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HEINRICH VON KLEIST

SELECTED WRITINGS

Edited and translated by
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white plumes, who was already beginning to entertain sweet hopes, he put it into his mouth and swallowed it. The man with the blue and white plumes, seeing this, fell down unconscious, twitching violently. Kohlhaas however, whilst that man's astonished companions bent down to him and lifted him from the ground, turned to the scaffold where his head fell under the executioner's axe. Here the story of Kohlhaas ends. Amid the general lament of the people his body was laid in a coffin; and whilst the bearers raised it, to carry it to a decent burial in a churchyard* in the suburbs, the Elector called the dead man's sons to him and, with a word to the Lord Chancellor that they were to be brought up among his pages, he knighted them. The Elector of Saxony, riven in body and soul, returned shortly afterwards to Dresden, and what followed can be read about in history. But in Mecklenburg, even in the last century, Kohlhaas still had robust and cheerful descendants living.

THE MARQUISE OF O.
(Based on a real event* but the place has been shifted from the north to the south.)

In M., an important town in northern Italy, the widowed Marquise of O., a lady of excellent reputation and the mother of two well-brought-up children, announced in the newspaper: that she had, without knowing it, become pregnant, and would the father of the child she was to bear kindly declare himself since she was resolved, out of consideration for her family, to marry him. The lady who under the pressure of unalterable circumstances was with such self-assurance taking this extraordinary step and exciting society's ridicule in doing so, was the daughter of Lord G., the Commandant of the fortress near M. About three years previously, whilst he was travelling to Paris on family business, she had lost her husband, the Marquis of O., having been most tenderly and deeply devoted to him. After his death, at Lady G.'s, her mother's, request, she had left the country seat near V., her home till then, and had returned with her two children to her father's house, in the fortress. Here, occupying herself with art and literature, with the education of her children and the care of her parents she had spent the following years quite out of the world: until the —— War* suddenly filled the surrounding country with troops of nearly all the powers, Russians among them. Colonel G., who had been ordered to defend the place, urged his wife and daughter to withdraw either to the latter's estate or to his son's, which lay near V. But before any assessment of what risks they might be exposed to in the fortress or what brutalities in the open country had weighed in the ladies' deliberations the citadel was already beset by Russian forces and called on to surrender. The Commandant informed his family that he would now act as though they were not there, and answered with grenades and bullets. The enemy, for their part, bombarded the citadel. They set fire to the magazine, captured an outwork, and when the Commandant, again called on to
surrender, hesitated to do so, they ordered a night attack and took the
fort by storm.

Just as the Russian troops, powerfully supported by howitzers, were
forcing their way in, the west wing of the Commandant's house caught
fire and the women were obliged to quit it. The Commandant's wife,
hurrying after her daughter who was fleeing downstairs with the
children, shouted that they should stay together and seek shelter in the
vaults below; but a grenade at that moment exploding in the house
completed an utter confusion there. The Marquise came with her two
children into the front courtyard where, the battle being very fierce,
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hurrying after her daughter who was fleeing downstairs with the
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children into the front courtyard where, the battle being very fierce,
firing lit up the night and drove her, desperate to know where to turn,
back into the burning building. Here, unhappily, just as she was seeking
to escape by the back door, she was met by a troop of enemy
sharpshooters who, seeing her, suddenly fell silent, shouldered their
weapons and gesturing abominably led her away. In vain did the
Marquise, ragged and thither by the fearful pack fighting among
themselves, call out for help to her women fleeing back in terror through
the gate. She was dragged into the rear courtyard and there, vilely
maltreated, was falling to the ground when, drawn by the lady's
screams a Russian officer appeared· and with furious blows dispersed
the beasts who were lusting for that prey. He seemed one of heaven's
angels to the Marquise. Ramming his sword handle into the last man's
face, so that the murderous savage took his hands off her slim waist and
staggered back with blood spewing from his mouth, he addressed the
lady courteously in French, offered her his arm and led her, stricken
dumb by all these scenes, into the wing of the house not yet caught
alight, and, losing consciousness entirely, she fell to the floor. Thereupon
— when, soon after, her terrified women appeared, he arranged for a
doctor to be called; assured them, putting on his hat, that she would
soon recover; and returned to the battle.

In a brief while all the space before the house had been taken, and the
Commandant, still fighting only because no one would as yet give him
quarter, was retreating with failing strength towards the entrance when
the Russian officer, very heated in the face, emerged from there and
called on him to surrender. The Commandant replied: that was what he
had been waiting to be asked to do, handed him his sword and asked
permission to go into the house and look for his family. The Russian
leaders of the assault, let him do so, under guard; with some speediness
then set himself at the head of a detachment of men, settled the struggle
wherever it was still in doubt and very rapidly occupied all the strong
points of the fort. This done, he was soon back where the troops were
mustering, gave orders that the fire, which was beginning to advance
with great fury, should be brought under control and in this business
was himself wonderfully active when his orders were not obeyed with
sufficient zeal. At one moment he was aloft among blazing gables with a
hosepipe in his hands, directing the jet of water; at another, a terror to
the Asiatics under his command, he was deep in the arsenals, rolling out
powder kegs and mines already loaded. The Commandant, who in the
meantime had gone indoors, when he heard what had befallen the
Marquise his consternation was extreme. The Marquise who, without
the doctor's help, was already, as the Russian officer had foretold, fully
recovered from her faint and in her delight at seeing her family safe and
sound was staying in bed only to calm their excessive anxiety, assured
him that all she wanted was to be allowed to get up and express her
grateful love to her rescuer. She knew already that he was Count F., a
lieutenant-colonel in the —th Hussars and the bearer of various military
honours and decorations. She begged her father to implore him not to
leave the fortress without first appearing in the house for a moment. The
Commandant, honouring his daughter's feelings, went back at once into
the fort and finding no better occasion, since the Count was perpetually
dashing to and fro on military business, it was on the earthworks, where
he was reviewing his battered troops, that the grateful lady's wishes
were made known to him. He assured the Commandant that just as
soon as he could wrest one moment free from his duties he would come
and pay her his respects. And he enquired how the lady Marquise was
honoured, giving his own conduct, the Count blushing crimson as he did so, he finished by
saying that as for the miscreants who had sullied the Czar's good name,
sources of confusion; and ordered the Count to say who they were.
Count F., in a confused speech, replied that he was not in a position to

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saying that as for the miscreants who had sullied the Czar's good name,
dim light from the lamps in the courtyard. The General, who had heard that at that time the house was in flames, expressed some surprise at this; but observed that if it was dark one might surely recognize familiar people by their voices; and he ordered the Count, who shrugged his shoulders and looked embarrassed, to enquire into the matter with all possible diligence and rigour. At that moment a man pushing forward from the rear of the assembly reported that one of the malefactors wounded by Count F., having collapsed in the corridor, had been dragged into a place of custody by the Commandant's people, and was still there. The General had him fetched out by the guard and summarily named; he then had shot. This done, the General ordered that a small party be left behind to occupy the fort and that the rest should depart; the officers returned in haste to their units; the Count, in all the confusion of this hurried dispersal, approached the Commandant and said that things being as they were he must regretfully send to the Lady Marquise his humble respects and bid her farewell; and in less than an hour the whole fort was empty of Russian troops.

