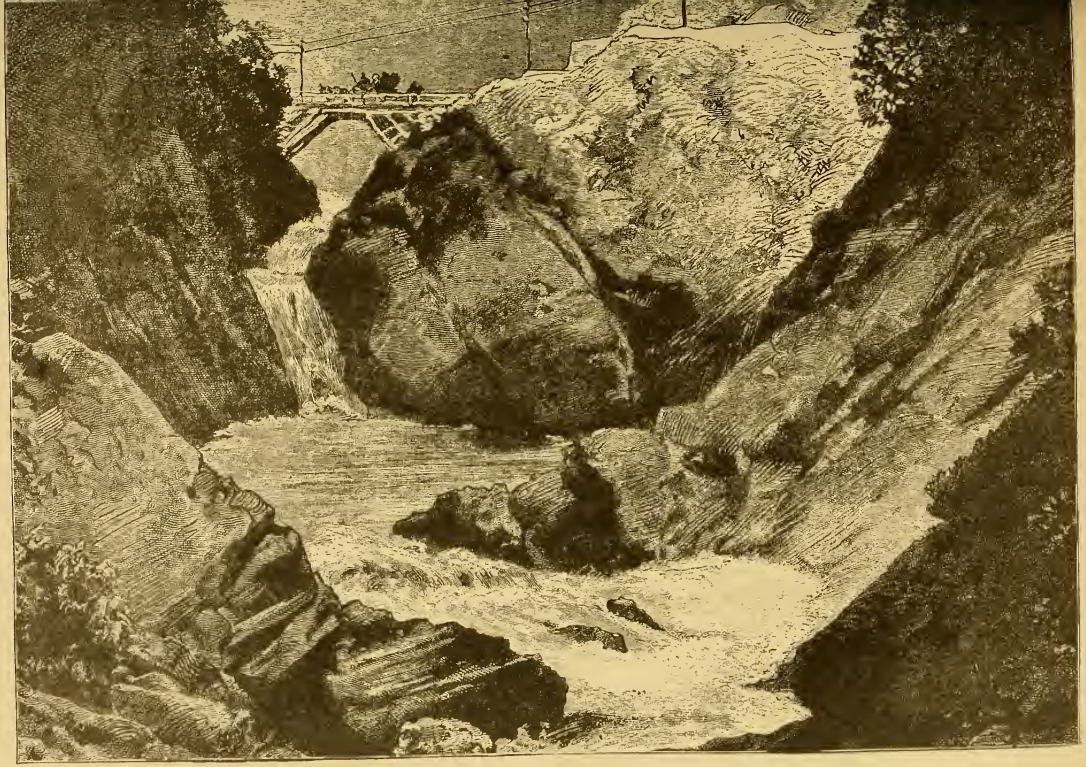
"I mean that you rather overacted your part. I did not intend gratuitously to insult and offend these gentlemen. There was nothing in our former pleasant intercourse to regret except the lack of a chaperon, and I supposed that when you assumed that character, that after having impressed Mr. Austin with his mistake, we would resume the old relations. The count has offered to introduce us to his titled friends, and —"

"And you would really like to continue his acquaintance?"

"It is very agreeable; I don't see why not."

Elsie looked hard out of the window, and was silent; but her beating heart kept repeating over and over again in rhythm to the steady jarring of the train, and so loudly that it seemed to her excited imagination that her friend must understand the words, —

"You cruel girl, you cruel girl!
Poor John, poor John!
You cruel, cruel, cruel girl!
Poor, poor John!"



THE PIOTTA GORGE ON THE ST. GOTTHARD ROAD

CHAPTER IV.

LAGO MAGGIORE.

A path of pleasure. Like a silver zone
Flung about carelessly it shines afar,
Catching the eye in many a broken link,
In many a turn and traverse as it glides ;
And oft above and oft below appears.
Yet through its fairy course, go where it will,
The torrent stops it not; the rugged rock
Opens and lets it in ; and on it runs,
Winning its easy way from clime to clime.
But now 't is passed,
That turbulent chaos ; and the promised land
Lies at my feet in all its loveliness !
To him who starts up from a terrible dream.
And lo ! the sun is shining and the lark
Singing aloud for joy, to him is not
Such sudden ravishment as now I feel
At the first glimpses of fair Italy.

ROGERS.

THE character of the scenery changed as by magic as they descended toward Italy. Not only was the vegetation more abundant on the southern slopes of the Alps, the walnut and the beech appearing in the valleys in the place of the gloomy pines, but the character of the architecture and of the people changed as well. Not for the better however. White stone huts replaced the log châlets, gleaming picturesquely in the distance,

but dirty and squalid when seen near at hand. The people spoke the soft Italian language, smoked the long cigars of Turin instead of the German pipe, and wore the costume of Piedmont; but they lacked the sturdy honesty of the German Swiss, and there was a dash of the bandit in their wild appearance.

The girls' first stop was at Locarno on Lago Maggiore. "It is like a scene in the theatre," Dorothy exclaimed with delight. "The arches and over-hanging balconies are all ready for Romeo and Juliet to rehearse their parts; the fruit and bright costumes seem arranged to give touches of color; even the dirt and rags of the beggars appear to be put on with an eye to picturesque effect. It is altogether admirable."

A TURIN CIGAR.

"Then you would rather the beggars should be dirty and picturesque than clean and prosaic?" Elsie asked.

"Yes, indeed. One quite forgets that these superb creatures are suffering; and I fancy that a great deal of our sympathy is wasted upon them, and that they really enjoy their misery."

Their pause at Locarno was only to give them a night's rest, and on the next day they sailed down the enchanting lake to Baveno, a charming little town nestled under grand mountains.

An adventure extremely mortifying to the girls befell them on the way. As they stepped on board the little steamer Dorothy noticed a well-known figure standing at the stern.

"There is that altogether disagreeable Gilbert Austin. The count is with him too," she whispered to Elsie. "They have not seen us yet. Come into the cabin quickly, and change your hat and jacket for Aunt Jane's bonnet and shawl."

Elsie demurred. All pleasure in the masquerade had vanished for

MORTUARY CHAPEL IN THE ST. GOTTHARD.

her. "I think we have had enough fun," she replied; "I would rather not do it any more."

But Dorothy swept her along, and presently mounted to the deck in company with a little old woman in black. A Swiss officer looked at the girls closely, and as it seemed to them rudely, as they passed, and they hurried by him and took an inconspicuous seat behind other passengers. But the man was not to be escaped. He followed them and stood staring at them fixedly.

"How very impudent he is," Dorothy whispered. "I really think I had better appeal to Mr. Austin."

As she rose to do so the young man noticed her and came forward, greeting them pleasantly. "You must have left on a very early train," he said. "It is a happy chance that we have overtaken you."

Dorothy was about to reply; but the Swiss officer approached and said authoritatively, "I must trouble the lady in black to go on shore. I cannot allow her to cross the Italian frontier, for I have reason to believe that she is disguised, and that I have seen her in quite another costume; I am stationed here to look out for a noted adventuress. I insist that this lady remove her veil." Elsie uttered a stifled cry, and Dorothy turned deadly pale.

"These ladies are friends and compatriots of mine," said Gilbert Austin. "I can satisfy you as to my official position by my credentials, and I make myself responsible for them."

The officer examined the papers which Austin handed him with evident respect.

"Here too is the Count Farniente," Gilbert Austin continued, "if you wish other assurance than mine of their perfect respectability." The count was profuse in his assertions, and the official hesitated.

"Will the ladies show me their passports?" he asked at last.

Dorothy produced the papers instantly.

"But this description tells of two *young* ladies."

"And they are both young," Gilbert Austin replied coolly. "Miss

Elsie, will you oblige the gentleman by removing your veil? Because Americans dress in a manner peculiar to themselves, Signor Officer, it is not necessary to conclude too rashly that they are disguised."

The officer was himself too much surprised to notice the count's exclamation of astonishment.

COUNT FARNIENTE.

"Is it thus that young ladies dress in America?" he asked.

"Sometimes," Dorothy replied demurely, resuming confidence. "At all events, sir, we are the American girls specified in those passports."

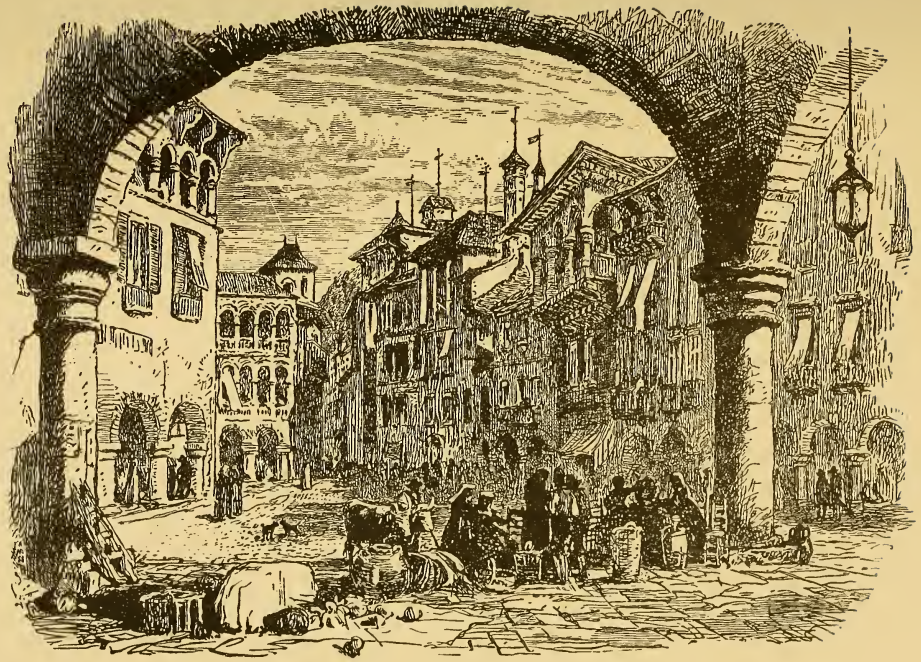
The count had recovered from his surprise, and now spoke to good purpose, and the officer retired, making profuse apologies. But the attention of the other passengers had been attracted by this little scene, and Elsie retired into the depths of Aunt Jane's bonnet, her eyes filled with tears of mortification. Dorothy assumed a haughty air and tried not to appear conscious of the fact that all eyes were upon her, but her cheeks flamed uncomfortably. The two gentlemen seated themselves beside the girls and pointed out the castles and places of interest which the boat passed, but all pleasure had vanished from the trip.

"I thank you for saving us from great annoyance," Elsie murmured. "How did you know me?"

"I knew you from the first," Gilbert Austin replied. "The count did not recognize you, and I did not think it necessary to enlighten him."

"I am not as good an actor as I thought."

"Oh! as for that I flatter myself that no one could deceive me in



DOMO D' OSSOLA.

that way; but I have been puzzling all along as to your motive, and confess that I have not been able to make it out."

"We felt the need of a chaperon, — that was all."

"What nonsense! as though two such dignified, self-reliant young women as you are, needed any such superfluous article as that."

Dorothy turned. "I cannot imagine what may have changed Mr. Austin's opinion," she said; "but I trust that the change is a genuine one."

MRS. IRVING.

"What can she mean?" thought the young man, but he dared not ask the question aloud. In spite of their having placed themselves in an uncomfortable and ludicrous position he felt a sincere respect for their uprightness of intention. The girls did not know this, however, and were deeply humiliated. There was no feeling of gratitude in their minds toward Gilbert Austin for helping them out of their predicament. On the contrary Dorothy almost hated him for his evident feeling of superiority and amusement. "If he thinks that he is to be allowed to take upon himself any airs of protection and intimacy from this adventure," she thought, "he will find himself sadly mistaken."

"I never, never will sail under false colors again," said Elsie, the tears welling up into her eyes.

"There will be no need for it, dear," said Dorothy, "since in an hour from now we shall be under Mrs. Irving's protection."

"That shall be Mrs. Wellington Irving of the Villa Claudia?" asked the count. "Ah! I have then the pleasure to know her. She

is a friend to my mother; they have been very what you call imitate. No? that is not the word. Your American language is my desolation, and yet it is not recent that I have made my studies of it. It is of years, and at the University of Padua I have received the first prize for my English."

Mrs. Irving was at the wharf to meet the girls with her pony carriage. She greeted the count familiarly and invited him to call, but looked a little grave when the entire story was related that evening.

"I do not know anything positively wrong about him," she explained; "but then there is nothing positive about Pasquale in any way. He is only a tailor's model admirably constructed to exhibit fine clothes, with a disposition very sweet and gentle so long as you do not cross it or ask him to exert himself in any way. His mother is very mercenary, and has such a temper! I don't wonder that her son is afraid of her. My own acquaintance with her is due to the fact that I rented the Appartemento Signorile in her palazzo."

"I should think a countess would be above such a thing," said Dorothy.

"She was, my dear, very much above me, — three whole stories, for she crowded herself into the garret and let all the other rooms. Her son lives on the rental of the palazzo and on some other trifling sources of revenue which bring him an income sufficient to keep him in kid gloves and cigarettes, and to allow him that 'lily-like disoccupation' which Howells speaks of as the characteristic of an Italian gentleman."

The days were warm and languorous, but they were very lovely. There was a terrace in front of the villa, screened from public view by shrubbery but open to the lake, where they loved to sit and watch the changing light upon the water and on Pallanza, which lay just opposite with its background of wonderful mountains. "The mountains are far enough away," Dorothy said, "not to weary one with suggestions of climbing, the mist gives them a glamour of unreality which is deli-

PALLANZA, LAGO MAGGIORE.

cious, and this shimmering sunset-light on the lake is simply entrancing. I would love to sit here and do nothing for the rest of my life."

Elsie shook her head. "It might grow wearisome after a time, Dorothy," she suggested.

In spite of Dorothy's declaration that such a thing should not be, the count and Gilbert Austin did take to themselves assurance from the fact that they had lately played the rôle of protectors to the girls, and from the count's acquaintance with their hostess. They came over from the hotel every day, and lounged and chatted upon the terrace or rowed them out upon the lake. In their intercourse it always happened that the count walked or talked with Dorothy, while Gilbert Austin fell to Elsie. A few days after their arrival at Baveno he announced to her that he must leave on the morrow for Innsbruck.

"Why do you go so soon?" Elsie asked politely.

"It is not soon," he answered; "my duties have been waiting for me too long already. Besides, I am not needed here. Miss Dorothy makes me understand very plainly that she does not approve of me."

Elsie was too truthful to deny this, and she replied, "If you really must go, give my best love to my friend Valerie and tell her that I shall soon be with her."

"If you desire me to carry any special message, of course I will do so; but otherwise I do not think I shall call on Miss von Hohenberg."

Elsie's lifted eyebrows seemed to ask why, and Gilbert Austin explained. "I am not a title-hunter. I made the acquaintance of Count Farniente quite by accident, and through no scheming of my own; indeed he rather pressed his friendship upon me. Your friend may be very charming, but her position antagonizes me. I never could see why our American girls care for titles, and for a man to consider them shows that his ideals are utterly microscopic."

Elsie hesitated. "Your friend the count is a very agreeable man," she said at last, boldly. "He seems interested in Dorothy. Would you be willing to have your sister marry him?"

Gilbert Austin started. "My feeling in the matter would make no difference. The count would never marry a sister of mine; we are not rich enough. Unless your friend is very wealthy I do not think that she is in any danger. The count may admire her, but he will bridle his affections."

Elsie was indignant. "You provoke me very much, Mr. Austin," she said; "I would like to prophesy that before I see you again both of the events which you regard as so impossible may take place."

"What events?"

"The count will propose to Dorothy and you to Valerie."

"Those events are equally impossible;" and the young man took his departure with an air of such supreme satisfaction in his own superior wisdom that Elsie was more enraged than ever. "And yet," she said to herself, "I don't want the count to propose, for if he does I am afraid that she will accept him."

After Mr. Austin's departure the count still continued his visits, and there was no cessation to the excursions by land and water. The group of Borromean Islands opposite the Villa Claudia interested the girls both by their beauty and their history.

One was called the Isola dei Pescatori, or Island of the Fishermen. On it was crowded a fishing-village. A little stretch of greensward at one end was reserved for the drying of the nets. The houses were painted pink, buff, and white, and presented an irregular jumble of roofs and queer little jutting balconies. In front of the island bare-legged men were continually pushing off or hauling in clumsy boats, which with their rakish lateen-sails added to the effect of the picture. Quite a contrast to this island was its neighbor the Isola Bella, whose gardens and palazzo are for four months of the year the home of the Count and Countess Borromeo. This island rises like a creation of fairyland from the lake, in a succession of artificial terraces in an ornate though unnatural style of gardening. Statues, vases, and carved balustrades are intermingled with the semi-tropical plants, — the

BOATS ON LAGO MAGGIORE.

aloe, the orange, the citron, roses, jasmine, and cacti, set off with the dark velvety background of yews cut into fantastic forms. The entire island is covered with soil brought from a distance. It was a rocky waste until 1671, when Vitaliano, Count Borromeo, master general of ordnance to the King of Spain, took the fancy to make a paradise here. The exotic plants flourish luxuriantly, for the flinty rock beneath the shallow soil retains the sun's heat, and in winter the artificial garden is carefully boxed from the snow. The taste of the entire plan has been much questioned. There is something theatrical and out of place about the island, but in spite of this it exerts its charm on the young and the uncritical. Dorothy, though she compared it to an elaborately decorated wedding-cake, admired it as she did rococo architecture, — which has been aptly called the cauliflower and periwig style, — and was anxious to visit the paradise.

Strangers are allowed to see the gardens and palace during the absence of the owner, but the count and countess were in residence, and as Mrs. Irving was not acquainted with them Dorothy's wish did not seem likely to be realized.

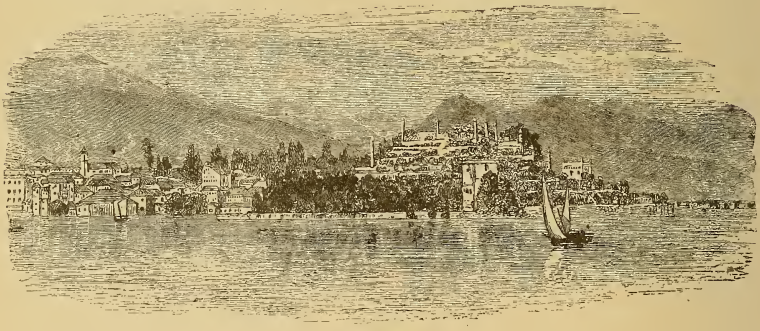
One day a rumor went forth that there was to be a grand fête at Isola Bella. Some young ladies visiting at the neighboring Villa Clara brought the news, only too glad to display their own invitations.

"Of course you will go," they said. "The invitations are very select; only the most distinguished families in the neighborhood are invited. There will be no hotel people, and very few English or Americans. The Palavicinis will be there, and the Milanese nobility, descendants of the Sforzas and Visconti, and perhaps of the Medici. There will be a special train from Como, and a tenor from the Scala Theatre is to sing. Altogether it will be a very brilliant occasion."

"How very charming!" exclaimed Dorothy, consumed with a desire to see all these splendors. "I hardly imagine, however, that we shall be favored with invitations. I do not think Mrs. Irving knows the family."

"Not know the Borromeos!" exclaimed their callers, in astonishment. "Oh! you must be mistaken; it would be too heart-rending if you could not go. I will ask Aunt Alice to ask if we may not take you."

"Pray do not put her to that annoyance; perhaps invitations may still come for us," Dorothy replied with dignity, though in her heart she quite despaired of any such good fortune. But her guests had hardly taken leave when Count Farniente called, as nearly excited as it was possible for a man of his languorous temperament to be.



ISOLA BELLA.

"I have effected it," he exclaimed in gentle triumph. "The Countess Borromeo have send you all invitation to her fête."

Mrs. Irving's maid had fairy fingers, and from Mrs. Irving's wardrobe becoming dresses were speedily evolved for the two girls, — a pretty, soft, Japanese silk for Elsie; and a rich old velvet for Dorothy, with puffed sleeves and costly Venetian lace at the throat, the simple folds of the skirt looped and held in place by a silver châtelaine.

"You look like a princess," Mrs. Irving exclaimed as she descended the staircase, and the lady was quite right. Mrs. Irving herself in black lace and diamonds was an elegant woman, and Mr. Irving was a man of distinguished appearance in any costume.

They were rowed across in the afternoon, for the fête was to begin with a garden party. Count Farniente presented them to their host and hostess, who received them upon the grand staircase of the terrace. As other guests were constantly arriving they chatted but for a moment and then passed on to make the rounds of the garden. Grottos and labyrinthine walks led from one level to another, and the count pointed out the rarest plants and flowers, — an enormous cedar of Lebanon and another cedar from the Himalayas, an American pine, a laurel three hundred years old, sugar-cane from the West Indies, palms from Africa, Japanese grasses, a cork tree from Portugal, bamboo from China, with luxuriant ivy and other vines. "It is a true Italian garden," he said admiringly. "It is a little like the Boboli gardens in Florence and a little like the Villa d'Este at Rome, but it is quite itself.

They strolled through the orangery, came out again upon the terrace, and leaning upon the mossy balustrade, looked away across the lake.

"There is a sweet-briar rose," said Elsie; "it makes me think of Mary Howitt's poem, —

> "'The rose of May its pride displayed
> Along the old stone balustrade;
> And ancient ladies quaintly dight
> In its pink blossoms took delight,
> And on the steps would make a stand
> To scent its sweetness, fan in hand.'"

The count looked up quickly at Dorothy with such a peculiar expression that she colored, and asked, "Am I such an ancient lady?"

"You look as if you belonged in it," he replied, "and as if it had belonged to you for hundreds of years."

"That is hardly a compliment," she laughed; "but the garden is very beautiful. I think I should not tire of it in several centuries. Why does the countess spend so short a time here?"

The count shrugged his shoulders. "The contessa is young," he said; "why should she live always with only the sound of the

water lapping the palace walls sounding in her ears? The gardens make well their affair for a few months. They are gay now with company everywhere — the orchestra in the grotto, the servants who serve the ices; but imagine to yourself the desolateness of being alone here. It is as that poor Robinson Crusoe of whom I read in your so delightful English classic. Ah! Dante should have put it in his "Inferno," — an island where one should be alone. But no, it was too horrible; he could not imagine it, and his condemned have always at least the pleasure of society."

"But the contessa is not alone," Dorothy replied thoughtlessly.

"You would say that when two shall love it is to them Paradise to be alone. That is a beautiful poetry, but it is not a prose. Imagine to yourself, for instant; could any woman so love me as to desire no other society?"

Dorothy looked disconcerted.

"No, I see by the expression to your face, it is impossible. So the contessa promenades herself everywhere, — Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, — and why not? It is not money that is lacking in *this* family."

"With all these poor people at one's door," suggested Elsie, "one might find human interests enough even here."

"Ah! that is exactly what for I make my reproaches to the count," said their escort. "Why does he such a rabble of fishermen allow that they encroach to the borders of his pleasure grounds? If the island were to you, signorina, without doubt she would sweep it of its beggars, and make also of it a garden; but we Italians lack what you call the initiative."

"Where would these people go if they were dispossessed of their homes," Dorothy asked.

"I do not know," the count replied; "to America perhaps. Shall the signorina derange herself to visit the palazzo, to behold the paintings before it shall be quite dark?"

It was the first palace which the girls had visited, and smothered exclamations of surprise and admiration escaped them in spite of their desire not to appear deeply impressed by any of this magnificence. The grand staircase, with its many coats-of-arms and heraldic ornamentation, all telling of noble families connected in some way with the Borromeos, and its long suite of state

FISHERMEN ON THE LAKE.

apartments and guest chambers, once occupied by noted personages, gave an impression of ceremonious grandeur to which the girls were entirely unaccustomed. This magnificent apartment all crimson brocade and gold was Queen Caroline's bed-chamber; this simpler room was occupied by Napoleon after the battle of Marengo. Here was a throne-room with canopied chair upon a raised daïs where Cardinal Borromeo received his friends when visiting at his ancestral home, and leading from it was a picture-

gallery filled with copies and originals by the greatest Italian masters. There were long suites of tapestried chambers, and halls devoted to statuary, and little boudoirs in the coquettish style of Marie Antoinette, as well as grand salons in the pompous mode of the Grand Monarque, in which, as the evening advanced, the company were assembled for music and dancing. Dorothy had no lack of partners; the statuesque American girl in the mediæval dress attracted much attention. In one of the pauses in the dancing she caught sight of the young ladies who had first told her of this fête sitting in the background as wall-flowers, and looking, as she afterwards told Elsie, "perfectly green with envy."

It was the triumph of the senses; and the glamour of mere earthly loveliness had achieved its very highest empire over Dorothy's mind.

"Why should one be an enthusiast?" she asked herself. "Why not enjoy life as it comes to us without this eternal self-torture about our duty to others?"

The lake was lighted up with colored lanterns swaying in the numerous boats, as they were rowed homeward. The count sat beside Dorothy, a little apart from the others, and drew her opera cloak carefully about her with lover-like attention. As she leaned back on the cushioned seats of the row-boat she listened to the rhythmic pulse of the oars, which seemed to keep time to the soft tinkle of mandolins from other boats, and to the swell of the stringed instruments at the palazzo where the dancers were still dancing. The evening breeze wafted the perfume of jasmine from the Isola Bella, and the lights of Pallanza glittered across the lake. It was a glorious night, the sky a deep entrancing blue, and the moon purest silver, dancing in reflection in the waves. A tenor voice in a neighboring boat sang one of Vittorello's serenades: —

"Guarda che bianca luna
Guarda che notte azzura
Un auro non susurra
Non tremolo uno stel."

AN ITALIAN LAKE.

If just then the count had whispered, "I will give you a palace and an earthly paradise like this if you will be my countess," Dorothy would have closed the bargain, even though she knew that she did not care a penny for the count; that there was more of manliness in one of John Hartley's little fingers than in all the Count's world-wearied and soiled soul; and that in her heart of hearts she loved honest John and always would love him, whatever might befall.

