

Wilhelmina

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON

“AND so, Mina, you will not marry the baker?”
“No; I waits for Gustav.”

“How long is it since you have seen him?”

“Three year; it was a three-year regi-mènt.”

“Then he will soon be home?”

“I not know,” answered the girl, with a wistful look in her dark eyes, as if asking information from the superior being who sat in the skiff,—a being from the outside world where newspapers, the modern Tree of Knowledge, were not forbidden.

“Perhaps he will re-enlist, and stay three years longer,” I said.

“Ah, lady,—six year! It breaks the heart,” answered Wilhelmina.

She was the gardener’s daughter, a member of the Community of German Separatists who live secluded in one of Ohio’s rich valleys, separated by their own broad acres and orchard-covered hills from the busy world outside; down the valley flows the tranquil Tuscarawas on its way to the Muskingum, its slow tide rolling through the fertile bottom-lands between stone dikes, and utilized to the utmost extent of carefulness by the thrifty brothers, now working a saw-mill on the bank, now sending a tributary to the flour-mill across the canal, and now branching off in a sparkling race across the valley to turn wheels for two or three factories, watering the great grass-meadow on the way. We were floating on this river in a skiff named by myself *Der Fliegende Holländer*, much to the slow wonder of the Zoarites, who did not understand how a Dutchman could, nor why he should, fly. Wilhelmina sat before me, her oars idly trailing in the water. She showed a Nubian head above her white kerchief: large-lidded soft brown eyes, heavy braids of dark hair, a creamy skin with purple tints in the lips and brown shadows under the eyes, and a far-off dreamy expression which even the steady, monotonous toil of Community life had not been able to efface. She wore the blue dress and white kerchief of the society, the quaint little calico bonnet lying beside her; she was a small maiden; her slender form swayed in the stiff, short-waisted gown, her feet slipped about in the broad

shoes, and her hands, roughened and browned with garden-work, were yet narrow and graceful. From the first we felt sure she was grafted, and not a shoot from the Community stalk. But we could learn nothing of her origin; the Zoarites are not communicative; they fill each day with twelve good hours of labor, and look neither forward nor back. "She is a daughter," said the old gardener in answer to our questions. "Adopted?" I suggested; but he vouchsafed no answer. I liked the little daughter's dreamy face, but she was pale and undeveloped, like a Southern flower growing in Northern soil; the rosy-cheeked, flaxen-haired Rosines, Salomes, and Dorotys, with their broad shoulders and ponderous tread, thought this brown change-ling ugly, and pitied her in their slow, good-natured way.

"It breaks the heart," said Wilhelmina again, softly, as if to herself.

I repented me of my thoughtlessness. "In any case he can come back for a few days," I hastened to say. "What regiment was it?"

"The One Hundred and Seventh, lady."

I had a Cleveland paper in my basket, and taking it out I glanced over the war-news column, carelessly, as one who does not expect to find what he seeks. But chance was with us, and gave this item: "The One Hundred and Seventh Regiment, O. V. I., is expected home next week. The men will be paid off at Camp Chase."

"Ah!" said Wilhelmina, catching her breath with a half-sob under her tightly drawn kerchief,—“ah, mein Gustav!”

"Yes, you will soon see him," I answered, bending forward to take the rough little hand in mine; for I was a romantic wife, and my heart went out to all lovers. But the girl did not notice my words or my touch; silently she sat, absorbed in her own emotion, her eyes fixed on the hilltops far away, as though she saw the regiment marching home through the blue June sky.

I took the oars and rowed up as far as the island, letting the skiff float back with the current. Other boats were out, filled with fresh-faced boys in their high-crowned hats, long-waisted, wide-flapped vests of calico, and funny little swallow-tailed coats with buttons up under the shoulder-blades; they appeared unaccountably long in front and short behind, these young Zoar brethren. On the vine-covered dike were groups

of mothers and grave little children, and up in the hill-orchards were moving figures, young and old; the whole village was abroad in the lovely afternoon, according to their Sunday custom, which gave the morning to chorals and a long sermon in the little church, and the afternoon to nature, even old Christian, the pastor, taking his imposing white fur hat and tasselled cane for a walk through the Community fields, with the remark, "Thus is cheered the heart of man, and his countenance refreshed."

As the sun sank in the warm western sky, homeward came the villagers from the river, the orchards, and the meadows, men, women, and children, a hardy, simple-minded band, whose fathers, for religion's sake, had taken the long journey from Würtemberg across the ocean to this distant valley, and made it a garden of rest in the wilderness. We, too, landed, and walked up the apple-tree lane towards the hotel.