The family were left wondering how they might ever, in the future, find an opportunity of giving the Count some indication of their gratitude; and it was a great shock to them when they learned that on the very day of his departure from the fort, in a skirmish with the enemy's troops, he had met his death. The courier who brought this news to M. had with his own eyes seen him, mortally wounded in the chest, being borne away to P., in which place, as was reliably reported, he had died just as the stretcher bearers were setting him down. The Commandant, who went to the posting house himself and asked for more details of what had happened, learned that on the battlefield, at the moment when he was hit, he had cried out: 'Julietta! This bullet avenges you!', and had closed his lips then for ever. The Marquise was inconsolable that she had let slip the opportunity of throwing herself at his feet. Bitterly she reproached herself that when, perhaps out of modesty, as she supposed, he had refused to come to the house she had not gone and sought him out; she grieved for the unhappy woman, her namesake, who had been his last thought as he died; made efforts, but in vain, to discover where she lived and tell her of this unhappy and touching event; and some months went by before she could forget him herself.

The family were obliged to give up the Commandant's house to the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian forces. They pondered at first whether they should not retire to the Commandant's estates, and that would have been the Marquise's decided preference; but since the Commandant disliked country life they moved into a house in town and made it suitable to be their permanent dwelling place. Now the old order of things was restored. The Marquise resumed the education of her children, after its long interruption; and for her leisure hours she took out her easel and books; but then, having always been the picture of good health, she began to be plagued by repeated indispositions which for weeks at a time made her unfit for society. She felt nauseous, dizzy, faint, and this strange condition was a puzzle to her. One morning when the family were drinking tea and her father had left the room for a moment the Marquise, waking out of a long vacancy, said to her mother: 'If a woman told me that she had had such a feeling as I had just now when I took up my cup my thought would be that she was with child.' Lady G. said she did not understand her. The Marquise explained herself, saying again that she had just felt as she did when she was pregnant with her second daughter. Lady G. said perhaps she would give birth to Phantasus, and laughed. 'Then Morpheus would be the father,' the Marquise replied, 'or one of his entourage of dreams'; and she laughed as her mother had done. But then the Commandant returned, the conversation was broken off and the whole subject, since within a few days the Marquise felt better again, was forgotten.

Soon afterwards, at a time when the Chief Forester G., the Commandant's son, also happened to be present in the house, the family were peculiarly shocked to hear a valet, entering the room, announce Count F. 'Count F.!' said father and daughter together, and everyone was dumbfounded. The valet assured them that he had heard and seen ariat and that the Count stood waiting in the next room. At once the Commandant himself sprang to his feet, to open the door for the Count who did indeed then enter, handsome as a young god and a little pale in the face. After scenes of wonder and incomprehension and when the Count, answering the parents' remonstrance that he was supposed to be dead, had assured them that he was alive, he turned to the daughter, with much emotion in his face, and his first question was: how did she feel? Very well, the Marquise assured him, and was herself only interested in knowing how he had come back to life. But he, insisting on his subject, replied that she was not telling him the truth; there was a strange fatigue in her face; unless he was much mistaken she was unwell and suffering. The Marquise, gladdened by the warmth with which he said this, answered: well then, the fatigue might, if he liked, count as the trace of an indisposition she had suffered from some weeks previously;
embracing in that one conception were indescribable; that finally, Lady Marquise; that he had suddenly been sent to Naples with there for months he had despaired of his life; that during that time the taking her hand, as though to kiss it, asked had she understood him. The lady's hand, and said that circumstances obliged him to be very serious look, placed a chair for him. The Commandant's wife said: 'Really, we shall think you a ghost until you divulge to us how you rose from the grave you were laid in at P.' The Count sat down, letting go of the grave you were laid in at P.; that there for months he had despaired of his life; that during that time the Lady Marquise had been his only thought; that the joy and pain embracing in that one conception were indescribable; that finally, having recovered, he had gone back to the army; that there he had suffered the most acute unease; that he had several times taken up his pen to give his heart some relief in letters to the Commandant and the Lady Marquise; that he had suddenly been sent to Naples with dispatches; that he could not be sure that from there he might not be ordered on further, to Constantinople; that he might even have to go as far as St Petersburg; that it had in the meantime become impossible for him to live without some clear answer to a necessary demand of his soul; that, passing through M., he had not been able to resist the urge to take the marks of a very great unease, said, turning to the Marquise's mother, the one unworthy deed he had ever committed in his life was unknown to the world and he was himself moreover about to make up the one already made. Thereupon the Count stated that he had no indecisiveness; but until he had had some consultation with his own as well as with the Corint's family no other response was possible except a definite answer. The Count, blushing, replied that all the way there he had warned his impatient wishes that this would be the outcome; that it flung him now into the greatest possible distress; that in the unfortunate role he was now obliged to play a closer acquaintance would indeed be advantageous; that as to his reputation, if that most equivocal of qualities must be taken into account, he believed he could vouch for it; that the one unworthy deed he had ever committed in his life was unknown to the world and he was himself moreover about to make up for it; that he was, in a word, an honourable man, and begged them to accept his assurances that what he was assuring them of was true. — The Commandant replied, and smiled a little, though without any irony, as he did so, that he subscribed to all these declarations. He had never before made the acquaintance of any young man who in so short a time had revealed so many excellent traits of character. He was inclined to believe that a brief period of reflection would resolve the present indecisiveness; but until he had had some consultation with his own as well as with the Count's family no other response was possible except the one already made. Thereupon the Count stated that he had no parents and that he was free. His uncle was General K., and he could vouch for his consent. He added that he was in possession of a substantial fortune and that he would not be averse to settling in Italy. — The Commandant bowed to him courteously, said again what the Count assuring him that this kind declaration did indeed satisfy all his hopes; that it would, in other circumstances, have rendered him entirely happy; that he was sensible of the utter impropriety of not consenting himself with it; but that very pressing factors, upon which he was not in a position to elaborate, made him exceedingly desirous of obtaining a yet more definite response; that the carriage which was to bring him to Naples stood ready and waiting; and he begged them from the bottom of his heart that if anything in their house spoke in his favour — here he looked at the Marquise — they would not let him depart without a favourable reply. The Commandant, rather taken aback by this behaviour, replied that the gratitude the Marquise felt for him did indeed justify him in making large presumptions, but not so large; in a matter in which her whole life's happiness was at stake she would not act without a proper prudence. It was imperative that his daughter, before she declared herself, should have the pleasure of his closer acquaintance. He invited him to return to M. when his journey on business was concluded and then for a time to be a guest in his house. Then if the Lady Marquise could hope to be made happy by him, but not before, he would himself be delighted to hear that she had given him a definite answer. 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Chief and to General K., his uncle, could not have been more determined; but that it had been thought that the journey would shake him out of the melancholy still lingering in him after his illness; and now, by that selfsame journey, he found himself plunged into utter misery. The family did not know what to say to this. Rubbing his forehead the Count went on to say that if there were any hope it might bring him closer to the attainment of his wishes he would postpone his journey by a day and even by rather more than a day, to make the attempt. So saying, he looked in turn at the Commandant, the Marquise and her mother. The Commandant looked down at the floor in some annoyance, and made no reply. His wife said: 'My dear Count, be on your way now; go to Naples; when you return give us the pleasure of your company for a while; and the rest will surely follow.' The Count sat still for a moment and seemed to be wondering what he should do. Rising then and removing his chair he said that since he must acknowledge the hopes he had entered the house with to be premature and since the family, as he thought right and proper, were insisting on a closer acquaintance, he would send his dispatches back to headquarters at Z., to be carried forward from there by somebody else, and accept the kind invitation to be their guest for a week or two. And thereupon, holding the chair in his hand and standing by the wall, he paused for a moment and looked at the Commandant. The Commandant replied that he would be exceedingly sorry if the passion he seemed to have conceived for his daughter were to bring him into what would surely be very serious trouble; but that he, the Count, doubtless knew best what it was up to him to do or not do, and should then, if he so wished, send back the dispatches and move into the rooms that would be his. At these words he was seen to lose colour; humbly he kissed the mother's hand, bowed to the others and withdrew.