"What of that?" she would have said to herself. "John does not love me, and it does not come in the range of every girl's possibilities to be a countess. I want to achieve something extraordinary; this is certainly my opportunity." And she would have bartered heart and soul for this glittering bauble. But her time of trial had not come. Sometimes our Heavenly Father, seeing how miserably unfit we are to sustain temptation, shapes circumstances over which we have no control, — accidents they seem to us, — which stop us in careers of our own choosing, and leave us safe because untested. Sometimes too He keeps us from a real good until we are able to bear it, leading us forty years in the wilderness until we have been disciplined, and are fit to enter the promised land. And sometimes, alas, all these guiding and hindering providences are thrust aside by headstrong wills that seem insanely bent on achieving their own misery. The count was as deeply stirred that evening as it was possible for him to be. Almost he was tempted to yield to the charm of the lovely face beside him, and to the bewitching influences of the night, to make Dorothy a full and unconditional offer of heart and hand, title and possessions. He would have been very happy in her acceptance too, until his next conversation with his mother and the family lawyer, for it had been fully agreed between them that the estate needed fresh money and a great deal of it, and that the count must marry an heiress. These considerations obtruded themselves unpleasantly on his mind even at this delicious moment, and the count did not offer himself; but he came very near it a moment later when Dorothy remarked, "This must be

like Venice," and he replied with a world of meaning in his expressive eyes, "Yes, but Venice is far more. You, who belong in it as if you were Italian born, should see Venice. When once there I think the city would win your heart and you would make yourself Venetian. Ah, if I could see you stand as you stood on the terrace on the staircase of my muzzer's palazzo! Promise me that you will so stand one day; promise me that, and you will make me happy for effer."

After all it was a very little thing which he had asked, but his voice, his hand upon his heart, and his expressive eyes had thrown such unbounded suggestiveness into the request, that it seemed for the moment as if he had made a most impassioned declaration. Dorothy understood it as he meant she should, and replied in so low a tone that he rather guessed than heard her answer, "If you wish it so much I will stand there."

CHAPTER V.

VALERIE.

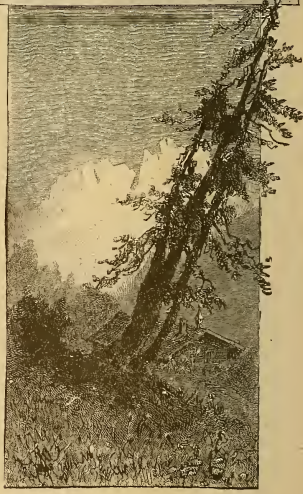
ALERIE'S home was a fantastic little château situated on a spur of one of the mountains whose grand procession encircles Innsbruck. The greater part of the château was modern for the old world, having been built in the earlier half of the present century by Valerie's grandfather; but there were two old towers, the remnants of a more ancient castle, in which Valerie's ancestors from remote ages had dwelt until its destruction by fire in the seventeenth century.

The château was a picturesque feature in the landscape with its ancient towers crowned with extinguisher roofs plated with green tiles. Away back in the fifteenth century the Emperor Maximilian had been the guest of the castle, and Valerie's grandfather, three centuries after the event, had celebrated it by having a frieze painted in fresco across the front of the château on the wall connecting the two old towers and over the principal entrance. The fresco represented the welcome given to the Kaiser after his return from his thrilling adventure on Martinswand. It had been executed by a Munich artist of considerable skill, and although it reminded Elsie when she saw it later of a circus poster advertising one of Barnum's street processions, she soon discovered that it was not an unusual thing in the Tyrol and Bavaria for wealthy people to decorate the façades of their houses in this grotesque manner. The emperor was represented as riding on a

handsomely caparisoned charger, and followed by two sturdy Tyrolese jägers, who carried between them a great boar supposed to have been killed in the royal hunt of the earlier part of the day. The worthy graf and gräfin had descended the steps of the chateau to meet their sovereign; while oddly enough the cook of the castle was visible behind them, bearing, roasted and served upon a platter, the head of the boar, which in the other part of the fresco was still attached to his body.

SCENERY IN THE TYROL.

The precipice of Martinswand was visible from the château, and a little shelf of rock is pointed out half way up its dizzy height, where the emperor, who had been absorbed in following a chamois, suddenly found himself unable either to advance or retreat. The people beneath, unable to rescue him, brought a priest, who gave him absolution from a distance; and he sat down to await his death. The legend, with its tradition of miraculous rescue, is told in the following ballad: —



ST. MARTIN'S WALL.

Who is the daring archer that in hunter's costume stands,
In his hat the beard of the chamois, and the cross-bow in his hands;
Whose eye with a youthful ardor like the eye of a monarch glances,
Whose heart with a quiet rapture in the sport of the hunter dances?

The hunter is Max of Hapsburg on a lusty chamois chase.
Where scarcely the chamois ventures, he sweeps on the frightful race;
Here over heaps of rubble, over deep abysses there,
Now on the ground close creeping, now flying through the air.
And now, hold on! No farther! Now is he fast confined,
Chasm before and chasms beside him, and a break-neck wall behind.

His throne the rocky rampart, see the princely scion stand,
His sceptre, the wall-lichen, he grasps with wavering hand.
Around him spreads a vista so boundlessly displayed,
That before the dizzy prospect his senses faint and fade.

With a blast of mighty clangor through his horn for help he calls,
On the air like a peal of thunder, but on air alone it falls, —
A little devil titters from a cleft in the nearest rock. —
It falls far short of the valley, his stout horn's fullest shock.

What the ear had not discovered the vision has descried;
From below they saw him swaying on the pathless mountain side.
There 's a sound to heaven ascending of orisons and bells
While from church to church in pilgrimage the tide of manhood swells.

At the mountain's foot a multitude in various garb appears;
A priest in their midst to heaven the sacrament uprears.
When the crowds in mingled colors in the distant valley shone,
Max saw the glance and glitter of the golden pyx alone.

In earnest supplication he sinks upon his knee,
Raises his eyes, invoking Heaven's succor fervently.
A hand is laid on his shoulder, he starts with a thrill of fear;
"Come home, thou art in safety," rings cheerily in his ear.

He mounts Max on his shoulders where the dizzy chasms frown.
On a fairer throne and firmer Max never sat him down.
To the valley thus descending his course all Tyrol cheers.
Though he rides in a strange fashion at Max no scoffer jeers.

There is an old tradition, of many ages since,
That a messenger from heaven wrought the rescue of the prince.
Yes, indeed it was an angel, a spirit from above, —
The love of faithful Tyrol, a loyal people's love.

From the precipice down-looking on the vale a crucifix
Marks the spot where Austria's scion saw the shining of the pyx.
Still lives the ancient legend, and in song will never cease
To stir a quicker heart-beat in every Tyrolese.

The Tyrolese have indeed been always loyal to the house of Hapsburg; and Maximilian, one of the most renowned of its emperors, was fond of Innsbruck. His tomb in the church of the Franciscans is one of the most beautiful that the world can boast. The sarcophagus itself is a wonder of workmanship, and it is surrounded by twenty-eight colossal bronze statues of kings and queens, who stand, as the emperor's paladins might have stood about his daïs in the rittersaal at Valerie's home. Valerie felt a sense of almost personal acquaintance with each of these silent personages, and she was impatient to introduce Elsie to them, and especially to her favorite Arthur of England, for in this statue the sculptor had fully realized the ideal of Tennyson —

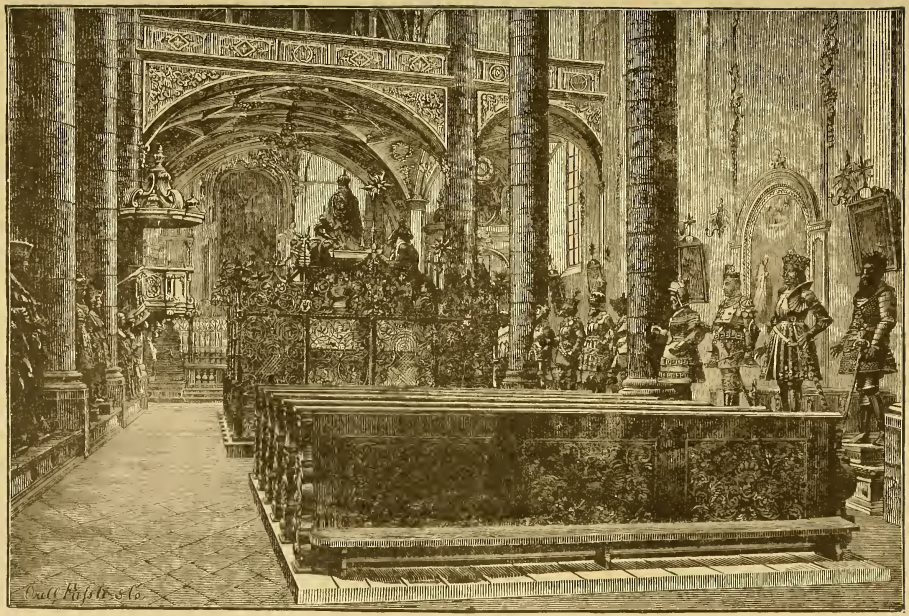
"Thou art the highest and most human too."

Whenever Valerie indulged in those day-dreams in regard to her own future which come to all young girls, she saw her knight —

"King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port."

There were no chamois or wolves near the chateau now, though this was long a famous hunting-region, for Innsbruck is nestled in a valley from which the savage mountains rise so immediately and sharply that the transition from civilized to wild life is abrupt enough to give rise to the saying that the wolves in the mountains look down the chimneys of Innsbruck.

Since her return Valerie had been a little homesick for Vassar and her dear friend Elsie. After the formal calls of greeting had been



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE FRANCISCANS AT INNSBRUCK.

exchanged with the old friends and neighbors, Valerie found it difficult to satisfy herself with the monotonous life of the château. She was too sensible and unselfish a girl to allow this discontent to become apparent, and she took herself sharply to task for it. "Of what good is my education," she asked herself, "if it makes me dissatisfied with my condition in life? It ought on the contrary to afford resources. Surely I can find some means of continuing my studies and of occupying my time in a profitable manner."

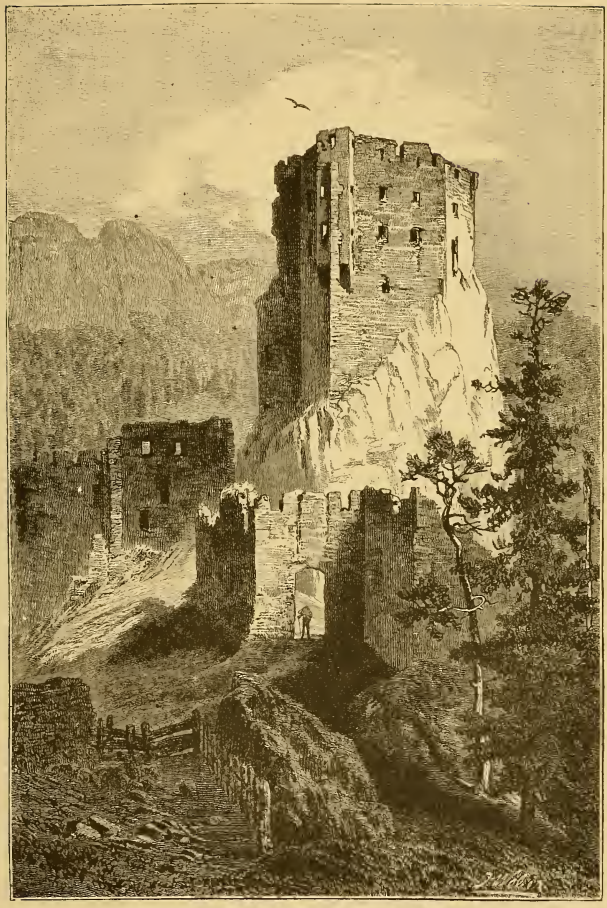
Valerie's mother interested herself in the thrifty German fashion in the management of her household affairs, and did not require Valerie's assistance. She had no sisters, and her only brother Franz was away with the Austrian army. No wonder that life at the chateau was a little dull. The count guessed the truth, and said to her one morning, "What shall I do to distract my little girl? Would you like in the summer to visit your aunt at Chiemsee, where life is a trifle gayer?"

"No, indeed, Vaterchen," Valerie replied eagerly. "Chiemsee is too much of a fashionable watering-place. Besides, you know I hope for a visit from my dear friend Elsie, though she has not written me the exact date of her coming, and I do not want to be away from home when she arrives. I want to show her all the sights of Innsbruck. I know she will like the Helblingshaus and the house of the Goldenes Dachl, and will be interested in knowing that Frederic of the Empty Purse plated the copper roof of its bay-windows with pure gold to prove his nickname a misnomer. We will take long walks together in the mountains to Berg Isel, to the Lanser Köpfe, and even as far as Martinswand. I hope that Franz will be able to get a furlough; and I mean to write him to try to be at home while she is here. There then will be amusement enough."

Near Valerie's home was a larger and more famous château, the castle of Ambras. This had been the home from 1567 to 1580 of the beautiful Philipine Welser, the wife of the Arch-Duke Ferdinand, Regent of the Tyrol. The history of the courtship,

long betrothal, and secret marriage of the pair is very romantic. Philipine was the daughter of a simple merchant, and Ferdinand the son of the emperor, who for a long time refused his consent to this plebeian marriage; but he was won at last by the loveliness of his daughter-in-law, and the marriage was publicly acknowledged. Her portrait agrees well with the character which history gives her, and is one of rare beauty and sweetness. Valerie's face bore a decided resemblance to this portrait. It had been often remarked; and she had taken part in a number of tableaux, fancy-dress balls, and pageants dressed to represent Philipine, with a jewelled net drawn over her dark hair, a high velvet collar meeting her chin in a delicate ruff, and clasped about with a heavy necklace.

Valerie wondered how the noble lady occupied her time when châtelaine of dreary Schloss Ambras, and searched the records for some hint for herself. She was not surprised to ascertain that Philipine found her pleasure in philanthropy. "At one time," she read, "Ambras must have been more like a hospital for paupers than a princely residence." There were Turkish prisoners, Russian and Turkish girls, poor or disabled peasants, and idiots and epileptics. Philipine maintained a physician to minister to her guests, and herself studied pharmacy and prepared drugs and simples. In her book of recipes Valerie found receipts for the preparation of "rose syrup, rose honey, the juice of quinces, wild cherries, and figs; many sorts of lotions, gargles, and tooth-washes, remedies for cramp in the stomach, epileptic fits, swollen tonsils, coughs, vertigo, and consumption; and, finally, antidotes against poisons." Valerie was not fond of practical chemistry, and did not care to follow the example of the Lady Philipine by the study and practice of medicine; but she found some of her prescriptions amusing enough, as was the following remedy for cramp in the stomach: "Slaughter a sheep close by the patient, flay it speedily, and lay the warm skin upon the bare body."



A RUINED CASTLE IN THE TYROL.

Philipine's kindness was not confined to the sick; she provided young girls with marriage portions, and aided the needy in so many ways that she was called "the lover of all sad souls."

To have emulated her bounty would have required an income far greater than Valerie's modest allowance. She could not charge herself with the maintenance of others, no matter how warmly she might be interested in them, and yet she could not quite give up the hope of being helpful to them in some way. Whenever she entered the church of the Franciscans, as she frequently did to have a quiet little chat with her bronze knights and ladies, the dead Philipine seemed to call to her from her tomb in the silver chapel and ask her what she was doing for the poor people near Ambras.

At length Valerie made her resolution. "If I cannot personally support the destitute girls who are my neighbors, perhaps I can help them to make themselves self-supporting." She organized a cooking and sewing class, each meeting once a week at her own home, and taught these classes herself. They were very popular, and the girls were quick to learn. The classes had been in progress only a few months when the girls perplexed her with the question, "What shall we do when we have learned to be good housekeepers and servants? Where can we obtain employment?"

Valerie endeavored to find situations for her protégées, but there was little demand. "We will go to America," said one of the girls, who had packed all her possessions in a little hand-bag and considered herself ready to start; "surely there is opportunity there for skilled labor." Valerie thought there was, but hesitated to send her girls out friendless into a strange land. "I hope to go back to America myself," she told them, "and I will see what arrangements I can make for you."

Meantime, in anticipation of this probable solution of her problem, she began to teach her pupils to speak English.

This philanthropic work did not occupy all of Valerie's time. She wrote a little from time to time, sending short stories and articles to journals and magazines, which invariably returned them with polite promptitude. She was not altogether discouraged by this want of success, but very sensibly tried to discover its cause. "Perhaps my subjects are not sufficiently popular," she thought; "I must write of something in which people are interested. The Passion Play is surely attracting a great deal of attention; I think I will attend it. Maria, my best pupil, can carry on the classes for me while I give myself a little vacation."

READY FOR AMERICA.

The accomplishment of her design was postponed for a time by the arrival of company, — the Contessa Farniente of Venice, mother of the count whose acquaintance we have already made. The contessa was of Austrian extraction; her father was a distant relative of the Count von Hohenberg, and they called each other cousin. Her visit to Innsbruck was ostensibly to look after old title-deeds of Austrian property, which had long since been occupied by other possessors and would involve much litigation. It would seem to the casual observer that the contessa's visit was rather thrown away as far as any business result was concerned. But such an observer could not have fathomed the depths of the contessa's scheming. She knew that her "cousin" had lately returned from America, and that he had brought with him a daughter of marriageable age who would inherit half of his little fortune, which, although not large, was perhaps as considerable as she could hope to obtain for her son. The connection, too, was noble; and mercenary as the contessa was, she counted the possession

of "von" before the name as equal in value to several thousands of plebeian dollars. She wore, suspended from her neck by a slender chain, a much-flattered miniature of her son, which in a moment of enthusiasm she presented to Valerie. She scanned the girl narrowly, and while she did not approve of her extravagancies (this was the term which she applied to the classes), she could not help admiring her gentle character and lovable disposition. Accordingly one day shortly before her departure she opened her mind to Valerie's father, making a formal proposition for Valerie's hand for her son. It was true that she had not consulted with her son, and that the two young people had never seen each other, but that was a matter of trifling importance. She half convinced the count of the suitability of the marriage. "It will unite two branches of our family," she explained. "My son is partly Austrian already; with an Austrian wife he will become entirely so. If you desire it he will drop his Italian name, become naturalized, and as a subject of the Kaiser be known only by his Austrian title, — the Graf von Adlersruhe. I will bestow all these title-deeds to properties in the Tyrol upon your daughter. You are in a position to secure them to her, and there will be less difficulty in persuading the

THE COUNTESS.

Emperor to grant them to the daughter of an Austrian noble than to an Italian. In return I ask only what dowry you may have already decided to give your daughter."

The count assented to the suitability of the marriage. He thought that imperial favor might obtain the reversion of property long since confiscated, and that a diplomatic position could be secured for the Graf von Adlersruhe. As for Valerie, he had decided to portion her with property amounting in value to about twenty thousand dollars.

The contessa winced; she had expected a much larger sum, but the other considerations were not to be despised, and she murmured: "It is little, but Valerie is a fortune in herself; we will take her without dowry, and we will consider the marriage as agreed upon."

"Not so fast," replied the count. "Valerie must be consulted; if your son cannot win her heart, these arrangements go for nothing."

"That goes without saying," the contessa replied proudly. "My son is invincible among ladies; he has received many offers of flattering alliances; he cannot fail to please the high-born lady Valerie. If you will invite him to visit here the affair is done." The contessa waved her hand with a gesture expressive of as much certainty as if she were Darius announcing a law of the Medes and Persians, "which altereth not."

An invitation was accordingly sent to Count Farniente to visit his Austrian cousins at Innsbruck at any time during the next month.

The contessa accompanied this invitation with a letter of explanation. She wrote to her son:—

"I have arranged a very satisfactory marriage for you with the daughter of the Count von Hohenberg. The count is a little stingy in regard to immediate settlements, — but what of that? He cannot take his money with him, and Valerie, when he dies, will have half, — perhaps more, for her brother is a soldier and may do us the favor of getting himself shot. The girl herself is handsome

THE ANCESTRAL CASTLE.

and lady-like enough not to disgrace us ; in short, I am convinced you can do no better. I am tired of your gallantries ; it is time for you to be serious. Report yourself at once at Innsbruck and write the result to your adoring mother."

The contessa took her departure for Meran to inspect the ancestral castle which, ruined and mortgaged, — its lands overrun by peasants, who had settled upon them, its timber felled, its game dispersed, — seemed a very unprofitable piece of real estate. Still it had its possibilities, and she determined to await here the result of her son's visit in Innsbruck, amusing herself in the interim in planning the restorations which would be begun as soon as the needed funds were secured.

Valerie knew nothing of the disposition which had been made of her hand. Her father was a little uneasy and dissatisfied in his own mind. He talked the matter over with his wife, and received no consolation or encouragement from her.

"I would rather Valerie would marry an American," said the good lady. "I like America, and so does she."

"And I like Americans," replied Count von Hohenberg; "but I do not understand their way of managing these matters. Do you remember my friend Judge Austin? He has a son of whom I heard only good. If we had been in Austria I would have said to the judge: 'Here is my daughter Valerie ; what are your expectations for your son?' But I was told that this was not the American custom, that every proposal of this sort must come from the gentleman. So I waited; but although the judge saw Valerie once when she was at home for the holidays he made no proposition to me on behalf of his son. Strange country, strange manners!"

A few days later the count handed Valerie a letter. "I have just received this from a gentleman whose acquaintance I made in Washington. It seems that his son has been appointed consul

to Innsbruck, and the father recommends the young man to my good offices. As I feel myself somewhat indebted to the elder Mr. Austin, I suppose we must ask him to dine with us."

"As you please, little Father," Valerie replied; "Mother, I am sure, will be quite able to entertain the young man. I was just about to ask your permission to spend a week or two at Ober Ammergau."

"A week or two! I can well imagine that you would be interested in the Passion Play; but though it is rather a lengthy affair, one can certainly see it in less than a fortnight."

"Not as I would like. I want to attend the representation several times to study it very thoroughly. I am very much interested in it, and I think I would like to write a critical review of the performance."

"So! The same idea has occurred to other writers. I fear you will evolve nothing particularly new. However, the occupation will keep you out of mischief. There can be no particular haste about it. I have invited young Mr. Austin to dinner for Wednesday."

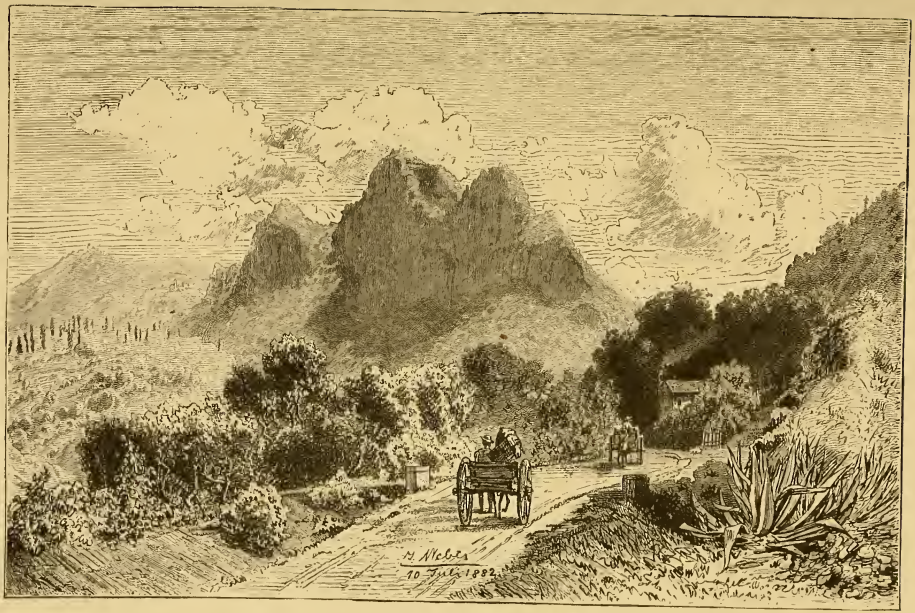
"Indeed! I did not understand that he had arrived in Innsbruck."

"The young man presented this letter in person, and I was very favorably impressed by him."

"We can invite him again, if you think best, when Elsie is here," Valerie replied indifferently. "As she does not speak German fluently, it will be convenient to have an American acquaintance to assist in entertaining her; but really, little Father, can you not excuse me for Wednesday? The Von Webers intend to drive to Ober Ammergau on Monday in their own carriage, and have invited me to form one of their party. I am not likely to have such pleasant company again."

"But the Von Webers surely do not intend to remain a fortnight?"

"They will stay long enough for me to find suitable lodgings



ON THE ROAD TO OBER AMMERGAU.

before their return, and perhaps you and Mother will decide to come over and see one of the performances and bring me back."

Valerie always had her own way, and she set out with her friends on the following Monday, as she had planned.

It was a little odd that although Dorothy's letter telling Valerie of the competition for the best essay on the Ober Ammergau Passion Play had miscarried, she had decided, independently of any such motive, to write exactly such a review. There are many coincidences of this kind in life which suggest an occult influence, — a subtle, magnetic wave, passing from one intelligence to another without any apparent means of communication. Such magnetism is, however, rarely of any practical assistance; it is oftener misleading, inducing us to say just the wrong thing, — to speak of divorces to people who are unhappy in their marriage relations, or of crime to those whose friends have brought them into disgrace. We have vague forebodings which come to nothing, or stop just short of averting disaster; the magnetic influence is fitful and untrustworthy, and inclined to be tricky rather than benevolent in its workings.

Valerie intended to write her essay, but there was nothing to suggest her sending it to Vassar. If anything occurred to defer Elsie's visit until after the middle of September, she might not know of the offered prize until it would be too late to compete; for one of the conditions was that all the papers must be in the hands of the Professor before the 30th. To Dorothy there had come a new temptation. The letter which she had written Valerie in a moment of exaltation had been returned to her through the Dead Letter Office. In her excitement she had neglected to write the word "Innsbruck" on the envelope; and the United States Post Office, seeing the uselessness of forwarding such a letter, had sent it to her New York address. As her mother had enclosed it in one of her letters, it had followed Dorothy over Europe, and had at last reached her at Baveno, — in an evil time for any renunciation.

It seemed to Dorothy, as she read again the generous letter which she had written her rival, that she had fully done all that was required of her. It was not her fault, she argued, that the information had not reached Valerie. Fate had so ordered it, and Fate alone was responsible for the result. That there was something fallacious in her reasoning she might have known from her unwillingness to confide in Elsie the fact of the return of the letter. The knowledge that it lay in her travelling letter-case beside her own half-written essay burned like a canker into her conscience, and took away all the pleasure from her tour; but she was all the more determined that come what might she would make no sign.

In the mean time, Gilbert Austin arrayed himself in his London-made dress suit and engaged a handsome equipage in which to be driven out to the château to dine with the Graf von Hohenberg. He told himself that he did this only to fulfil his father's wish; that he had no interest whatever in the count's remarkable daughter; that on the contrary he anticipated being much bored by the interview: but with masculine inconsistency, he had indulged in a button-hole bouquet, which certainly was not assumed in honor of the ex-minister; and when informed that the daughter of the house was absent at Ober Ammergau, something like real disappointment gave additional gloom to the very stately dinner.

