



***WILHELMINE  
VON HILLERN***

***THE HOUR  
WILL COME:  
A TALE  
OF AN ALPINE  
CLOISTER.  
VOLUMES  
I AND II***

**Wilhelmine von Hillern**

**The Hour Will Come: A Tale  
of an Alpine Cloister.  
Volumes I and II**

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## **ST. VALENTINE'S ON THE HEATH.**

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The heath or moorland plateau of Mals lies wide--spread, silent, and deserted where the lofty head of the Grossortler towers up, and overlooks it in eternal calm. It is five centuries ago--a mere moment in that world of everlasting snows; the keen autumn wind, as at this day, is rushing through the grey halms of the charlock, woodrush and heathgrasses, that have caught a doubtful, golden gleam reflected from the glaciers which are bathed in the glow of the sinking sun; as at this day, the gale packs the driving white clouds together in the still highland valley, as though to rest for the night. They heave and roll noiselessly, spreading a white, misty sheet over the withered heathgrass. The mirror-surface of the moorland tarn lies lead-coloured and dull, wrinkled by the night-breeze, and its icy waters trickle in tiny rills over the bare plain and down to the valley. All is the same as it is to this day! Only life is wanting, life warm and busy, which in these days is stirring in the villages and homesteads that dot the plain, and that have brought the dead moorland into tilth and fertility. Profound silence reigns over the immeasurable level, throughout its length and breadth no living thing stirs; it is as if this were indeed the neutral space between Heaven



and Hell--a vast, eternal void! Only the monotonous murmur of the Etsch--that cold artery of the desolate heath--and the roar of the winds that sweep at night across the plateau; these are the eerie voices of this realm of death.

Woe to the lonely pilgrim who is wandering through the night in this boundless desert, in storm and snow, in impenetrable darkness; he is lost in nothingness, owned by neither Heaven nor Hell, and the earth knows him not! No ear can hear his cry for help, it is lost in vacancy; the raven and the wolf mark him down, but they tell no one of their mute prey.

It is true that pitying love has penetrated even to this wilderness and realm of death, and spreads her arms so far as they may reach; but they are but human arms, weak and inadequate for the great divine mind that animates them. Every evening, above the howling of the storm and the roaring of the highland lake, as dusk creeps on, the Vesper bell rings softly out like the beat of some metallic heart. Then a dull-red, flaring blaze is suddenly seen, which parts into wandering storm-blown flakes of flame that disperse themselves about the moor till they vanish in the mist and darkness. The shepherd and lay-brethren it is, who go forth with torches and biers from the Hospice of Saint Valentine in the moor, which pious faith has erected for the lost traveller here in the wilderness. Defying the warring elements, they seek in silent and fearless devotion the strayed, the perishing, and the hungry, and bring them in to the warm hearth of humanity. Happy is he whom they find, he is rescued--but the moor is wide, and they are but a forlorn little handful of men, not all-knowing nor all-seeing.

The sun went down early in angry red; it grows darker and darker. Heavy clouds are packed over the evening sky, the last glimmer of starlight is extinguished, all is as dark as though no light survived in Heaven or earth; for a moment even the howling, shrieking winds are silent, which nightly carry on their demon-dance round and across the heath; but from the distance looms a nameless, formless something, a thunder roll is heard, soft at first like the sound of slow, heavy wheels, then nearer and nearer--a terror, invisible, intangible but crushing, shakes the earth to its foundation. Slowly it surges on, like a deep groan of rage long controlled only to break out all the more fearfully in raving, annihilating fury. The snow-storm, the first of the year, sweeps down from the Grossortler over the bare trembling heath--a mighty, moving mass rolls on before it that breaks incessantly into powder, and is incessantly renewed--as if the winds had torn the eternal mantle of snow from the shoulders of the numberless glaciers, and were flinging it down from the heights. A giant wall reaches from earth to sky; snow, snow everywhere. Touched by the icy breath, the shapeless mists over lake and river curdle and turn to snow, the light evening-clouds form compact masses of snow--whirling pillars that bury everything in their wild dance; the very air is turned to snow, there is no tiniest space between sky and earth that is not filled with snow. The whole moor is overwhelmed in it, and is one vast, white bed, where the storm and night may work their wild will.