"The cows come," said Wilhelmina as we heard a distant tinkling; "I must go." But still she lingered. "Der regi-mènt, it come soon, you say?" she asked in a low voice, as though she wanted to hear the good news again and again.

"They will be paid off next week; they cannot be later than ten days from now."

"Ten day! Ah, mein Gustav," murmured the little maiden; she turned away and tied on her stiff bonnet, furtively wiping off a tear with her prim handkerchief folded in a square.

"Why, my child," I said, following her and stooping to look in her face, "what is this?"

"It is nothing; it is for glad,—for very glad," said Wilhelmina. Away she ran as the first solemn cow came into view, heading the long procession meandering slowly towards the stalls. They knew nothing of haste, these dignified Community cows; from stall to pasture, from pasture to stall, in a plethora of comfort, this was their life. The silver-haired shepherd came last with his staff and scrip, and the nervous shepherd-dog ran hither and thither in the hope of finding some cow to bark at; but the comfortable cows moved on in orderly ranks, and he was obliged to dart off on a tangent every now and then, and bark at nothing, to relieve his feelings. Reaching the paved court-yard each cow walked into her own stall, and the milking

began. All the girls took part in this work, sitting on little stools and singing together as the milk frothed up in the tin pails; the pails were emptied into tubs, and when the tubs were full the girls bore them on their heads to the dairy, where the milk was poured into a huge strainer, a constant procession of girls with tubs above and the old milk-mother ladling out as fast as she could below. With the bee-hives near by, it was a realization of the Scriptural phrase, "A land flowing with milk and honey."

The next morning, after breakfast, I strolled up the still street, leaving the Wirthshaus with its pointed roof behind me. On the right were some ancient cottages built of crossed timbers filled in with plaster; sundials hung on the walls, and each house had its piazza, where, when the work of the day was over, the families assembled, often singing folk-songs to the music of their home-made flutes and pipes. On the left stood the residence of the first pastor, the reverend man who had led these sheep to their refuge in the wilds of the New World. It was a wide-spreading brick mansion, with a broad-side of white-curtained windows, an enclosed glass porch, iron railings, and gilded eaves; a building so stately among the surrounding cottages that it had gained from outsiders the name of the King's Palace, although the good man whose grave remains unmarked in the quiet God's Acre, according to the Separatist custom, was a father to his people, not a king.

Beyond the palace began the Community garden, a large square in the centre of the village filled with flowers and fruit, adorned with arbors and cedar-trees clipped in the form of birds, and enriched with an old-style greenhouse whose sliding glasses were viewed with admiration by the visitors of thirty years ago, who sent their choice plants thither from far and near to be tended through the long, cold lake-country winters. The garden, the cedars, and the greenhouse were all antiquated, but to me none the less charming. The spring that gushed up in one corner, the old-fashioned flowers in their box-bordered beds, larkspur, lady slippers, bachelor's buttons, peonies, aromatic pinks, and all varieties of roses, the arbors with red honeysuckle overhead and tan bark under foot, were all delightful; and I knew, also, that I should find the gardener's daughter at her never-ending task of weeding. This time

it was the strawberry bed. "I have come to sit in your pleasant garden, Mina," I said, taking a seat on a shaded bench near the bending figure.

"So?" said Wilhelmina in long-drawn interrogation, glancing up shyly with a smile. She was a child of the sun, this little maiden, and while her blond companions wore always their bonnets or broad-brimmed hats over their precise caps, Wilhelmina, as now, constantly discarded these coverings and sat in the sun basking like a bird of the tropics. In truth, it did not redden her; she was one of those whose coloring comes not from without, but within.

"Do you like this work, Mina?"

"O—so. Good as any."

"Do you like work?"

"Folks must work." This was said gravely, as part of the Community creed.

"Would n't you like to go with me to the city?"

"No; I 's better here."

"But you can see the great world, Mina. You need not work, I will take care of you. You shall have pretty dresses; would n't you like that?" I asked, curious to discover the secret of the Separatist indifference to everything outside.

"Nein," answered the little maiden, tranquilly; "nein, fräulein. Ich bin zufrieden."

Those three words were the key. "I am contented." So were they taught from childhood, and—I was about to say—they knew no better; but, after all, is there anything better to know?

We talked on, for Mina understood English, although many of her mates could chatter only in their Württemberg dialect, whose provincialisms confused my carefully learned German; I was grounded in Goethe, well read in Schiller, and struggling with Jean Paul, who, fortunately, is "der Einzige," the only; another such would destroy life. At length a bell sounded, and forthwith work was laid aside in the fields, the workshops, and the houses, while all partook of a light repast, one of the five meals with which the long summer day of toil is broken. Flagons of beer had the men afield, with bread and cheese; the women took bread and apple-butter. But Mina did not care for the thick slice which the thrifty house-mother had provided; she had not the steady unfastidious appetite of the Community

which eats the same food day after day, as the cow eats its grass, desiring no change.