"Thank you, madam, but I hope never to repeat this very dismal experience," he said to himself, as the Countess kindly pressed him at parting to visit them frequently. Then, as he threw himself into a comfortable attitude in his carriage, he added, without being in the least conscious of what had suggested the idea, —

"Ober Ammergau! strange I have not thought of it before! I believe I will go over and see the Sunday performance."

CHAPTER VI.

HIGHER ALTITUDES.

WHEN Dorothy entered her room on the night of the fête, it almost seemed to her that she was walking in a dream. She stepped to the window and stood looking out upon the moonlit lake, until Elsie recalled her to herself.

"What is it, Dorothy? I am sure that something has happened."

"Yes, dear."

"The count has proposed?"

"Yes — no — well, not exactly;" and Dorothy related the conversation in the boat.

"It strikes me," said Elsie, practically, "that he was a trifle indefinite."

"On reflection it seems so to me; but oh, Elsie! if you could have seen his look, — it spoke volumes."

"Humph! Well, supposing he does come up like a man, shall you accept him?"

"I don't know, I have n't decided; I am glad that he did not ask me explicitly. I want time to consider."

"That is what they all say," thought Elsie, but what she said was, "How much time does it take to know whether you love him?"

"That is not everything," Dorothy replied, evading the question. "It is a great alliance, and it opens great opportunities."

"Yes. I was thinking to-night what an absolute queen the Countess Borromeo is over her people. Such a position must involve one in grave responsibilities."

"I was not thinking of that," Dorothy replied. "I was imagining the delight of revelling in all these treasures of art and luxury, of arranging and re-arranging to suit one's own taste, and of the fun of outraging the ideas of some of the old noblesse. I would like to show the old-fogy nobility what kind of a countess a live American girl would make."

"If you did nothing for the poor people on your domain, how would you differ from other pleasure-seekers?"

"I probably should do something for them. It is very uncomfortable to see people miserable. If, as you say, this is an opportunity for doing good, there is another reason for me to accept it. I wish Mother were here to let me talk it over with her. Of course I shall write her, but it will be so long before I can receive her answer that I shall have to decide before it comes."

"Mrs. Irving can advise you."

"I know in advance what Mrs. Irving will say. She made a few derogatory remarks at the beginning, in order to wash her hands of all responsibility of influencing me in the matter; but she thinks it a great match, and she has good-naturedly been doing all she can to help it along. She is an excellent chaperon, but what a girl needs at such a time as this is not a chaperon but a mother."

It was a genuine cry from the heart, and a piteous one; but Elsie was sleepy; as the sister of John she was also a little angry, and she said rather crossly, "Well, since you don't seem to know your own mind, I would advise you to sleep on it. There seems to be no immediate necessity of your deciding, for the count appears to me to be in a similar state of nebulous incertitude."

But Dorothy was sure that the count was quite in earnest, and she lay awake until dawn, thinking it over and over. Marriage was doubt-

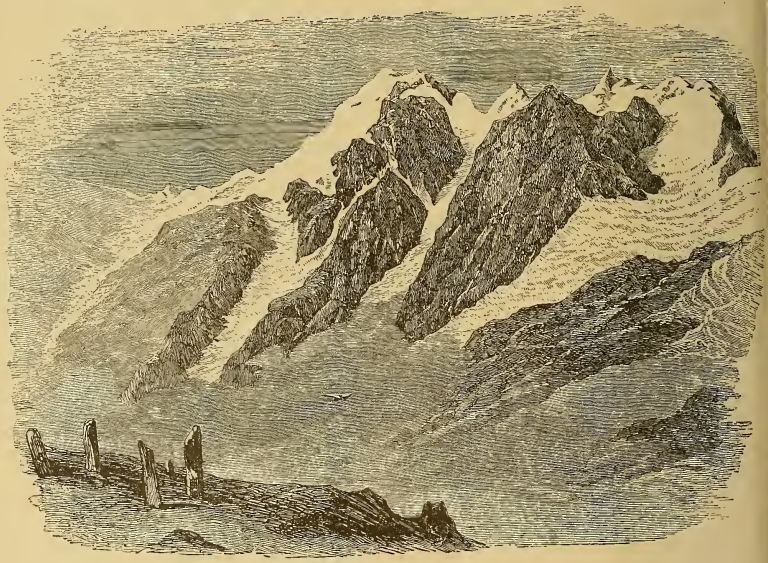
less a very solemn thing; but then old maidenhood, lonely and desolate, seemed to her a great deal more solemn. The count was not absolutely repugnant to her, and the life which he represented was very fascinating. The dawn was breaking when she finally fell asleep, saying to herself, "There is plenty of time to decide," but knowing all the time that when she promised to stand upon his staircase she had already decided.

Two days later the girls with their host and hostess and the count started on a long ride to the pilgrimage shrine of Varallo. Mr. Irving was a scholarly man, much interested in hunting out remarkable places little known to the ordinary tourist. Varallo he had assured the girls was one of these. The excursion, during the morning of the first day, was a donkey ride as far as the Albergo Motterone, an inn near the summit of the mountain of the same name, which has been called the Rigi of northern Italy. Here they left their donkeys and climbed to the top on foot. The view was one of great beauty, and gave them an excellent idea of the topography of the Italian Lakes. The entire region was spread out at their feet like a great map. Seven different lakes were visible, shining like silver mirrors in emerald settings, while the grand panorama of the Alps stretched across the northern horizon, from Monte Viso in the west to the Ortler group in the east. "The Ortler Spitz is in the Tyrol," said Mr. Irving. "It is one of the grandest of the great brotherhood of giants. It seems small only because it is so far away."

"I hope to climb it," Dorothy replied; "we are on our way to the Tyrol."

"If you carry out your intention you will perform a feat which few women have accomplish," said the count. "I have myself attempt to climb that mountain, but have not succeed. I have one castle not so far from it. I have inherit it from the father to my mother. He was one Austrian officer who was station in Italy, but he was taken prisoner to one Italian, my grandmother, and he nevermore went back to

his castle. When my mother was a signorina he would say she also must marry herself to an Austrian; but no, it was not so to be, for she fell in love to my father, a Venetian of the Venetians, who never could tear himself from the piazza of San Marco."



THE ORTLER SPITZ.

"And the castle," Dorothy asked, "what is it called, and who lives there now?" They had wandered a little away from the others, and the count replied, "Who live there? One whole village of peasants have planted themselves on my estate, have cut down my forest, and destroy my game. The castle is name Adlersruhe. It is in ruin; but it could be restored, though it would take much money. I would like to have you see it, if you make your journey near by. It would make a not so bad residence in the hunting season. I have known some

MONTE ROSA, FROM THE MONTE MORO.

Americans who have very good taste to amuse themselves to restore old ruins. I wonder would you find some divertissement to restore my castle. If so you would like to own it, it is at your service, and I will have the papers made out. It is worse very little as now; but I assure you it has its possibilities, and I have often dream to beautify it, — but alas! I am too poor."

What did he mean? Was he trying to *sell* his castle to her? But for the evening of the fête she would have thought so. In the light of that evening, however, the words seemed to take on the signification, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow." Still, *did* he mean quite that? This was the first time that she had met him since the night upon the lake, and in the presence of others there had been no opportunity for a confirmation of what she had understood as a declaration. Even now Mr. Irving approached them and handed Dorothy a field-glass.

"That great mountain is Monte Rosa," he said, "with the Cima di Jazzi and the Strahlhorn beside it. Just visible away to the north is the Jungfrau; and if you turn and look southward across the plains of Lombardy you will see Milan with its great cathedral. What a stretch for human vision to take in from one point!"

"So that white speck is Milan Cathedral!" Dorothy replied. "It was built of marble quarried at Baveno, and the Borromeos seem to have poured out their wealth upon it. We saw a bust of Cardinal Carlo Borromeo at Isola Bella which interested me greatly, and we heard at St. Gotthard that he founded the hospice there. Can you give me his history?"

"He was born in 1538 at the ancestral seat of the Borromeos," said Mr. Irving, "and he became the most noted man of his family. A nephew of Pius IV., he was made archbishop of Milan and cardinal at the age of twenty-two."

"He did not look like Browning's description of the church-men of that period," Dorothy replied, —

"'Gay Abati with the well turned leg
And rose i' the hat rim, canons, cross at neck,
And silk mask in the pocket of the gown.'"

"No," said Mr. Irving, "he was an enthusiast. He gave up all the luxury of wealth and nobility to become a true saint and hero during the great plague and famine in Milan, in 1570 and 1576, saving the lives of many by his energy and devotion, and he died shortly after, 'exhausted by his labors and austerities.'"

"He probably had no taste for the 'lust of the eyes and the pride of life,'" Dorothy replied, "and so his good deeds may not have been so very meritorious after all."

"I prefer," said Mr. Irving, "to give him full credit for self-sacrifice, for in the early part of his career he was deeply interested in the building of Milan Cathedral, and the greater part of his income went to speeding the work. If it had been finished in his life-time it would doubtless have been completed in the pure Gothic style in which it was begun, instead of being what it is now, — a patchwork of several styles. Doubtless he hoped to make it his life-work, — a grand monument which should carry down his name to the ages; but when the need came he dropped the work and applied all his money, influence, and thought to pure philanthropy, and so died, leaving the cathedral unfinished."

"That was indeed noble," Dorothy admitted, roused to enthusiasm. "It does seem better after all to live for others than for one's self alone. But what grand opportunities he had! I doubt if he could accomplish as much if he lived in our age."

"I can imagine him doing just as great a work now," said Elsie. "And I am sure that on that little fishing-island there is work enough to fill the life of a saint."

"Perhaps you are right," Dorothy replied. A new idea had come to her. "If I were a countess," she thought, "and had an entire village of my own to experiment upon, I might accomplish something

for humanity." The idea was not a transient one; it took root and grew, developing in many ways in her imagination. A sentimental fancy at first, it was destined in time to become more unselfish and practical. At present, however, it was only a romantic day-dream, in which she saw herself as a modern Saint Elizabeth, robed in a mediæval gown of green velvet, dispensing alms to grateful peasants.

Descending from the summit of the mountain, they lunched at the inn, and then continued their ride to the town of Orta, where they spent the night.

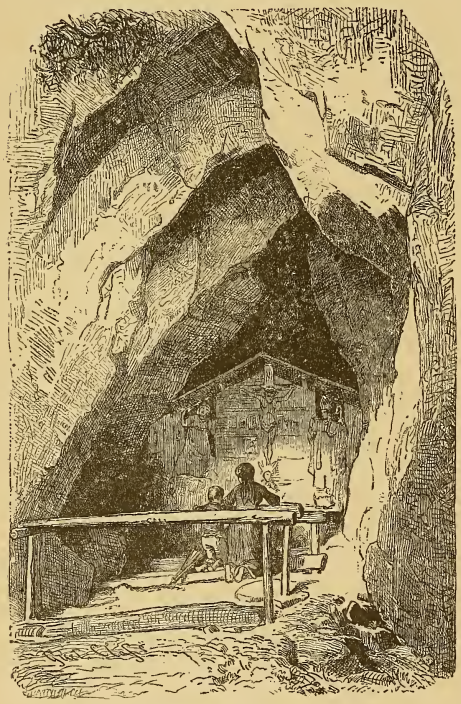
The next morning they crossed the lake in a fishing-boat, their destination being a pilgrimage mountain near the town of Varallo to the west of the lake. The daylight effects on this lake, while very different from the enchantment of the moonlight on Lago Maggiore, were none the less bewitching. Dr. Bartol's description of the reflections on the Traunsee might with equal truth have been written here:

"The huge forms of the inverted hills ran downward as far as upward in their erectness they climbed. What refinement of pleasure was there in remarking the minuteness as well as vastness of the copy! How we admired the submarine curving lines, the diverse shades, each vapor-shrouded point jutting from the mighty mass, the shreds of woolly cloud floating underneath, and the winds blowing gently round the spectral mountain's brow as truly as about the other mountain on high! How the double glory divided our regard, till we drew toward the shore from which we were to roll in wheels again by a road hedged in on one side by verdant woods, and on the other by streams that with their clear, delicious color told us whence the lake derived its crystal character to make it like 'one entire and perfect chrysolite.'"

It was all true to the carriage drive through the woods to Varallo, and the beauty was of a more wholesome kind than the night-witchery of the fête on Lago Maggiore. Dorothy realized that —

"Colors seen by candle-light
Do not look the same by day."

A life of selfish ease and indolence did not seem so altogether desirable now. There was a fresh, invigorating breeze which tempted her to leave the carriage and walk briskly in advance of it, with an occasional side excursion into the woods for wild flowers,— the purple cyclamen, the narcissus, and the laburnum, which grew so plentifully along the way.



CHAPEL IN THE ROCK.

They found the Sacro Monte del Nuóva Gerusalemme a most curious and interesting spot. Fifty chapels or oratories were scattered along the side of the mountain. Some of these were of handsome architecture, but it was not intended that worshippers should enter them. They were already occupied by a congregation of terra cotta or porcelain figures, which formed a series of sacred tableaux to be looked at through peep-holes in the door, and represented scenes from the life of Christ. Some of the groups were as grotesque as wax figures with their real hair and glassy eyes. To deepen the disgust of the spectator, the executioners in the crucifixion were represented with goitres on their throats. There were other groups, however, which deserved to rank as works

of art with those of Lucca della Robbia, — notably some executed by Guadenzio Ferrari, pupil and friend of Raphael, and others by Fiamingo, the renowned sculptor of children. The "Murder of the Innocents" comprised sixty figures; and the "Entombment" was arranged with impressive effect in a vault where little light was admitted, and the figures seen dimly through the gloom had a certain weird realism which was quite indescribable.

"This is certainly the most whimsical, the most charming, the most deliciously absurd place in the world," Dorothy exclaimed, delighted with the ingenuity displayed by the founder of the Via Sacra.

"He was clever enough to have managed the plot and characters of a three-volume novel or a five-act drama," Mr. Irving replied; "and he knew well the value of a good send-off, for he persuaded Carlo Borromeo to recommend the place as a pilgrimage mountain, and after that its success was assured."

"I think I understand why Borromeo could conscientiously recommend it to the ignorant peasants," Elsie replied; "they had no Bibles, and could not have read them had they possessed them. They looked at these representations, even the coarse and painful ones, with none of the critical or amused feeling with which we regard them, but with a childlike awe and docility; and undoubtedly the tragic story of the sufferings and death of Christ must have made a vivid impression on their susceptible minds. Borromeo probably thought as Paul did, when he said to the Church at Corinth, 'I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual . . . but as unto babes in Christ.'"

The higher altitudes had dispelled the glamour which drifted like a miasma over the lovely lake, and recalled them all to their real estimates of life. To the count this awakening had not had the same elevating effect. Waters cannot rise above their source, and he realized simply that he had been carried further by his emotions

than prudence would have permitted. He rode at Mrs. Irving's side as they returned to Baveno. She was an old friend of Dorothy's family, and was likely to be well informed concerning their circumstances. He determined to confide in her.

"My friend," he said, "I am one fool; I have allow myself to fall in love with Miss Dorothy."

"I regard that as simply a proof of your good taste, Count," replied Mrs. Irving. "Where could you find a more lovely girl?"

"And yet I am still one fool," he persisted; "for I have no right to fall in love except to a rich young lady. You know my mother."

"Yes, I know that the contessa has expectations for you; but I do not know the lowest figure that would satisfy her in the matter of a dowry."

"Alas! I know it too well; it has been too often discussed. My bride must restore Adlersruhe and the palazzo in Venice, and bring enough property besides to enable us to live comfortably upon its income."

Mrs. Irving gave her donkey a vicious cut with her riding-whip. "Your mother is unreasonable," she said.

"So I say," assented the count. "I have told her that we have now enough to live upon. For myself I am not mercenary; I will ask nossing, — hear you, *nossing;*" and the count waved his hands magnificently, thereby dropping his reins and starting his beast into a canter.

"You are more disinterested than I had thought," Mrs. Irving remarked, when she had opportunity.

"Am I not?" the count replied with a complacent smile. "I am a poor man, but I am also a proud. I will accept not one penny from my wife, for myself or for my mother. On the contraire, I will settle on her Adlersruhe, and if my honored father-in-law will also make one leetle settlement on her — not on me — I will be content."

TYROLESE SCENERY.

"Mr. Thorne's eldest daughter was married last year," said Mrs. Irving, "and her father at that time made a generous division of his property among his children."

"Listen," cried the count, delighted; "if the future contessa restores the castle, and brings enough income for her own personal expense, — her dress, her servants, her horses, her travelling, her jewels, and all zose leetle necessaries, — and if my future honored father-in-law will make suitable provision in his will for his future grand-children, why, then I am content to set myself one side. You have not thought me capable of such renunciation; is it not so? But when one loves, one is capable of sacrifice. Can you tell me what shall be the dowry of Miss Dorothy?"

"Her father has given her ten thousand dollars," said Mrs. Irving, dryly.

"Ten thousand!" almost screamed the count; "the very least that my mother would consent to is one hundred thousand."

"Then I fear, Count, that your self-renunciation will be of no avail."

"But surely when her father die he will leave her more. Mr. Austin assure me he was one very rich man. Ten thousand, — that would last very well one year perhaps."

"Mr. Thorne promised his children nothing further. That is considered a very fair provision in America."

The count smote his forehead with a gesture of despair. "My heart ees proken," he said.

"Oh, no, Count. I hardly think it is as bad as that; and Miss Dorothy is fortunately a very sensible girl. I think that when I explain matters to her she will be very willing to release you."

"No explain ees necessary!" he exclaimed; "do you think I am so deeshonorable as to make proposal before — "

"Before you were sure that it was quite to your advantage to do so? I see that I have wronged you, Count, and I beg your pardon. I am glad that you have not proposed to Dorothy. It

would be rather awkward to explain these little matters if you had said anything."

The count stood waiting as the girls reached the villa gate. "May I have the pleasure to row you in the lake this evening?" he asked, on leaving.

THE COUNT'S LETTER.

After dinner the two girls chatted merrily as they dressed for the evening.

"I am certain, Dorothy," said Elsie, "that he will speak his mind to-night, for he looked terribly in earnest. I suppose I must go with you for propriety's sake; but I will sit at the other end of the boat, and I'll be obligingly deaf."

Dorothy laughed a careless little laugh of triumph and gratified vanity, as she pinned a tiny coronet of pearls in her velvet bonnet-strings; and hearing a step on the pavement outside, fluttered down into the reception-room to meet her suitor.

A servant from the hotel was talking with one of the maids outside the open window.

"She may look like a marchesa, but she is only an American."

"Have a care, Asunta," replied the other. "If she is not a marchesa now, she may soon be. That is what these rich American girls come to Italy for, — to buy themselves titles."

A wave of indignant color swept over Dorothy's face, and subsided as she thought, "What the girl says is true."

Asunta entered, bearing a bouquet of stefanotis and a note. She dropped a low courtesy, and handed them to Dorothy.

"Count Farniente sent them by Giovanni." Dorothy placed the bouquet upon the table, and waited until Asunta had left the room before opening the note. It was very short, but perfectly intelligible, for the Count wrote better than he spoke.

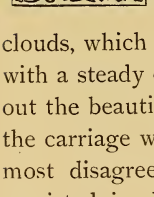
MOST HONORED AND DEAR FRIEND, — I am called suddenly to Venice, to my mother. You will comprehend that there are duties which are cruel but inexorable; such is this one, — to bid you farewell. Deign to accept the assurance of my most distinguished esteem.

FARNIENTE.

The count had spoken his mind.

CHAPTER VII.

OBER AMMERGAU.



ALERIE'S journey to Ober Ammergau had not been as pleasant as she anticipated. There had been a great deal of rainy weather that summer in the valley of the Inn, and scarcely had the Von Webers' carriage set out from Innsbruck when the heavy gray clouds, which had threatened in the early morning, closed upon them with a steady downfall of determined, disheartening rain. It blotted out the beautiful mountain landscape, rendered it necessary to close the carriage windows, and even then trickled through the cracks in a most disagreeable manner. It was in vain that Valerie hopefully persisted in discovering signs of clearing; the rain obstinately continued to pour, preventing the travellers from varying their journey by walking part of the way, as they had intended, and dampening the most determined efforts at cheerful conversation. They had expected to reach Ober Ammergau by evening; but sunset found them instead only at the village of Partenkirchen, with fully a third of their journey still before them, their horses exhausted, the roads in a heavy state, with possible wash-outs in dangerous places, and the blackest of nights settling down about them. Under these circumstances it seemed wise to remain until morning at the village inn; but though of unusual capacity, it was already crowded with other pilgrims to Ober Ammergau. The long tables of the large dining-room were

beset by hungry people of different nationalities and stations in life, and the greatest confusion prevailed. The inn-keeper promised however to "do his best," and finally succeeded in lodging the party at the house of a peasant. "If Partenkirchen, which is only one of the many approaches to Ober Ammergau, is so crowded, have you any hope that we will be able to find accommodations at the village itself?" Valerie asked somewhat anxiously.

"I have telegraphed," replied Herr von Weber, "to the burgomaster, and I have no doubt that he will bestow us all comfortably. At every representation there is the same influx of sight-seers, and I never heard that the mixed multitude were not provided for in some seemingly miraculous way. At these times every peasant opens his house, proud of the wide popularity of his passion play, and glad to have strangers billeted upon him by the burgomaster."

BOUND FOR OBER AMMERGAU.

There was a delusive gleam of sunshine in the morning, and the party continued their journey, all asserting that they would not mind rainy weather upon their way, if only they were granted sunshine on the morrow for the performance of the great spectacle.

"It will make very little difference whether it rains or shines," said Herr von Weber. "The actors will go through their parts with the same conscientiousness, careless that the rain is drenching their magnificent costumes; and the audience will sit and take it with the same indifference, if not unconsciousness, for eight mortal hours."

"Is the auditorium unprotected from the weather?" Valerie asked.

"The more expensive seats at the back are roofed; but several thousand are entirely open, and no one is allowed to obstruct the view with an umbrella."

They had reached Ettal with its great rambling monastery, which Valerie would have liked to visit; but the rain had begun again, the streets were rivulets, and Herr von Weber advised her to remain in the carriage. From this point on, the highways were filled with every description of vehicle on its way to the same destination.

Ober Ammergau itself struck Valerie, as they approached it, as remarkably prosperous in appearance. The houses were large, many of them new, with picturesque, overhanging roofs like chalets, and the walls were decorated with frescoes, generally of a religious character. As the greater part of the inhabitants were wood carvers and their favorite subject the crucifix, the startling sign "Herrgottschnitzer" (carver of the Lord) was sufficiently common.

They drove directly to the burgomaster's, and were assigned quarters in different parts of the village. Valerie was sent to the house of Annas the High Priest, and the rest of the party to that of Judas.

Valerie found that Annas in his everyday character was a merry little "schneidermeister," or master-tailor, whose thrifty wife further added to the resources of the family by keeping a grocer's shop in the front room of their dwelling. The large room behind the shop was the kitchen; a long hall ran beside it to the little court, at the rear of

which the tailor's apprentices were at work in a little shop. A rough staircase, hardly more than a ladder, led to three chambers, which were more comfortable than might have been expected from the ruder furnishing of the rest of the house. Indeed, every house in Ober Ammergau has so long been an inn that the inhabitants have come to understand what comforts are expected by their guests, and every housewife is well supplied with good bed-room furniture. The tailor's wife had sufficient bedding and table-linen of good quality to furnish all her daughters for housekeeping, and she had also a service of fine porcelain for the use of her guests, whose meals were served them in their own rooms. Valerie was given a very tiny room, but on explaining that she intended to remain in the village for a fortnight was promised the large front chamber which, it was expected, would be vacated on Thursday morning.

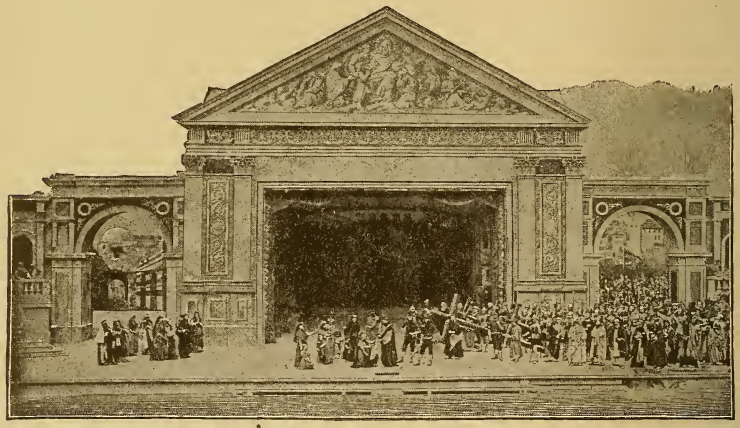
JUDAS ISCARIOT.

In spite of the rain the village band paraded the streets during the evening, as is the custom on the eve of every performance; and Valerie was awakened in the morning by the report of cannon, announcing the daybreak of the great festival.

Annas had succeeded in obtaining covered seats for them all, and

Valerie picked her way through the crowded streets blocked by constantly arriving omnibuses and stages, toward the great amphitheatre.

Frau Annas informed her that the train which should have arrived from Munich at the neighboring village of Oberau, their nearest railway station, at four on the previous afternoon, had been detained by the flooded condition of the road; and the travellers had only reached Ober Ammergau at midnight, when they had sought shelter by



THE PROSCENIUM.

knocking at people's windows. Some of them she feared had been obliged to sit up all night in their damp clothing.