But hark! a cry of distress, from a spot between the two lakes and far, far from the sheltering Hospice. It is the cry of

a human being that shares that fearful bed with the night and the storm--a woman who lies sunk to the knees under the cold, crushing coverlet of snow, and on her breast a newborn baby-boy, closely clasped in her stiffened arms and wrapped in her cloak. The milk which flows from the young mother's bosom to nourish her infant has frozen above her fluttering heart, and the tears on her closed lashes are turned to ice. There she lies. "Poor feeble mother, who has thrust thee out in this night of storm and tumult for your child to be born under the open sky?" Thus ask the storm and the wild uproar of the elements; and as if even they had pity for the wretched soul, the wind carries the mother's cry of anguish over her starving infant, bears it on its wings to the scattered party of seeking, rescuing monks. "Be quick, make haste before it is too late."

And they hear it, these bold wrestlers with death, themselves half-buried in the snow, and they set out, wading, digging, shovelling, till the sweat of their brows runs down on their frozen beards, ever listening without a word, without a sound after that tremulous wind-borne cry.

And these storm-proof hearts quake with dread and pity for the hapless wretch to whose help they are hastening; they go forward painfully on their deadly and toilsome way, heeding neither danger nor difficulty, with only one purpose and one aim before their eyes--a struggle for life with Death.

At last--it is close by--at last they hear a faint cry; even the death-stricken woman hears them approaching, she collects her remaining strength and once more opens her eye-lids, on which the restless whirling snow has already dropped a white shroud; a red gleam meets her sight, she

hears the scraping of iron shovels, the burden that weighs on her breast and on her feet gets lighter and lighter--here are light and human voices--a shout of deliverance--of joy. Round her opened grave stand the snow-whitened storm-beaten group in a flood of red light from the flaring torches, their eyes shining with the divine light of devoted love which has triumphed over danger and death. And they raise her in their rough hands, they lift her out of her cold tomb, they wrap her and the naked child in warm hair-cloth coats and carry her home under the sheltering roof of holy Valentine.

"Salve, Frater Florentinus! we bring a precious prize," says one of the brethren triumphantly to the silver-bearded old man who opens the heavy creaking door. "A young mother and a new born boy--snatched from death."

"Deo gratias!" murmurs the old man in a voice husky from age. "The Lord will bless your labours. Come in quickly, the wind is blowing the snow in."

They step in and the door falls to with a groan. The storm outside snorts and rages and hurls against the door, like some wild beast robbed of its prey, but the door is tight and fast, and within all is quiet and warm; a smoking pine torch is burning in an iron bracket fixed to one of the pillars of the entrance hall, and throws wavering shadows and red lights on the grey stone walls and the black wooden crucifix which spreads out its arms to welcome all who enter.

"Come, hapless suffering mother, here you may find rest," says the old man compassionately, and he opens a low, iron-plated door at the farther end of the hall, through which the procession passes in silence into a room which is

at once the guest-chamber, the kitchen, and the refectory of the pious brotherhood, and the only warm room in the little Refuge, whose walls are thicker than its rooms are wide. A vast chimney-place like a roof projects into the half-dark hall, its broad shadow cast on the vaulted roof by the crackling fire that burns beneath it. From the ceiling hangs a small iron oil-lamp covered with cobwebs and giving too dismal and dim a light to illuminate the whole room. Over the fire hangs a cauldron in which a warm mess is stewing for the brethren and for any one they may bring with them on their return, half-frozen, from the desert outside; the roughly hewn seats stand round an octagon table, which is immoveably fixed in the middle of the room on strong supports. The only decoration in the whole smoke-blackened hall is a picture of St. Valentine, who, himself of gigantic proportions, stands preaching the gospel on the open heath to a crowd of very small devotees; the thick clouds of smoke which, all the winter through, are puffed back from the chimney by the stormy gusts, have blackened this picture also; yet it is the most treasured possession of the brotherhood. It was painted by Father Columbanus of the monastery at Marienberg, and Father Columbanus was an enlightened and inspired man, to whom the saints were wont to appear in nightly visions that he might depict them. This picture of Saint Valentine was the last vision that he saw and painted, for he died shortly after; so it is of double value! Under the picture hangs a holy-water vessel of terracotta.