Left in the room the family did not know what to make of what they had witnessed. The mother said it was scarcely possible that he intended sending back to Z. dispatches with which he was travelling to Naples merely because, passing through M., he had not managed, in a five-minute interview, to persuade a lady he was wholly unacquainted with to marry him. The Chief Forester remarked that for such irresponsible behaviour he would most certainly be arrested. And cashiered as well, the Commandant added. But there was no risk of that, he continued. It was only a shot in the air in the assault; doubtless he would come to his senses before he sent the dispatches back. The mother, when she knew of the danger, expressed the keenest concern that he would indeed send them back. That passionate will of his, set as it was on one objective, seemed to her capable of just such a thing. She begged the Forester most urgently to go after him at once and dissuade him from an action threatening his ruin. The Forester replied that to do so would achieve a contrary result and only strengthen him in the hope that his strategy would be successful. The Marquise was of the same opinion, but felt certain, she said, that not to do so would result without any doubt in the dispatches being sent back, since he would sooner he ruined than lose face. All were agreed that his behaviour was very strange and that it seemed to be his way to take a lady's heart by storm, like a fortress. At that moment the Commandant noticed the Count's carriage and the horses in harness before it outside his door. He called the family to the window and in astonishment asked a servant, entering at that moment, whether the Count was still in the house. The servant replied that he was down below, in the servants' quarters, with an adjutant, writing letters and sealing packages. The Commandant, suppressing his consternation, hurried down with the Forester and asked the Count, whom he saw busy at tables unsuitable for his purposes, would he not like to move to his rooms. And whether he had any other requirements. The Count, still writing rapidly, replied that he was grateful, but no, the job was almost done; asked, as he sealed the letter, what time it was, and wished the adjutant, handing him the whole portfolio, a safe journey. The Commandant, who could not believe his eyes, said, as the adjutant left the house, 'My dear Count, unless you have very important reasons—'

'Overriding ones,' said the Count, interrupting him; accompanied the adjutant to the carriage, and opened the door for him. 'In that case,' the Commandant continued, 'I should at least send the dispatches...'

'Impossible,' the Count replied, helping the adjutant into his seat. The dispatches are no good in Naples without me. I thought of that too. Off you go!' — 'And the letters from his excellency, your uncle?' the adjutant cried, leaning out through the carriage window. 'Will reach me,' the Count replied, 'in M.' 'Drive on,' said the adjutant, and the carriage took him away.