“And the gardener really wishes you to marry Jacob?” I said as she sat on the grass near me, enjoying the rest.

“Yes. Jacob is good,—always the same.”

“And Gustav?”

“Ah, mein Gustav! Lady, *he* is young, tall,—so tall as tree; he run, he sing, his eyes like veilchen there, his hair like gold. If I see him not soon, lady, I die! The year so long,—*so* long they are. Three year without Gustav!” The brown eyes grew dim, and out came the square-folded handkerchief, of colored calico for week-days.

“But it will not be long now, Mina.”

“Yes; I hope.”

“He writes to you, I suppose?”

“No. Gustav knows not to write, he not like school. But he speak through the other boys, Ernst the verliebte of Rosine, and Peter of Doroty.”

“The Zoar soldiers were all young men?”

“Yes; all verliebte. Some are not; they have gone to the Next Country” (died).

“Killed in battle?”

“Yes; on the berge that looks,—what you call, I not know—”

“Lookout Mountain?”

“Yes.”

“Were the boys volunteers?” I asked, remembering the Community theory of non-resistance.

“O yes; they volunteer, Gustav the first. *They* not drafted,” said Wilhelmina, proudly. For these two words, so prominent during the war, had penetrated even into this quiet little valley.

“But did the trustees approve?”

“Apperouve?”

“I mean, did they like it?”

“Ah! they like it not. They talk, they preach in church, they say ‘No.’ Zoar must give soldiers? So. Then they take money and pay for der substitute; but the boys, they must not go.”

“But they went, in spite of the trustees?”

“Yes; Gustav first. They go in night, they walk in woods, over the hills to Brownville, where is der recruiter. The morning come, they gone!”

“They have been away three years, you say? They have seen the world in that time,” I remarked half to myself, as I thought of the strange mind-opening and knowledge-gaining of those years to youths brought up in the strict seclusion of the Community.

“Yes; Gustav have seen the wide world,” answered Wilhelmina with pride.

“But will they be content to step back into the dull routine of Zoar life?” I thought; and a doubt came that made me scan more closely the face of the girl at my side. To me it was attractive because of its possibilities; I was always fancying some excitement that would bring the color to the cheeks and full lips, and light up the heavy-lidded eyes with soft brilliancy. But would this Gustav see these might-be beauties? And how far would the singularly ugly costume offend eyes grown accustomed to fanciful finery and gay colors?

“You fully expect to marry Gustav?” I asked.

“We are verlobt,” answered Mina, not without a little air of dignity.

“Yes, I know. But that was long ago.”

“Verlobt once, verlobt always,” said the little maiden, confidently.

“But why, then, does the gardener speak of Jacob, if you are engaged to this Gustav?”

“O, fader he like the old, and Jacob is old, thirty year! His wife is gone to the Next Country. Jacob is a brother, too; he write his name in the book. But Gustav he not do so; he is free.”

“You mean that the baker has signed the articles, and is a member of the Community?”

“Yes; but the baker is old, very old; thirty year! Gustav not twenty and three yet; he come home, then he sign.”

“And have you signed these articles, Wilhelmina?”

“Yes; all the womens signs.”

“What does the paper say?”

“Da ich Unterzeichneter,”—began the girl.

“I cannot understand that. Tell me in English.”

“Well; you wants to join the Zoar Community of Separatists; you writes your name and says, ‘Give me house, victual, and

clothes for my work and I join; and I never fernerer Forderung an besagte Gesellschaft machen kann, oder will.”

“Will never make further demand upon said society,” I repeated, translating slowly.

“Yes; that is it.”

“But who takes charge of all the money?”

“The trustees.”

“Don’t they give you any?”

“No; for what? It ’s no good,” answered Wilhelmina.

I knew that all the necessaries of life were dealt out to the members of the Community according to their need, and, as they never went outside of their valley, they could scarcely have spent money even if they had possessed it. But, nevertheless, it was startling in this nineteenth century to come upon a sincere belief in the worthlessness of the green-tinted paper we cherish so fondly. “Gustav will have learned its value,” I thought, as Mina, having finished the strawberry-bed, started away towards the dairy to assist in the butter-making.

I strolled on up the little hill, past the picturesque bakery, where through the open window I caught a glimpse of the “old, very old Jacob,” a serious young man of thirty, drawing out his large loaves of bread from the brick oven with a long-handled rake. It was gingerbread-day also, and a spicy odor met me at the window; so I put in my head and asked for a piece, receiving a card about a foot square, laid on fresh grape-leaves.