On the heavy, rough-hewn table there are wooden platters in which each man receives his share as it is taken

out of the cooking pot, and a wooden spoon lies by each. This is all the furniture of the bare room; but such as it is, to the suffering, storm-lashed woman it is full of unspeakable comfort--a city of refuge from the raging wilderness without. She is silent, but her eye rests with an unearthly glitter on the rough, weather-beaten figures, who carry her at once to the chimney and with clumsy hospitality press her to take a little of the warm mess. Then, with a quiet bustle, they make her a couch by the glowing fire; a sack of straw, a pillow filled with white moss, and for coverlet a woolly sheep-skin--this is all the house has to offer, but it is a delicious couch after the fearful bed out on the moor--a couch prepared by careful and kindly human hands. With bashful awkwardness they untie the band of her tangled golden hair, take off her wet outside garment and wrap her in a warm, dry monk's frock, then they lay the frail and trembling form carefully on the bed and put the pale, half dead baby on her arm. The frozen fount of the mother's breast thaws under the warm wrapper, the child finds its natural food, and breathes and lives again. The brethren stand aside in silence, and tears run down their lean cheeks.

"May the holy mother of God protect thee--poor young mother!" says the grey-haired brother Florentinus, laying a little metal image of the Virgin on the suffering woman's breast. "We are unlearned men, unskilled in serving sick ladies and ignorant of what may comfort you in your suffering; but this image is of great virtue and famous for many miracles. It will bestow its grace on you too if your past life has not rendered you unworthy to receive it."

The young woman looked him calmly and frankly in the face.

"Holy brother," said she, "I am miserable and poor, and have not where to lay my head, but in that shelter which Heaven provides for the wretched under the sacred convent roof. But I was faithful, reverend brother, faithful and obedient at all times!" She pressed the image long and fervently to her lips, and silently told her sorrows to the All-pitying Mother.

"Most times when a young wife's first-born is brought into the world a loving grandmother bends over her bed and takes thought for everything, and a young father rocks his first-born tenderly on his arms. But I, O Mother of Grace! am cast off and homeless, and have no one but Thee."

And as the nourishing fount flows freely for her sucking child, the frozen fountain of her soul thaws too, and overflows from her closed eyelids in hot but restful tears. The Heavenly Mother bends lovingly and soothingly over her; the worn out woman rests her weary head on the unseen but omnipresent and ever-merciful bosom, and overcome by deadly exhaustion she falls asleep. The brethren slip off their wooden shoes, and walk barefoot on the stone flags so as not to disturb the exhausted woman. She looks to them like a martyr as she lies there--so calm, with the baby that has also gone to sleep looking like a glorified angel. The flickering fire throws changing lights and shadows on her crisply curling hair, making it seem like a crown of thorns; the brethren observe the resemblance, and point to it in silence.

Old Florentinus meanwhile does not forget temporal interests for the sake of eternal ones. He busily steals about the room on tip-toe, and carries the stranger's garments to the fire to dry, and for the first time he sees that there is a richly embroidered border at the hem of the dress, which glitters in the fire-light, and that the tattered shoes are embroidered by a skilful hand; he silently shows these ornaments to the brethren, and they shake their heads in astonishment. Then he lifts the cauldron from the fire, and dispenses the steaming contents into the platters with a sign to his companions; they obey the signal with but small alacrity, they are in no mood to eat. Noiselessly they draw up to the table, offer up a grace, and take the simple meal of barley and water standing. The thoughtful old man puts by a little of it for the sick woman. Then they cross themselves before the picture of St. Valentine, and withdraw each to his own cell, carefully closing the clumsy doors behind them. The old man only remains to watch the sick woman, and he seats himself in silence on the stone window-seat at the farther end of the room, telling his beads. The storm still roars round the house in long and violent gusts, but it can do it no mischief, for poor and bare as it is, it is built of strong masonry, a fortress against wind and weather, and the narrow air-openings are so deeply imbedded in the thick walls that no draught can pour in through them; only now and then the wind rushes howling down the chimney, and flings the crackling flames and smoke out into the room, so that the sick woman is startled from her painful slumbers; then all is still again. The child sighs softly in its sleep as if dreaming of future sorrow; the