Thereupon Count F., turning to the Commandant, asked would he be so kind as to have the servants show him to his rooms. 'At once,' said the Commandant, in confusion, he would do so himself, it would be an honour; called to his own and to the Count's people to take up the baggage and conducted him to the rooms set aside for visitors and there, stiffly, took his leave of him. The Count changed his clothes; went out then to announce his presence to the town's military governor, and for the rest of the day making no appearance in the house he returned there only a short while before supper.
The family meanwhile were in a very agitated state. The Forester recounted how decidedly the Count had answered certain points of view put to him by the Commandant; he was acting, as it seemed to the Forester, in a quite premeditated way; what in heaven's name were the reasons for this courtship at a gallop? The Commandant said he could not make head or tail of the business, and begged the family to say nothing more about it in his presence. The mother kept looking out of the window to see if he had regretted his irresponsible behaviour and were coming back to make amends. At last, when it got dark, she joined the Marquise who was seated at a table very busy over some work and apparently not wishing to talk. She asked her in a whisper, while the father paced up and down, whether she had any idea where things were leading. With a timid glance towards the Commandant the Marquise replied that if her father had managed to get him to go on to Naples all would have been well. 'To Naples!' the Commandant replied, having overheard this. 'Should I have fetched a priest? Or had him arrested and sent to Naples under guard?' — 'No,' the Marquise answered, 'but sharp and forceful arguments do have an effect'; and with some impatience she looked down at her work again. — At last, as night came on, the Count appeared. They were only waiting, after the first politenesses, for the subject to come up again, in order to join forces and urge him, if it were still possible, to undo what in his foolhardiness he had done. But in vain, throughout the meal, did they wait for such a moment. Scrupulously avoiding anything that might lead to it he discussed war with the Commandant and hunting with the Forester. When he mentioned the fighting at P., in which he had been wounded, the mother drew him into the story of his illness, asked him how he had fared in such a small place, whether he had had all the proper comforts. 'One might at least,' the mother continued, seizing hold of her shoulder, 'let him have an assurance that you will not, before his return from Naples, do as you have done in the past — avoid the subject.' Scarcely to be feared that his conduct elsewhere in his life would be any different. With every appearance of being greatly agitated the Marquise looked down at the floor. 'One might at least,' the mother continued, seizing hold of her hand, 'let him have an assurance that you will not, before his return
The Count hoped, said the Count, to catch up with his dispatches at B., and from there he would take a shorter route to Naples than via M.; in Naples he would do everything possible to avoid being sent on with further business to Constantinople; and since he was determined, if things came to the worst, to declare himself sick he could assure them that unless insuperable obstacles intervened he would be back in M. without fail within four to six weeks. At that moment his servant announced that his carriage was waiting and that everything was ready for departure. The Count took his hat, approached the Marquise, and seized her hand. 'Well, Julietta,' he said, enclosing her hand in his, 'I am in some measure contented, though it had been my dearest wish to marry you before I left.' 'Marry!' all the members of the family exclaimed. 'Marry,' said the Count again, kissed the Marquise's hand and assured her, when she asked him was he out of his mind, that there would come a day when she would understand him. The family were about to be displeased with him, but he at once, in the warmest fashion, said his goodbyes to them all, and begging them to give no further thought to what he had said, he left.

Several weeks passed, during which time the family, with their very different feelings, waited in some suspense for the outcome of this strange affair. From General K., the Count's uncle, the Commandant received a polite communication; the Count wrote himself from Naples; what they learned through their enquiries spoke pretty well in his favour; in brief, the engagement seemed as good as settled when the Marquise's indisposition came on again, more acutely than before. She noticed an incomprehensible alteration in her person. She was entirely candid with her mother and said that she did not know what to make of her condition. The mother, made very fearful for her daughter's health by these strange occurrences, insisted that she seek the advice of a doctor. The Marquise, hoping her own nature would give her victory, demurred; she spent several days, ignoring her mother's advice in the most acute discomfort: until certain feelings, constantly recurring and of the oddest kind, plunged her into an extreme unease. She sent for a doctor whom her father trusted and, her mother happening not to be present, made him sit down on the sofa and after a brief preamble, in a jocular tone, revealed to him what state she believed herself to be in. The doctor gave her a quizzical look and after examining her thoroughly still said nothing for a while: then with a very grave face answered that her Ladyship's opinion was quite correct. When he then, upon her asking him what he meant by this, expressed himself in unequivocal terms and said, with a smile he was unable to suppress, that she was in good health and had no need of a doctor, the Marquise rang the bell, looked at him askance and very severely, and asked him to leave. She added in an undertone, as though to herself and as though she were a negligible person, that she had no taste for any levity with him on subjects of that sort. The doctor replied rather touchily that it was to be wished she had always been so little inclined to levity as now; took up his hat and his stick and was about to leave. The Marquise promised him that her father would hear of these insults. The doctor replied that he would stand by his statements in a court of law: opened the door, bowed, and said his goodbyes. The Marquise, as he stooped for a glove he had dropped on the floor, asked: 'And how could that possibly be, doctor?'
The doctor replied that she surely did not need him to explain the first cause of things; bowed once again, and left.

The Marquise was thunderstruck. She pulled herself together and was about to run to her father; but the strange gravity of the man by whom she thought herself insulted paralysed her limbs. In great agitation she threw herself down on the couch. Now becoming mistrustful of herself, she went over every moment of the past year and reaching the last thought she must be out of her mind. Finally her mother appeared, and being asked, in some anxiety, why she was so distraught, the daughter related what the doctor had just told her. Lady G. called him shameless and a good-for-nothing and supported her daughter’s determination to report this insult to her father. The Marquise assured her that he had been entirely serious and that he seemed resolved to repeat his insane assertion to her father’s face. Lady G., more than a little shocked by this, asked did she then believe in the possibility of such a condition. ‘Sooner believe,’ said the Marquise, ‘that the grave itself were fruitful and the womb of the dead gave birth.’ ‘Well then, my poor dear child,’ said Lady G., hugging her close: ‘Why be uneasy? If your conscience absolves you why should you be troubled by one opinion and even if it were that of a whole board of doctors? Whether his was due to error or malice: is it not all the same to you? But it would be proper to tell your father.’ — ‘Dear heaven!’ said the Marquise with a convulsive movement: ‘How can I feel easy? Do I not have my own inner feeling against me, a feeling I know only too well? Would I not, if I knew of such feelings in another woman, myself be of the opinion that what was said of her was right?’ ‘This is frightful,’ Lady G. replied. ‘Malice! Error!’ the Marquise continued. ‘Why should this man, whom until today we have always thought worthy of our esteem, now insult me in so idle and despicable a fashion? Me, who never offended him? Who received him trustingly and in the anticipation of owing him my gratitude? To whom he came, as his first words proved, in the pure and honest intention of giving help and not of actually causing me pain worse than the pains I had already? And looked at her in some surprise, ‘I am inclined to believe in its being an error: is it really possible that a doctor, and were he even only moderately skilled, could be wrong in such a case?’ — Lady G. said, rather tartly: ‘Error or malice, it must necessarily have been one or the other.’ ‘My dear mother,’ the Marquise replied, crimson in the face and with a look of injured dignity kissing her hand: ‘it must. Though the circumstances are so extraordinary that I may be permitted to have my doubts. I swear to you, since such an assurance is required, that my conscience is as clear as my children’s. Even you, my dearest mother whom I respect exceedingly, your own could not be clearer. Nevertheless I beg you to send for a midwife so that I can convince myself of the truth of what is and be at ease then whatever it is.’ ‘A midwife!’ cried Lady G., affronted. ‘A clear conscience and a midwife!’ And words failed her. ‘My dear mother, a midwife,’ the Marquise replied, and went down on her knees before her, ‘and at once, or I shall go mad.’ ‘Gladly,’ Lady G. replied, ‘but please find somewhere else for your confinement.’ And with that she stood up and made to leave the room. The Marquise, following with outstretched arms, prostrated herself utterly and embraced her knees. ‘If a blameless life,’ she cried with all the eloquence of suffering, ‘if a life lived after your example gives me any right to your respect, if in your bosom still, at least until my guilt is proven beyond doubt, some motherly feeling speaks on my behalf: do not abandon me at this terrible hour.’ — ‘What is it that troubles you?’ her mother asked. ‘Is it only the doctor’s words? Only your own inner feeling?’ ‘Only that, Mother,’ the Marquise replied, and laid her hand on her breast. ‘Nothing else, Julietta?’ her mother continued. ‘Think. A transgression, unspeakably painful though it would be to me, would in the end be forgivable and I should have to forgive it; but if to escape a mother’s reprimand you invent some tale by which the order of things is overturned and blasphemously protest your innocence to force your story on my all too credulous heart: that would be disgraceful and you and I would never be reconciled.’ — ‘May heaven one day be as open to me as my soul is to you,’ the Marquise cried. ‘My dear mother, there is nothing I have not told you.’ — These words, pathetic in their utterance, shook the mother. ‘Dear heavens!’ she cried, ‘my darling child, how you move me!’ And raised her up and kissed her and pressed her close against her heart. ‘What in the world are you afraid of? Come, you are very ill.’ And she sought to lead her away to bed. But the Marquise, whose tears would not be kept back, assured her that she was very well and that there was nothing the matter with her except that strange and incomprehensible condition. — ‘Condition!’ the mother cried again. ‘What condition? If your memory of the past is so certain what fearful madness has seized hold of you? Might not an inner feeling, only dimly stirring after all, might it not be deceiving you?’ ‘No, no,’ said the Marquise, ‘I am not deceived. And if you send for the midwife you will learn that this frightful thing, this thing that annihilates me, is true.’ — ‘My dearest child, come now,’ said Lady G., beginning to fear for her sanity. ‘Come now, come with me, come to bed. What was it you thought the doctor said to you? How flushed you are. And shaking like a leaf. What was it
then that the doctor said to you? And with that she was leading the Marquise away, no longer believing her account of what had happened.