“But I cannot eat all this,” I said, breaking off a corner.

“O, dat ’s noding!” answered Jacob, beginning to knead fresh dough in a long white trough, the village supply for the next day.

“I have been sitting with Wilhelmina,” I remarked, as I leaned on the casement, impelled by a desire to see the effect of the name.

“So?” said Jacob, interrogatively.

“Yes; she is a sweet girl.”

“So?” (doubtfully.)

“Don’t you think so, Jacob?”

“Ye-es. So-so. A leetle black,” answered this impassive lover.

“But you wish to marry her?”

“O, ye-es. She young and strong; her fader say she good to work. I have children five; I must have some one in the house.”

“O Jacob! Is that the way to talk?” I exclaimed.

“Warum nicht?” replied the baker, pausing in his kneading, and regarding me with wide-open, candid eyes.

“Why not, indeed?” I thought, as I turned away from the window. “He is at least honest, and no doubt in his way he would be a kind husband to little Mina. But what a way!”

I walked on up the street, passing the pleasant house where all the infirm old women of the Community were lodged together, carefully tended by appointed nurses. The aged sisters were out on the piazza sunning themselves, like so many old cats. They were bent with hard, out-door labor, for they belonged to the early days when the wild forest covered the fields now so rich, and only a few log-cabins stood on the site of the tidy cottages and gardens of the present village. Some of them had taken the long journey on foot from Philadelphia westward, four hundred and fifty miles, in the depths of winter. Well might they rest from their labors and sit in the sunshine, poor old souls!

A few days later, my friendly newspaper mentioned the arrival of the German regiment at Camp Chase. “They will probably be paid off in a day or two,” I thought, “and another day may bring them here.” Eager to be the first to tell the good news to my little favorite, I hastened up to the garden, and found her engaged, as usual, in weeding.

“Mina,” I said, “I have something to tell you. The regiment is at Camp Chase; you will see Gustav soon, perhaps this week.”

And there, before my eyes, the transformation I had often fancied took place; the color rushed to the brown surface, the cheeks and lips glowed in vivid red, and the heavy eyes opened wide and shone like stars, with a brilliancy that astonished and even disturbed me. The statue had a soul at last; the beauty dormant had awakened. But for the fire of that soul would this expected Pygmalion suffice? Would the real prince fill his place in the long-cherished dreams of this beauty of the wood?

The girl had risen as I spoke, and now she stood erect, trembling with excitement, her hands clasped on her breast, breathing quickly and heavily as though an overweight of joy was pressing down her heart; her eyes were fixed upon my face,

but she saw me not. Strange was her gaze, like the gaze of one walking in sleep. Her sloping shoulders seemed to expand and chafe against the stuff gown as though they would burst their bonds; the blood glowed in her face and throat, and her lips quivered, not as though tears were coming, but from the fulness of unuttered speech. Her emotion resembled the intensest fire of fever, and yet it seemed natural; like noon in the tropics when the gorgeous flowers flame in the white, shadowless heat. Thus stood Wilhelmina, looking up into the sky with eyes that challenged the sun.

“Come here, child,” I said; “come here and sit by me. We will talk about it.”

But she neither saw nor heard me. I drew her down on the bench at my side; she yielded unconsciously; her slender form throbbled, and pulses were beating under my hands wherever I touched her. “Mina!” I said again. But she did not answer. Like an unfolding rose, she revealed her hidden, beautiful heart, as though a spirit had breathed upon the bud; silenced in the presence of this great love, I ceased speaking, and left her to herself. After a time single words fell from her lips, broken utterances of happiness. I was as nothing; she was absorbed in the One. “Gustav! mein Gustav!” It was like the bird’s note, oft repeated, ever the same. So isolated, so intense was her joy, that, as often happens, my mind took refuge in the opposite extreme of commonplace, and I found myself wondering whether she would be able to eat boiled beef and cabbage for dinner, or fill the soft-soap barrel for the laundry-women, later in the day.

All the morning I sat under the trees with Wilhelmina, who had forgotten her life-long tasks as completely as though they had never existed. I hated to leave her to the leather-colored wife of the old gardener, and lingered until the sharp voice came from the distant house-door, calling, “Veel-hel-meeny,” as the twelve-o’clock bell summoned the Community to dinner. But as Mina rose and swept back the heavy braids that had fallen from the little ivory stick which confined them, I saw that she was armed *cap-à-pie* in that full happiness from which all weapons glance off harmless.