mother's breathing goes on in regular rhythm, and even the old watcher leans his weary head in the niche in the wall, and falls asleep. Only the gigantic saint on the wall preaches unweariedly on to his dwarfed heathen in the light of the dying lamp, and the little figures seem to move and dance dreamily in the growing darkness.

Suddenly a cry of pain broke from the lips of the sick woman; the old man rose and went to the bed-side. She lay there quite changed, almost unconscious, her eyes sunken, her lips blue; the hand of death had passed over her face. She was seized with a violent trembling, and the bed quaked under her.

"What is the matter?" asked the brother in alarm. "Will you have a little food? It is standing here by the fire--or shall I make you a drink of warming herbs?" and he hastily threw some more wood on to the embers.

"Good brother," she replied, and her white teeth showed below her upper lip like those of a corpse, "neither food nor drink can help me any more. As it must come, let it come--I am dying; and when I tell you that I walked with my unborn child from Görz as far as this, and that the boy was born on the heath where I was all alone and helpless, you cannot wonder at it. Hear my confession, and grant me extreme unction."

The old man's eyes overflowed with tears. "Alas, poor flower, who can so pitilessly have plucked you, and flung you away to wither, and fall to pieces in the winter-storm. And we are so unskilled in all medical knowledge, and must see you die so miserably when we would so willingly rescue you!"

"Do not weep for me, reverend father," she said calmly; "all is well with me, I am going to rest in the lap of our Blessed Mother. But my poor child--he loses his mother just as I am finding mine. Take charge of him, I beseech you, he has no one in the world--he is wholly forlorn!"

"It shall be as you wish," said the old man. "You may rely on that in perfect confidence--you may die in peace on that score."

"Then take my boy without delay to the venerable Abbot Conrad of Amatia at Marienberg. Tell him that the outcast wife of Swyker of Reichenberg sends the child to him as her last bequest, that she dedicated him to the church in a sorrowful hour, and the venerable man will help a poor soul to keep her vow."

"In the name of all the saints!" cried the monk. "You, the most noble lady of Reichenberg? You, the guardian spirit and good angel of all the country round! Married only nine months since, if we were rightly informed? How, tell me, how come you here in this wild spot without one of your friends, cast out like the poorest beggar or like some criminal!"

"You say rightly, reverend father," she said quietly, and a gleam of the reviving fire fell like a glory on her pale brow, "I was banished like a criminal, and thrust out to be a prey to the fowls of the air, I and the child, the son of a noble house. And yet I am not guilty of that of which I was accused, although God himself was pleased to bear witness against me." A fresh shivering fit came over her, and shook her as the autumn wind shakes the faded leaves from the trees.

"My time is short--I will make a short story," she said in a failing voice. "It is nine months to-day since the noble Lord of Reichenberg, as you know, married me from the house of Ramüss, and soon after we went to Görz, the gay court of Albert, the count of Tyrol and Görz.--Egno of Amatia, the companion of my childhood, went with us. Oh! would we had never gone there--I have never had an hour of happiness since! The countess of Eppan, a beautiful woman of courtly manners and accomplishments, stole my husband's heart and with it his confidence in me; I had to look on while it happened, helpless and with no one to counsel me, a simple woman, having grown up in a quiet town in the Lower Engadine--ignorant of the world and of its wickedness. And then--how can I say it--she whispered to my husband that I and Egno of Amatia--! Oh! reverend Brother, spare me, spare me--If death had not already frozen my blood with his cold breath I should blush purple with shame!"

"I understand you, noble Lady," said the old man.