— The Marquise said: ‘You are good and kind. I am not out of my mind.’ And she smiled through her tears. ‘The doctor told me I am carrying a child. Send for the midwife and as soon as I hear from her that it is not true I shall be calm again.’ ‘Very well,’ Lady G. replied, suppressing her fears. ‘She shall come at once; if you want her to laugh at you let her come at once and tell you you are a dreamer and not quite right in the head.’ And so saying she rang the bell and dispatched one of the servants to fetch the midwife.

The Marquise, still agitated, her bosom still heaving, was lying in her mother’s arms when the woman appeared and Lady G. told her the bizarre idea her daughter lay sick with. The lady Marquise, she said, swore that her conduct had been blameless and yet, misled by an incomprehensible feeling, she had thought it necessary to have her condition examined by a woman expert in such matters. The midwife, being told more about this condition, spoke of the passions of youth and the wicked ways of the world; said, having completed her business, that she had met such cases before; young widows finding themselves in her situation would always have you believe they had been living on desert islands; told the Marquise there was nothing to worry about and said she felt sure that whoever the happy mariner was who had come ashore one night, he would appear again. At these words the Marquise fainted. Lady G., giving in to her motherly feelings, did, with the help of the midwife, revive her. But indignation was victorious as soon as she opened her eyes: ‘Julietta,’ her mother cried in acute distress, ‘will you be honest with me, will you tell me who the father is?’ And still seemed inclined to be forgiving. But when the Marquise said she felt she would go mad her mother, rising from the sofa, said: ‘Out of my sight! You are unworthy of us. I curse the hour I bore you.’ And left the room.

The Marquise, again near to losing consciousness, drew the midwife down to her and, trembling violently, laid her head on her breast. She asked in an unsteady voice what the ways of nature were really like. And whether an unwitting conception were a possibility. — The midwife asked in a unsteady voice what the ways of nature were really like. And whether an unwitting conception were a possibility. — The midwife smiled, loosened the Marquise’s bodice, and said that would scarcely be her Ladyship’s own case. No, no, the Marquise replied; hers was not unwitting, she was only curious to know in a general way whether in the natural world such a thing ever happened. The midwife answered that it had to the Virgin Mary but not to any other woman on earth. The midwife soothed her. She assured her that her confinement was still far off, suggested the means by which, in such a case, the world’s bad opinion might be avoided, and was of the view that everything would turn out well in the end. But since these consolations went through the poor lady’s heart like so many knives she pulled herself together, said she felt better and asked her companion to withdraw.

Scarcely had the midwife left the room than the Marquise was brought a communication from her mother in which the lady expressed herself thus: Lord G. wished her, in the circumstances, to leave his house. He enclosed the papers having to do with her finances and hoped God would spare him the torment of ever seeing her again. — Here and there the letter was wetted with tears; and a smudged word in one corner read: ‘Dictated.’ — The Marquise’s grief welled from her eyes. Bitterly weeping over her parents’ error and over the injustice into which such excellent people had been misled, she went to her mother’s rooms. Her mother was with her father, she was told; she staggered to her father’s rooms. There, finding the door locked, she fell down, calling on all the saints as witnesses of her innocence. Lay for some minutes; then the Forester came out, with burning cheeks, and asked: had she not been told that the Commandant did not wish to see her? The Marquise cried: ‘Oh, my dear brother!’ sobbing uncontrollably; forced her way into the room and cried: ‘Oh, my dear father!’ and stretched out her arms towards him. The Commandant, at the sight of her, turned his back and hurried into his bedchamber. He cried out, as she followed him: ‘Keep away!’ and tried to fling the door shut; but when she, beseeching him, in her anguish prevented it from closing, he suddenly gave way and fled, as the Marquise entered, towards the far wall. She had just flung herself down at his feet and though he had turned his back on her she was clinging to his knees when a pistol he had seized went off at the very moment of his tearing it from the wall and shattered into the ceiling. ‘Dear God,’ the Marquise cried; rose, deathly pale, from her knees and fled from his rooms. ‘The carriage at once,’ she said, entering her own; sat down, almost lifeless, on a chair, quickly dressed her children and had her things packed. She had the youngest between her knees and was wrapping a scarf around her and everything being ready for departure was about to get into the carriage when the Forester arrived and demanded that, on the Commandant’s orders, she leave the children behind and hand them over. ‘These children?’ she asked; and stood up. ‘Tell your inhuman father that he may come and shoot me down but may not tear my children from me.’ And armed with all the pride of her
innocence she lifted up the children, carried them, her brother not daring to halt her, to the carriage and drove away.

