The forenoon bells were sounding from the great cathedral. On the open place, men and women were moving in various directions, carriages passing along, and priests going to their churches. Ferdinand stood upon the stairs regarding the multitude, and contemplating those who went up to be present at high mass. The sunshine glistened on the white stones; every one sought shelter against the heat; he only had been long standing in meditation, leaning against a pillar, under the burning beams, without feeling them; for he was lost amid the recollections which had risen up in his thoughtfulness. He thought on his former life, and inspired himself with the feeling which had penetrated his being, and extinguished all other wishes.

At the same hour he had stood here in the former year, to see the women and maidens going to service; with listless heart and smiling eye he had contemplated the various forms. Then there came across the square a youthful form in black, tall and noble, her eyes modestly cast before her on the ground; unembarrassed she ascended the stairs with lovely grace; her silken dress lay around the most beautiful of forms, and vibrated as in music about the moving limbs. She was going to mount the highest step, when unconsciously she raised her eye, and its azure beam met his glance. He was pierced as by lightning. She stumbled, and quickly as he sprang forward, he could not hinder but that for a moment she, in the most charming posture, lay kneeling at his feet. He raised her; she looked not at him, but was all a blush, nor answered his inquiry whether she was hurt. He followed her into the church, and saw only the image as she had knelt before him, and the loveliest of bosoms bent towards him. The following day he again visited the threshold of the temple; for him the place was consecrated. He had intended to take his departure, his friends were impatiently expecting him at home; but now from henceforth this was his father-land; his heart was inverted.

He saw her often—she did not shun him—yet only for separate and stolen moments; for her rich family sufficiently watched her, still more a powerful and jealous bridegroom. They confessed to each other their love, but knew not in their situation what to counsel; for he was a stranger, and could offer his beloved no such great fortune as she was entitled to expect. Now he felt his poverty; yet when he thought on his former way of life, he seemed to himself surpassingly rich, for his existence was hallowed, his heart floated for ever in the fairest emotion. Nature was now friendly to him, and her beauty revealed to his meditations, he felt himself no longer a stranger to devotion and religion; and now he trod this threshold, the mysterious dimness of the temple, with far other feelings than in those days of levity. He withdrew from his former acquaintances, and lived only to love. Whenever he passed through her street, and only saw her at the window, that day was for him a happy one. He had often

spoken to her in the twilight of evening, as her garden adjoined to that of a friend, who, however, did not know his secret. Thus a year had elapsed.

All these scenes of his new existence again passed through his remembrance. He raised his eyes; that noble form was even then gliding across the square—she lightened upon him from among the mixed multitude as a sun. A lovely song sounded into his longing heart; and as she approached, he stepped back into the church. He held towards her the holy water; her white fingers trembled as they touched his; she bowed graciously. He followed her, and knelt near her. His whole heart melted away in melancholy and love; it seemed to him as if, from the wounds of longing, his existence was bleeding away in ardent prayers; every word of the priest thrilled through him, every tone of the music gushed devotion into his bosom; his lips quivered as the fair one pressed the crucifix of her rosary to her ruby mouth. How had he not been able to comprehend this faith and this love before?

The priest raised the host, and the bell sounded. She bowed herself more humbly, and crossed her breast. Like lightning it struck through all his powers and feelings; and the altar-picture seemed alive—the coloured dimness of the windows as a light of Paradise. Tears streamed profusely from his eyes, and allayed the inward burning of his heart. Divine service was ended. He again offered her the holy font; they spoke some words, and she withdrew. He remained behind, not to excite notice; he looked after her till the hem of her garment vanished round the corner. Then he felt as the weary bewildered traveller, who in the thick forest beholds the last gleam of the descending sun.

He awoke from his dream, as a dry, withered hand struck him on the shoulder, and some one called him by name. He started back, and recognised his friend the morose Albert, who lived apart from men, and whose lonely house was open only to the young Ferdinand. "Are you mindful of our engagement?" asked the hoarse voice.

"O, yes," said Ferdinand; "and will you keep your promise to-day?"

"This very hour," replied the other, "if you will follow me."

They walked through the city to a distant street, and there into a large building.

"To-day," said the old man, "you must give yourself the trouble to go with me to the back part of the house, into my most solitary chamber, that we may not be at all disturbed."