"My husband believed the falsehood and--oh! that I should have to say it--disowned his child. He challenged Egno of Amatia to ordeal by combat. Reverend Father, the ways of the Almighty are inscrutable and wise--why He, who proves the heart and reins, abandoned the innocent, I cannot understand; but it was His holy will--and so it fell out. Egno fell, slain by my husband's hand. God himself was witness against me--and so my deluded husband cast me out--me and my child. 'Go--bring your child into the world to be meat for the birds and wolves, and if tender hands take pity on it, may it be accursed and they who rescue it also. It

is the fruit of sinful love and by sinful love may it perish!' So he spoke and put me out of his house, and in order that the curse may not take effect, worthy father, I dedicated the child to the cloister before it saw the light, for where can it be safer than within convent walls. I was trying to reach St. Gertrude's, the convent in the Münsterthal--a well-beloved home.--There I thought to have given birth to my child. If it were a girl it was to belong to St. Gertrude--if a boy, I would take it to Marienberg. My brother is there and the Abbot is well known to me, and kindly disposed towards me--he is of the house of Amatia and will receive the child, who is an outcast for his relation's sake, and will bring it up to a holy life in the Lord, so that it can incur no curse and fall into no sinful love. Swear to me that you will report all this to him, faithfully--as I tell it to you--!"

"I swear it by this picture of the Blessed Virgin, who henceforth will be a mother to your son, born in sorrow. You have dedicated him to Heaven, and Heaven will accept him--because the gift is pure. I promise you in the name of the brethren of Marienberg that they will keep and cherish your child so that the curse may not be accomplished." And the old man sprinkled the baby with holy water and laid his withered hand in blessing on his head. The mother suddenly stretched herself out with a wonderful smile of peace. Her child was safe now, she could die content.

"Make haste, give me the last sacraments, I am near my end!" The old man went to wake the brethren--startled, they hurried out of their rooms and gathered round the dying woman's bed. She still breathed, but with difficulty, and

speech had failed her; but her lips could still receive the sacred viaticum and smile.

All was still as death in the room; the brethren prayed softly, the old man concluded the sacred office and made the sign of the cross. Yet three more feeble breaths--and all was over. The old man closed the sightless eyes and gently took the sleeping infant from its dead mother's side.

"Come, poor little one, there is no home on earth for you--you belong to Heaven."

He wrapped the boy in a warm lamb-skin and lighted a torch at the sooty lamp.

"Where are you going, brother Florentine? Are you going out in this stormy night, and with the tender infant?" asked one of the brethren. "Shall we not accompany you!"

"No! the child's guardian spirit is with me--I need no human aid. You stay here to pray by the corpse."

"Wait at least till the morning," said even the rough shepherd, the secular Superior of the convent.

"A vow will not bear any postponement!" said the old man, and with the new-born child in his arms he quitted the room where its mother's body was lying. The baby was torn from its mother's breast, torn from the source of its life; and as if the unconscious child felt the sorrowful parting it struggled and cried and fought against the bony, masculine arm that carried it. The old man stepped out of the convent; once more the heath received the outcast and homeless infant with wild cries from the storm; the snowfall was over and an icy blast had frozen the endless expanse of snow quite hard. The old monk's steps crunched upon it, and the evanescent crystals sparkled with a million rays where the

flare of the torch fell, so that he made his onward way through the darkness, in the midst of a glory of light. He felt as if it were Christmas Evening, and as if the angel who guided the three kings were leading him too on the way, to conduct the child to his Holy Companion in the manger--to the Child above all children and the city of salvation. The star on the angel's brow threw a soft light in his path, he felt the mighty fanning of his wings on his hoary temples, and he sang joyful praise to the Lord in his heart while he marched stoutly forward through that stormy, glorious night of wonders.

# **BOOK I.**

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# **UNDER A CURSE.**

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# CHAPTER I.