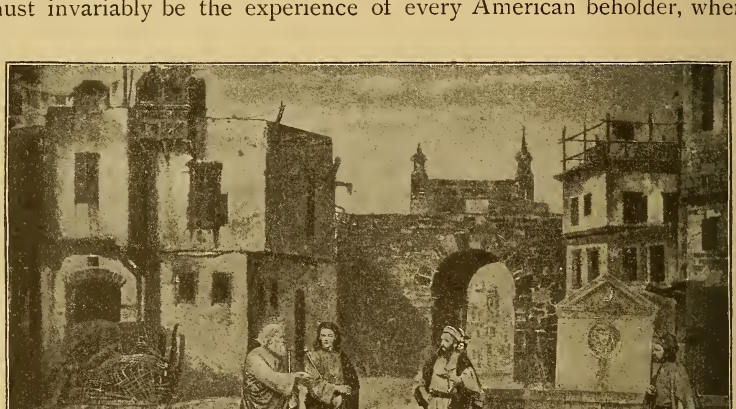
The theatre, constructed to hold six thousand persons, was crowded; and Valerie, who had wisely taken her seat early, interested herself in noticing the construction of the stage. It was different from and larger than any that she had ever seen. At the back was a second smaller stage framed by a temple-like peristyle and roof. On either side of this inner stage were large arches, behind which very well-painted scenery represented streets in Jerusalem, whose houses of

Oriental architecture were shadowed by waving palm-trees. Down these streets wound the processions which appeared with such effect in the play. The arches which framed the streets united the inner theatre with two houses of genuine carpentry, the one on the right the palace of Annas, that on the left of Pilate; and on the balcony and staircase of Pilate's house several of the most thrilling scenes of the play were enacted. These houses were in turn connected with the sides of the stage by two long semicircular colonnades remotely suggesting those of St. Peter's at Rome. Through these colonnades the chorus invariably made their appearance, filing from each side, taking their places on the large open stage or proscenium, and explaining each act of the drama in song or recitative. They were clothed in classical draperies, and had no part in

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

GETHSEMANE.

the real play; but so dignified was their appearance that they did not seem out of character with what followed. Indeed, it seemed to Valerie that these might be the Roman sibyls who foretold the coming of the Saviour. Valerie, although a Protestant, had been brought up among Catholics, and was so accustomed to see Christ represented in art and in every wayside shrine that she did not feel the shock which must invariably be the experience of every American beholder, when



ORDERING THE PASSOVER.

Christ first appears riding on the ass in the first scene, which represents the entry into Jerusalem. She knew too that the performance of the play had been instituted in fulfilment of a vow registered by the inhabitants of the village in the year 1633 at the convent of Ettal, on deliverance from a pestilence, — "that in thankful devotion, and for edifying contemplation, they would every ten years publicly represent the Passion of Jesus, the Saviour of the world."

This was the reason that so many representations of the crucifixion bore underneath it the words, "Durch Seine Wunden sind wir geheilet" (Through His wounds we are healed). At each returning decade (except during the Franco-Prussian war, when it was postponed one year) the Mystery has been repeated; and although it has been asserted that what was originally an act of devotion only was now mixed with the motives of gain and love of applause, still Valerie was sure that religious fervor was the mainspring of the really wonderful acting. There was a rapt interest, such as she had never seen in any other performance. Not only the principal actors threw themselves into their

BEFORE HEROD.

parts, but every performer down to the merest child was possessed by an intense ambition to make his part absolutely perfect. Through the long duration of the tableaux the most difficult poses were sustained with the immobility of statues. There was no gesture or glance which was not in character. Indeed for the time being it almost seemed as if they believed themselves to be the characters. This too was Valerie's feeling. All of her enjoyment of the acting and the art displayed in the representation came to her afterward. Now it seemed to her real, and herself a part of it. She fancied herself standing with the mob before Pilate's house, applauding the

Roman governor as he refused to be the tool of the Sanhedrim, and later watching his wavering with intense anxiety. She shared Mary's anguish in the affecting parting scene at Bethany, and at the terribly realistic crucifixion, and the still more impressive descent from the cross, copied from Rubens' masterpiece; and she awoke with a start as from a trance when the rising of the audience proclaimed that all was over.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

"I shall have to see the drama more than once," she said to herself, "before I can write a dispassionate review upon it."

Such a review would not have had half the worth possessed by the glowing description of her first impressions which Valerie did write on the following Thursday and Friday. "I will begin in this way," she planned, "and then add a second part which shall be historical, analytic, and critical."

The Von Webers had left immediately after the representation, with nearly all the strangers who had more than filled the little village. A greater contrast could scarcely be imagined than the appearance of the streets on Wednesday and on Friday. On Saturday they began to fill again in anticipation of the Sunday performance, and Valerie, who had so far scarcely left the house, amused herself by watching the different costumes worn by the peasant girls from various parts of Bavaria and the Tyrol. The dress of the Zillerthal was decidedly the most becoming, and a playful fancy seized her to see how she would look in the picturesque white sleeves and black-velvet bodice. The village store furnished the requisite materials, with silver ornaments and chains; and with these and a short, bright petticoat Valerie was ingenious enough to arrange herself a very pretty costume. She arrayed herself in it, and came down to the kitchen on Sunday morning to try its effect on Mrs. Annas. The entire family were delighted. The only criticism made was on the arrangement of the hair, and one of the golden-haired daughters offered to braid it for her.

"Now no one would know, gnädige Fraulein, that you were not a peasant maiden."

"So let me be for the remainder of my stay," cried Valerie, — "your cousin from the Zillerthal; and you must let me help you as you would allow a cousin to do, for you are all far too busy with these new arrivals."

That day Valerie, instead of experiencing any diminution in her impressions of the religious character of the spectacle, felt them sensibly deepened. She was able now to perceive the ethical meaning even of each of the most trivial acts of our Lord. She was particularly impressed by his words on washing the disciples' feet, and the lesson in humble service which they inculcated. "If I therefore, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought to wash one another's feet." "Figuratively, yes," she thought; "but I could never literally perform such a service; it is too menial, too humiliating."

She was a little annoyed in the very midst of this solemn scene by the pushing by of a young gentleman, who seemed to feel so little respect as to leave the house at such a time, until on glancing up at his face she saw that it was deadly pale, and betokened intense suffering. On her return to the house for luncheon during the intermission she found Mrs. Annas more than usually busy. "The noble young gentleman who has the little room which was yours is in great pain, and I have had no one to send for a doctor, for the father was acting his part, and the girls and the apprentices were at the theatre, and how could I leave the dinner?"

"I will go for one now if you will tell me where to find him," Valerie exclaimed, delighted that an opportunity had occurred when she could be of service. The doctor waited upon the young man immediately, and reported in the kitchen that his patient was suffering from an abscess on his foot, occasioned by the rusty point of one of the long, heavy nails with which the soles of alpine shoes are studded. He prescribed a course of poulticing. Poor Mrs. Annas groaned aloud. "And who is to carry him the warm poultices up and down those steep stairs twenty times a day?"

"I am among you as one that serves." It seemed to Valerie that Christ repeated the words in her ear. "I will take them to him," she offered. "You know I am your Tyrolean cousin, and you have promised to let me aid you."

It was Gilbert Austin, who, always fond of pedestrian excursions, had made the trip from Innsbruck on foot, and who by a strange coincidence had come to lodge under the same roof as Valerie. He had little of the exquisite appearance which he presented at the dinner when he had hoped to meet her; and the suavely *nonchalant* manners of the young consul were hardly recognizable in this savage creature with disordered hair who sat nursing his wounded foot, and who growled angrily as the door opened, "When in the name of all the saints are you going to bring that poultice?"

Very gently and patiently Valerie performed the act which she had just imagined impossible, allowing tepid water to trickle softly on the inflamed surface, and then binding the foot up with deft fingers. As he stretched the member comfortably on the great eider-down *plumeau*, and a soothing sensation began to relax his tense nerves, Gilbert Austin's attention was transferred from himself to the girl who had so skilfully tended him; but she had left the room without uttering a syllable. Who was she? Certainly not a servant, — probably a daughter of the house, and he laboriously prepared a German phrase with which to ask her name.

She came just as the poultice had grown cold and uncomfortable, for she had given up the afternoon performance of the play. "'Ich dien' [I serve] is the motto of the Prince of Wales," she thought, and when Austin asked what he should call her she replied simply, "Diena."

"You are German, of course?" he asked in that language.

"Yes, Tyrolean," she replied quite truthfully. He did not imagine that she could speak English, and continued to converse with her in his lame German.

"Have you come far to see the play?"

"As far as from Innsbruck."

"And do you think it was worth the trouble?"

"Far more than worth it."

"And to think that I have taken all the pains without having any of the recompense!"

"You must stay and see the performance on next Wednesday."

"I suppose I shall be obliged to do so; but I can't say that I like the prospect, cooped up in this little cell."

"I think you can have the large front room if you like. It is certainly pleasanter than this one. It has three windows, and you can see in as many directions, — down the principal street, and up toward the burgomaster's, and away toward the Kofel and the other

mountains." And Valerie resolved to ask Mrs. Annas to allow her to change rooms with the invalid.

"I suppose I shall have to pay more for all these privileges," he replied querulously.

"I think not; you know the guests all leave after the performance."

"Then I will move to-morrow, though it will be only an aggravation to my annoyance to look at the mountains which I cannot climb."

"You could not ascend them now even if you were well, for what is rain here has been snow higher up. The mountains are covered with snow as in winter. It has a fairy-like look, to see snow mingled with all this summer greenery; but it is not pleasant for climbing, for the snow covers treacherous places and makes the rocks slippery. Is the worthy Sir much of an Alpinist?"

"I have been doing a good deal of that sort of business of late. I went over the St. Gotthard in one day; that is about thirty miles, you know. Then I tramped over the Stelvio. It was there my shoe began to pain me; but as I did not wear it again until I left Innsbruck, I did not think to take it to a cobbler. I don't think it would have been so bad were it not that, on finding the shoes thoroughly soaked, I had them dried at Partenkirchen; and the Boots baked them in an oven, and warped the sole all out of shape, and sent the nail a quarter of an inch further upward."

Valerie did not find these details as interesting as they seemed to the sufferer, and left the room without remark.

"I say, Diena," he called very loudly and imperiously, for Valerie was now half way down the stairs, "when you come again, do bring me something to read. It is intolerably dull here with no one to talk to."

Valerie brought him the book containing the text of the Passion Play, saying that it was the only English book in the house.

"I am tired of that," he exclaimed petulantly; "I would even rather hear you talk. Describe it to me, please; you have seen it, have you not?"

But Valerie explained with much dignity that if she assisted the good *haus-frau* by bringing the poultices, he must not on that account imagine that all of her time was at his disposal.

"Absurd," he muttered to himself; "a peasant girl with the airs of a countess! She is evidently not a servant. I wonder what her position is in this family."

When Valerie next came, he noticed a little tell-tale spot of ink on the middle finger of her right hand. "You write," he exclaimed triumphantly.

"A little," she confessed, blushing slightly.

"And have learned book-keeping?"

"Yes."

Austin was certain now that she kept the accounts of the stuffy little store, and made out the tailors' bills and receipts for Herr Annas. He was rather pleased by this supposed discovery. On his pursuing his inquiries still further, one of the daughters of the house informed him that Diena was a cousin from the Zillerthal. A poor cousin, he thought, dependent on these well-to-do peasants for her support, — and how different she is from her relatives! and then it struck him that this difference was just what he had heard existed between the peasants of the Bavarian and the Austrian Tyrol, — the former well-to-do and merry, the latter poor, sad, and handsome.

Two weeks, three weeks passed rapidly by, and Valerie and Gilbert Austin became very well acquainted. She had the advantage of him in every way, for Mrs. Annas had given her his name and position, and she knew that her father approved of the acquaintance. She had, moreover, received a letter from Elsie, recounting the incidents of her journey and enlarging on Austin's

CALVARY.

interest in the unknown Valerie. She had even mentioned the fact of the judge's fear lest his son might become interested in some peasant maiden, and Austin's assurances that such a thing was not possible.

All this had given Valerie ideas.

They had many conversations in regard to the Passion Play, concerning which they did not quite agree. Austin persisted in regarding it in the same light as any other dramatic performance. "Of course the scenery and the posing is effective," he said; "they have the advantage of having the best artists in the world work for them. The Descent from the Cross is copied from Rubens' famous picture, the Ascension from that of Raphael, the Last Supper from Da Vinci's masterpiece."

He admitted that the acting was more uniformly good than he had elsewhere seen. "But that is natural," he added, "and could not well be otherwise under the circumstances. These peasants are all born actors; they have inherited the talent for several generations. Moreover, they have been carefully trained from infancy; they go on the stage as babies in their mothers' arms in the great tableaux requiring the presence of the populace. Ten years later they make their appearance as the youthful Joseph or Tobias. Then, if very talented, they may hope at the next representation to

THE ASCENSION.

be one of the apostles. Look at that fellow Saint John. I presume he has had just that career; and they say he is training for the rôle of Christ for the year 1900. He may be able to sustain it twice or even three times, as Mayer has done; after that he will be too old for it and will appear as Judas, and at his 'positively last appearance,' he will have grown a patriarchal beard, and make up finely for Caiphas or Joseph of Arimathea, or possibly Barabbas."

"All this is very true," Valerie replied, "but I think you miss the soul of the thing. You should see these actors attending Mass in the early morning on the days of the representation, the little church crowded with them, and those unable to get in kneeling outside in the churchyard, their faces lifted in sincere devotion, the iron crosses which are used to mark the graves here all about them, and the snowy mountains forming the background. I wished when I saw the scene the other day that I was an artist, it was such an impressive picture."

JOHN.

"If I grant," he persisted, "that the performance of the play is undertaken for the best of motives, what real good does it accomplish? The old moralities were plays taken from the legends of the saints, or from the Old Testament, and always inculcated some practical, moral lesson; but a Mystery or a play which simply depicts the sufferings of the Saviour must always, it seems to me, remain in a double sense a mystery, and fail to edify the beholder."

"I cannot agree with you," Valerie replied. "The example of Christ is more than many sermons. We learn more from what we see done before our eyes than from what we are exhorted to do. Christ's words were such as never man spake, but it was his life

and death which moved the world. It will always have a new vividness and force for me since seeing it pass before my eyes, and I shall be different all my life for having seen it. Do you imagine that I would have served you as I have done during the past few days if I had not seen the Christ set me an example?"

Gilbert Austin started.

"You looked surprised. What motive do you suppose induced me to act as your nurse? Did you fancy that I enjoyed such menial duties?"

"I told Frau Annas that I would recompense you well for your services, and later I have thought that perhaps pity, or friendship, might have been your guiding motive; that possibly you did it because you cared just a little for me, Diena."

"Not at all," Valerie replied inexorably. "You are entirely wrong. Nursing is repulsive to me. I would never undertake it as a profession, no matter how poor I might be; and as for any personal charm in yourself, Herr Austin, you were not very attractive when I first saw you; you have not been very amiable since —"

BARABBAS.

"Then I am to understand that I have been a sort of object of charity, and that you tended me simply from religious duty, precisely as you would a beggar in a hospital?"

"The Herr Austin states the case exactly."

"Well, of all the complimentary young ladies that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting, you certainly do cap the climax."

"Danke schön, Herr Austin."

The first time that Gilbert was able to attend the play, Valerie walked with him, allowing him to steady himself by leaning upon her arm. In spite of himself he was much moved by the acting of the part of Pilate. "That man had it in his power to save Jesus," said Valerie. "Oh, why did he not do it?"

"Because he feared the report which the high priests would have sent to Cæsar. He was not a Christian. He went as far as he could without endangering his own life, and that is all that a worldly man of the kindest instincts feels called upon to do for his neighbor. To have done more would have made him a hero, a Christian."

"Then you acknowledge that the Christian ideal is higher?"

"I do."

"And have you accepted it for your own?"

They were standing on the little bridge over the Ammer, for they often walked together, Gilbert Austin requiring more of her aid than it seemed to Valerie was absolutely necessary.

"Diena," he said, "I have been thinking seriously of these things, and I have decided that I will make the Christ-life my ideal if you will help me carry it out."

"Ah! that is something, Herr Austin, in which one cannot lean too much upon another. To be a Christian one must resolve to live his life so, even though unaided and alone."

"Do not put me to that test, Diena. Stop, wait, I have something which I must say to you. I love you, and I want you to promise that some day you will be my helper all my life through, my own true wife."

"But, Herr Austin, you do not know my parents, my real position in life, — you scarcely know me as yet."

"I know myself, Diena, and I know that I love you; and

though the differences in our stations be ever so great, I am resolved to marry you."

Gilbert Austin was so exalted by his sense of his own magnanimity in stooping to a peasant girl, that he did not notice the smile that twitched at the corners of her lips. "You are surprised, little Diena, that I, a well-born gentleman, am willing to lift you to my position; but I am firmly determined to do it. I am sure, too, that you are capable of education, and that after you have spent a few years in school no one would suspect your origin. I will educate you. Find some good primary school and let me know the expense of tuition, and I will settle with the schoolmaster. You are a rough diamond, my Diena, but I am not to be deceived. I can tell diamonds even in disguise. All you need is polish, and that I will give you."

GILBERT AUSTIN MAKES A MAGNANIMOUS PROPOSITION.

"The Herr Austin is very kind," Valerie replied demurely; "I will think of the Herr Austin's proposition."

"And you will be a great fool if you do not accept it," Gilbert Austin replied warmly. "Think of what I offer you, and tell me if there is any possibility of your doing better, if there is any one among your rustic lovers, — I suppose you may have had lovers, even over there in the Zillerthal, — who is as much of a gentleman as I am, who can make a lady of you, Diena."

How comical he looked in his rough tourist-garb, with his little cap pushed back in his excitement, his absurd airs of lofty condescension, and his owl-like stare through his round eye-glasses.

"His conceit is delicious," thought Valerie, and again she murmured, "The Herr Austin is very kind, but I cannot deceive the Herr Austin. He must see me in my own home, before he binds himself; his own people must see me and accept me before I will take what he offers."

Gilbert Austin winced. "As you please, Diena," he replied; "but I consider it an engagement all the same."

"This has gone entirely too far," Valerie said to herself that evening; "I must get back to Father and Mother as quickly as possible," and she took the early train the next morning, leaving a note for her would-be lover. When he opened it she was well upon her way. It said only: "Diena thanks the well-born gentleman for his kindness, and will think of what he has said. She goes to *enter service* in Innsbruck, so that he will see her soon again."

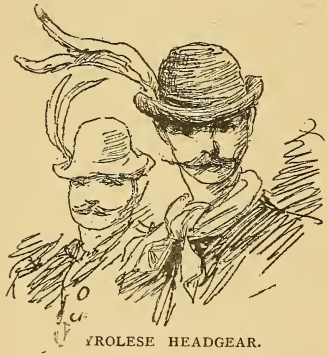
"He will, will he?" ejaculated Gilbert Austin; "but she does not give the name of her employers. Does the child wish me to go the rounds of every house in Innsbruck, asking to see all the Dienstmädchen? I suppose I shall come upon her some day scrubbing down the front steps of one of the houses." And then he thought of his father. "The old gentleman will make no end of a row. How shall I ever tell him?"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE TYROL.—THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.—STARTLING NEWS.

OROTHY was heart-sick and weary. She comprehended at once that the count had repented himself of his infatuation. Mrs. Irving, who was very indignant with the recalcitrant lover, could not keep his secret, but told Dorothy everything; and the girl understood now that it had been on his side a mere matter of money, and that she had not enough to purchase the title. There was no regret for the count mingled with her mortification, only a burning self-contempt that she had for a moment thought such a barter possible. "I deserve the humiliation," she said to herself bitterly, "I am beneath all scorn." She longed with a feverish anxiety to leave Italy. It seemed to her a land of seductive pleasure, enervating to body and soul. She felt the need of stern, wild scenery, and of companionship with poor and simple people, to restore her moral tone. She said nothing of her reasons for wishing the change even to Elsie; but she acknowledged herself weary of palazzos and semi-tropical gardens, and expressed her wish to see snow-capped mountains once more. Aunt Jane too was anxious for Dorothy to join her at Meran, a beautiful resort in the Austrian Tyrol, where she intended to remain during the month of September, while Elsie visited her friend Valerie at Innsbruck. September was the last month in which the Passion Play was to be represented, and Dorothy's thoughts now

reverted to her original aim in coming to Europe. The first days of that beautiful month therefore saw them speeding up the valley of the Adige with Verona and Italy behind them. The mountains close down steeply about the impetuous little river, leaving in places but a narrow defile through which the glacier-fed torrent dashes down to warm itself in sunny Lombardy. Grim fortresses man the rocks, and tell of the long, fierce wars between Italy and Austria. Up this valley, as into a refuge, the broken forces of the Austrians had fled after the bloody battles of Solferino and Magenta; but here the wave of victory for the French and Italians had been stayed, for it was impossible to conquer the Tyrol. This western province of Austria is a natural-rock fortress, standing like a fort to guard the country from the invader. Bavaria menaces it on the north, Switzerland on the west, and Italy on the south; but its rampart of mountains, accessible only by narrow passes and defiles, and easily defended by a few mountaineers, have rendered it impregnable. The people, like the Swiss, are hardy, patriotic, and proud. They asked no assistance from the standing army of Austria, but bands of Tyrolese marksmen organized themselves under the inn-keeper Hofer and formed one of the most effective home-guards that the world has known.



TYROLESE HEADGEAR.

A chill but invigorating blast from the Dolemite region blew down the defile as the train made its way northward. They were to spend their first night in the Tyrol at Trient or Trent, the meeting-place of the famous council of bishops. They entered the gloomy old city in the evening, its frowning walls made sterner by the lengthening shadows. There was something in the very

gloom which was acceptable to Dorothy, — a feeling of strength and solidity, as if here the foundations were sure. She stepped out upon the balcony of her room at the Hotel Trento that evening and looked across the wide square to the towers of the city walls, which rose at intervals, picturesque but grim, silently guarding the city, and themselves guarded by the grander encircling mountains.

"This is just the place for an episcopal council," she said; "all the surroundings give authority and dignity."

"But you do not see the Bishop's Castle," Elsie replied; "we must visit it to-morrow. It is used as a barrack for Austrian soldiers now; but our host says it is shown to visitors, and is well worth seeing."

STREET CLEANING IN TRENT.

The next morning, before inspecting the castle, they wandered about through the quaint streets of the old city. There were suggestions of Italy on every hand, but blended with something different and more virile. The façades of the houses were frequently adorned with frescoes of religious subjects in the Italian style, but you felt that the people of Trent believed more thoroughly in the good saints under whose protection they placed their homes than the Italians do. Lanterns were almost invariably suspended in front of these pictures, and the lanterns were lighted at night; though electric lamps at intervals had removed any necessity for them as far as regarded street-illumination. It was strangely incongruous to see the graceful flower-like bulbs of the modern electric light outlined against an old fourteenth-century tower, — an odd mingling of the past and present; but it was not the only incongruity to be

found in this inconsistent old town. The shop-windows were barred and grated like dungeons, the houses were a queer jumble of varied architecture, — steep, many-dormered German roofs surmounting Italian arcades, — and the names on the signs showed such polyglot combinations as Giovanni Reichenbach, Giuseppe Reinherz, Pasquale Zimmerman, and Otto Karl Morosini.

There was a noticeable attempt at cleanliness, and a street-cleaning department consisting of men with handbarrows and great fagot-brooms were doing good work.

The cathedral was a mixture of the Romanesque and Renaissance styles. The roof of the porch was supported by columns resting on the backs of grotesque lions, — a feature which they found repeated in the cathedral of Botzen, their next stopping place. Another architectural feature not in the best of taste was displayed at the back of the church, where columns were so carved as to seem to be tied in knots, or braided, as though the stone were a soft and bending material like clay or putty. They strolled into the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, where the Council of Trent was held, and were shown a great painting representing the sitting of the Council, each face a portrait of a cardinal or a bishop. There was a cheerful frieze of Renaissance carving over the door through which they had entered, — a coquettish virgin and an orchestra of jolly young cherubs, — altogether the gayest group which they met in the serious old town.

FATHER PACIFICO.

They climbed the long steep street which led up the hill to the castle of Buon Consiglio. There it stood, half palace and wholly fortress, once the stately residence of the prince-bishop of Trent.

They hesitated for a moment at the entrance. "I hardly like to walk straight into a barrack," said Elsie, "and I do not see any custodian."

As she spoke, a mild-faced, portly priest, evidently a stranger like themselves, approached from the city, and joining them, looked wistfully up at the great pile. They were all about to turn away, when a young officer in the uniform of an Austrian unterjager stepped jauntily across the courtyard, and asked politely if they would like to see the castle. "Thanks, signor," replied the priest, "it is the object of my pilgrimage to Trent."

"We are also pilgrims," Dorothy added with a smile; "pilgrims in search of the beautiful and all objects of historic interest."

"Then let me show you the apartments," said the officer, leading them up the stone steps into the entrance hall. "There are some frescoes here which I believe are considered very fine, — at least they were painted by celebrated Italian artists, — but they are sadly faded now."

They climbed a grand stone staircase, and entered a handsome gallery which looked down upon a court containing a fountain. Everywhere the two lions — the insignia of the prince-bishop — were carved in stone with the cardinal's hat and tassels and the bishop's mitre. The gallery was ornamented with frescoes of flimsily clad ladies, — strange subjects for a religious house. Biblical and classical subjects were mingled, and Delilah and Venus, Judith and Helen, disported themselves upon the walls and ceiling. "These are possibly by Ramanino," said the unterjager. "Cardinal Madrozzo invited him to Trent in 1540 to adorn the palace with some new frescoes before the sitting of the great council."

"What very gay old fellows those prince-bishops must have been," Dorothy remarked irreverently.

"They enjoyed temporal power over all the country around from 1027 to 1803," said the young unterjager; "and that they must have lived in great luxury, we have evidences in this castle."

"They were also frequently men eminent for their learning and their piety," said the priest, who had told them that his name was Father Pacifico.

The young unterjager smiled, and led them through a noble suite of apartments with richly panelled ceilings and wainscots, ornamented with tarnished gilding and once magnificent with paintings. "This great hall was the dining-room," he said. "The reverend host broke not his bread alone; and his wine-cellars were enormous."

"It was one of the first duties of the prince-bishop to exercise hospitality," said Father Pacifico. "His palace was a hospice for the traveller, and splendid must have been the sight when the Council of Trent were feasted in this apartment. Here might have been seen his holiness, Pope Julius III., with all the great cardinals of the Church, representatives of the houses of Medici, Mendoza, Palavicini, Sforza, and the sainted Carlo Borromeo."

"Was he here?" asked Dorothy. "He seems to be ubiquitous; we find traces of him everywhere."

"Truly he was the heart and soul of the Council; and how could he have stayed away when all the prelates of Christendom were convened, and they came even from distant Ireland, while the unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots, was represented by her uncle, the great Cardinal Lorraine? I was reading but recently the account given by one of our historians, and I wrote it down here for reference." Father Pacifico took from his breast a small note-book and read, — "The Synod of Trent, the older it waxeth the more it will flourish. What variety of nations, what choice of bishops of the whole world, what splendor of kings and of commonwealths, what marrow of theologians, what sanctity, what weepings, what fasts, what academical flowers, what languages, what subtilties, what labor, what infinite reading, what riches of virtues and studies, did fill up that majestical, sacred place!"

All listened respectfully to the enthusiasm of the gentle priest.