Thus through this beautiful exertion coming to self-knowledge she lifted herself suddenly, as though by her own hand, clear out of the depths into which fate had flung her. The commotion tearing her apart subsided once she was outside the house; again and again she kissed the beloved children she had carried off, and thought with great self-satisfaction of the victory which, by force of her guiltless conscience, she had won over her brother. Her reason, strong enough to withstand the strangeness of her situation, gave itself up entirely to the large and holy and inexplicable ordering of the world. She saw the impossibility of convincing her family of her innocence, understood that she must cease grieving over it or perish, and only a few days after her arrival in V. her grief had been replaced completely by the heroic resolve to arm herself with pride against the world’s assaults. She resolved to withdraw entirely into her innermost self, dedicate herself with an exclusive zeal to the education of her two children and to caring for the third, as a gift that God had bestowed on her, with all of a mother’s love. She took steps so as to begin in a few weeks’ time, as soon as she was over her confinement, the restoration of her beautiful but, after long absence, somewhat run-down estate; sat in an arbour and pondered, as she knitted little bonnets and leggings for the child, what best use she should make of the rooms and which she should fill with books and in which her easel and painting things could best be accommodated. And in this way before Count F. was due to return from Naples she had already reconciled herself to the idea of living for evermore as secludedly as a nun. The porter had orders to admit nobody. But one thought was unbearable to her: that the young creature whom she had conceived in utter innocence and purity and whose origins precisely because they were more mysterious also seemed more heavenly than those of other mortals, would be marked in civil society by a mark of shame. A strange means which, when she first thought of it, she let her knitting fall from her hands in fright. Whole nights long, in a restless sleeplessness, she still recoiled from entering into any dealings with the person who had abused her so, rightly assuming that whoever it was must belong, beyond any redemption, among the ordures of his kind and wherever one might suppose his abode on earth to be his origins must lie in the mire where it was foulest and most trampled. But the sense of independence becoming ever stronger in her
climb the slope towards the back of the house when to one side, in a bower, busily working at a small table, he saw the Marquise in a sweet secrecy. He approached her in such a way that she could not catch sight of him until he stood at the entrance of the bower, scarcely three paces from her feet. 'Count F.,' said the Marquise as she raised her eyes, and a blush of surprise spread over her face. The Count smiled, stood a while longer at the opening, not moving; seated himself by her then, with such modesty in his presumptuousness as was necessary if she were not to be alarmed, and before she, in the strangeness of her situation, had made any decision gently he put his arm around her. 'Where have you come from? How is it possible?' the Marquise asked — and looked shyly down at the ground. The Count said: 'From M.,' and pressed her very gently against him; 'through a back gate that I found open. I believe I might count on your forgiveness, and I entered.' 'Did they not tell you in M.? —?' she asked, and moved not a muscle in his embrace. 'Everything, my dear lady,' the Count replied; 'but wholly convinced of your innocence ...' 'What!' the Marquise cried, standing up and disengaging herself; 'and you have come despite that?' — 'In despite of the world,' he continued, holding her fast, 'and in despite of your family, and even in spite of this sweet appearance here.' And so saying he bowed his head against her breast in a passionate kiss. — 'Keep away!' the Marquise cried. — 'As convinced,' he said, 'Julietta, as if I were all-knowing, as if my soul were dwelling in your breast ...' The Marquise cried: 'Let me go.' 'I have come,' he concluded — and did not let her go — 'to repeat my proposal of marriage to you and to receive, if you will grant me what I ask, a life of bliss henceforth from your hand.' 'This minute let me go!' the Marquise cried, 'I order you to,' and she tore herself forcibly out of his arms and fled. 'Beloved, my revered lady,' he whispered, getting to his feet and following her. — 'You hear me,' the Marquise cried and turned and eluded him. 'One moment's whispered, private ...' said the Count and made to seize hold of her smooth-skinned arm, but she escaped. — 'I wish to know nothing,' the Marquise replied, repulsed him with a violent push against his chest, hurried to the path that rose towards the house, and disappeared.

He was climbing after her to get himself a hearing cost what it might when the door slammed shut ahead of him and the bolt, in haste and distress, was slid across. For a moment undecided what was to be done in the circumstances he stood and debated whether to climb through an open window at the side and pursue his purpose until he achieved it; but hard though it was in every sense for him to turn back, necessity this time seemed to demand it, and bitterly angry with himself for letting her
puzzled by so many things in the whole affair and especially by the Marquise's readiness to enter, quite without passion, into a second marriage, sought in vain to have this circumstance discussed. The Commandant repeatedly begged her, in the manner of a man giving an order, to be silent; asserted, on one such occasion taking down a portrait of her that still hung on the wall, that he wished to eradicate her entirely from his memory; and declared that he no longer had a daughter. Soon afterwards the Marquise's strange proclamation appeared in the newspapers. Lady G., astounded by it, took the paper, which she had received from the Commandant, through into his room, where she found him working at a desk, and asked him what in the world he made of it. The Commandant went on with his writing and said: 'Oh she is innocent.' 'What!' Lady G. exclaimed in the most extreme astonishment. 'Innocent?' 'She did it in her sleep,' said the Commandant without looking up. 'In her sleep!' Lady G. replied. 'And such a monstrous event might be ...?' 'The fool!' the Commandant cried, threw all his papers into disorder, and left the room.

When next there were newspapers Lady G., as both were sitting at breakfast, read out the following reply in print still wet from the press:

If the Lady Marquise of O. will present herself on the 3rd at 11 in the morning in the house of Lord G., her father, the man she is seeking will be there, to prostrate himself at her feet.