All the rest of the day she was like a thing possessed. I followed her to the hill-pasture, whither she had gone to mind

the cows, and found her coiled up on the grass in the blaze of the afternoon sun, like a little salamander. She was lost in day-dreams, and the decorous cows had a holiday for once in their sober lives, wandering beyond bounds at will, and even tasting the dissipations of the marsh, standing unheeded in the bog up to their sleek knees. Wilhelmina had not many words to give me; her English vocabulary was limited; she had never read a line of romance nor a verse of poetry. The nearest approach to either was the Community hymn-book, containing the Separatist hymns, of which the following lines are a specimen,

“Ruhe ist das beste Gut
Dasz man haben kann,”—

“Rest is the best good
That man can have,”—

and which embody the religious doctrine of the Zoar Brethren, although they think, apparently, that the labor of twelve hours each day is necessary to its enjoyment. The “Ruhe,” however, refers more especially to their quiet seclusion away from the turmoil of the wicked world outside.

The second morning after this it was evident that an unusual excitement was abroad in the phlegmatic village. All the daily duties were fulfilled as usual at the Wirthshaus: Pauline went up to the bakery with her board, and returned with her load of bread and bretzels balanced on her head; Jacobina served our coffee with her slow precision; and the broad-shouldered, young-faced Lydia patted and puffed up our mountain-high feather-beds with due care. The men went afield at the blast of the horn, the workshops were full and the mills running. But, nevertheless, all was not the same; the air seemed full of mystery; there were whisperings when two met, furtive signals, and an inward excitement glowing in the faces of men, women, and children, hitherto placid as their own sheep. “They have heard the news,” I said, after watching the tailor’s Gretchen and the blacksmith’s Barbara stop to exchange a whisper behind the wood-house. Later in the day we learned that several letters from the absent soldier-boys had been received that morning, announcing their arrival on the evening train. The news had flown from one end of the village to the other; and although the well-drilled hands were all at work, hearts were

stirring with the greatest excitement of a lifetime, since there was hardly a house where there was not one expected. Each large house often held a number of families, stowed away in little sets of chambers, with one dining-room in common.

Several times during the day we saw the three trustees conferring apart with anxious faces. The war had been a sore trouble to them, owing to their conscientious scruples against rendering military service. They had hoped to remain non-combatants. But the country was on fire with patriotism, and nothing less than a *bona fide* Separatist in United States uniform would quiet the surrounding towns, long jealous of the wealth of this foreign community, misunderstanding its tenets, and glowing with that zeal against "sympathizers" which kept star-spangled banners flying over every suspected house. "Hang out the flag!" was their cry, and they demanded that Zoar should hang out its soldiers, giving them to understand that if not voluntarily hung out, they would soon be involuntarily hung up! A draft was ordered, and then the young men of the society, who had long chafed against their bonds, broke loose, volunteered, and marched away, principles or no principles, trustees or no trustees. These bold hearts once gone, the village sank into quietude again. Their letters, however, were a source of anxiety, coming as they did from the vain outside world; and the old postmaster, autocrat though he was, hardly dared to suppress them. But he said, shaking his head, that they "had fallen upon troublous times," and handed each dangerous envelope out with a groan. But the soldiers were not skilled penmen; their letters, few and far between, at length stopped entirely. Time passed, and the very existence of the runaways had become a far-off problem to the wise men of the Community, absorbed in their slow calculations and cautious agriculture, when now, suddenly, it forced itself upon them face to face, and they were required to solve it in the twinkling of an eye. The bold hearts were coming back, full of knowledge of the outside world; almost every house would hold one, and the bands of law and order would be broken. Before this prospect the trustees quailed. Twenty years before they would have forbidden the entrance of these unruly sons within their borders; but now they dared not, since even into Zoar had penetrated the knowledge that America was a free country. The younger generation were not as their fathers

were; objections had been openly made to the cut of the Sunday coats, and the girls had spoken together of ribbons!

The shadows of twilight seemed very long in falling that night, but at last there was no further excuse for delaying the evening bell, and home came the laborers to their evening meal. There was no moon, a soft mist obscured the stars, and the night was darkened with the excess of richness which rose from the ripening valley-fields and fat bottom-lands along the river. The Community store opposite the Wirthshaus was closed early in the evening, the houses of the trustees were dark, and indeed the village was almost unlighted, as if to hide its own excitement. The entire population was abroad in the night, and one by one the men and boys stole away down the station road, a lovely, winding track on the hill-side, following the river on its way down the valley to the little station on the grass-grown railroad, a branch from the main track. As ten o'clock came, the women and girls, grown bold with excitement, gathered in the open space in front of the Wirthshaus, where the lights from the windows illumined their faces. There I saw the broad-shouldered Lydia, Rosine, Doroty, and all the rest, in their Sunday clothes, flushed, laughing, and chattering; but no Wilhelmina.

"Where can she be?" I said.