And they passed from the noble dining-hall into a great round chamber in the tower, also richly decorated, which the priest thought must have been the library; then through more apartments, now used as dormitories and filled with the rough beds of the soldiers, but which were once hung with tapestry and carpeted with velvet; through the pillared cloisters, and across a bridge, which spanned the court, into a magnificent room, once faced with marble, and into another set of cloisters with marble balustrades. The walls were decorated with the portraits of all the bishops who had reigned here. Father Pacifico studied them with deep interest; but the girls preferred to enjoy the wide-spreading view which the windows afforded of the entire surrounding country, with many of the thirty towers (Trento Torre) from which the city derives its name, some of which are attributed to Theoderic, king of the Ostrogoths.

There were tears in the good priest's eyes as they left the palace. It was plain that he regretted the vanished glories of the Mother Church. "But the old faith is still alive," the young officer said proudly. "You should see Trent on the Festival of Saint Vigilius, the 26th of June, when the faithful flock to the city."

"Nay," said Father Pacifico, "you should see the Tyrolese in their daily lives, for it is not alone on festival days that religion shows itself. I am priest at a little village not far from Meran. I would like to have you judge by my people whether faith is perishing from the world."

He bowed ceremoniously and took his leave, and the unterjager took the girls to the outer court to inspect the great siege cannon. They found it difficult to admire the murderous engines. "I dislike war," Elsie said frankly. "I do not see how you can be a soldier."

"It is the only career open to the lesser nobility," the young man replied. "I could not be a do-nothing."

"In America you could have the choice of a hundred honorable professions."

"Ah, in America! That is different. We are all looking to America to work out our problems for us. If America succeeds for another century, Europe will be full of republics."

"I did not think of that," Dorothy said, as they walked down the hill together. "In America we are not only working out our own salvation, but we are an example to the world. Our responsibility is all the greater."

Elsie's mind was still upon the Council of Trent. "When did it take place?" she asked.

"I don't know the exact date. Fifteen hundred and something, I believe. We will look it up whenever we have access to a library."

This did not happen until they reached Meran. Here the girls were surprised to find that the Council, whose first session took place Dec. 13, 1545, was a very lengthy one, convening at intervals and covering a period of eighteen years, its last meeting being upon Dec. 4, 1563.

"It must have had some weighty question to settle," said Aunt Jane, "to take all that time to finish it up."

"The question is not finished yet," Dorothy replied, looking up from the book which she had been consulting. "It was convened for the purpose of suppressing Protestantism, and it only disseminated the new faith by making it a subject of discussion in every land. It seems that when Pope Leo X. excommunicated Luther, the reformer appealed from the judgment of the Pope to that of a general ecumenical council. My historian — a Catholic one — says that this appeal was merely a device for controversy; but the Pope Paul III. (Farnese) did not so consider it, and with the Emperor Charles V. he called a council-general of Christendom to define the true faith. The Emperor insisted that the Council should not be held in Italy, as there it would be considered to be under the direct power of the Pope. All the Protestant clergy were invited to attend, and were assured of safe conduct. Some deputies from Protestant churches responded, but on

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS, OF THE TYROL.

being refused equal voice in the meetings, retired, saying that they would not remain merely to hear themselves condemned. Pius IV. (Medici), pope during the later sessions of the Council, made two efforts to have Queen Elizabeth recognize the Council by sending a representative. But Elizabeth replied to the effect that England had done with the Pope; and that it was therefore useless, and might be mischievous, to confer with his emissaries. The Romish Church in England was, however, in some sort represented by Reginald Pole, whom Elizabeth had deposed from the bishopric of Worcester. The fidelity of Mary, Queen of Scots, was praised by the Council, who replied to her by letter, assuring her that "among the princes and rulers who in these evil times have been bold in the cause of the Church of God, assuredly the illustrious name of Mary, Queen of Scotland, will be commended to the undying remembrance of mankind."

Dorothy seemed to find relief from her self-contempt in hard study. Theological controversy is not usually the most attractive reading to young people; but she plunged into it with keen zest, and found a real pleasure in making herself absolute mistress of the subject. She waded patiently through many dry books at the library, made voluminous notes, and afterward talked over what she had read with Elsie and Aunt Jane.

"I think you must admire Luther's attitude," she said. "Although the Council was called in response to his request, he was far from recognizing its authority, but wrote to Melancthon: 'We must admit that our doctrine is true apart from the Council, that the angels in heaven can change no part of it, and that the angels who should attempt to do so ought to be excommunicated; much more then is it inadmissible that the Emperor, the bishops, or the Pope should judge it.'"

"And did they spend all those eighteen years simply in discussing and condemning Protestantism?" Elsie asked.

"No, the entire Roman Catholic creed seems to have been taken

up point by point. In the first place they authorized the Vulgate Bible, and pronounced the traditions of the Church equal in authority with sacred scripture. Later the doctrine of justification by faith as held by Luther was condemned as a heresy. Next the sacraments were brought up for discussion, and the doctrine of transubstantiation established as a test of orthodoxy, no Protestant being willing to admit it. The Sacred Orders were declared of divine appointment, and the way paved for Ultramontanism. The Duke of Bavaria at this juncture demanded that marriage should be permitted to the clergy, but this was promptly refused. Many other points were discussed, and it is plain that many of the disputants were truly Christian men who felt that Christianity was in danger. This is especially to be remarked in the course taken by Cardinal Borromeo; it is evident, also, in the dispute over Predestination as held by Calvin, which the Council finally pronounced an error."

"It only proves," said Elsie, "that very good men may hold diametrically opposed opinions."

"And yet it certainly does not follow that our opinions are of no consequence."

"No, dear; but in Cardinal Borromeo's case, at least, his life was of far greater worth."

That afternoon a different current was given to their thoughts by the arrival of two letters from John Hartley. To his sister he wrote at length of his life at the mines, but his note to Dorothy was simply a business one and ran as follows: —

CHAIN LIGHTNING MINE, COLORADO, August 15.

DEAR MISS DOROTHY, — I am happy to report a great advance in the value of your stock. The past months have witnessed an unprecedented boom. A new vein was struck in the early summer, and the value of shares went up from ten to fifty dollars. Your original investment of ten thousand dollars now represents fifty thousand. Shall I sell? I counsel this, — not because I anticipate any immediate decline in market values (indeed, popular enthusiasm is so great

that the stock is likely to go as high as seventy-five dollars a share), — but because I am confident, from the samples of ore in the new vein and the amount of land owned by our company, that this is all the stock is really worth. I had invested one thousand dollars, and have realized ten thousand. There is a lively demand for the stock, and the company will probably issue new shares. This inflation will do no harm for the present, but the mine cannot furnish the dividends which it has declared in the past to an unlimited number of stockholders.

On receipt of this, will you kindly advise me by cable of your wishes in the matter? I trust that your European tour is offering you even grander opportunities than you anticipated.

Yours to command, JOHN HARTLEY.

Dorothy read the letter aloud to Elsie, who exclaimed, "Why, Dorothy, you are rich! Fifty thousand dollars!"

"Yes, and the stock is likely to go higher; I may be worth seventy-five thousand now."

"Shall you sell?"

"I don't think I shall. Your brother seems so sure that it is likely to increase in value. I don't quite see why he advises me to withdraw my money."

"Let me see. Because — 'this is all it is really worth.' That is so like John. He could never bear to sell anything at fictitious values."

"I have n't so nice a conscience. I shall cable him to let it go as high as it will, and only sell my shares when they begin to go down. Whatever possessed him to take out his own investment? There certainly is such a thing as being righteous overmuch."

"John seems to have lost interest in mining," said Elsie, as she glanced through her brother's letter; "or rather, to be greatly interested in another scheme, — that of forming a company for furnishing employment to emigrants. This is what he says: 'As paymaster for the mine I have been thrown a great deal with the men. They are all foreigners who have come to this new world to seek their fortunes, and after searching in vain for employment throughout the cities of the east have drifted out to the west, and are so pitiably glad

to find any work. Every day the great ocean steamers bring in hundreds of steerage passengers, — the hard-working and honest, and the idle and improvident; but all ignorant and helpless, — human wreckage cast upon our shores for us to care for. There is room for them in the west, there is labor and land waiting for them here if they knew how to reach it; but they know nothing, and they huddle into the already teeming tenement-quarter of New York, and patiently beg and die, or turn into ruffians and criminals. My plan is to organize an intelligence and forwarding agency, which shall meet these emigrants when they land and send them to just the spot for which they are fitted and which needs them. Such a company will want money to begin operations; but it ought to be more than self-supporting within a few years, and would accomplish great good. I hope that I will be able to report in my next letter that it is in active operation.'"

"How good he is!" Dorothy exclaimed. "When I do decide to sell my mining shares I will invest something in his scheme. You 've a brother to be proud of, Elsie. Contrast his aims with those of Count Farniente. He thought it would be a good plan for Count Borromeo to sweep that entire fishing-village from its island in order to enlarge his own pleasure-grounds, and when I asked what would become of the fishermen, said they might go to America — for John to take care of, I presume. I cannot comprehend how any man can be willing to count for nothing, — for less than nothing, a real minus quantity in the world's work."

It was the first time that she had spoken of the count in a long time. Elsie looked at her friend a little incredulously.

"You evidently think you are in earnest," she said to herself; "but all the same, if the count had known of your wealth and had proposed, I don't believe you would have drawn the contrast so greatly in favor of John." More than ever she wished Dorothy to care for John, for in a postscript to his letter, which she had not read to Dorothy, he had said: "I am very glad that her interests have prospered in my hands.

It will be one of the delights of my life if this fortune opens the way for her to some beautiful realization of her ideals. Keep my secret, and let me know if ever a time arrives when I can serve her in any way."

If the count did not hear of Dorothy's fortune, Elsie was sure that he would never cross their path again, and then perhaps in time Dorothy might deign to stoop to John. But she wished for him no such grudging acceptance, regretted perhaps in after days as Dorothy thought of that other lot which never quite came within the possibilities. Her sisterly heart was very proud as well as loyal; she wished for John nothing short of unqualified preference, and of this she was not absolutely sure.

CHAPTER IX.

MERAN AND ITS CASTLES.

HE Tyrol is sown thick with castles. They bristle on the mountains, commanding every pass; and their ruins "come in" picturesquely wherever in the landscape an artist could desire them. While wandering over the castle of the prince-bishops of Trent, Dorothy had wondered whether that owned by the count resembled it in any way. If so, the possession of such a domain was surely wealth and consequence enough for one man. But as they continued their journey to Meran, and she saw ruins in every degree of dilapidation, she realized that one might be the owner of a ruined castle and yet be no richer than an evicted Irish peasant whose cabin has been unroofed above him. Before reaching Meran they had stopped at Botzen, — one of the most important and picturesque cities of the Tyrol, charmingly situated at the juncture of the Talfer and Eisak rivers, which in turn empty a little farther south into the Adige. Mountains rise steeply all around, crowding the city into the valley; and down the sides of the mountains rush a score of brooks, swelling into torrents after every rainfall, and forming countless cascades and lakelets. In spite of the prevalence of water, Botzen is noted for its scorching heat. The air seems to simmer as in a chafing dish. The whirlwinds which dash down from the gorges whisk the dust —

powdered porphyry — into the eyes of pedestrians, and the sun glares with such fierceness that one is fain to take refuge under the shaded arcades of the Laubengasse. This long street is extremely curious; its stone colonnades would cause it to resemble a cloister were it not that the great variety and quantity of merchandise displayed give one the impression of a country fair, — a fair held in the court of a convent, if such a thing were conceivable. One side of the street is occupied by German and the other by Italian shopkeepers.

AUNT JANE.

Aunt Jane had come from Meran to meet the girls. She was greatly improved by her stay in the Tyrol, and had exchanged the close and stuffy crape veil for a broad-brimmed hat. She looked at everything with great interest, but with almost invariable disapproval.

There was very little that was foreign which met with her approbation. The Gothic church with its roof and spire covered with green porcelain tiles, the iridescent vitreous glaze shining under the strong light like the scales of a dragon, was an altogether heathenish object in her eyes, — though to the girls this green tiling — a peculiarity of the Tyrol — seemed charming. The interior of the church was set with pews in the Protestant fashion, each pew bearing a brass plate with the name and coat-of-arms of its occupant. "The good people of Botzen

appear to be all nobles," Elsie said in a whisper, as she read the names of Herzog this and Baron that.

"The noblesse of the Tyrol are as proud, I have heard, as they are poor," Dorothy replied. "Do you see that sad, weary-looking woman kneeling behind that pillar? She is probably a descendant of a line of belted knights, who now labors with her hands for her daily bread. And she has doubtless plenty of companions in like circumstances. Where have you ever seen so many ruined castles? Every height is crowned with one; and I mean to explore them all before I leave this vicinity."

IN THE CHURCH AT BOTZEN.

It is said that every tourist on arriving at Botzen makes up his mind to "do" all the places of interest, but goes away having accomplished nothing but the Calvarienberg; and our venturesome maidens were no exception. The afternoon of their arrival they walked out toward the ruins of the castle Hoch Eppan, far enough to obtain a magnificent view of the Dolomites, — sharply splintered mountains whose snow-

crowned summits have in turn attracted and repelled the most hardy Alpinists. But the next morning the heat oppressed them so much that they decided to substitute the easy ascent of the Calvarienberg for the more ambitious excursion which they had planned to the old château of Sigmundskron.

The Calvarienberg, like Varallo, is one of the many pilgrimage mountains so much in favor in Catholic countries. Dorothy made the excursion simply for the sake of the fine view which she was assured she would find at the summit. The two girls set out, alpenstocks in hand, but paused a few moments on the long wooden bridge over the Eisak to enjoy the beautiful landscape.

The effigies in the little chapels had not the artistic merit of those at Varallo to recommend them, and the girls hurried by them and passed around the little church which crowned the summit of the mountain to the terrace from which the famous view was to be obtained.

An ingenious device for giving the tourist the names of the points of interest in the surrounding landscape was arranged on the terrace balustrade. From a converging point on the coping, at which the spectator was asked to place his eye, lines were drawn toward the heights, and to nine castles which were visible on the horizon, the name of each being traced on the line. Conspicuous among the many ruins was that of Schloss Eppan, whose owners in the eleventh century were rivals of the counts of Tirol, who exercised sway over thirty-six tributary castles, and carried on for a long time a feud with the prince-bishops of Trent, by whom they were finally crushed.

"Castles are really as common here as pig-sties," Dorothy remarked.

"I do not think I have seen as many good comfortable sties in this region," Elsie added. "I do not see the name of Adlersruhe here, but somewhere over there beyond Meran is the castle

which the count wished to give — or was it to sell? — you. I shall be curious to see it. They say that Meran is a greater centre for castles than Botzen; and as the heat here is so enervating, I propose that we postpone our explorations of ruins until we reach the next stage in our journey."

OFF FOR A WALK.

To Meran they came. The first week Dorothy devoted to reading in the town library, informing herself not only on the Council of Trent, but also on the history of the Tyrol and on the German and Austrian Mystery Plays. Elsie brought a neglected correspondence up to date, and wrote to Mrs. Irving of their safe arrival under Aunt Jane's wing, and of their various happenings en route. She mentioned the good fortune that had come to Dorothy; for she knew that Mrs. Irving would be keenly interested in this item of intelligence, and could imagine the vexation which that well-intentioned woman would experience at the thought that the news had come too late to have its influence on the little romance which had been enacted under her roof. But books and letters could not hold the girls long indoors, and they soon began to explore the fascinating region.

Meran, the ancient capital of the Tyrol, is famous as the ancestral residence of the counts of Tirol, from whom the province obtained its name. It is greatly frequented during the winter by consumptives on account of the mildness of its climate, and at other seasons by tourists of every

description. Aunt Jane had engaged pleasant rooms at a *pension* on the Gisèle promenade, which skirted the dike constructed along the impetuous Passer, which now danced harmlessly enough at the bottom of the gorge.

Life here was very restful. The girls took long walks in the forenoons, and never had they known a spot where there were so many tempting objective points for excursions. Everywhere along the roadside were placed religious images or pictures; nailed against the trees, sheltered in niches in the cliffs, or under little shrines, these "guide-posts to heaven" were closely set; and it was rare indeed when some peasant was not seen kneeling before them, the smoke from his painted porcelain pipe rising toward Heaven like incense from a censer. In the town there was a tennis club which the girls joined, and as the temperature of Meran was much cooler than that of Botzen, active exercise was a positive delight.

Of the thirty castles to be found in the environs they first visited that of Zenoberg, with its chapel noted for its fine carvings; then Schönna, which still retains its gates and draw-bridge, armory and dungeons, and is a fine specimen of a mediæval castle belonging to the Duke of Meran.

"This is certainly the most beautiful spot in all this lovely country," said Elsie, looking out at the vine-clad hills with their shadowy chestnuts and dusky mulberries, while the grand panorama of the mountains rose in the background.

"Just over there," said Dorothy, pointing to the east, "is the Ortler group, the grandest mountains of the Tyrolean Alps. If we had come by the Stelvio Pass we would have journeyed for hours in sight of them. I think we must make an excursion to the Ortler Spitz, the highest peak in the group, before we leave this region. It has been climbed by women, and I am sure we can do it."

"We can't quite make the ascent alone," said Elsie, "but we will keep our eyes open for any party that we can join."

Another day they scaled the ramparts of the Fragsburg, the most loftily situated of all the Meran castles, still perfect and inhabited, while below it nestled the ruins of Katzenstein and Neuberg; but the most interesting of all their excursions they both agreed was to the Schloss Tirol.

It was a walk of six good English miles, during which they mounted over a thousand feet; but the day was perfect, and they were both in excellent spirits. After passing the little village of Tirol, the highway skirted a cliff, a rocky wall on their right and a precipice upon their left. Suddenly the black mouth of a tunnel confronted them. A way had been constructed to the castle straight through an abutment of the mountain. Excavated centuries ago, it could easily have been held in those primitive times by a few retainers, and must have been a strong defence. On issuing from the tunnel, the castle appeared before them, perched on a high cliff of conglomerate, and overlooking the valley, which was indistinct with mist. It was easy to imagine it a lake, and Elsie was sure that it must once have been one, for the geologic conformation of the strata on which the castle stood showed water-rounded stones imbedded in drift and clay. They crossed a bridge, entered the courtyard of the castle, and then climbed the staircase to the rittersaal, or great reception hall, where the custodian of the castle was already showing a party the magnificent view from the beautifully carved windows. Elsie paused to admire the finely cut dragon which formed the capital to the pillar dividing one of the windows into two narrow arches; but Dorothy's gaze overlooked the carving, and swept outward down the beautiful valley of the Adige, following the windings of the river on its way to Italy.

The Baroness Tautphoeus was right when she made her heroine say: "If you were not enchanted with that view just as you found it, we must never travel nor even look at prints together."

"I wish we could live here for a time," said Dorothy; "I do not think any one could be mean or little in such surroundings. I wonder whether one could purchase permission to reside in the castle."

"I fancy it would be impossible. The castle belongs to the Crown. It is preserved as a historical monument, and the emperor would hardly rent it. Come, the guide is taking the others into the chapel; we shall miss some part of the building."

Dorothy turned away reluctantly. The carvings about the ancient portal were most fanciful and grotesque; mythological beasts were intermingled with representations of scripture characters and a tangle of gothic leafage. The chapel itself was smaller than the great ritter-saal, being intended for the private use of the lords of the castle. There was some finely carved wood-work, and they were shown a canopied stall, or chair, like a bishop's sedilla, the seat of Margaret Maultasch (or pocket-mouth), the last Countess of Tirol.

"When was this castle built?" Elsie asked of Dorothy, who carried the guide-book.

"It is claimed that it was begun in the fourth century, but the building as we see it was principally constructed in the tenth. It seems that it belonged to the counts of Tirol until the thirteenth century, when this Margaret of whom the guide has just spoken, being the last descendant of that line, willed her inheritance to the house of Hapsburg, and from that time Tyrol ceased to be an independent State, but was merged among the possessions of Austria. The Tyrolese seem to have agreed to the change, and to have been as loyal to the emperor as they were to their former masters, the counts of Tirol."

The custodian showed them into the visitors' room, — a fine apartment on the next floor, fitted up as a drawing-room and hung with large portraits of the present emperor, his uncle, and grandfather. The emperor was represented as a handsome youth in a sky-blue coat well covered with medals. The custodian, a tall and (for his position) a rather silent man, pointed out the portrait with evident admiration. He was so dignified, and in appearance so much above his situation, that the girls hesitated whether to fee him; but seeing that the other tourists pressed a coin into his hand on parting, they followed the example.

As they descended the staircase, they looked once more into the rittersaal. "It must have been fine here, eh?" said the custodian, "when the countess received a hundred knights and all her vassals. They say, too, that on occasion she led them to battle on horseback, dressed all in armor."

Dorothy admitted that such a sight would have been worth seeing; and then, emboldened, expressed her desire to live for a time in the castle.

"In this one?" replied the custodian. "Oh, no! it would not be permitted; but there is a castle on the way to the Ortler Spitz, not very far from Schlanders. My cousin is the custodian. It has been for sale for many years, and is to let also. You could hire that for a song. Mr. Obermeyer in Meran is the agent; or if you did not wish to hire it, you could board there if you like. My cousin keeps an inn for the entertainment of Alpinists who climb the Ortler. It is a beautiful country, but lonely, — lonely as the ark of Noah after the Deluge."

"Your description interests me," said Dorothy. "I am not afraid of loneliness. What is the name of this castle?"

"Schloss Adlersruhe; it belongs to an Italian count who never comes here. No wonder he is anxious to sell it; the people do not love him."

Dorothy did not wait to hear more, but turned quickly away.

"Shall you take up your abode at Adlersruhe?" Elsie asked, as they descended the mountain.

"Most certainly not," Dorothy replied with decision.

"But you need not be indebted to the count for hospitality; you have only to see this Mr. Obermeyer and make a business arrangement. John said he would send you another dividend check soon. From the description of its surrounding, I should think it is just the place you would like."

"It seems that surroundings after all have little influence upon

character. Adlersruhe has not ennobled the count nor Schloss Tirol the Lady Margaret. Carlyle paints her as not altogether an admirable character," Dorothy answered. "I think his expression is that she was remarkable alike for her ugliness, her courage, her intelligence, and her wickedness; but I like that custodian, and I can't help feeling that he is not exactly a common peasant."

"Some one told me," Elsie replied, "that he was a descendant of Hofer, and that the emperor gave the family the care of this castle as one of the marks — and a very trifling one it seems to me — of the esteem in which he held the services of their brave ancestor."

"That explains it," said Dorothy; "the man is of noble descent, not because the emperor granted Hofer a patent of nobility after his great victories, but because Hofer was noble, a patriot and a hero before those marks of royal favor were granted. Our next excursion must be to the site of the old inn on the Passer, which this remarkable man kept before his country's need called out his genius and made him famous."

Elsie was a little disappointed that Dorothy showed so little curiosity in regard to Adlersruhe, but she consoled herself with the hope that they might see it when they made their ascension of the Ortler Spitz. She did not greatly share Dorothy's taste for historical research; but their walk to Hofer's inn, and later a visit to Defregger's Cycle in the museum of Innsbruck, interested her greatly in the story of the hero of Tyrol. And any mention, however brief, of this region would be incomplete without a glance at his life.

Andreas Hofer was born in the valley of the Passer, not far from Meran, in 1765. Here he lived quietly, pursuing the vocation of an inn-keeper, until by the treaty of Pressburg the Tyrol was ceded to Bavaria, Napoleon's ally. The Tyrolese had no mind to be disposed of without any consultation of their own wishes. All over

the country the rifle clubs held meetings and organized into militia, bent on liberating themselves from foreign rule and restoring their country to Austria. The inn of Andreas Hofer became the rendezvous for these reunions. He was elected their leader, and on the 12th of April, 1809, at the head of fifteen thousand peasants, he assaulted Innsbruck and routed the combined forces of the French and the Bavarians. The Emperor of Austria immediately sent General Chasteler to take command of the Tyrolese troops. Hofer surrendered his position obediently; and the general, who had the reputation of "always coming too late and leaving too soon, in a few days succeeded in losing all that the peasants had won."

The Tyrolese clamored for their own leader, and Hofer again came forward and took Innsbruck for the second time. After the victory the valiant home-guard retired to their mountains and valleys and Hofer to his inn, well content, until in a convention after the defeat of Wagram Austria relinquished the Tyrol. The Tyrolese could not believe the news until they saw the Austrian army evacuate Innsbruck and Napoleon's marshal Lefevbre take possession of the city with fifty thousand men. Then Hofer, in hiding in the mountains, issued orders signed, "Andreas Hofer, from where I am;" and despatches came to him addressed simply, "To Andreas Hofer, wherever he is," forwarded with unerring promptitude and secrecy. In this third campaign the Tyrolese marksmen were organized most admirably. Bonfires blazing on the mountains were the signals at night. Sawdust thrown into the rivers carried the news southward of the advance of the enemy. Hofer had two able *aides-de-camp*, — Speckbacher his lieutenant and the red-bearded Capuchin monk Haspinger, who left his convent to confess and communicate the insurgent peasants and to lead them forward, crucifix in hand. Four thousand Saxon troops with the vanguard of Lefevbre's corps advanced southward as far as the gorge of Stilfes, when at a sudden signal the heights were manned by Tyrolese, and as in the death

of Roland, "rocks, trunks of trees previously loosened and held together by ropes, were set free. An avalanche of blocks of porphyry, enormous pines, stones, and earth falls on the Saxons and crushes them."

The rout was complete. The Tyrolese followed it up, and on August 15 Hofer made his third entry into Innsbruck. The townspeople were wild with enthusiasm and gratitude. They elected him dictator of Tyrol and lodged him in the palace. The emperor sent him a decoration and a patent of nobility. His every act during his brief reign was true to his religious and patriotic character. No other dictator ever lived so abstemiously or cost the government less for his personal expenses.

But it was the old story. Austria was powerless to keep the gift which the sons of Tyrol had presented to her.

Napoleon had pursued the Austrian army down the Danube to Vienna. After ten hours of bombardment, the city capitulated; and occupying the Austrian emperor's palace, Napoleon, on the 14th of October, dictated the Treaty of Vienna. The conditions of peace demanded the annexation of the Tyrol to Bavaria, with the exception of a large slice ceded to Italy.

