

"But have I saved him?" she whispered hesitatingly. "Have I saved him?—that is the terrible query which has of late arisen in my heart. Oh! I can hardly tell you all the dreadful doubts which have assailed me of late, and against which I have vainly tried to shut my eyes. . . . And so I wanted to take life in a superficial sort of way, because every kind of serious thought was martyrdom. That Landolfo is our evil genius, and my father is completely in his hands. Oh, my poor dear father! He is no longer what he used to be," she added, with a deep shame burning on her cheeks. "This life draws every one down. Who knows? Perhaps, if I had not made this sacrifice, necessity would have compelled him to give the whole thing up."

"You have done what you considered right, and that is sufficient before God and your own conscience. Do not torment yourself about it. One cannot foresee everything; and when one has done one's duty, one must leave the rest to God. But could you not retire now, that your father's affairs are once more flourishing?"

"No, no; my father says that it is I alone who keep matters going, and that the loss is not yet filled up; and I am sure that Landolfo takes good care that it should not be filled up so soon. He moves heaven and earth against me."

"Against you? Your father's darling? . . . Do you mean to say that you are not well treated?" cried the chaplain in surprise.

"Oh! I did not mean it in that sense," she said with a sad smile. "I am but too well treated, flattered, and adored by all, because I am necessary to all. But he—the man I have just named—he has his own wicked plans, he wishes to bring my father down lower and lower, and to make him completely his slave by flattering him. . . . But they shall not conquer me," she added with a flashing eye. "I see one plan following another, one low intrigue taking the place of another. No, no; I must not desert my father now."

"Cannot you explain yourself more clearly?" asked the chaplain.

"No, no," whispered Nora. "It is only like a ghost still which I see slowly rising before me."

"Nora," said the chaplain gravely, after having sat for some moments lost in reflection; "accomplish your task, hard and difficult as it is; it forced you to trample over your happiness, it leads you across great dangers; but keep your heart pure and strong, and then outward attacks will be powerless against it. Perhaps you are meant to be your father's guardian angel. . . . Grace will not fail you. See, is it not Providence which sent me now, at a moment when you had lost courage, and were on the brink of losing your good resolutions? Is it not a comfort that everything should now be made clear to you, and that you should no longer feel the bitterness which threatened to poison the pure and noble sacrifice you had made? Go on now, firmly and gravely, upon the road of sacrifice, and do not give up your eternal birthright for paltry vanity and petty bitterness."

"But how long, how long will it last?" she whispered to herself.

"So long as the Almighty chooses. In one moment He can solve all the difficulties which now seem insurmountable."

The chaplain rose, and Nora also. Laying her burning hand in his, she said—

"Yes, it was indeed providential that you should have come. I was standing on the brink of a fearful precipice. Help me, help me, that I may not give way!"

At the same moment a knock was heard at the door, and as Nora called out, "Come in!" the director entered.

Ah, ah; you have a visitor?" he said with feigned surprise. "What! you sir? What brings you so suddenly here again? It's a great pleasure, I'm sure—a great pleasure to see you." He offered the chaplain his hand, but there was something measured in his tone, something forced in his attitude which showed how unwelcome the visit was.

The chaplain found him changed since the last time he had seen him. His figure had become more corpulent, and his features seemed swollen, his eye, too, was lifeless and uncertain, even his walk was different, and he had completely lost the attitude of former years. On noticing all this, the chaplain was deeply pained, and as he looked at the daughter standing beside her father, her sweet face, still bearing the impression of the grave conversation she had just had, the contrast between those two was something glaring and intensely painful. At any rate, she could no longer lean upon her father, and feel supported by him.

Meanwhile, Nora explained to the director how it was that the chaplain, going through town, had called upon her, and the latter said that the hour of his departure was approaching.

"I'm afraid that this meeting has agitated you, my child," said the director, looking suspiciously at her grave expression. "Everything has happened as our older and wiser heads had prophesied," he added, turning to the chaplain. "However, young people must learn through their own experience, you see—but my daughter is very happy all the same. She will have told you that her life is not so bad as it appears; and wasn't I right in saying that she would do great things some day? Was it possible to see anything better than last night? The public were completely carried away!"

"The Emperor of Russia was right," said the chaplain, smiling to Nora.

"Yes, yes; she has quite put her father into the shade!" answered the director with a loud laugh. "Nora, when you come downstairs, you will see what a number of nose-gays are awaiting you, I could scarcely count them. Yes! she is my support, my pride, this daughter of mine, but rather a spoilt princess!" and laying his arm about her waist, he drew her towards him. The director spoke hesitatingly, and he was strangely flushed, so that a doubt came over the chaplain's mind—a doubt which would have been confirmed had he known that Karsten had just been breakfasting with Landolfo. After making him drink a great deal of sherry, Landolfo had told him of the chaplain's visit, and advised him to interrupt it,

saying that the "Pfaff" would certainly fill his daughter's head with a precious deal of nonsense. Landolfo and the director always breakfasted together now, of course at the director's expense, and generally with the same result. It was but too true, and Nora was right when she said that Landolfo's influence was growing daily greater, and had a most pernicious effect upon him. He not only had the complete direction of affairs in his hands, but he also endeavored to amuse the director and encourage in him a lurking taste for spirits which had developed itself since his last illness. Those are dangerous years for a man when bodily strength is giving way, and great exertions make him long for tonics and excitement, the years, in short, when, being on the frontier of old age, life's pleasures seem to concentrate themselves in a cup of merriness.

"The prince also called in order to ask after you," continued the director in the same tone; "and begged to have the honor of arranging a little *partie champêtre* for you."

"Thank you, father; you know that I never accept such invitations," said Nora coldly. "I hope you told him so at once."

"Well, well it wouldn't be such a fearful thing for you to go out a little with your mother and me. You were just beginning to be a little reasonable. I hope, sir, you have not made my little daughter into a nun again. The same fashion doesn't suit every one. It's part of our business not to frighten people away."

"I cannot help thinking that Miss Nora is right in this case; a young lady in her position cannot be too prudent."

"Pooh, pooh! don't turn her head, my reverend friend," said the director with a slight stutter. "She is proud enough as it is, and if she don't take care, she'll be making a mess of the whole thing for me."

"Father dear, if you really think so," said Nora quietly, "I am ready to retire at any moment. As it is, you know that I am not fond of the business, and shall be very glad to look out for some other situation."

"Pon my honor! just see how high and mighty our spoilt young lady is!" laughed her father, stroking her face. "She knows we can't do without her, that's what it is! But my daughter will not leave her old father in the lurch," he added maudlingly.

Nora, hoping to put an end to so indescribably painful a scene, held out her hand to the chaplain. "I'm afraid we are keeping you, sir," she said sadly; "and at Göhlitz you are expected with anxiety. But I thank you for your visit which has done me all the good in the world. Do not be afraid of me, I shall now be able to fight the battle, and, with God's help, to win it too."

"God bless you, my poor child! and rest assured that He will not forsake you. I have perhaps inflicted greater pain upon you by all I've told you, but, on the other hand, I firmly hope that it has saved you from something worse than sorrow."

"Yes, indeed," said Nora, standing erect and proudly before him. "You have furnished me with new weapons to-day, and,

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