They passed through many rooms, then up some stairs, and along several passages; and Ferdinand, who had thought that he knew the house well, now could not but wonder at the number of the apartments, as well as the singular arrangement of the spacious building; but more than all, that the old man, who was not married and had

no family, should occupy it alone, with only a single servant, and would never let out any portion of the superfluous room to strangers. At length Albert unlocked a door, and said, "Now we are at the place." They entered a large and lofty chamber, hung round with red damask, that was trimmed with golden listings; the seats were of the same stuff; and through heavy red silk curtains, which were let down, there glimmered a purple light.

"Wait a moment," said the old man, as he went into another room.

Ferdinand, in the mean time, took up some books, in which he found strange unintelligible characters, circles and lines, together with many curious plates; and from the little he could read, they seemed to him to be works on alchemy: he knew, also, that the old man had the reputation of being a gold-maker. On the table lay a lute, singularly overlaid with mother-of-pearl and coloured wood, and representing birds and flowers in splendid forms. The star in the middle was a large piece of mother-of-pearl, worked out in the most skilful manner into many intersecting circles, almost like the centre of a window in a Gothic church.

"You are looking at my instrument," said Albert, who had now returned: "it is two hundred years old; I brought it with me as a memorial of my journey into Spain. But now leave all that, and take a seat."

They sat down at the table, which likewise was covered with red cloth; and the old man placed something on it which was carefully wrapped up.

"From pity to your youth," he began, "I lately promised to foretell you whether or not you could become happy; and this promise I am willing to fulfil at the present hour, though you recently wished to treat the matter as a jest. You need not alarm yourself, for what I design can happen without danger. I shall make no dread incantations, nor shall any horrible apparition terrify you. The thing which I shall endeavour may fail in two ways; either if you do not love so truly as you have wished to make me believe, for then my labour is in vain, and nothing will shew itself; or if you should disturb the oracle, and destroy it by a useless question, or by a hasty movement leaving your seat, the figure would break in pieces. So you must keep yourself quite still."

Ferdinand gave his word; and the old man unfolded from the cloths that which he had brought with him. It was a golden goblet, of very costly and beautiful workmanship: around its broad foot ran a wreath of flowers, twined with myrtles and various other leaves and fruit, highly chased with dim and brilliant gold. A similar ring, only richer, adorned with figures of children, and wild little animals playing with them, or flying before them, wound itself around the centre of the cup. The chalice was beautifully turned; above, it was bent back toward the lips; and within, the gold sparkled with a ruddy glow. The old man placed the goblet between himself and the youth, and beckoned him nearer.

"Do you not feel something," said he, "when your eye loses itself in this splendour?"

"Yes," said Ferdinand; "this brightness reflects into my very inmost being,—I might say, I feel it as a kiss in my longing bosom."

"It is right," said the old man. "Now let your eyes no more stray around, but keep them fixed on the glance of this gold, and think as earnestly as you can on your beloved."

Both sat still awhile, and, absorbed in contemplation, beheld the gleaming cup. But soon the old man, with mute gesture, first slowly, then more quickly, and at last with rapid movement, proceeded with extended finger to draw regular circles around the glow of the goblet. Then he paused, and took the circles from the opposite direction. When he had thus continued for some time, Ferdinand thought he heard music, but it sounded as from without in a distant street. Soon, however, the tones came nigher; they struck on his ear louder and louder, and vibrated more distinctly through the air; so that, at last, he felt no doubt but that they issued from the interior of the goblet. The music became still stronger, and of such penetrating power, that the heart of the young man trembled, and tears rose into his eyes. Busily moved the old man's hand in various directions across the mouth of the cup; and it appeared as if sparks from his fingers were convulsively striking and sounding on the gold. Soon the shining points increased, and followed, as on a thread, the motion of his finger; they glittered of various colours, and crowded still more closely on one another, till they rushed altogether in continuous lines. Now it seemed as if the old man in the red twilight was laying a wondrous net over the brightening gold, for at will he drew the beams hither and thither, and wove up with them the opening of the goblet: they obeyed him, and remained lying like a covering, waving to and fro, and playing into one another. When they thus were fastened, he again described the circles around the rim; the music subsided, and became softer and softer, till it could no longer be perceived; and the bright net-work quivered, as if in agony. It burst in increasing agitation, and the beams rained down drops into the chalice; but out of the fallen drops arose a reddish cloud, which formed itself in manifold circles, and floated like foam over the mouth of the cup. A bright point darted up with the greatest rapidity through the cloudy circles. There stood the image; and suddenly, as it were, an eye looked out from the mist; above, golden locks flowed in ringlets; presently a soft blush went up and down the quivering shade; and Ferdinand recognised the smiling countenance of his beloved—the blue eyes, the delicate cheeks, the lovely red mouth. The head waved to and fro, raised itself more distinctly and visibly on the slender white neck, and bowed towards the enraptured youth. The old man kept on describing his circles around the goblet, and thereout issued the glancing shoulders; and at last the whole of the lovely image pressed from out the golden bed, and gracefully waved to and fro.