Hofer refused to believe that the order to lay down his arms really came from his emperor. He retreated into the mountains, and endeavored to rally his army; but the Tyrolese were profoundly discouraged, and for the first time failed to respond to him. A reward was offered for his apprehension, and a traitor guided a detachment of French and Italian soldiers to his retreat. He was surprised, taken prisoner, and conveyed to Mantua, where he was tried by court-martial and condemned to be shot. It is one of the many blots on Napoleon's character that he allowed this sentence to be carried into effect. Hofer met his death bravely, with unbandaged eyes, himself giving the signal to fire.

On the downfall of Napoleon, the congress of the allies meeting

in Vienna restored the Tyrol with various Italian provinces to which she had no right to Austria; and with the exception of this brief period, the Tyrolese have been under the power of no foreign nation, but have rendered loyal and cheerful fealty to their own counts and to the Austrian kaiser, many of the Tyrolese serving in the Austrian army.

In the general rejoicing the dead patriot and hero was not forgotten. Deputations of Tyrolean marksmen bore the remains of Andreas Hofer from Italy, and in 1823 he made his fourth and last triumphal entry into Innsbruck. Seldom has such a funeral been seen. They laid him in the church of the Franciscans, close beside the beautiful sarcophagus of the Emperor Maximilian, — in a costly tomb ornamented with his statue cut from the marble of the Tyrol by her best sculptors, — and with the tombs of his friends Speckbacher and Haspinger on either hand.

In the museum of Innsbruck every obtainable souvenir of Hofer is preserved with the most sacred care. His sculptured bust, portrait, autographs, his sabre, the golden chain and medal given him by the emperor, trophies taken by him from the enemy, French, Bavarian, and Italian standards and arms, the pistol of Speckbacher and the crucifix of Haspinger are all there, while the grand historical paintings of Defregger tell the story from the little inn of Meran to the grave at Mantua, — "one crowded year of glorious life."

CHAPTER X.

ADLERSRUHE AND THE ORTLER SPITZ.

DOROTHY was still a problem to Elsie and to herself. A change had taken place in the girl, but it was rather a change in her aims than in her character. Ambition was still the motive power of all her actions, — the consuming fire in her heart which stimulated her talent as the furnace fires generate steam. She no longer desired rank, but her ambition had not been quenched; the fires glowed and the steam expanded still, though the engine had been reversed. It was her ambition now to attain literary eminence, and her least action had this for its end. She wrote and studied, read, observed, made notes, and thought, with feverish intensity.

"John Hartley expects me to make something grand of my life," she said to herself. "I can write. I know it is in me; and some day he shall see that the world will acknowledge me queen by right of my own talents. It would have been no triumph to have become a countess. He would only have despised me for it. I want him to admire me; and he shall admire me as I do him. He is grand and good and self-sacrificing. I am not self-sacrificing; I am very selfish: but I feel that I am gifted, and some day he shall acknowledge it and love me for it."

Poor Dorothy! If she had only known that John Hartley had long ago recognized her talent, and loved her not for it but in spite of it. He believed too, with a great, loving faith, that Dorothy would some day show herself greater than her ambition in some act of noble magnanimity. His ideals for her were higher than any which she had set for herself.

Dorothy worked on, losing much of the benefit which might have come to her health by her stay in the Tyrol through her intense application to study. She had taken up once more her essay on the Passion Play.

"It is poor stuff," she said to Elsie; "but I can improve it after I have seen the play, and the month is waning. I ought to go to Ober Ammergau at once."

"I have just received a letter from Valerie," said Elsie. "She is at Ober Ammergau now, but returns to Innsbruck soon, and invites me to visit her there on the 22d. If you leave Meran with me next week, you will be in Ober Ammergau for the last week of the Passion Play, and we shall still have another week for this lovely region."

"I have seen everything that I wish in the vicinity of Meran," Dorothy replied.

"Except the Ortler Mountains."

"True, but we cannot make their ascent alone."

The long talked-of excursion was almost given up, when there arrived at their *pension* a party of three Alpinists on their way to this very mountain.

Elsie reported the news in high glee. "And who do you think is in the party?" she asked excitedly.

"I really cannot imagine."

"The amateur photographer whom we met on Lake Lucerne."

"I do not see that this helps us at all. We know nothing about him, and can't invite him to invite us to join the party."

"Of course not; but he has brought *his wife* with him, and we do happen to know her, for she is Caroline Ponsonby! His name is Bruce, and he was on his way to be married when we met him. Mrs. Caroline Ponsonby Bruce seemed much pleased to meet me, and urges us to make the ascent with them."

The excursion was accordingly agreed upon, the itinerary and all details being left to Mr. Bruce.

The first day all took the public *stellwagen*, or stage, to Schlanders, where riding-horses were engaged to take them on the morrow to a point from which the ascension could be made on horseback or on foot.

Aunt Jane accompanied them during the first stage. They had seen the principal cities of the Tyrol, but had not until now witnessed its wild mountain-passes, its forests, its scattered farm-houses and Senn-huts.

A TYROLESE MOUNTAINEER.

The men whom they met all wore the Tyrolese mountaineer costume, and many of them carried rifles.

"How picturesque that man looks," Dorothy remarked, pointing out a woodcutter, "with his long pipe, his brigand hat with its black cock-feathers, the scarlet vest over the white shirt, and the gray jacket trimmed with green hanging carelessly on one shoulder. But why are not either the breeches or the gray stockings a little longer? I should think bare knees an uncomfortable fashion for this cold climate."

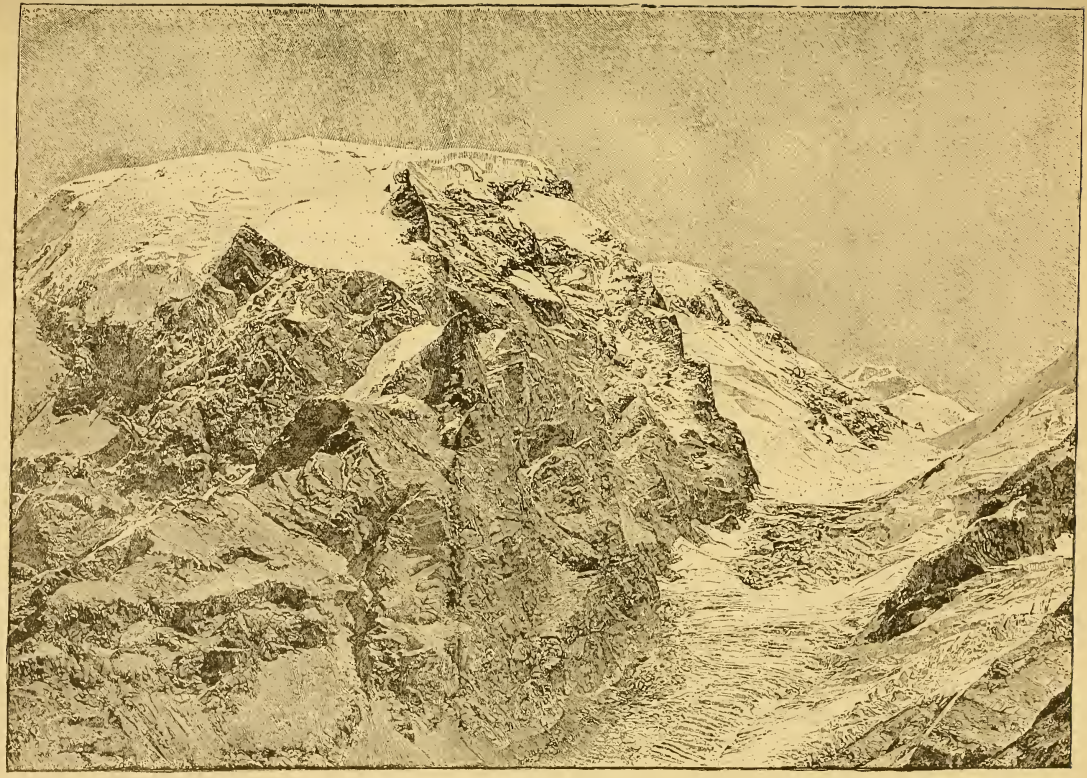
"And yet it is the fashion of the chill Highlands of Scotland," Mr. Bruce replied. "The Tyrolese are a hardy race, and do not feel the cold as we do. I know that you will be interested in the

people of the village of Adlersruhe. I call it my village, for few tourists have discovered it, though it is one of the best points of approach to the Ortler. These villagers are even more intelligent and possess more of the Christian virtues than others of the same grade. There are three conditions which may have conduced to this, — first, their remoteness from the world with its modern vices; second, the presence among them of an unusually devoted and enlightened parish priest; and third, the fact that there is in the community no higher or aristocratic class. Their seigneur deserted his castle years ago to settle in Italy; and since that time the peasants have called no man lord, but have grown in independence and manliness of spirit, governing themselves in an almost republican fashion."

WANDA.

It seemed strange to Dorothy that by no design of her own she should be on her way to see the castle and the village which Count Farniente had once offered her, and she scanned the country and the people with peculiar interest.

Shortly after leaving the town they crossed one of the mountain torrents, which in time of freshet become so appalling, but which now slipped along in the centre of a pebbly bed which seemed a world too wide for its shrunken proportions. On the centre of the bridge there had been raised one of those painful images of the crucified Christ, so common in the Tyrol. It was large, and colored with ghastly realism. Dorothy looked at it with intense repulsion. "What possible good can such a hideous thing do?" she asked. As she spoke a little peasant-girl approached hurriedly. She carried in one hand a milk-can, in the other a long stick or pole. She



THE SUMMIT OF THE ORTLER FROM FRANZENSHOHE.

knelt a moment before the image, then tying the milk-can to the pole, lifted it to the lips of the figure upon the cross. Then seeing that the eyes of the two strangers were fixed upon her, she colored and courtesied.

"Why did you do that, little girl?" Dorothy asked in German.

"It is so hot," the child replied, "and the Herr Christ must be very thirsty. We bring our milk every morning from our dairy. Father Pacifico has told us that we will never prosper if we do not offer the first fruits of all our possessions to the Herr Christ. Surely, too, if we were so stony-hearted as to leave him suffering there in the cruel heat, the very river would rise to quench his thirst."

With a quaint little courtesy she scampered across the bridge to a yoke of creamy oxen which were slowly proceeding on their way with a cart of rattling milk-cans.

"So Father Pacifico is settled here!" said Elsie. "It will be very pleasant to meet him again."

Later in the day, as the party approached the village, they saw that it was peculiarly situated, being entirely within the lines of fortification of the ancient castle, which covered a bit of level land on the spur of the mountain. It was the best available land for building a village for miles around, for the road had begun to mount steeply, and was in many places a mere shelf on the side of the cliff. Within the castle walls was a level space filled with a hundred or more little houses. What had been the castle chapel was now the village church, and Father Pacifico stood upon its steps. He recognized the girls and greeted them cordially, following them to the inn, which had been constructed out of the old residential portion of the castle. A rude sign on the front announced a balcony with *schöne ausgesicht*. They entered a great room, which had once been hung with tapestry and armor, for it was the ancient rittersaal. From its balcony, which jutted out over the ravine, they looked away to the glistening cone of the Ortler Spitz. It seemed

more unapproachable than ever, and a light cloud like a puff of smoke brooded over the summit. Mr. Bruce shook his head. "That means that there is a storm up there," he said; "but it may all clear away by to-morrow."

MINE HOST.

Their host could not furnish dinner at a moment's notice. He would, however, serve them a light luncheon. The gentlemen cared for nothing, and went out for a walk. "We will take some milk," Dorothy said to Elsie, "but nothing else, for it will be an extra. The arrangement is made for three regular meals, and you know how every extra is made to count up." She explained to the host that they would pay on the spot for the milk, that it need not be put in the bill.

"Ja, ja," said the host, bringing them capacious beer-mugs filled with excellent milk. He was a portly man with an expansive smile. He seemed to enjoy regarding them with an air of patriarchal benevolence, and he remarked as they nibbled the rolls which had been ordered with the milk, "I have some such beautiful pears." No reply being vouchsafed, he retreated into the kitchen, only to reappear after a few minutes and to say in a pitying tone, "If those ladies only tasted my pears, they would eat nothing else for a month."

"We do not care for any pears," Dorothy replied shortly.

"No pears?" he exclaimed in surprise. "Ah! if these ladies

only knew how good they were!" A pause, no answer, and he again disappeared, murmuring, "After all, why should I afflict myself? It is your loss, not mine."

Elsie laughed. "He is irresistible," she said to Dorothy in English; "let us try his fruit just to please him." As though he understood her words, the inn-keeper returned, bearing a basket of very large and handsome pears which he set down on the table before them without a word, but with an expression which said very plainly, "There, resist them if you can." Dorothy tasted one. "They are really excellent," she admitted. The girls continued to eat, their long walk having given them a keen appetite; and much to their own surprise, they soon finished the basket.

"I wonder what he will charge us. We ought to have made a bargain in advance; there were certainly eight or ten of them."

The host came at their call, an expansive smile spreading over his features as he noted the empty basket. "What is the charge?" Dorothy asked.

The inn-keeper counted on his fingers. "Eight?" he replied doubtfully.

"Eight marks, — that is two dollars. The old rascal!" Elsie exclaimed. "Tell him we will give him one dollar, and no more."

"Eight pfennig," said the inn-keeper, slowly.

"What?" asked Dorothy, thinking she could not have heard aright.

"Eight pfennig," repeated their host. And this sum — four cents — was all that they could persuade him to accept. Much refreshed and amused, they strolled out to inspect the village. The houses were very small, but they seemed neater than those in the valley towns. Boys were driving back the cows from the pastures up in the clefts of the mountain, and the bells chimed with a not unmusical rhythm. Below the town the ravines were filled with pine-forests, and woodcutters were bringing in small loads of sticks

strapped on the backs of donkeys. The fires of a furnace glowed in what had once been the donjon-keep of the castle, for charcoal-burning was the principal industry of the little village. The burners were coming back from their work, and many of them paused at the fountain in the square to wash their sooty faces before entering their homes. Father Pacifico drew their attention to all this, and Dorothy remarked on the general air of contentment and industry. The good priest heaved a sigh. "If it could only remain so," he murmured; "but no, the owner of the castle was here lately upon a visit, and she proposes to make it over for a summer residence."

FATHER PACIFICO AGAIN.

"Is that altogether a misfortune?" Dorothy asked. "Will not the presence of wealthy people — the natural patrons and protectors of the villagers — create new industries and bring in a better state of things in every way?"

"No," replied the priest, "not even if they were kindly disposed to the villagers. What my people want is not patronage but liberty. They can help themselves. To be aided would only teach them dependence and servility. Moreover, the owner of the castle does not love her people. She is not of them; how can she love them? It is her plan to turn them all from their homes; and she brought an architect with her who has been measuring and taking notes all about the village, and walking into houses without so much as saying by your leave. I found him in the chapel making drawings, and he did not scruple to tell me that it was the contessa's intention to make over the sacred edifice into a ball-room. 'We will banish all this dirty charcoal and these grimy charcoal-burners,' he said; 'the entire village shall be swept away, and I will restore the castle to its mediæval state in a way that will make the ghost

OLD BATHS OF BORMIO.

of Violet le Duc wail with envy.' I saw the architect's designs, and I must admit they were fair pictures."

"But," said Dorothy, "it would surely make a very lonely though dignified residence."

"The Baths of Bormio are near enough to make it endurable during the season. When the woodchoppers are no longer here, the chamois will venture down into the forests, and there will be merry hunting-parties. It is all for the young people, — the son of the contessa and his wealthy bride. They will amuse themselves here for three months in the year and then flit away to Venice, or to some of the gay capitals of Europe, and never trouble themselves with the fate of my poor people."

Dorothy was greatly surprised. The count's marriage was spoken of as something quite settled, and yet but a few weeks had elapsed since he had assured Mrs. Irving that he was a free man and since he had seemed so devoted to her. Either the new negotiations for this betrothal had been pushed with extraordinary haste, or they were pending while the count was still in Baveno. A revelation of the man's utter heartlessness came to her, and she could hardly command her voice to ask, —

"Did you tell the contessa what you thought of her plans?"

"I interceded with her, but to no purpose. She is a hard woman, and cordially hated by my parishioners. Were it not that they are all good Christians, it might not have been so safe for her to visit among them."

After their return to the inn, the little girl whom she had met upon the bridge appeared with bouquets of edelweiss, which she wished to sell.

"This is very nice," Dorothy said. "I presume they come from the Ortler Spitz."

"Not exactly," the little maid confessed. "Father Pacifico says I must never tell a lie, and I grow them in my garden. I have a

great bed of them; and I make it larger every year, for I collect the seed and plant anew."

"Cultivated edelweiss! That takes away all the romance!" exclaimed Dorothy. "It is supposed to grow only in the most inaccessible clefts, and to be obtained at the risk of life and limb. Still, it is right to tell the truth; and I will buy this bouquet, for it is very pretty. Always mind Father Pacifico, little girl."

A troubled look came into the child's face. "I did not mind him as we came back from town," she said. "My milk-cans were all empty, and it was so late that I did not stop to go down to the river for some water for the poor Christ."

"Don't trouble your little head about that senseless image; but when you see some suffering human being in need of your aid, remember that Jesus told us that as we give our help to such an one, we give it to him."

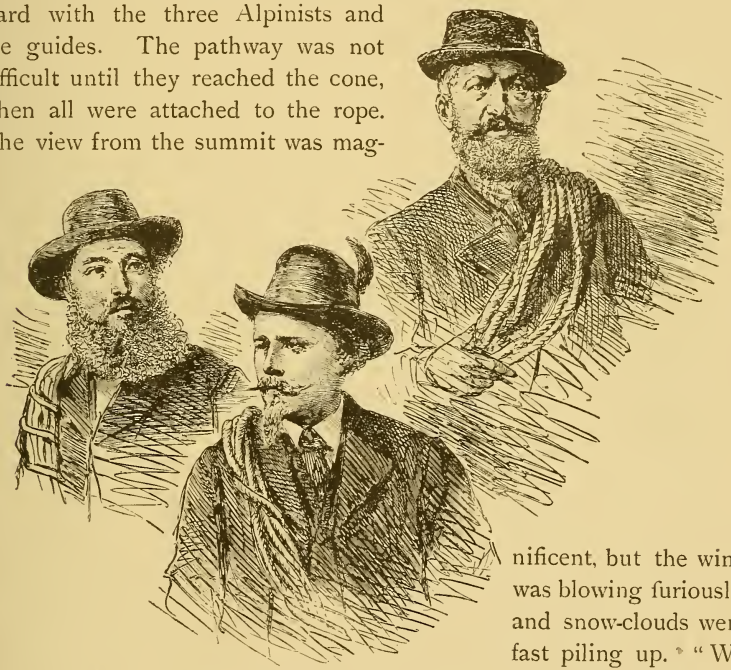
"After all," Dorothy thought, "what right have I, who have never considered any one but myself, to preach to that child? How simple and sweet her life is, and what a sermon it is to me!"

All the party were wakened at four in the morning, and set out with guides and horses in the early dawn. Even at that hour there was a numerous escort of "young adlers," as the children of the village were called, assembled at the door of the inn to accompany the party a little distance on its way. The ladies rode the horses, which were left at a mountaineer's hut where the party paused for breakfast. From this point all proceeded on foot. The cloud which had been observed the previous day had lifted, the weather was perfect, and beautiful views were afforded in every direction. They were on the Ortler Spitz, whose summit is 12,680 feet above the sea. Mont Zebru, 12,150 feet high, towered upon one hand and the beautiful Königspitze on the other. Away toward the south lay the Italian Lakes, and the Stelvio Pass was at their feet.

The air was stimulating, and they felt no fatigue until they

ARRIVAL AT THE PAVERHÜTTE ALTE SULDEN.

reached the snow, when Mrs. Bruce and Elsie grew so weary that they decided to await the return of the others at the "Paverhütte," where they spread their picnic-luncheon, — in full view of the summit and apparently very near it. Dorothy, whose strength and spirits were unflagging, trudged bravely onward with the three Alpinists and the guides. The pathway was not difficult until they reached the cone, when all were attached to the rope. The view from the summit was magnificent, but the wind was blowing furiously, and snow-clouds were fast piling up. "We must not remain an instant," said the oldest guide; "it will snow before night, and we must try to reach the hut where we left the horses before the storm sets in."



GUIDES.

They hurried back, but it began to snow when they were still two miles from the hut where they left their animals. Dorothy,

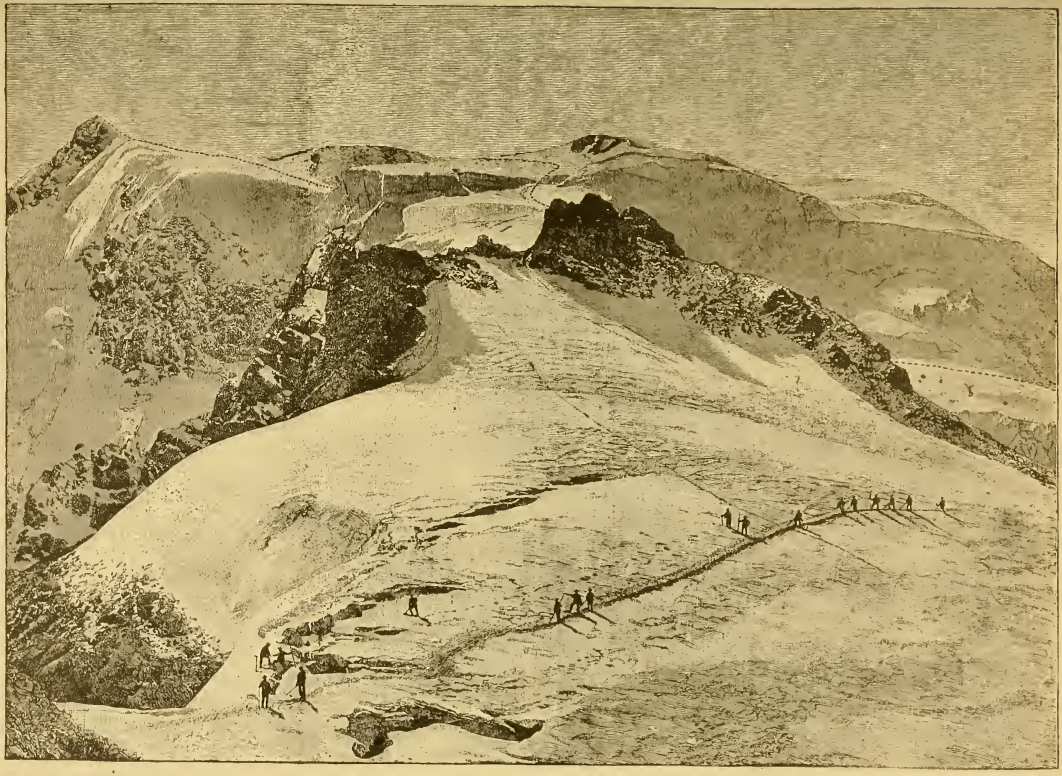
who had walked much farther than Elsie, began to grow desperately weary. The newly-fallen snow clogged her feet and the white flakes blurred her eyes. She stumbled on uncomplainingly, but in the rear of the procession. Once she fell, and on rising saw that the others were quite a distance in advance of her. Like a cold hand on her heart came the thought, "What if that drift had hidden a crevasse and I had been left unnoticed to freeze to death?" She exerted all her strength and soon overtook the others. One of the guides noticed her pale face and held out his alpenstock. She grasped the chamois horn on the end of it, and for the remainder of the way allowed herself to be towed along. They arrived at the hut where the horses awaited them just as night was falling. The ladies could now ride, and the necessity for painful exertion was passed; but the most dangerous part of their trip was before them. The path was very steep, the snow hid the loose stones, and the girls were jolted and shaken most uncomfortably. The horses stumbled not unfrequently, and great care was required to avoid being thrown over their heads. A guide walked at the head of each horse, probing the snow with his alpenstock to make sure of their footing. It seemed to Dorothy's excited imagination that they ran the gauntlet of a thousand perils. At one time, when her horse stumbled and she tried to pull him up, the rein snapped at the bit. The guide mended it with his shoestring.

A YOUNG ADLER.

"Is it all right now?" Dorothy asked anxiously, as they proceeded.

"All right," responded the guide laconically, "*provided the string holds.*"

Dorothy said afterward that she had never before realized so vividly that her life hung upon a thread. As it grew darker, and she felt herself more and more helpless, a sense of awe came over



WAY FROM THE PAVERHÜTTE TO THE ORTLER SPITZ.

her. "If I should fall into this precipice at my right," she thought, "and my foolish little life should end now and here, what would be my chief regret?" With a pang of keen remorse came the thought of her injustice to Valerie. "She has seen the play," Dorothy thought, "and could easily obtain the prize if she knew of it. How could I be so dishonorable as to hold back the information from her? If ever I reach Adlersruhe she shall be told at once."

There was a pause among those in advance. "Mr. Bruce has sprained his ankle. He can walk no farther."

"Let him take my horse," Dorothy exclaimed, sliding to the ground. "I am quite rested, and can walk the rest of the way easily." As though to encourage them just at this most desperate part of their journey, a part of the sky cleared temporarily, the storm lulled, and the moon shone out, giving them light upon their way. (See frontispiece.) Dorothy took this as a good omen, and plunged on bravely; though her wet skirts, blown about by the wind, buffeted her with every step and nearly dragged her down. Several times she would have given up, but the fire of her new resolve to tell Valerie kept her up; and at last, just as the storm began again, the sound of a bell was heard, and the lights of Adlersruhe were seen shining through the murk. The great beacon was lighted for them on the donjon-keep, — a bucket of tar swinging from an iron crane.

It was Father Pacifico who had ordered the bell to be rung, hoping that its sound might be heard far up the valley. Their host had provided a steaming supper redolent with garlic, and Aunt Jane, trembling with anxiety, received them with open arms.