Lady G.'s voice failed her before she was halfway through this outrageous announcement; she hurried over the rest and handed the paper to the Commandant. He read it three times, as if he could not believe his eyes. 'What do you make of it?' 'Oh how vile she is!' the Commandant replied, stood up. 'Such cunning, such hypocrisy! Ten times the shamelessness of a bitch and couple it with ten times the slyness of a fox and still you fall short of hers! And what a look she has! What a pair of eyes! The eyes of a cherub could not look more truthful.' And he fell to lamenting and was unable to calm himself. But what force, that's what,' the Commandant replied. 'They have learnt their fairy story off by heart, the pair of them, and we are to swallow it here on the third at eleven in the morning. "My darling little girl," I am supposed to say, "these are things I did not know, who would have thought, forgive me, have my blessing and be friends with me again." But there's a bullet for the man who crosses my threshold on the morning of the third. Except that it would be more decent to have him thrown out by the servants.' — Lady G. said, after another reading of the newspaper, that if of two incomprehensible things she was obliged to give credence to one she would sooner believe in some unprecedented quirk of fate than in such baseness in their daughter who had always been exemplary. But even before she had finished the Commandant shouted: 'Do me the kindness of being silent!' and left the room. 'Even to hear of it is detestable to me.'

A few days later the Commandant received from the Marquise in connection with the announcement in the newspaper a letter in which, respectfully and touchingly, she asked him whether, since she was denied the favour of appearing in his house, he would be so kind as to send whoever presented himself on the morning of the third out to her at V. Lady G. happened to be present when the Commandant received this letter; and seeing from the expression on his face that he was confused now in his feelings: for now what motive, if this really were a deception, could he ascribe to her since she seemed not to be making any bid for his forgiveness? — emboldened by this, Lady G. came forward with a plan that she had for a long time harboured in her doubt-ridden heart. She said, as the Commandant continued blankly gazing at the paper, that she had an idea. Would he permit her to go out to V. for a couple of days? She believed she could place the Marquise, should she really be acquainted with the man who had answered her through the newspapers as one unknown to her, in such a situation that she must inevitably betray her innermost heart no matter how suplatively well practised in deception she might be. The Commandant replied, and with a sudden violent movement he tore up the letter: that she knew that he had time to harbour in her doubt-ridden heart. She replied that she knew of this rule but that he should go the country house the porter told her that nobody was admitted to the man she is seeking will be there, to prostrate himself at her feet.

The Commandant's coachmen and drove out with him next morning, while her husband was still in bed, to V. When she arrived at the gate of the country house the porter told her that nobody was admitted to the Marquise. She replied that she knew of this rule but that he should go nevertheless and announce that Lady G. was there. To this he replied that it would be of no use doing so since there was nobody in the world the lady Marquise was willing to see. Lady G. replied that she would be seen by her since she was her mother and that he should not delay any
longer but go and do his duty. But scarcely had the porter gone into the house on this, as he maintained, none the less vain endeavour, than the Marquise was seen to emerge from there, hurry to the gate and throw herself down on her knees beside Lady G.'s carriage. Lady G., assisted by the coachman, got out and in some agitation raised up the Marquise from the ground. The Marquise bowed, overwhelmed by emotion, deep over her hand and frequently giving in to tears led her, with every mark of respect, into the rooms of the house. 'Dearest mother!' she cried, having seated her on the sofa and herself remaining standing, drying her eyes. 'To what happy chance do I owe this visit whose value to me is higher than I can say?' Lady G., affectionately taking hold of her daughter, replied that what she had to say was this: that she had come to ask forgiveness for her harsh expulsion from her father's house. 'Forgiveness!' cried the Marquise, interrupting her, and made to kiss her hands. But her mother, not allowing it, continued: 'For not only has the response published in the latest newspapers to your advertisement convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must ask forgiveness for her harsh expulsion from her father's house. 'Forgiveness!' cried the Marquise, interrupting her, and made to kiss her hands. But her mother, not allowing it, continued: 'For not only has the response published in the latest newspapers to your advertisement convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.' 'Who did?' the Marquise asked and convinced both your father and myself of your innocence, but I must also tell you that yesterday, to our great and joyful astonishment, he appeared in person in our house.'
morning, when the old lady's emotions, which in the night had brought on a fever, had subsided a little, mother, daughter and grandchildren drove as if in triumph back to M. They were in excellent spirits along the way, joked about Leopardo the coachman sitting forward on the box, and the mother said to the Marquise that she noticed her blushing whenever she looked at his broad back. The Marquise answered, with a start that was half a sigh and half a smile: 'Who knows who it will be after all who appears in our house on the third at eleven in the morning.'

Then the closer they got to M. the more serious their mood became in the apprehension of the decisive scenes still awaiting them. Lady G., revealing nothing of her plans, conducted her daughter, when they got out of the carriage outside the house, back into her old rooms; said to make herself comfortable, she would be with her again in no time, and crept away. She came back an hour later, very flushed in the face. 'What a Thomas!' she said with some secret inner satisfaction, 'what a doubting Thomas! Has it not just taken me one full hour of the clock to convince him? But now he is sitting there weeping.' 'Who?' the Marquise asked. 'Him,' the mother replied. 'Who else but the one who has most cause to?' 'Not my father?' the Marquise cried. 'Like a child,' the mother answered, 'so that I should have laughed at him as soon as I got outside the door, had I not had tears of my own to dry.' 'And because of me?' the Marquise asked, and stood up; 'and here I am ...'

'Do not move,' said Lady G. 'Why did he dictate that letter to me? He can come and look for you here if he ever wants to be with me again so long as I live.' 'My dearest mother,' the Marquise, begging her. — 'Implacable!' said Lady G., interrupting. 'Why did he reach for his pistol?' — 'But I beseech you.' — 'You shall not,' Lady G. replied, pressing her daughter back into her seat. 'And if he is not here before evening, tomorrow I will leave this place with you.' The Marquise called this a harsh and unjust measure. But her mother replied: 'Calm yourself, for she had just heard somebody drawing nearer, sobbing. 'Tiere he is.' 'Where?' asked the Marquise, and listened. 'Is there somebody outside the door? The loud ...' 'Indeed yes,' Lady G. replied. 'He wants us to open the door for him.' 'Let me then,' the Marquise cried, and stood up in haste. But: 'If you really have forgiven me, Julietta,' Lady G. answered, 'stay where you are'; and at that moment the Commandant came in, holding a handkerchief over his face. The mother stood in front of her daughter, turning her back on him. 'Dearest father!' the Marquise cried, and stretched out her arms towards him. 'Stay where you are,' said Lady G. 'Do you hear?' The Commandant stood there in the parlor, weeping. 'Let him beg your pardon,' Lady G. continued. 'Why is he so violent? And why is he so stubborn? I love him, but I love you too; I honour him, but I honour you too. And if I have to make a choice you are a better person than he is and I stand by you.' The Commandant bent double and howled. The walls rang with it. 'Dear God in heaven!' the Marquise cried, suddenly ceased struggling against her mother and took out a handkerchief, to let her own tears flow. Lady G. said: 'It is just that he cannot speak', and moved a little to one side. Thereupon the Marquise got to her feet, embraced the Commandant and begged him to calm himself. She was herself weeping violently. She asked would he not like to sit down; she tried to manoeuvre him into a chair; pushed one towards him so that he should sit in it: but he made no reply; he could not be budged; nor would he be seated but merely stood there bowing down his face almost to the floor and weeping. The Marquise said, holding him upright and half turning towards her mother, that he was going to be ill; the mother herself, since he was behaving as if in a fit, seemed about to lose her steadiness. But when finally the Commandant, repeatedly urged to by his daughter, had seated himself and she, ceaselessly caressing him, had sunk down at his feet, she spoke again and said it served him right, now perhaps he would see reason, withdrew from the room and left them alone.