Ferdinand thought he felt the breath as the beloved form inclined towards him, and almost touched him with burning lips. In his ravishment he could no longer command

himself, but impressed a kiss on the mouth, and endeavoured to grasp the beautiful arm, and quite to raise the lovely form out of its golden prison. Then a violent trembling suddenly struck through the image, as in a thousand fragments the head and body broke together; and a rose lay at the foot of the goblet, in whose blush the sweet smile still appeared. Ferdinand passionately seized it, and pressed it to his mouth. At his ardent longing, it withered and dissolved away in the air.

"Thou hast badly kept thy word," said the old man, angrily: "thou canst only impute the fault to thyself."

He again wrapped up his goblet, drew aside the curtains, and opened a window. The clear daylight broke in; and Ferdinand, in a melancholy mood, and with many apologies, took his leave of the murmuring old man. He hastened with emotion through the streets of the city, and sat down under the trees without the gate. She had told him in the morning that she was to go that night with some relations into the country.

Intoxicated with love, he now sat, now wandered into the wood. Still he beheld the fair form as it ascended from the glowing gold: he expected to see her step forth in the splendour of her beauty, when the fairest of shapes broke in pieces before his eyes; and he was angry with himself that, through his restless desire and the bewilderment of his senses, he had destroyed the image, and perhaps his own happiness.

When, after the midday hour, the pathway began to be crowded, he withdrew further into the thicket, but watchfully still kept his eye upon the high-road, and curiously examined every carriage that issued from the gate. Evening drew on, a red glimmer was thrown up by the setting sun; when the richly gilded coach rushed out from the gate, and shone brightly amid the evening glow. He hastened towards it. Already her eye had sought his. Graciously smiling, she leaned her fair bosom from the window. He caught her loving look and greeting. Now he stood by the side of the carriage, her fall glance falling upon him; and as she hastily drew back, the rose which had adorned her bosom flew out, and lay at his feet. He hastily took it up and kissed it; and it seemed to him as if it prophesied that he should no more see his beloved one,—that now his happiness was destroyed for ever.

People were up and down stairs; the whole house was in commotion; all were making a noise and bustle about the morrow's great festival. The mother, as the most active, was also the most joyful. The bride heeded nothing, but retired, meditating her destiny, into her own chamber. They were still expecting the son, the captain and his wife, and two elder daughters with their husbands. Meanwhile Leopold, a younger son, was mischievously busy in increasing the noise and disorder, perplexing every thing, while he pretended to further it. Agatha, his still unmarried sister, endeavoured to make him reasonable, and to persuade him to meddle with nothing, and to leave the others in peace. But the mother said: "Do not disturb him in his folly; for to-day more

or less of it does not signify. Therefore I only beg you all that, as I have already so much to think of, you will not trouble me about any thing that is not absolutely necessary. If the china should be broken, or some of the silver spoons be lost, or the strangers' servants break the windows,—with such trifles do not vex me by recounting them. When these days of disquiet are over, then we will have a reckoning."

"You are right, mother," said Leopold; "these are sentiments worthy of a governor. Also, if some of the maids should break their necks—or the cook get drunk, and set the chimney on fire—the butler, for joy, let the malmsey run or be drunk out,—you shall hear nothing of such childish tricks. But if an earthquake should overturn the house,—that, dearest mother, it would be impossible to keep secret."

"When will he ever become wiser?" said the mother. "What will thy sisters think, when they find thee again quite as foolish as they left thee two years ago?"

"They must do my character the justice," replied the lively youth, "that I am not so changeable as they or their husbands, who, in a few years, have so very much altered, and not to their advantage."

The bridegroom now entered, and inquired for the bride. Her maid was sent to call her.

"My dear mother," said he, "has Leopold made known to you my request?"

"That I cannot tell," she replied; "for, amid the disorder now in the house, one can scarcely retain a reasonable thought."

The bride entered, and the young people saluted each other with joy.