A fire had been made in the great porcelain stove in the girls' bedroom. It looked like a church organ fashioned in green china. Aunt Jane had mistaken it for a wardrobe, and had bestowed her caps in the oven. They were done to a crisp, and an odor of

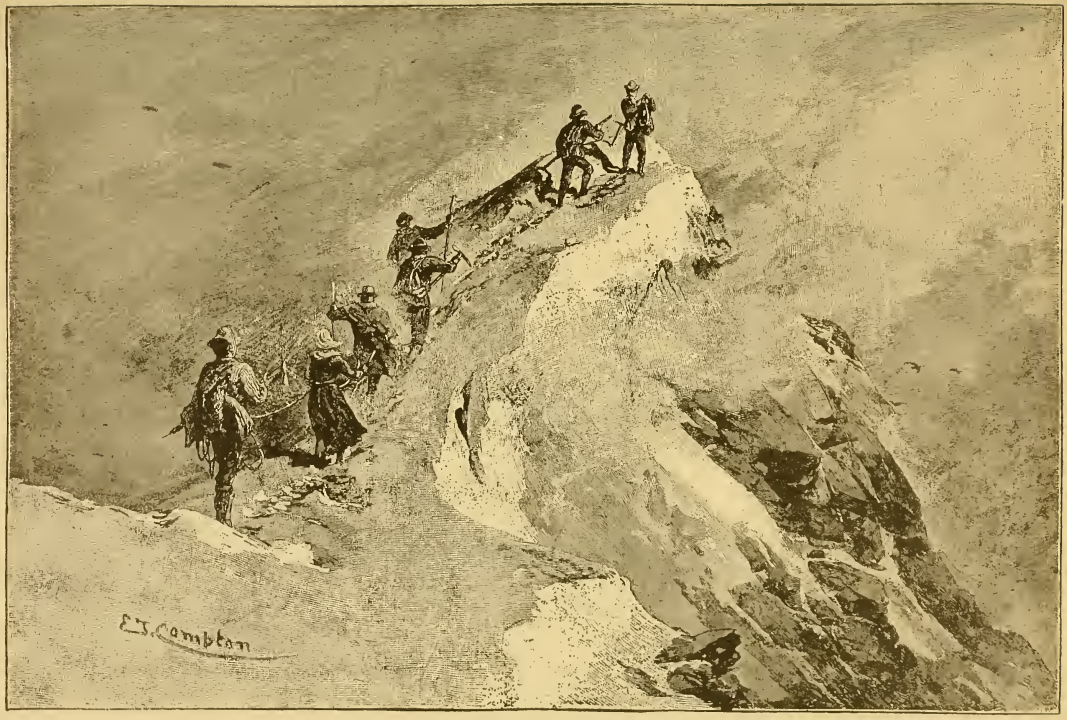
burnt crape pervaded the room. As Dorothy was sinking to sleep under an extra eider-down coverlid, Wanda, the little maid of the edelweiss, tapped at the door. "I wanted to see with my own eyes that you are safe," she said. "It is storming fearfully. What was snow with you has been rain here and in the valley. They say that the bridge will probably be carried away. It is all my fault, because I was so hard-hearted as to refuse to give the dear suffering Christ a cup of water. The very river took pity upon him and has raised itself to his lips."

It rained steadily for three days, and the *wetterglocke*, or storm-bells, were kept ringing as a charm against the lightning.

> "Then banks came down with ruin and rout,
> Then beaten foam flew all about,
> And all the mighty floods were out."

The travellers were safely housed in the old castle, but every day news came to them of some fresh disaster. The head forester had had a large part of the season's lumber carried away, and could not understand it, for a cross had been chopped on every log. There had been avalanches and landslides, and tall trees uprooted or snapped like pipe-stems. The *wassermauer* — a dike which protected a little milling-village down the valley — had given way, and the inhabitants, who had fortunately had warning in time, took refuge at Adlersruhe.

Father Pacifico was very active. As soon as the storm was over he was out all day rowing over the submerged meadows from house to house, and affording help and succor to persons who had been cut off by the water from outside communication. In several cases they had driven their cows into the houses, and even to the upper stories, to save them from the inundation. There were few deaths, for the rain had come on gradually, with plenty of warning, and the Tyrolese are used to these storms; but there was much loss of property and suffering.



THE ORTLER SPITZ.

The homeless people were lodged temporarily in the castle, and the inhabitants of Adlersruhe responded nobly to the demand made upon their charities. They gave not as to beggars, but as to brothers in distress; and not only ministered to their bodily needs, but also entertained them as guests.

There was a wedding at Adlersruhe while the little community was still shut in by the broken bridge. All of the strangers were invited to the dance, which took place in the dining-hall of the inn. It was like one of Defregger's pictures. The men were all clothed in the mountaineer costume of gray and green, enlivened with scarlet. Every hat was decorated with a bunch of edelweiss, the beard of a chamois, or curling cock's-feathers. The dance was one of the wildest the girls had ever witnessed. The men turned somersaults and handsprings between the figures; and at a given signal each man seized his partner by the waist, and aided by a little jump on her part, tossed her high into the air.

The fiddler was enthroned on the high porcelain stove, and Father Pacifico sat at the table beside the bride and groom. The master of ceremonies — a witty fellow bearing a long wand decorated with ribbons — would call off the names of the guests, making a few humorous and personal remarks as he did so; and each as called would shake hands with the young couple, drink their health from a capacious beer-mug, and leave a small wedding-present in money in the plate in front of the bride. It was all very homely and simple, but honest and generous.

Interested as Dorothy was in the insight which she was obtaining into the life of the villagers, she was still very anxious to hurry on to Innsbruck, to make amends to Valerie as soon as possible, and while there was yet time for her to join in the competition; but for the present she was a close prisoner. "Can I not send a letter, or telegram?" she asked anxiously. But the nearest telegraph and post office was on the other side of the river, which it was still

dangerous to cross even by boat, owing to the wreckage of lumber with which it was choked.

There was nothing to do but to wait; and in spite of her impatience she found the waiting interesting, as she went about with little Wanda, striving to help the poor people.

Elsie was at a loss to understand why Dorothy, who was at first so averse to visiting Valerie, was now so eager to do so. She even suggested that by stopping in Innsbruck Dorothy would lose all chance of seeing the play in time to describe it.

"You do not understand," Dorothy replied. "I *must* see Valerie at once. It is a great deal more important than that I should write that article, even if my only chance of literary success depends upon it." And then, in a passion of repentance, she confessed her sin. "Oh, Elsie!" she said, "how you must despise me! but no more than I despise myself. But you see now why I must get to Valerie right away Look at that calendar! How the days are racing by! I ought not to stay here another hour!"

Elsie soothed her excited friend; and that evening they held a council with Mr. Bruce, explaining that it was very necessary that they should proceed upon their journey.

"The river is clearing," Mr. Bruce replied, "and my ankle will now permit me to walk. It may be that to-morrow I can row you across in the boat, with the help of several pairs of stout arms; but you must promise to sit perfectly still, and not to be frightened."

"I can promise for all of us," Elsie replied; and on the next morning they bade farewell to Adlersruhe. The mountain paths were so slippery and had been cut through by so many new torrents that it was thought best to walk down to the river rather than to attempt descending on horseback. Porters carried the little luggage which they had brought, and a great hamper of luncheon, — a free gift from their host, brought forward after their bill was paid. They thought of him many times as they munched his pears, and

THE STORM IN THE MOUNTAINS.

of little Wanda, who followed them half way down the mountain side with her hands filled with edelweiss and her eyes with tears.

It was a perilous trip; but they were all brave and resolute, Aunt Jane behaving admirably, tucking her petticoats up and skipping over the rocks with the agility of a young girl. At one place they were obliged to cross a roaring brook on a bridge consisting of a single log. While Dorothy closed her eyes and allowed herself to be led across, Aunt Jane disdained all help, and even paused on the centre of the bridge to look downward.

At another turn in the road they found that a new brook had poured into the path from the cliff, and finding a convenient bed prepared for it, had chosen to go brawling down the mountain by the very way in which they must also go. There was no alternative but to walk for the rest of the way in the bed of the brook, with the water splashing all around them. "It makes me think of a Pfingstbrauch," said the father of little Wanda, who was one of the porters.

"And what is that?" asked Elsie.

"On the day of that festival," chuckled the old man, "not even the slothful lie a-bed late; for parties of stout young fellows go from house to house, and if any sluggard is still a-bed she is carried in a litter-bed to the nearest stream and there set down where the water will pour over her while she is decorated with a wreath of nettles. They never catch the same girl two successive years."

Arrived at the landing, the condition of the river promised a safe crossing, and they set out hopefully; but the current was so strong that they were carried far below their intended landing-place, and it was necessary to walk a long distance up the bank to the village where they hoped to take the stage for Meran, which was the nearest point whence they could continue their journey by rail. "It is long past the hour," said Mr. Bruce; "I fear that you will be obliged to wait until to-morrow."

But the rain had delayed the *stellwagen* and they found it drawn up before the door of the post-house. Mr. Bruce bade them good-by, for he and his wife intended remaining several weeks at Adlersruhe.

The journey was very wearisome; for owing to the condition of the roads the stage seemed scarcely to crawl, and often came to a dead halt, while the driver, assisted by the passengers, removed larches or pines or stones which had fallen in the road. The scenery all around them was glorious, for even the lesser mountains were snow-clad. They were in a white world, and the desire blossomed in Dorothy's heart to grow white of soul. There was only one ambition now which was not hateful to her, — the ambition to be unselfish and helpful to others.

It was dark before they reached Meran; but the coach crept safely in during the wee hours of the night, and the wearied travellers were glad to bury themselves under the mountainous feather-puffs of the *pension*.

If Dorothy had consulted her own desires she would have allowed the others scant time for repose, for there was an early morning train which she would have liked to take. But Aunt Jane was tired out; and though she did not intend to go to Innsbruck with them, would have insisted on being up to see the girls off.

Elsie too looked pale and wan. A later train would bring them to Valerie in time for her to finish and send the article which Dorothy knew was already written; but there is no fever which quickens the pulse like the desire to make amends for a wrong when a soul is once awakened to its recognition. Elsie slept the profound and dreamless sleep of exhaustion. Dorothy slept but fitfully; and awaking or dreaming, her mind was busy with Valerie.

CHAPTER XI.

AT INNSBRUCK.

ILBERT AUSTIN, after his return to Innsbruck, had endeavored to apply himself to his duties. Unfortunately they were not arduous, and he had plenty of time to think of little Diena, and to wonder when he would meet her again. He had never before taken so great an interest in housemaids. Never a white cap or apron appeared within the scope of his vision but his heart gave a choking thump, and he found himself staring at the nurses who wheeled the baby-carriages along the shady banks of the Inn. But he did not find her, and no word came to him from the peasant-girl who had so touched his heart at Ober Ammergau.

His father, — kind-hearted Judge Austin, — who had waited in Switzerland until his son should establish himself, came to Innsbruck; and Gilbert found occupation for a few days in showing him the sights. These were soon exhausted, and one day the judge expressed a desire to call on his old acquaintance, Count von Hohenberg. Gilbert begged to be excused from accompanying his father, as he had already made his call of ceremony, and had not enjoyed it. The judge had a different experience. His friends welcomed him cordially; and Valerie, who was glad to meet Gilbert's father once more, entertained him so pleasantly that the judge was completely charmed.

"I can't make myself believe that you are a foreigner," he said. "I have n't had such a home-like feeling, as if I were back in America, since I met those friends of yours at Lucerne. Nice girls too, both of them, though Gilbert did n't seem to take to them particularly. I think it must have been because they were Vassar girls. A good many young men are afraid of college girls; they are afraid that they can't keep up that little fiction of the superiority of the masculine mind before them. Let me see, — you have never met Gilbert, have you?"

JUDGE AUSTIN.

Valerie could not utter an untruth. "I saw him in Ober Ammergau," she replied hesitatingly.

"Indeed! He did not mention it. Sly dogs, these young fellows!"

"Mr. Austin did not know me. We were not introduced; but some friends of mine told me his name."

"Sorry he did not have the pleasure of your acquaintance; he might have been able to show you some attention. May I bring him to call upon you? He is anxious to know you."

The worthy judge faltered a little as he uttered this polite untruth. Valerie understood him, and replied, "Mr. Austin has my parents' permission to call, but so far does not seem very eager to avail himself of it. Perhaps when my Vassar friends arrive, the château will possess greater attractions for him."

"My dear young lady, Gilbert is not interested in your friends, or in any one else, I do assure you. His heart is as tough as an armadillo's coat. If your bright eyes make any impression upon him, they will be the first that have ever done so. He is an incorrigible old bachelor, and declares that he will never marry."

"Indeed!" said Valerie. "May I ask whether he has made that declaration since his return from Ober Ammergau? It was remarked there that he was quite attentive to a peasant-girl from the Zillerthal."

"A peasant-girl! Impossible! you must be mistaken. Gilbert is not fond of low associations. It's not like him, and he knows it would never suit me."

But in spite of his apparent disbelief in the information, the judge was worried. He did not interrogate his son immediately. "If Gilbert has anything to tell me he will tell it," he said to himself. "I will not force his confidence." But he watched the young man closely, and was not satisfied. He could not persuade him to call on the Von Hohenbergs with him, and he was at his wit's end to make excuses for his neglect. Valerie had confided to her mother the entire experience at Ober Ammergau. "So," said that lady, "the young man believes you to be a peasant, and loves you! Well, he is not likely to be disappointed when he knows your true position."

Frau von Hohenberg, without relating the entire adventure to her husband, explained to him that the young people had met at Ober Ammergau, and were interested in each other. It might be well to see more of this young Mr. Austin before the matter was quite settled with Cousin Farniente.

Judge Austin dined with them that afternoon; and over the walnuts, after the ladies had left them, the count in the blunt German fashion frankly broached the question.

"I have seen your son," the count said "and like him. I know his antecedents and his prospects, and like them. You have seen my daughter, and you know me and what I can give her. Tell me, would she please you as a daughter-in-law?"

The judge expressed himself as delighted. Such good fortune for Gilbert exceeded his wildest dreams, his fondest hopes.

"Then give me your hand upon it, old friend; and we will have the betrothal party before you go back to America."

"Certainly, certainly," replied the judge; "but the young people, — they must be consulted. Your daughter, Miss Valerie, may not fancy Gilbert."

The count smiled reassuringly. "The young people met at Ober Ammergau," he said. "I fancy that there will be no objection on their part to our plan."

The judge uttered a smothered exclamation. "Both—eration."

"You remarked?"

"Nothing, sir, nothing. My boy's good fortune simply takes my breath away. I am overwhelmed; and if anything should happen to break off this match, I 'll marry Miss Valerie myself."

VALERIE.

"Then, sir," said the count, "will you kindly say to your son that I am planning various festivities to celebrate the visit of my daughter's friend, and among other things a little driving-excursion in which we shall be pleased to include him?"

"With pleasure, my dear friend, with pleasure!" and the poor judge sought his son's office in a most unhappy frame of mind. Gilbert was alone, and evidently his official duties were not weighing heavily upon him, for he was sketching.

"Gilbert," exclaimed his father, "your avoidance of the Von Hohenbergs has become downright rudeness. I want you to call on them."

"May I ask why you wish me to perform so irksome a task?"

"Why, you young idiot, if you knew Miss Valerie you would n't find it irksome. She 's just the prettiest, nicest girl I 've met since I left the States."

"I can't deny it, since I have not seen her."

"But you did see her in Ober Ammergau."

"Indeed! Yes, I remember they told me she had gone there; but we did not meet."

"No, because you were too much occupied in another quarter."

Gilbert started. "I was a cripple while at Ober Ammergau, confined much of my time to my room. I made no calls."

"Then it is not true that you flirted with a peasant-girl until you were the talk of the town?"

The young man flushed to the roots of his hair. "I never flirt. Who told you so?"

"Never mind; we will let that drop. I am very glad there is no truth in it; for, Gilbert, I bring you the best piece of news that ever came to you, or could come, in all your life. Listen seriously, and don't answer too quickly. The Count von Hohenberg offers you the hand of his daughter Valerie."

"Which I have the honor to refuse."

"Wait a minute, Gilbert; don't be in a hurry."

"Do you suppose I am to be disposed of as if I were a bag of grain?"

"Of course not. Their ways aren't like ours, Gilbert; and I own I was a trifle put to when the count sprung it on me. But the young lady is such a charming one, Gilbert! I believe if you had met without knowing anything of this, you would have fallen head and ears in love with her. And don't you think it's a trifle foolish to refuse such a gift of Providence without seeing her? Why, man alive! You couldn't refuse her if you saw her."

"Then I refuse to see her."

"Why, you obstinate young imbecile! When the mere looking at her compromises you to nothing; when nobody asks you to marry her if you do not love her; but when it would be the luckiest thing for you that could possibly happen if you could fall in love with her, and when I'd be willing to stake my life that you couldn't see

her without loving her, why in the name of common-sense do you act in this cantankerous way?"

"Because," the young man replied with an effort, "if what you say of her irresistible attractions is true, I am bound in all honor not to expose myself to them." And then he told his father of his meeting with Diena at Ober Ammergau, and how he had loved and lost her. The old judge was very angry. It seemed to him a piece of supreme folly; but he saw that his son was in earnest, and after scolding him soundly, he wrote the Count von Hohenberg an incoherent letter, from which the irate gentleman could only glean that the father was very wretched, for Gilbert Austin could not or would not accept the honor offered him.

Just at this juncture Count Farniente arrived upon the scene. "This indignity serves me right," thought Valerie's father, "for having acted with duplicity toward my good cousin Farniente." He received the young count with open arms, privately informing Valerie that her marriage with her cousin had been formally decided upon.

It was in the midst of this complication that Dorothy and Elsie reached Innsbruck.

Valerie greeted her old friend with delight, but after a quick embrace turned to Dorothy with simple but hearty cordiality. "It is so good of you to visit me," she said; "I feared that I could not persuade you to do so, for we were not very intimate at college."

The three girls were alone in the family carriage, for Valerie had driven to the Innsbruck station to meet her friends; and before they arrived at the château Dorothy made a full confession.

"I do not see that I have anything to forgive," Valerie said. "You simply did not send me a bit of information; and for that matter, Elsie did not send it either, and I do not see that she is consumed with remorse."

"You do not seem to understand," Dorothy insisted, coloring

painfully, "that I was bound in honor to let you know, and that I disgracefully kept back the letter which Elsie thought I had sent."

"Say no more, dear," said Valerie; "it makes no difference at all, since I have no intention of competing."

"But you must," Dorothy pleaded eagerly "You wrote Elsie that you had written an essay on the Passion Play. There is still time for it to reach the committee, if you mail it at once. This is why we have pushed on in such haste. I shall not believe that you have forgiven me if you do not send it."

"Since you desire it so much, I will mail it this very afternoon. But your own essay?"

"I will send it at the same time, and then the chances will be quite even."

"I beg pardon, Dorothy dear; I am sure that I have the advantage, for you have not seen the Play."

"True; but my trip thus far has been of great advantage to me, for we stopped at Coventry in England, and there I read a great deal about the Mystery Plays that were acted there in the Middle Ages. In Paris, too, I read for several days in the Library of St. Geneviève, and found much that was interesting on the subject of the mediæval Mysteries as they were played in France. Then at Meran I informed myself on German plays of the same nature; so I think I have a pretty good historical review of the subject."

"Then I shall not be surprised if you take the prize; and I really hope you may," Valerie said sincerely.

"Oh, Valerie," Dorothy replied, "you cannot imagine what a weight you have taken from my mind!"

"I wish you could reciprocate, and take a weight from mine," said Valerie, as the carriage came to a stop before the château.

"And what is the incubus?" Dorothy asked gayly.

"The incubus is my cousin Pasquale," Valerie replied; "and he is coming down the steps to open the carriage door for us."

Meeting Count Farniente in this way was a great surprise to Dorothy; but she responded to his salutations with quiet dignity, passing by him as quickly as possible. Both the Count and Countess von Hohenberg stood in the entrance hall to receive their daughter's guests. After a hearty welcome, they were shown to their rooms to dress for dinner. Valerie brought her essay into Dorothy's room, and read it to her. "It is delightful," was Dorothy's comment; "so fresh and enthusiastic! Mine is only a bundle of dry bones; yours pulsates with life and love."

"I was very happy when I wrote it," Valerie said with a little sigh; and then she listened while Dorothy read hers, and Valerie honestly admired it; after which the two essays were bound up together and entrusted to a servant to mail.

For two days the girls visited together very happily. As it was too late to utilize a visit to Ober Ammergau in her essay, Dorothy was in no haste to reach the village; and she enjoyed heartily the sights of Innsbruck as they were shown her by Valerie, while the young hostess assured her friends again and again that she would be quite happy if only Cousin Pasquale would go away. To a man of a more active temperament than Count Farniente the presence under the same roof of two young ladies, each of whom he had honored with his addresses, would have been embarrassing, to say the least. But the count was never embarrassed, never impassioned; he allowed circumstances to have their own way, and lead him where they would. He was simply suave, complaisant, indolent, with the same admiring expression of the eyes and the same meaningless smile for Valerie and for Dorothy.

One afternoon Dorothy told the count of her visit to his castle, and begged him to leave the inhabitants of Adlersruhe undisturbed.

"That is a strange request," the count replied. "I fear my mother would regard it as sheer nonsense; and after all it is she, not I, who has the changes at heart."

"But it is for your sake that she is planning them," Dorothy replied. "If you assured her that you did not wish to live at the castle, she would not compel you to do so."

"You do not know my mother," the count said helplessly. "She always has her own way, and ends by making me desire it. Do you like garlic? No? I did not like garlic. In fact, as a youth I experienced for it a repugnance inexpressible. But my mother adored it; she caused every dish that appeared upon our table to be seasoned with it. I ate it in self defence, and now I adore garlic. You also would adore it if you had the happiness to live with my mother."

While they were chatting, Count von Hohenberg stamped angrily into the room. "A word with you alone, Cousin Pasquale," he exclaimed imperatively; and Dorothy stepped out into the garden, wondering what had rendered her host so wrathful.

"I have here a letter from your mother," said Count von Hohenberg, — "a letter intended for you, but which a mischievous — or shall I rather say a fortunate — chance has caused her to address to me. She writes: —

"'MY DEAR SON, — I have just learned from Mrs Irving that the young lady in whom you were interested at Baveno — the Signorina Dorothea Thorne — is a woman of a great fortune in her own right, and consequently a much better *partie* than your cousin Valerie. Under these circumstances I withdraw all my objections to the young lady, and leave you to withdraw as best you may from the engagement which I entered into on your behalf.'

"Do you hear that?" roared Valerie's father. "I will save you the trouble of extricating yourself. You are dismissed, Cousin Pasquale, and the sooner you take yourself from my house the better. You need not remain to bid adieu to the ladies or to pack your baggage. My man Josef will meet you at the station with it in time for the afternoon train. You may go, sir. You may go."

Count Farniente stood listening to this outburst with folded arms.

"I call you to witness, Cousin," he said, with languid self-possession, "that I am absolutely passive in this matter. I have had nothing to do either with the engagement or with its breaking. It has all been arranged and disarranged between your honored self and my mother."

"BAT!"

In a way his words were true; but it was an unmanly thing to allow his mother to bear the brunt of blame when he knew that her action in the matter had his hearty concurrence. Count von Hohenberg felt this, and it made him all the angrier.

"You are right," he said; "you are a do-nothing, a nobody! You have no more character of your own than a shuttlecock! Bat! your noble mother Battledore sends you flying this way. Bat! I send you flying back. The game is ended. Begone, I say!"

Count Farniente bowed ceremoniously, and passing into the hall, took his hat, and strolled nonchalantly down the garden walk. Dorothy was returning to the house, and his step quickened a little as he saw her.

"Signorina," he said, "I am going away; it is very sudden. My mother calls me."

"Your mother seems to have a habit of summoning you suddenly," Dorothy replied.

"It is true," he replied moodily; "such is her not altogether pleasing custom. Nevertheless, at this time I am glad to obey her summons, — or would be were it not that they take me again from you.

But, signorina, I trust you will allow me to follow you to America, and there present myself at the house of your honored father to supplicate your hand."

Dorothy started. "Count Farniente," she exclaimed in displeasure, "I understand that your position in this house is that of Valerie's suitor. Is this conduct honorable?"

"Perfectly so, dear signorina. My mother and the Count von Hohenberg have each released me from that disagreeable position, and I am free to offer you that heart of which you so long have possession."

Dorothy smiled incredulously. "I do not know what has influenced you to make this declaration," she replied. "I might have believed it, count, if it had been made at Baveno; but now" — she opened her hands with a pretty gesture of refusal — "I have had time to be quite certain that I do not love you."

"It was all for you, — Adlersruhe," the count urged, as though the statement that she did not care for him was of no consequence. "We would make such a beautiful castle of it, like the Isola Bella or Linderhof or Herrenchiemsee."

"I have already asked you, count, as a personal favor not to restore Adlersruhe."

"You do not care for it? Then an agent might be established there when our rights have been proved, — an expensive thing to do, but worth the while, — to collect annual rents from the peasants. It would make a fine income, and you could live where you would."

"Speak no more of it," Dorothy replied, somewhat provoked; "I will not help you to trouble those honest people, and I beg you to let them alone. Meantime, count, if I thought that you cared for me in the least, I should be very sorry to give you pain; but as I cannot flatter myself that such is the case, I can only wish you a pleasant journey, and bid you good-by."

The count raised his eyebrows slightly and bowed; and Dorothy

hurried into the house, excited, indignant, and yet experiencing a spice of satisfaction that she had had her opportunity. Valerie's father stood at the open window, from which he had witnessed the scene. "I think I understand the meaning of the little tableau which has just been acted before me," he said not unkindly; "you have refused Count Farniente?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sensible girl! Will it offend you if I tell you that I fancy his interest in you to have been prompted by monetary considerations?"

"I can well believe you."

"Read this letter, which the young man neglected to take with him, and I think it will convince you if you have any lingering doubts on the subject. You need not return it. I have no use for it. You American girls have my profound admiration. I only wish American young men were as satisfactory."

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXCURSION IN THE BAVARIAN AND AUSTRIAN TYROL. — THREE BAVARIAN CASTLES. — THE ZILLERTHAL. — HOME AGAIN.

FTER the departure of Count Farniente, Papa von Hohenberg experienced so great a satisfaction that he proposed to celebrate the event by a driving-trip through the Bavarian and Austrian Tyrol. "You have seen nothing as yet," he said, "of our beautiful Tyrolese lakes, which so far exceed those of Italy. The frauleins Dorothy and Elsie wish to see the Passion Play. Very good; the mother and I have not seen it; Valerie can probably endure a repetition. We will go first to Ober Ammergau, and from there we will drive to Linderhof and Neu Schwanstein, — two castles built by Ludwig II., the mad king of Bavaria. Then I think we will send the carriage home, and go by rail to Munich; and after a brief glance at the sights of the city, visit the Chiemsee, — to my mind the most charming of the Tyrolese lakes, — and so circle round and back to Innsbruck."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Dorothy and Elsie in a breath. "Delightful!" echoed Valerie; "and you dear, good father, as we come back you must stop at Jenbach to let us visit your fishing-châlet on the Achensee, and then we must explore the Zillerthal as far as Zell. The Zillerthal is the most characteristic valley of Tyrol. Nowhere is the costume so pretty or so universally worn; and all the Zillerthal people are born musicians."