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High up on the rocks above the village of Burgeis stands a watch tower of faith, the monastery of Marienberg, with heaven-reaching towers and pinnacles, proudly looking far out and down into the night. Torn, and as though weary, the clouds hang about the mountain peaks that surround it, and the snow storm beats its exhausted wings against the mighty walls; it has spent its rage over night and its power is broken. Now and again between the parting clouds glimmers the pale crescent of the setting moon; below, in the valley, a cock crows betimes to announce the coming morning, but up in the convent as well as down in the village all are sunk in sleep, no ray of light illumines any one of the numberless rows of windows, with their small round panes set in lead; only in the porter's room on the ground floor a feeble light is burning and keeping watch for the sleeping door-keeper. Three blows of the huge iron ring on the back door are suddenly heard. The porter starts up, his lamp has burnt low, warning him that it will soon be morning. He goes out with his clattering bunch of keys in his hand; meanwhile the knocking has been hastily and imperatively repeated.

"Who is out there at this early hour?" He asks cautiously.

"The beginning and the end--an infant and an old man," is the answer.

"What am I to understand by that?"

"Open the door and then you will know."



"I must first fetch the Superior. At such an unwonted hour I cannot open to any one without his sanction." And he goes back into the house and wakes the Superior, who glances with alarm at the hour-glass thinking he has overslept himself. It will soon be the hour of matins.

"Come out quickly," cried the gatekeeper. "A stranger asks to be admitted--I dared not open the gate without your permission."

The Superior threw on his frock and cowl and stepped out.

"An old man and a child--as he says--" continued the porter, as they crossed the courtyard.

"Open the gate," said the Superior, as the wail of an infant apprised him that the stranger outside had spoken the truth. The porter obeyed and at the door, with the infant on one arm and in his other hand the torch, stood the old monk from St. Valentine's.

"Blessed be the Lord Christ! Brother Florentinus! How come you here this wild night--and what have we here for a whimpering visitor?" cried the Superior, admitting the old man.

"Aye, you would never have thought that my stiff old arms would be bringing round such a fragile, wriggling thing.--But take me quickly to the reverend Abbot that we may take counsel in the matter--for the child is hungry and needs womanly care."

"The bell will soon call to matins," said the Superior. "Wait here in the court-yard till the first stroke, and then you will be sure that no bad spirit crosses the threshold with

you. Meanwhile I will go and announce you to his reverence, the Abbot."

"Aye, you are right, brother, the child must enter the convent at a lucky hour, for he must stay in for ever."

The Superior asked no more--the brethren were accustomed to suppress all curiosity and to accept inexplicable occurrences in silence. He went in and the gate-keeper remained outside with the old man. They stood there expectant, till the first stroke should sound that should scare away the hordes of bad night-spirits.

Florentinus extinguished his torch, for the light from the porter's window lighted up the narrow court-yard.

"To-day is a great festival, and the fathers were making preparations far into the night," said the porter. "You did not think of that?"

"I do not know what you mean," said the old man. "To-day is no saint's day?"

"This day, a hundred years ago, anno Domini 1150, the edifice of this godly house was begun by Ulrich of Trasp, and a great thanksgiving service is to be performed in honour of the noble founder."

"To be sure I might have known it. Your house is ten years younger than ours and we too, ten years since, had a thanksgiving to our founder, Ulrich Primele."

"But you must not let our reverend brethren hear you say that our foundation is younger than yours, for they may take it ill in you. You know of course that our holy house was built two hundred years ago at Schuls, and was only transferred here because at Schuls and at St. Stephen we were so often visited by fire and avalanches."

"I know, I know," nodded the old man. "I did not mean to cast any reflection on the venerable antiquity of your foundation. God grant it may increase and prosper. It is still a sure bulwark against the decay of all conventual discipline in these days--God save us--the rule of St. Benedict is often followed in outward semblance only, but your severity is everywhere famous."

"Now!" said the guardian, opening the door for the old man. Solemnly and with silvery clearness, the bell for matins rang out. Inside the convent, all was alive at once. One after another, the windows were lighted up but without noise, as in a magic lantern. Brother Florentinus stepped into the hall. Door after door opened, and the dark figures of the monks slipped out in their soft sandals, and glided noiselessly down to the chapel along the long corridor. The deepest "silentium" reigned in the dusky passages and halls--that sacred silence by which the still dormant soul prepares itself to wake up to prayer. But the crying of the hungry baby disturbed the solemn stillness, and the fathers paused in astonishment, and gathered full of wonder and bewilderment round the screaming child. The guardian called the old man to come into the refectory with the infant, and the brethren went in to matins, shaking their heads over this strange visit. The Abbot, a reverend man of near seventy years, was standing in the refectory when Florentinus entered.