"The request I meant," continued the bridegroom, "is, that you would not take it ill if I brought yet another guest into your house, which, in truth, is, for these days, too full already."

"You know yourself," said the mother, "that, spacious as the house is, I could hardly find another chamber."

"Nevertheless," exclaimed Leopold, "I have partly provided for that, by having the large room in the back of the house put in order."

"Why, that is not commodious enough," replied the mother; "for many years it has been only used as a lumber-room."

"It is splendidly restored," said Leopold; "and the friend for whom it is designed does not regard such matters—he is only anxious for our love. Besides, he has no wife, and

prefers to be in solitude; so that it will be quite the place for him. We have had trouble enough to persuade him, and bring him again amongst his fellow-creatures."

"Not, surely, your morose gold-maker and conjuror?" asked Agatha.

"No other," replied the bridegroom, "if you please to call him so."

"Then, dear mother, do not let him," continued the sister; "what should such a man do in our house? I have sometimes seen him pass down the street with Leopold; I have been frightened at his countenance. The old sinner, too, almost never goes to church; he loves neither God nor men; and it will bring no blessing on so solemn an occasion to have such infidels under the roof. Who knows what may spring from it?"

"How now thou speakest!" said Leopold, angrily: "because thou dost not know him, therefore thou condemnest him; and because his nose does not please thee, and he is no longer young and handsome, therefore, according to thy notion, he must be familiar with spirits, and a wicked man."

"Grant, dear mother," said the bridegroom, "a little place in your house to our old friend, and let him partake in our general joy. He appears, dear sister Agatha, to have experienced much misfortune, which has made him distrustful and misanthropic. He avoids all society, with the exception of myself and Leopold. I have much to thank him for: he first gave my mind a better direction; yea, I may say, perhaps he alone has rendered me worthy of my Julia's love."

"He lends me all his books," continued Leopold; "and, what is more, his old manuscripts; and, what is still more, money upon my bare word. He has the Christian disposition, my little sister; and who knows but that, when thou comest to be better acquainted with him, thou mayest not forego thy prudery, and fall in love with him, odious as he appears to thee at present?"

"Well, bring him to us," said the mother; "I have already been obliged to hear so much about him from Leopold, that I am curious to make his acquaintance. Only you must answer for it, that we cannot afford him a better lodging."

In the mean while travellers had arrived; they were members of the family, the married daughters and the officer, and had brought their children with them. The good old lady was delighted to see her grandchildren; all was welcoming and joyful talk; and when Leopold and the bridegroom had also received and returned their salutations, they went away to look after their ancient melancholy friend. This latter lived, for the greater part of the year, about three miles from the city; but he also kept a little dwelling for himself in a garden near the gate. Here, by chance, the two young men had become acquainted with him: they now met him at a coffee-house, as they had previously appointed. As it was already evening, they after a little conversation

returned back to the house. The mother received the stranger very graciously; the daughters kept themselves somewhat distant; Agatha especially was shy, and carefully avoided his glance. After the first general conversation was over, the eye of the old man turned fixedly on the bride, who had come into the company later; he appeared enraptured, and it was observed that he endeavoured secretly to dry off a tear.

The bridegroom rejoiced in his joy; and when after some time, they stood aside at the window, he took the hand of the old man, and asked him, "What do you say of my beloved Julia? Is she not an angel?"

"O my friend," replied the old man, with emotion, "such beauty and grace I have never yet seen; or rather I should say (for that expression is incorrect), she is so beautiful, so charming, so heavenly, that it seems to me as if I had long known her; as if she were to me, stranger as she is, the dearest picture of my imagination, that which had ever been at home within my heart."

"I understand you," said the young man. "Yes, the truly beautiful, great, and sublime, when it sets us in astonishment and admiration, still does not surprise us as something strange, unheard-of, never seen; but our inmost existence in such moments becomes clear to us, our deepest recollections are awakened, and our dearest feelings are made alive."

At the supper the stranger took but little part in the conversation; his gaze was intensely fixed upon the bride, so that, at length, she became embarrassed and alarmed. The officer told of a campaign, which he had served in; the rich merchant, of his merchandise, and the bad times; and the landowner, of the improvements he had begun on his estate. After supper, the bridegroom took his leave, to return for the last time to his lonely habitation; for in future he was to live with his young wife in the mother's house, in chambers already furnished. The company separated, and Leopold conducted the stranger to his apartment.