"Very well, little daughter, our itinerary is then decided upon, and I think we can extract some amusement from it, *nicht wahr?* So away and pack your knapsacks, for we must travel light weight, and can carry no trunks."[1]

MARY.

The plan was carried out as proposed. Again at Ober Ammergau Valerie gazed on the rapt face of Mary, the beautiful youthful countenance of John, and saw the sacred drama unfold itself before her, with no diminution of interest. The other girls were also profoundly impressed.

"I am glad that my essay is finished and sent," Dorothy said, "for I could not combine the feelings which I have just experienced with that coldly critical review."

The drive from Ober Ammergau to Linderhof was a short and charming one, following the course of the Ammer to the valley of Graswang, then plunging into the woods, and emerging on a little height, which afforded a beautiful view of mountains crowned by the white summit of the Zugspitze, which has been called the princess of Bavarian mountains.

[1] See map on cover lining for all places mentioned in the narrative.

In this lonely but beautiful spot Ludwig II., who had a mania for building, took a fancy to build a chateau in the style of Louis XV., taking for his model Madame Pompadour's pavilion at Bellevue.

But Ludwig, although madly devoted to architecture, had not the best of taste; and instead of following strictly the charming model which he had at first proposed, he introduced in the château of Linderhof many details taken from the pompous style of Louis XIV. Opposite the château a huge staircase leads to a little Greek temple; grottos and statues in zinc, fountains and artificial cascades, show that the gardens of Versailles were in his mind. The interior of the château shows other imitations of that grandiose palace. The magnificent bed with its balustrade of gilded wood, which at Versailles is quite in keeping in its stately gallery, is here crowded into an ordinary room, while a suite of small rooms filled with rich furniture and bric-à-brac were rendered insignificant by their obvious imitation of those interminable royal apartments in whose grand spaces the eye and the foot of the tourist are alike wearied.

Another bizarre fancy of the poor demented king was to reproduce the blue grotto of Capri in his grounds. A cave was excavated by his orders in the mountain. Pasteboard stalactites depend from the roof, electric lights shed a blue tinge upon the artificial lake, and at the extremity of the cave a painting like a drop-scene at the theatre represents Tannhauser on the Venusberg. This cave was a favorite resort of the king; and he spent many hours floating in a little boat upon the lake, costumed in imitation of Lohengrin, and listening to an invisible orchestra.

Dorothy was deeply interested in the poor king's folly. "It was only a desire which we all possess carried to excess," she said, — "a love of beauty, right in itself, but diverted into the selfish wish to surround ourselves with beautiful objects, instead of striving to make life beautiful for others."

"In my opinion," said Count von Hohenberg, "he failed in his

desire of creating here anything beautiful; and he himself recognized the incongruities of this little palace, and strove to remedy them in two other castles to which I intend to take you. Ludwig had a passionate admiration for the memory of the Grand Monarque Louis XIV.; he felt himself akin to that old piece of bombast and magnificence, and would have resembled him if he could. He was also profoundly influenced by the operas of Wagner. You have seen how the two tastes were mingled at Linderhof. His architect induced him to separate them, and to build a commemorative castle to each, — Herrenchiemsee, a better copy of Versailles, and Neu Schwanstein, a castle after Wagner's own heart."

Away in the southeast corner of Suabia lies the Swan country, a district famous for its ancient legends of knights and minstrels. Here in the old castle of Hohenschwangau, or in another still older building on the same site, the somewhat mythical character of Lohengrin is said to have lived.

King Ludwig had frequently visited this romantic spot. Completely carried away by the operas of Wagner, which had revived the old legends so much loved by poets and romancers such as Uhland and Grimm, the king determined to build near the old castle another which should be a fitting monument to the traditionary past. The castle of Neu Schwanstein is not amenable to the criticisms of incongruity or insignificance which are so painfully evident at Linderhof. The castle is in the Romanesque style of the Middle Ages. The castle of the Wartburg seems to have been its model. Though modern, it has the appearance of a mediæval fortress. Heavy, gloomy, vast in its proportions, dignified and imposing, did we not know its history we could well believe it older than its neighbors, Hohenschwangau and Falhenstein. Within, all is in perfect harmony with this idea. The decorations, chiefly mural paintings, have a dark and sombre tone, as though touched by the hand of time; and the furniture is rich, elegant, but in antique style, —

carved oak, ancient armor, dull brocades, and faded tapestries, which have the air of having remained here for centuries. In the throne-room alone is there any attempt at a gay decoration of white and gold or light tints. In the other apartments a mediæval mellowness and dusk, like the darkening varnish on a painting by the hand of an old master, gives a unifying touch to wrought-iron work, swinging lamps of corroded bronze, stained glass, Byzantine mosaics, and carved oak black as ebony.

The girls wandered through the long halls and galleries, following the painter's delineation of the old legends, — of the Niebelungen, Lohengrin, and Tannhauser, the adventures of Siegfried and Gudrun. In the king's own apartments the early German poets were portrayed with scenes from their principal works. Henri of Waldech, the first German translator of the Æneid, Gottfried of Strasburg, author of Tristan and Iseult, and Wolfram, who first translated the legend of Parsifal into poetry, Walther of the Vogelweid, the great Minnesinger, and Hans Sachs, the cobbler of Nuremburg.

"This is better than that nondescript Linderhof, is it not?" said the Count von Hohenberg. "This is really worth while, for every thing is in perfect taste."

"Yes," Dorothy replied, "the taste displayed is unquestionable; but was it really worth while to lavish wealth in this way merely to reproduce an imitation of the life of past ages. Would not Ludwig have made a better name for himself on the pages of history if he had 'served his present age' with an equal ardor?"

"Undoubtedly; and yet Neu Schwanstein remains a place of beauty which will always delight and educate the visitor, and so far it does serve a worthy purpose."

At the little town of Fuessen the Count von Hohenberg dismissed his travelling-carriage, and the party sped away by train to Munich, where they spent a delightful week. By day they feasted their eyes on the treasures of art in the Alte and Neue Pinakothek in the

Glass Palace and other exhibitions of this most art-loving of the German cities; and in the evening they attended enchanting operas, listening to the music of Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner. It was a happy and valuable experience for all; but Munich has been described in a previous volume of this series, and we must not linger in the quaint old city, but will accompany them to the Chiemsee, one of the most charming lakes in Bavaria.

Dorothy had felt a peculiar interest in seeing the castles of the unhappy king of Bavaria, for Count Farniente had mentioned them when he spoke of the possibilities at Adlersruhe. It was true that to convert the ruined burg into anything like one of these royal châteaus would require a royal purse far deeper than the Chain Lightning Mines could fill; but even if her revenues had been unlimited, Dorothy knew that it would give her no pleasure to expend them in this way. The gratification of his expensive caprices had given Ludwig II. no real satisfaction; monomaniac and misanthrope, he committed suicide at last by drowning himself in the pretty lake of the Starnberg.

The palace of Herrenchiemsee is less pleasing to a cultivated taste than the castle of Neu Schwanstein. Three islands dot the southern expanse of the Chiemsee. On one of these, Herrenwörth, stood in former days a monastery, and on another, Frauenwörth, a nunnery, for noble lords and ladies, while the third island was used as a vegetable garden for both. The boat left our party on Herrenwörth. There was a little restaurant near the landing, where they refreshed themselves with a luncheon consisting principally of fruit, and then walked to the splendid palace, a second Versailles, transported as though by magic to this charming spot. The lovely lake lies in the centre of an enchanting panorama of Tyrolese and Bavarian mountains. Nature has done enough here, and the palace of Louis XIV. seems entirely out of place, with its basins and fountains of Fortune, of Glory, and of Latona, which never play,

FISHER COTTAGES AT FRAUENWÖRTH.

and its long succession of magnificent apartments built by a mad king, and now unoccupied. There were the Salle des Gardes, precisely as at Versailles; the Ante-chambers; the Salon de l'Œil de Bœuf, with a statue of the Grand Monarque, who might be considered the patron saint of poor Ludwig; a royal bed-chamber, which alone cost nearly a million dollars, with hangings heavy with silver embroidery; a "galerie des Glaces." nearly two hundred and fifty feet in length, and long halls devoted to War and to Peace.

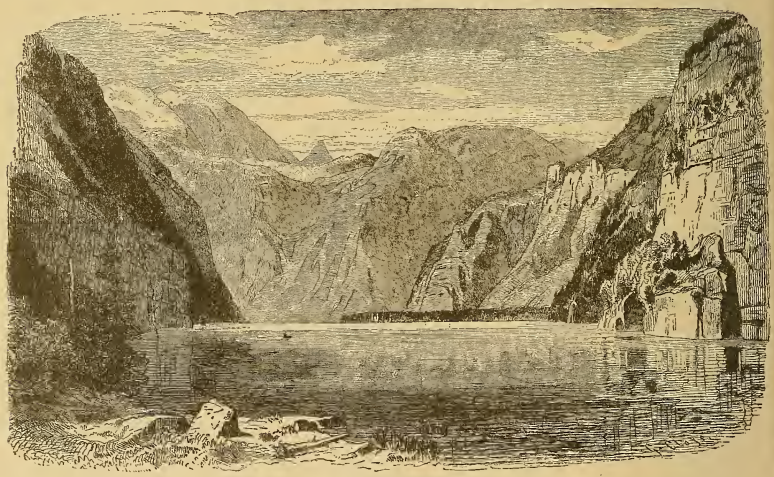
All was magnificent and splendid. The eye wearied with the display of gold and silver, flashing mirrors, and brilliant cut-glass lustres, dropping like Aladdin's gems from the ceiling. Gorgeous, showy decoration had done its utmost; the sheen of satin, the luxurious pile of sumptuous velvets and plushes, brocades flaunting all the colors of all the tulips, furniture of gilded wood and ormolu, cut-glass cabinets displaying collections of jewels, and costly curios, surfeited the senses.

It seemed to Dorothy that vain-glorious pomp and ostentation had here achieved its triumph; and as she walked through the empty-sounding galleries, the words of the preacher — "vanity of vanities" — seemed written over all.

Standing in the dining-room, the guide showed them the crack in the floor, and explained how the table sank and rose between each course for a change of service, for Ludwig could not endure the presence of servants. Dorothy turned to Elsie, and said irrelevantly, showing that her thoughts were far away, "How do you suppose I can get John to use my money in his new scheme for aiding emigrants? I shall write him to sell every bit of my Chain Lightning stock, and invest the proceeds in the other enterprise."

From the Chiemsee the Count von Hohenberg would have liked to take them to the Königssee and the other more celebrated lakes of this region; but Valerie was anxious to show her friends her beloved Zillerthal, and Time was on the wing.

They left the railroad at Jenbach, and proceeded up the valley to Zell in a lumbering stage. They travelled slowly; but it was pleasant to enjoy at their leisure the wild beauty of the scenery. Pine forests covered the slopes of the near mountains, and in the distance the grand slopes of the Gerlos were visible.



KÖNIGSSEE.

The inhabitants of the Zillerthal travel more than other Tyrolese. Bands of singers and players have made their way over their own and other lands, and have spread the reputation of this vivacious, music-loving clan. A favorite song of theirs is a pathetic lament of a Tyrolese for his dead wife. This never fails to draw tears from the eyes of a sympathetic audience; each verse ends with the words —

"Wenn ich zu meinem Kinde geh,
In seinem Aug die Mutter seh."

(In my child my comfort lies,
I see his mother in his eyes.)

To the accompaniment of the zither this simple song is inexpressibly touching.

At Zell the girls attended one of the "Bauern Komedien," in which the actors were all simple peasants, though the parts they took were those of lords and ladies. The play was called "Adolf von Fliehburg," and its plot was founded upon a legend of one of the noble houses of the neighborhood.

"Is it not a little singular," Elsie remarked, "that these peasants should delight in depicting the lives of nobles, and in strutting about in slashed doublets with rapiers at their side, while Valerie, a lady born, always loved at Vassar to play the part of a peasant-maiden?"

"It is very natural," Count von Hohenberg replied. "We all like to get away from ourselves; but such playing is dangerous, too, if it is allowed to mix with the sober realities of our lives."

Valerie colored. Her little comedy had been pleasant while it lasted, but had she hopelessly tangled her life in playing with it thus? Where was Gilbert Austin, and why had he not accepted her father's courtesies?

On their return from the Zillerthal they stopped for a day or two at a little country-house which her father owned on the Achensee, and to which he sometimes came to enjoy the fishing. Two old servants of the family lived near, and were ready to put it in order at a moment's notice.

They were floating one day on the lovely little Achensee, their Zillerthal boatman singing for them the beautiful song "O Tannenbaum," so popular, and so appropriate in this region.

"O Tannenbaum! O Tannenbaum!
Wie grün sind deine Blätter!
Du blüh'st nicht nur zur Sommerzeit
Du blüh'st auch wenn es friert und schneit!
O Tannenbaum! O Tannenbaum!
Wie grün sind deine Blätter."[1]

[1] Longfellow has given a charming translation of this old song.

"O hemlock tree! O hemlock tree! how faithful are thy branches!
Green not alone in summer time,
But in the winter's frost and rime!
O hemlock tree! O hemlock tree! how faithful are thy branches!"

As they drew near a village on the shore opposite their residence, Valerie noticed a pedestrian sitting in front of a little inn. There was something very familiar in the tall, well-made figure, and she recognized it from a distance. So did the other girls, for Dorothy exclaimed, "There is Mr. Gilbert Austin!" while he arose at the same instant and waved his hat.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

The landing was at a little distance from the inn, and Dorothy and Elsie walked back to meet the young consul. Valerie stood still and waited. "How odd that we should find you here, Mr. Austin!" said Dorothy. "Madame von Hohenberg told us that you had been invited to join our party, but that you had declined on account of professional duties, and we all thought that a very flimsy excuse."

"I ran out only for the day," Gilbert stammered, walking on with them toward Valerie.

"And how is your father?" Elsie asked. "Valerie said he visited them quite often before we arrived. I hope we have not frightened the judge away; we should so like to meet him again."

"Have you never met Miss von Hohenberg?" Dorothy asked, as she saw Gilbert fix a questioning glance upon that young lady.

"I am so glad to introduce you. Valerie, this is the Mr. Austin whom we met in Lucerne."

Valerie was perfectly self-possessed. She inclined her head slightly, and remarked, "I am glad *at last* to have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Austin."

The young man was thunder-struck; for a moment he could not utter a word. Then he murmured, "It is impossible! pardon me, but the likeness is very striking. I fancied for the moment that I had met Miss von Hohenberg before."

"SHE WAS PERFECTLY SELF-POSSESSED."

"And Mr. Austin is not mistaken."

"Diena!" he exclaimed, springing impulsively forward; but Valerie raised the umbrella with which she was playing, and held it like a bar at arm's length before her. He placed his hands on hers, and spoke rapidly and exultantly. "Diena, child, I would know you in any disguise. Ah, young ladies, it was a capital joke to dress this little peasant-girl as a lady and introduce her to me; but I forgive you the trick, I am so happy to find her again."

"There is something here that we do not quite understand," said Dorothy. "Elsie dear, it seems that our presence is not needed;" and the two girls stepped briskly back toward the boat.

"Diena my darling," continued Gilbert, "I looked for you everywhere in Innsbruck, and finally I wrote Mrs. Annas to know where to find you. She replied that you had returned to your own people. That was not very definite, and I have been searching the Ziller-

thal for you for days. How did you happen to fall in with these American young ladies? Do you know you look remarkably pretty as they have dressed you? I had no idea that you would bear the change so well. If my father could only see you as you look now, he would withdraw every objection."

"Judge Austin and I are already very good friends," Valerie replied; "it remains to be seen whether my father will approve of *you*."

Gilbert Austin started back aghast. "Am I insane?" he asked. "What does this mean?"

"That this is no masquerade; and that I am really and truly Valerie von Hohenberg."

"And you were only amusing yourself with me at Ober Ammergau?" he asked savagely.

"I cannot deny, Mr. Austin, that you *were* amusing."

"Then all I can say is, that you trifled with an honest heart."

"Pardon me, Mr. Austin. I have not implied that anything I may have said in the character of Diena was insincere. I have a home here on the Achensee, to which I now invite you, though how you will make your peace with my father for your avoidance of us at Innsbruck I am not certain."

"Diena, do you not see that it was because I was true to you that I did not care to meet Miss von Hohenberg?"

"The task will be to make my father believe that; but I will try. That is our châlet across the lake. Come and dine with us. No, I don't mean that you are to come with us now; wait until we have prepared Father to meet you. There will be a plate laid for you; drop in at five minutes past six precisely. The soup will then have been served, and Father is another man after he has eaten his soup. He declares that soup is the overture of the dinner, and it prepares him for any drama."

The soup that day was the count's favorite, — a compound of cab-

bage and sausages not delectable to a western taste, but so hot and rich that the count helped himself twice, and listened with complacency while Valerie explained the little comedy. "It has ended better than it might have done," he grumbled. "Still, I am not inclined to let that young man off too easily. He had no business to treat my advances so cavalierly, no matter what the attractions of that Zillerthal girl; and Valerie," he added very seriously, "let this be the last of carrying amateur theatricals into real life. What begins with comedy is very likely to end in tragedy, and one's ideas of truth are apt to be sadly warped. The simple truth, my girl, is the best guide for lovers as well as for every one else; and you deserve to suffer a little for the pranks you have played."

Gilbert Austin suffered more. All of his supercilious condescension loomed before him in its colossal proportions. "What a donkey I have been!" he said to himself; "how can I ever endure her raillery?"

His former sins were visited upon him but in one instance. When he pleaded that the wedding might be set for an early date, Valerie brought up his unfortunate remarks at Ober Ammergau in reference to her education.

"I insist on the few years necessary to prepare me for my future position," she said smilingly; "I want to return with the girls and graduate at Vassar before I think of marriage." And from this resolution he found it impossible to move her.

When Gilbert informed his father that he had found Diena, the judge was at first unwilling to see her; but when the facts in the case were made known, the happiness of the old gentleman was delightful to witness.

He presented his son with a charming cabinet portrait of Valerie, which he had framed in a little shrine of Tyrolese wood-carving. On the inner side of the little door he inscribed Lord Tolloller's appeal in "Iolanthe": —

"Spurn not the nobly born
With love affected;
Nor treat with virtuous scorn
The well-connected.
High rank involves no shame;
We boast an equal claim
With her of humble name
To be respected."

Dorothy smiled when she was shown it, and said to Elsie, "'An equal claim,' yes, — but no more. Madame de Charrière held a very pretty ideal of the old noblesse, when she described them as men 'who more strongly than others feel themselves obliged to be brave, disinterested, and true; men who think they could not possibly do a mean thing, and who believe they have received from their ancestors — and who hold themselves bound to transmit to their children — a certain flower of honor, and who do not know to what length they would go rather than see it destroyed or disgraced.' It was a charming ideal of nobility, but it is not true. Human nature is nearly the same everywhere. I have the pleasure of knowing one true nobleman who could not do a mean thing; but he possesses no title, while even Madame Charrière herself could not claim that her rhapsody fits Count Farniente."

The vacation months had glided swiftly by, and the three girls, accompanied by Aunt Jane, returned to America.

As the steamer entered New York harbor in the very early morning, the stewardess tapped at Elsie's stateroom. "If you please, miss, there is a gentleman on deck who is very anxious to see you."

"A gentleman!" Elsie exclaimed, her surprise struggling with her drowsiness.

"Yes, miss; he came down to Staten Island on a tug, and came on board as soon as the health-officer would permit. He must have been waiting to hear that the steamer had been sighted. He seems to be in a state of mind, for he is walking the deck impatient like."

Elsie dressed hurriedly and hastened up the stairs. It was John, as she had suspected; but such a demoralized John that she scarcely recognized him. "What is the matter?" she asked, as she caught sight of his white face and knotted brows.

"Gone to smash!" he replied.

"The Chain Lightning mine?"

"Yes; the vein petered out suddenly. There is no more silver, and the stockholders have nothing but a hole in the ground."

"Poor Dorothy!"

"Yes, poor child! I am nearly crazy when I think of her."

JOHN DEMORALIZED.

"Too bad that she would not let you sell when the stock was up so high."

"If she had, some one else would have suffered tremendously; and I am mistaken in Miss Dorothy if she would have liked that."

"Has she lost everything?"

"No; I sold for her when the first rumors began to be circulated, and the stock had begun to go down. I realized ten thousand dollars, just the amount she put in, so that her original investment is safe."

"Then it is n't so bad after all."

"Mr. Thorne does not blame me; indeed, he thinks I did well to rescue this brand from the burning. But that poor child! after she has had her expectations raised by the belief that she is the possessor of a fortune, how will she bear it?"

"You don't know Dorothy. She will bear it magnificently."

"But it may compromise her future. Will the count hold to his engagement when he hears of this crash?"

"The count! What do you mean? Who told you anything about the count?"

"Mrs. Irving wrote me last summer asking the exact amount of Dorothy's fortune. She gave as the reason for her investigation that a grand marriage was planned for Miss Dorothy; but she admitted very frankly that this marriage was entirely contingent upon money."

"And you believed that Dorothy would marry for rank! Oh, John, John! what a goose you are! I am happy to inform you that Dorothy distinctly and unequivocally refused the count; and I have reason to believe, you dear old blunderhead, that it is because she loves some one else; and that some one else is — "

A great light of joy flashed over John's face, and went out.

"Hush, Elsie! I am a penniless man."

"Penniless? Why, you are just as well off as she is. You wrote me that you sold your shares in the mine for ten thousand dollars."

"So I did; but you see I — circumstances induced me to reinvest in it."

"You bought Chain Lightning after it had begun to go down, when you were selling Dorothy's stock? John, you can't deceive me. It was Dorothy's stock that you bought because no one else would buy it, to save her from utter failure."

"At the time that Dorothy's stock was sold, there were plenty of buyers, who would have taken it at that price."

"Then why did *you* buy it? — for I know you did."

"Elsie, I will confide in you if you will promise not to betray me. I found out to a certainty that the end had come before the general public knew it. I went down into the depths of the mine with the chief engineer, the government assayer, and a committee of our stockholders sent to investigate the truth. We were pledged to secrecy at that time, but we knew that the announcement must be made public. I had Dorothy's shares in my possession, and I could have sold them twenty times before it was known that they were valueless; but selling them with the knowledge that I had to an ignorant speculator would have made me a thief. I sold them at

their quoted value in the market to a man who knew what he was buying."

"To yourself?"

"What else was there to do? I saved Dorothy's original investment, and I saved my own honor."

"John, you are the noblest fellow in all the world."

"No, Elsie. If you only knew me at my worst! When the knowledge that the stock was worthless first flashed upon me, and I thought that this would break off the engagement which I supposed existed between her and the count, I was glad, — Elsie, despise me, — I was wickedly glad. But I conquered myself; and if it had been in my power to have bought the stock at its highest fictitious value in order to save her from disappointment or mortification, I would have done it. But I could not do this, and it was the fear that this partial failure would be a dreadful blow to her which has worn on me." He mopped his damp brow energetically, and drew a long breath. "I am glad she did not want to marry the count," he said; "but, Elsie, remember you have sworn never to betray my secret about the stocks."

"Never, John, if you will walk right up like a man and propose, and if Dorothy accepts. Otherwise I shall be so angry that I cannot be responsible for my actions."

Elsie never told the secret.

Strange to say, neither Dorothy nor Valerie were awarded the prize for the essay on the Ober Ammergau Passion Play. Another Vassar girl carried off the honor; but neither of the girls envied her as they would have done earlier in the year, for new interests now absorb them.

The Society for Aiding Emigrants in Finding Employment is established with John as its president, and Judge Austin, Mr. Thorne, Count von Hohenberg Mr. Bruce, and many others as its stock-

holders; and Consul Gilbert Austin is one of its foreign associate managers. Adlersruhe has not been restored, and the count is still waiting for an American heiress who will take it with all its encumbrances. Next year, after our girls graduate, there is to be a double wedding; but all of this is quite outside the story of Three Vassar Girls in the Tyrol.

THE END.

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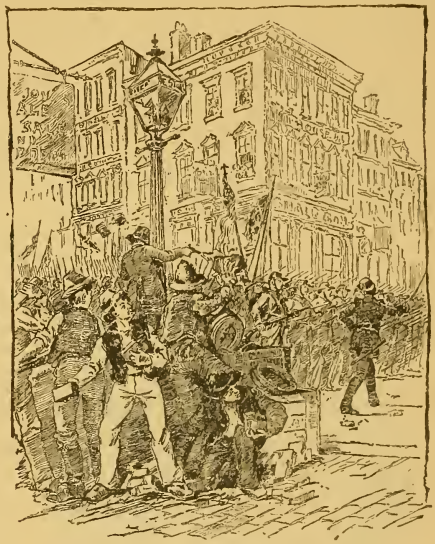

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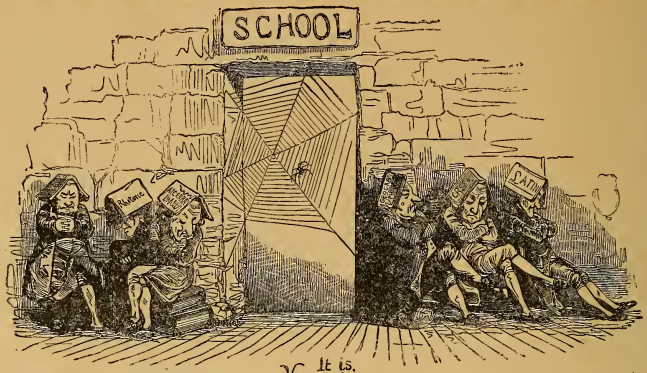

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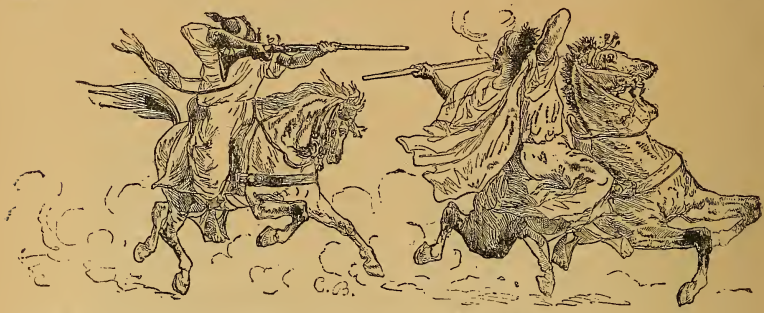

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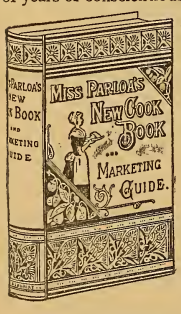

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