If she was there, the larger girls concealed her with their buxom breadth; I looked for the slender little maiden in vain.

"Shu!" cried the girls, "de bugle!"

Far down the station road we heard the bugle and saw the glimmering of lights among the trees. On it came, a will-o'-the-wisp procession: first a detachment of village boys each with a lantern or torch, next the returned soldiers winding their bugles,—for, German-like, they all had musical instruments,—then an excited crowd of brothers and cousins loaded with knapsacks, guns, and military accoutrements of all kinds; each man had something, were it only a tin cup, and proudly they marched in the footsteps of their glorious relatives, bearing the spoils of war. The girls set up a shrill cry of welcome as the procession approached, but the ranks continued unbroken until the open space in front of the Wirthshaus was reached; then, at a signal, the soldiers gave three cheers, the villagers joining in with all their hearts and lungs, but wildly and out of time, like the scattering fire of an awkward squad. The sound

had never been heard in Zoar before. The soldiers gave a final "Tiger-r-r!" and then broke ranks, mingling with the excited crowd, exchanging greetings and embraces. All talked at once; some wept, some laughed; and through it all silently stood the three trustees on the dark porch in front of the store, looking down upon their wild flock, their sober faces visible in the glare of the torches and lanterns below. The entire population was present; even the babies were held up on the outskirts of the crowd, stolid and staring.

"Where can Wilhelmina be?" I said again.

"Here, under the window; I saw her long ago," replied one of the women.

Leaning against a piazza-pillar, close under my eyes, stood the little maiden, pale and still. I could not disguise from myself that she looked almost ugly among those florid, laughing girls, for her color was gone, and her eyes so fixed that they looked unnaturally large; her somewhat heavy Egyptian features stood out in the bright light, but her small form was lost among the group of broad, white-kerchiefed shoulders, adorned with breast-knots of gay flowers. And had Wilhelmina no flower? She, so fond of blossoms? I looked again; yes, a little white rose, drooping and pale as herself.

But where was Gustav? The soldiers came and went in the crowd, and all spoke to Mina; but where was the One? I caught the landlord's little son as he passed, and asked the question.

"Gustav? Dat 's him," he answered, pointing out a tall, rollicking soldier who seemed to be embracing the whole population in his gleeful welcome. That very soldier had passed Mina a dozen times, flinging a gay greeting to her each time; but nothing more.

After half an hour of general rejoicing, the crowd dispersed, each household bearing off in triumph the hero that fell to its lot. Then the tiled domiciles, where usually all were asleep an hour after twilight, blazed forth with unaccustomed light from every little window; and within we could see the circles, with flagons of beer and various dainties manufactured in secret during the day, sitting and talking together in a manner which, for Zoar, was a wild revel, since it was nearly eleven o'clock! We were not the only outside spectators of this unwonted gayety; several times we met the three trustees stealing along in the shadow from house to house, like anxious spectres in

broad-brimmed hats. No doubt they said to each other, "How, how will this end!"

The merry Gustav had gone off by Mina's side, which gave me some comfort; but when in our rounds we came to the gardener's house and gazed through the open door, the little maiden sat apart, and the soldier, in the centre of an admiring circle, was telling stories of the war.

I felt a foreboding of sorrow as I gazed out through the little window before climbing up into my high bed. Lights still twinkled in some of the houses, but a white mist was rising from the river, and the drowsy, long-drawn chant of the summer night invited me to dreamless sleep.

The next morning I could not resist questioning Jacobina, who also had her lover among the soldiers, if all was well.

"O yes. They stay,—all but two. We 's married next mont."

"And the two?"

"Karl and Gustav."

"And Wilhelmina!" I exclaimed.

"O, she let him go," answered Jacobina, bringing fresh coffee.

"Poor child! How does she bear it?"

"O, so. She cannot help. She say noding."

"But the trustees, will they allow these young men to leave the Community?"

"They cannot help," said Jacobina. "Gustav and Karl write not in the book; they free to go. Wilhelmina marry Jacob; it 's joost the same; all r-r-ight," added Jacobina, who prided herself upon her English, caught from visitors at the Wirthshaus table.

"Ah! but it is not just the same," I thought as I went up to the garden to find my little maiden. She was not there; the leathery mother said she was out on the hills with the cows.

"So Gustav is going to leave the Community," I said in German.

"Yes, better so. He is an idle, wild boy. Now, Veelhelmeeney can marry the baker, a good steady man."

"But Mina does not like him," I suggested.

"Das macht nichts," answered the leathery mother.