"You will excuse it," he began, as they went along, "that we are obliged to lodge you somewhat far away from us, and not so commodiously as my mother wished: but you see yourself how numerous our family is, and other relations are coming to-morrow. You will, at least, not be able to run away from us, for certainly you could not find your way out of this spacious mansion."

They went through several passages, and at last Leopold took leave of his friend, and wished him good night. The servant placed two wax-lights on the table, and having asked the stranger if he should assist him to undress, which service being declined, he also withdrew; and the stranger found himself alone.

"How, then, does it happen," said he, as he walked up and down, "that to-day that image springs so vividly from my heart? I forgot the long past, and thought I saw

herself; I was again young, and her voice sounded as of old; it seemed to me as if I was awaking from a heavy dream; but no, now I am awake, and the pleasing delusion was only a sweet dream."

He was too restless to sleep: he contemplated some pictures on the walls, and then the chamber. "To-day," he exclaimed, "every thing is so familiar, I could almost delude myself to imagine that this house and this apartment are not strange to me." He tried to fix his recollections, and took up some large books which were standing in a corner. When he had turned over the leaves, he shook his head: a lute-case was leaning against the wall; he opened it, and took out a strange old instrument, which was damaged and wanted the strings. "No, I am not mistaken," he cried, astonished; "this lute is too remarkable—it is the Spanish lute of my long-deceased friend Albert; there stand his magic-books; this is the room where he wished to awaken for me the happy oracle: faded is the red of the tapestry, the golden embroidery is become dim; but wonderfully vivid in my mind is all pertaining to those hours. Therefore it was that I shuddered as I came hither through those long, complicated passages where Leopold led me. O heaven, on this very table rose the image, springing forth as if watered and refreshed by the redness of the gold. The same image smiled on me here, which this evening has almost made me frenzied in the hall—that hall where I have so often walked in familiar speech with Albert."

He undressed, but slept only little. Early in the morning he arose, and again surveyed the room; he opened the window and saw as formerly the same gardens and buildings before him, only that in the mean time many new houses had been built. "Forty years have since then vanished," he sighed, "and each day of that time contains a longer life than all the remaining period."

He was again called to the company. The morning passed away in varied conversation; at length the bride entered in her marriage-dress. As the old man noticed her he fell into such agitation, that every one in the company observed it. They proceeded to the church, and the nuptial ceremony was performed.

When they had returned to the house, Leopold asked his mother, "Now how do you like our friend, the good morose old man?"

"I had imagined him, from your description," she replied, "to be much more frightful; he is indeed mild and sympathetic, and might gain from one a real trust in him."

"Trust!" exclaimed Agatha; "in those frightful burning eyes, those thousandfold wrinkles, that pale contracted mouth, and that strange laugh which looks and sounds so scornfully! No, God preserve me from such a friend! If evil spirits wish to clothe themselves as men, they must assume such a form as this."

"Probably a younger and handsomer one," replied the mother; "but I cannot recognise

the good old man in thy description. One can see that he is of a hasty temperament, and has been used to lock up his feelings within himself; he may have experienced much misfortune, and so is become mistrustful, and has lost that simple openness which especially belongs to those who are happy."

Their conversation was interrupted by the coming in of the rest of the party. Dinner was served, and the stranger sat by Agatha and the rich merchant.

When the toasts were beginning, Leopold cried out, "Now stop a little, my worthy friends; we must have the festal goblet for this, which shall then go the round."

He was about to rise, but his mother beckoned him to keep his seat. "Thou wilt not be able to find it," she said; "for I have packed all the plate away." She went out hastily to seek it herself.

"How active and sprightly our old lady is to-day," observed the merchant, "for all her breadth and weight! and though she reckons full sixty, how nimbly she can move! Her countenance is always bright and joyful, and to-day is she especially happy, for she makes herself young again in the beauty of her daughter."

The stranger applauded his saying, and the mother returned with the goblet. They filled it full of wine, and from the head of the table began to pass it round, each proposing the health that was dearest. The bride drank the welfare of her husband; he, the love of his fair Julia; likewise every one in his turn. The mother lingered as the goblet came to her.

"Now quickly," said the officer, somewhat roughly and hastily; "we know well that you think all men faithless, and not one of them worthy of a woman's love. What, then, is dearest to you?"

The mother looked at him, as an angry seriousness suddenly overspread the mildness of her countenance. "As my son," said she, "knows me so well, and so severely blames my disposition, let me be permitted not to express what I was thinking, and let him endeavour by his constant love to falsify what he attributes to me as my conviction." She passed on the cup without drinking, and the company was for some time in silent embarrassment.