"What is this strange story that our brother, the Prior, tells me? You, Florentinus, bring us a child--a new-born infant. Where, in the name of all the saints, did you pick it up, and what have we to do with the helpless baby?"

"Most reverend Abbot, kindly lend me your attentive ear, and then your questions will be answered. But first of all I beseech your grace to allow that a woman may be fetched out of the village to suckle the child, for it has been starving these three hours."

"That cannot be, Brother Florentinus; a woman in the convent! What are you thinking about? You know very well that our order allows no women but princesses to come within our walls."

"Your reverence, it *must* be," said Florentine fearlessly; "I promised the babe's dying mother in your name that it should be received this day within the sheltering walls of Marienberg, and 'he will help a poor soul to keep her vow,' the dying woman said. He is the child of the noble Lady of Reichenberg."

The Abbot clasped his hands.

"What--where did you see her?"

"We found her at night on the heath, where her child had been born out in the snow. She is now lying in our house at St. Valentine's--dead."

The Abbot grasped his forehead with his hand as if he thought he was dreaming.

"The Lady of Reichenberg, the angel of Ramüss! What has happened to her?"

"She was repudiated by her husband on account of your relative Egno of Amatia; he fell in trial by combat. But the wife was innocent nevertheless, the child is Swyker of Reichenberg's child; but he cast it out to the birds of the air, and loaded it with the heaviest curses. In order that the

curses might not take effect, she dedicated it to the cloister."

The Abbot Conrad took the child tenderly in his arms.

"Yes, poor orphan, you shall find a home here; none on earth are motherless to whom the church opens her sheltering bosom."

Then he went to the door, and called the Superior.

"Hasten without delay down into the village, and find some good woman who will undertake to care for the infant's bodily needs; the convent will reward her richly. She may live in the Lady Uta's east turret-chamber; there she will be hidden from the eyes of the brethren; and you may also open the Lady Uta's chest for her use and the baby's. Make the room ready so that it may look comfortable and habitable, and that the woman may not feel as if she were a prisoner."

The guardian brother hurried away.

"The church must give to each severally that which he needs, why should she let the suckling starve that wants a mother's breast--she, the All-bountiful, the Mother of all," he went on, giving the child back to the old man. "In such an unprecedented case it is allowable to make an exception to the rule, to save a soul for the church."

"You are great and wise, my Lord Abbot," cried Florentinus with grateful joy, and rocking the child on his arm to quiet it. "It is strange how soon one gets used to a little thing like this. I have quite set my old heart on this little brat, it is so helpless and forsaken!"

"It is no longer helpless nor forsaken," said the Abbot gravely. "When matins are over, and the child has been

properly attended to we will baptise it. Meanwhile tell me in detail all that has happened, for it must all be recorded in the chronicles of the monastery, as is fitting."

He seated himself in the deep arm-chair at the upper end of the table, supporting himself on the monstrous dragon's heads which formed the arms of the seat.

Brother Florentinus conscientiously narrated the melancholy occurrences of the night.

"The body must be fetched and interred in the church," said the Abbot, "but without any inscription, for if we are to carry out the dead lady's vows we must efface every trace of her. Nay, the boy himself must never learn who his parents were, so that none of his family may dispute our right to him."

"You are always wise and choose the right, most reverend Abbot," Florentinus again declared.

They heard a sound of hasty steps on the stone floor of the corridor, and the Prior knocked at the highly ornamented door.

"Come in, in the name of the Lord," cried the Abbot.

The door opened, and a handsome young woman entered, whose fine, tall figure was poorly clad in miserable rags. She remained standing timidly at the door.

"Here is a woman who will be a mother to the child, if your reverence thinks proper."

"What is your name?"

"Bertrudis."

"Only think, after the pious waiting maid of the Lady Uta of Trasp, our noble foundress."

"She was my great-grandmother's sister."