Wilhelmina was not in the pasture; I sought for her everywhere, and called her name. The poor child had hidden herself, and whether she heard me or not, she did not respond. All

day she kept herself aloof; I almost feared she would never return; but in the late twilight a little figure slipped through the garden-gate and took refuge in the house before I could speak; for I was watching for the child, apparently the only one, though a stranger, to care for her sorrow.

“Can I not see her?” I said to the leathery mother, following to the door.

“Eh, no; she ’s foolish; she will not speak a word; she has gone off to bed,” was the answer.

For three days I did not see Mina, so early did she flee away to the hills and so late return. I followed her to the pasture once or twice, but she would not show herself, and I could not discover her hiding-place. The fourth day I learned that Gustav and Karl were to leave the village in the afternoon, probably forever. The other soldiers had signed the articles presented by the anxious trustees, and settled down into the old routine, going afield with the rest, although still heroes of the hour; they were all to be married in August. No doubt the hardships of their campaigns among the Tennessee mountains had taught them that the rich valley was a home not to be despised; nevertheless, it was evident that the flowers of the flock were those who were about departing, and that in Gustav and Karl the Community lost its brightest spirits. Evident to us; but, possibly, the Community cared not for bright spirits.

I had made several attempts to speak to Gustav; this morning I at last succeeded. I found him polishing his bugle on the garden bench.

“Why are you going away, Gustav?” I asked. “Zoar is a pleasant little village.”

“Too slow for me, miss.”

“The life is easy, however; you will find the world a hard place.”

“I don’t mind work, ma’am, but I do like to be free. I feel all cramped up here, with these rules and bells; and, besides, I could n’t stand those trustees; they never let a fellow alone.”

“And Wilhelmina? If you do go, I hope you will take her with you, or come for her when you have found work.”

“Oh no, miss. All that was long ago. It ’s all over now.”

“But you like her, Gustav?”

“O, so. She ’s a good little thing, but too quiet for me.”

“But she likes you,” I said desperately, for I saw no other way to loosen this Gordian knot.

“O no, miss. She got used to it, and has thought of it all these years; that ’s all. She ’ll forget about it and marry the baker.”

“But she does not like the baker.”

“Why not? He ’s a good fellow enough. She ’ll like him in time. It ’s all the same. I declare it ’s too bad to see all these girls going on in the same old way, in their ugly gowns and big shoes! Why, ma’am, I could n’t take Mina outside, even if I wanted to; she ’s too old to learn new ways, and everybody would laugh at her. She could n’t get along a day. Besides,” said the young soldier, coloring up to his eyes, “I don’t mind telling you that—that there ’s some one else. Look here, ma’am.” And he put into my hand a card photograph representing a pretty girl, over-dressed, and adorned with curls and gilt jewelry. “That ’s Miss Martin,” said Gustav with pride; “Miss Emmeline Martin, of Cincinnati. I ’m going to marry Miss Martin.”

As I held the pretty, flashy picture in my hand, all my castles fell to the ground. My plan for taking Mina home with me, accustoming her gradually to other clothes and ways, teaching her enough of the world to enable her to hold her place without pain, my hope that my husband might find a situation for Gustav in some of the iron-mills near Cleveland, in short, all the idyl I had woven, was destroyed. If it had not been for this red-cheeked Miss Martin in her gilt beads! “Why is it that men will be such fools?” I thought. Up sprung a memory of the curls and ponderous jet necklace I sported at a certain period of my existence, when John— I was silenced, gave Gustav his picture, and walked away without a word.

At noon the villagers, on their way back to work, paused at the Wirthshaus to say good by; Karl and Gustav were there, and the old woolly horse had already gone to the station with their boxes. Among the others came Christine, Karl’s former affianced, heart-whole and smiling, already betrothed to a new lover; but no Wilhelmina. Good wishes and farewells were exchanged, and at last the two soldiers started away, falling into the marching step, and watched with furtive satisfaction by the three trustees, who stood together in

the shadow of the smithy, apparently deeply absorbed in a broken-down cask.

It was a lovely afternoon, and I, too, strolled down the station road embowered in shade. The two soldiers were not far in advance. I had passed the flour-mill on the outskirts of the village and was approaching the old quarry, when a sound startled me; out from the rocks in front rushed a little figure, and crying, "Gustav, mein Gustav!" fell at the soldier's feet. It was Wilhelmina.

I ran forward and took her from the young men; she lay in my arms as if dead. The poor child was sadly changed; always slender and swaying, she now looked thin and shrunken, her skin had a strange, dark pallor, and her lips were drawn in as if from pain. I could see her eyes through the large-orbed thin lids, and the brown shadows beneath extended down into the cheeks.

"Was ist's?" said Gustav, looking bewildered. "Is she sick?"