"It is reported," said the merchant, in an under-tone, leaning over to the stranger, "that she did not love her husband, but another who proved faithless to her; they say she was once the handsomest maiden in all the town."

When the goblet came to Ferdinand, he looked at it with astonishment, for it was the very same from which Albert had aforetime called up to him the beautiful shadow. He looked down into it and on the waving of the wine; his hand trembled; it would not

have surprised him had that form again bloomed forth from the magic bowl, and therewith his evanished youth. "No," said he, after some time; "that which glows here is wine."

"What else should it be?" said the merchant, laughing. "Drink, and be happy."

A thrill of terror struck the old man, as he hastily pronounced the name, "Francesca!" and placed the goblet to his burning lips. The mother cast on him an inquiring and astonished look.

"Whence is this beautiful goblet?" said Ferdinand, who was ashamed of his embarrassment.

"Many years ago," replied Leopold; "even before I was born, my father bought it, with this house and all the furniture, from an old lonely bachelor, a reserved man, whom all the neighbourhood considered a magician."

Ferdinand did not like to say that he had known that man; for his whole soul was too much perplexed, as it were in a strange dream, to let the rest look into it, even from a distance.

After the cloth was removed, Ferdinand was left alone with the mother, while the young people withdrew to make preparations for the ball. "Sit down by me," said she; "we will rest, for our dancing years are past; and, if the question is not too bold, pray tell me if you have ever seen our goblet elsewhere, or what was it that so very much moved you?"

"O, gracious lady," cried the old man, "pardon me my foolish vehemence and emotion, for since I have been in your house I feel as if I were no longer myself; every moment I forget that my hair is grey, that my loved ones are dead. Your beautiful daughter, who now celebrates the happiest day of her life, is so like a maiden whom I knew and adored in my youth, that I regard it as a miracle. But no, not like, that expression is too weak, she is her very self. Here, also, in this house have I often been, and once in the strangest manner became acquainted with this goblet." Hereupon he related to her his adventure. "On the evening of that day," he concluded, "I saw for the last time my beloved one, in the park as she went into the country. A rose fell from her, this I have preserved; but she herself was lost to me, for she became faithless, and soon after married."

"Merciful God!" cried the old lady, starting with emotion; "surely thou art not Ferdinand!"

"That is my name," said he.

"And I am Francesca," replied the mother.

They wished to embrace, but immediately started back. Each contemplated the other with searching glance; both endeavoured to develop again out of the ruins of time those features which erewhile they had known and loved in one another. And as in dark tempestuous nights, amid the flight of black clouds, for a few fleeting moments solitary stars ambiguously glimmer, immediately again to disappear,—so shone for the time to these two, lightening from the eyes, the brow, and lips, a transient glimpse of some well-known feature, and it seemed as if their youth wept smiling in the distance.

He bowed himself low, and kissed her hand, as two big tears burst from his eyes; then they embraced each other heartily.

"Is thy wife dead?" asked the mother.

"I was never married," sobbed Ferdinand.

"Heavens!" cried the lady, wringing her hands; "then I have been the faithless one! Yet no, not faithless. When I returned from the country, where I stayed two months, I heard from every one, from thy friends, not from mine only, that thou hadst long since gone away and been married in thy fatherland. They shewed me the most credible letters, and pressed me vehemently, availing themselves as well of my despair as of my indignation; and so it happened that I gave my hand to another, a deserving man; but my heart, my thoughts, were ever devoted to thee."

"I never removed from this place," said Ferdinand; "but after a time I heard of thy marriage. They wished to part us, and they have succeeded. Thou art a happy mother; I live in the past: and all thy children I will love as if they were my own. But how wonderful that we should never since have met!"

"I seldom went abroad," said she; "and as my husband soon after assumed another name on account of an estate which he inherited, you could have had no suspicion that we both were living in the same city."

"I avoided men," said Ferdinand, "and lived only to solitude. Leopold is almost the only one that has again drawn me forth and led me amongst men. O my beloved friend, it is like a horrible spectre-story, how we lost and have again found each other!"

The young people, on their return, found the old couple dissolved in tears and in the deepest emotion. Neither told what had befallen them; the secret seemed too holy. But from that time the old man was the friend of the house; and death alone parted the two beings who in so strange a manner had again found each other, in order shortly after to be re-united.