I answered "Yes," but nothing more. I could see that he had no suspicion of the truth, believing as he did that the "good fellow" of a baker would do very well for this "good little thing" who was "too quiet" for him. The memory of Miss Martin sealed my lips. But if it had not been for that pretty, flashy picture, would I not have spoken!

"You must go; you will miss the train," I said, after a few minutes. "I will see to Mina."

But Gustav lingered. Perhaps he was really troubled to see the little sweetheart of his boyhood in such desolate plight; perhaps a touch of the old feeling came back; and perhaps, also, it was nothing of the kind, and, as usual, my romantic imagination was carrying me away. At any rate, whatever it was, he stooped over the fainting girl.

"She looks bad," he said, "very bad. I wish— But she 'll get well and marry the baker. Good by, Mina." And bending his tall form, he kissed her colorless cheek, and then hastened away to join the impatient Karl; a curve in the road soon hid them from view.

Wilhelmina had stirred at his touch; after a moment her large eyes opened slowly; she looked around as if dazed, but all at once memory came back, and she started up with the same cry, "Gustav, mein Gustav!" I drew her head down on

my shoulder to stifle the sound; it was better the soldier should not hear it, and its anguish thrilled my own heart also. She had not the strength to resist me, and in a few minutes I knew that the young men were out of hearing as they strode on towards the station and out into the wide world.

The forest was solitary, we were beyond the village; all the afternoon I sat under the trees with the stricken girl. Again, as in her joy, her words were few; again, as in her joy, her whole being was involved. Her little rough hands were cold, a film had gathered over her eyes; she did not weep, but moaned to herself, and all her senses seemed blunted. At nightfall I took her home, and the leathery mother received her with a frown; but the child was beyond caring, and crept away, dumbly, to her room.

The next morning she was off to the hills again, nor could I find her for several days. Evidently, in spite of my sympathy, I was no more to her than I should have been to a wounded fawn. She was a mixture of the wild, shy creature of the woods and the deep-loving woman of the tropics; in either case I could be but small comfort. When at last I did see her, she was apathetic and dull; her feelings, her senses, and her intelligence seemed to have gone within, as if preying upon her heart. She scarcely listened to my proposal to take her with me; for, in my pity, I had suggested it, in spite of its difficulties.

“No,” she said, mechanically, “I ’s better here”; and fell into silence again.

A month later a friend went down to spend a few days in the valley, and upon her return described to us the weddings of the whilom soldiers. “It was really a pretty sight,” she said, “the quaint peasant dresses and the flowers. Afterwards, the band went round the village playing their odd tunes, and all had a holiday. There were two civilians married also; I mean two young men who had not been to the war. It seems that two of the soldiers turned their backs upon the Community and their allotted brides, and marched away; but the Zoar maidens are not romantic, I fancy, for these two deserted ones were betrothed again and married, all in the short space of four weeks.”

“Was not one Wilhelmina, the gardener’s daughter, a short, dark girl?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“And she married Jacob the baker?”

“Yes.”

The next year, weary of the cold lake-winds, we left the icy shore and went down to the valley to meet the coming spring, finding her already there, decked with vines and flowers. A new waitress brought us our coffee.

“How is Wilhelmina?” I asked.

“Eh,—Wilhelmina? O, she not here now; she gone to the Next Country,” answered the girl in a matter-of-fact way. “She die last October, and Jacob he haf anoder wife now.”

In the late afternoon I asked a little girl to show me Wilhelmina’s grave in the quiet God’s Acre on the hill. Innovation was creeping in, even here; the later graves had mounds raised over them, and one had a little head-board with an inscription in ink.

Wilhelmina lay apart, and some one, probably the old gardener, who had loved the little maiden in his silent way, had planted a rose-bush at the head of the mound. I dismissed my guide and sat there alone in the sunset, thinking of many things, but chiefly of this: “Why should this great wealth of love have been allowed to waste itself? Why is it that the greatest of power, unquestionably, of this mortal life should so often seem a useless gift?”

No answer came from the sunset clouds, and as twilight sank down on the earth I rose to go. “I fully believe,” I said, as though repeating a creed, “that this poor, loving heart, whose earthly body lies under this mound, is happy now in its own loving way. It has not been changed, but the happiness it longed for has come. How, we know not; but the God who made Wilhelmina understands her. He has given unto her not rest, not peace, but an active, living joy.”

I walked away through the wild meadow, under whose turf, unmarked by stone or mound, lay the first pioneers of the Community, and out into the forest road, untravelled save when the dead passed over it to their last earthly home. The evening was still and breathless, and the shadows lay thick on the grass as I looked back. But I could still distinguish the little mound with the rose-bush at its head, and, not without tears, I said, “Farewell, poor Wilhelmina; farewell.”