Once outside she dried her own tears, wondered whether the violent agitation she had thrown him into might not after all be dangerous and whether it might not be advisable to send for a doctor. In the kitchen she cooked him, for the evening, a meal of all the fortifying and calming things she could lay hands on, made up and warmed his bed to lay him in it just as soon as he should appear hand in hand with his daughter, and crept, when he still had not come and the evening meal was ready to serve, to the Marquise's room to find out, by listening, what was happening there. She could hear, when she laid her ear softly against the door, a gentle murmuring, just dying away, that seemed to be coming from the Marquise; and, as she saw through the keyhole that lady was sitting on the Commandant's lap, a thing he had never permitted in his life before. Then at last she opened the door and saw — and her heart swelled up in her for joy: the daughter, lying still in her father's arms, her head thrown back and her eyes tight shut; whilst he, sitting in the armchair, his wide eyes full of shining tears, was kissing her lips, at length, with passion, greedily: exactly like a lover. The daughter said nothing, he said nothing, he sat there with his face bowed over her as over the first girl he had ever loved, and arranged her mouth and kissed her. The mother felt like one of the blessed; unnoticed, standing behind his chair, she was loath to intrude upon such pleasures and interrupt the
heavenly joyous reconciliation that had visited her house. She
approached the father at last and bending around the side of the
armchair watched him as he busied himself once more in unspeakable
pleasure over his daughter’s mouth. The Commandant, catching sight of
her, bowed down his face already crumpling again and was about to say
something; but she cried out: ‘What sort of a face is that?’ and herself
now kissed it into better shape and with pleasantries brought all the
emotion to an end. She invited and led in the two of them, walking like a
bridal pair, to table and over the meal, although the Commandant was
very cheerful, he did not eat or speak much but so ~bed ~rom t~
time and looked down at his plate and played with his daughters
hand. * ·

Then the question was: who in all the world would present himself at
eleven o’clock on the following day; for that day was the third of the
month, the day they dreaded. Father and mother and also the brother,
who had made his appearance, to be reconciled, were, if the person
should be in the least degree tolerable, decidedly in favour of marriage;
everything at all possible was to be done to make the Marquise’s
situation a happy one. However, if the person’s circumstances were such
that they would, even after favours and assistance, be still too far below
the Marquise’s, then in that case the parents were opposed to a
marriage; they were resolved to keep the Marquise with them as bef ~re,
whatever the case, unless the person were wholly wicked, to keep her
and to adopt the child. The Marquise on the other hand seemed willmg
word and get the child a father cost what it might. That evening the
mother asked how .the reception of the person should be managed. The
Commandant thought it would be most proper if the Marquise were left
her brother should be present, for she wished tophare no secrets with
that person. It was also her view that a similar wish seemed contained in
the reply, since the person had suggested the Commandant’s house for
the meeting; one circumstance which, as she candidly admitted, had
made her very pleased with that reply. The mother observed that there
was something improper in the roles-the father and the brother would
have to play; begged the daughter to allow the men to absent themselves
and would then agree to her request and be present herself to receive the
person. The daughter thought for a moment, and finally this last
proposal was adopted. Then, after a night spent in very great suspense,
the morning of the third, of the day they dreaded, broke. As the clock
struck eleven the two women, ceremoniously dressed as though for a
betrothal, were seated in the reception room; their hearts were beating
so that they would have been audible had the noises of the day ceased.
The eleventh hour was still reverberating when Leopardo, the servant
hired by the father from Tyrol, came in. Seeing him the women went
white. ‘Count F.,’ he said, ‘has arrived and asks to be announced.’
‘Count F.?’ they exclaimed at once, flung from one kind of shock into
another. The Marquise cried: ‘Close the doors! We are not at home to
him!’ — rose to lock the room herself immediately and was pushing the
servant, who stood in her way, outside when the Count himself, in
battledress with medals and weapons just as he had been when the fort
was taken, came in to her. The Marquise felt she would sink into the
ground in her confusion; she reached for a handkerchief that she had left
lying on the chair, and made to escape into an adjoining room; but Lady
G., seizing her hand, cried out: ‘Julietta!’ and her voice, as though
choked by thoughts, failed her. She kept her eyes fixed on the Count and
repeated: ‘Julietta, I beg you’, pulling her after her: ‘Whom were we
expecting then?’ The Marquise, turning suddenly, exclaimed: ‘Not him
for sure’, and struck home in him with a look that seared like lightning
while the pallor of death went over her face. The Count had gone down
on one knee before her; his right hand was pressed against his heart, his
head bowed meekly on his breast; he kneeled there with a burning face
and gazed at the floor and said nothing. ‘Who else,’ Lady G. exclaimed
in a hampered voice, ‘who else — were we out of our minds? — but
him?’ The Marquise stood rigid over him and said: ‘Mother, I shall go
mad. ‘Fool,’ her mother replied, drew her close and whispered in her
ear. The Marquise turned and, covering her face with her hands, flung
herself down on the sofa. The Mother cried: ‘What is it, child? What is
the matter? What has happened that you were not prepared for?’ — The
Count did not move from Lady G.’s side. Still on his knees, he took up
the outermost hem of her dress and kissed it. ‘Dear lady, gracious lady,
worthier of respect than words can say,’ he whispered, and a tear rolled
down his cheek. Lady G. said: ‘Stand up, Count, stand up. Comfort her;
then we are all friends again and everything is forgiven and forgotten.’
The Count stood up, weeping. Before the Marquise he went down on his
knees again, gently he took her hand as though it were made of gold and
the aura of his own might tarnish it. But she: ‘Go away! Go away! Go
away!’ she cried, rising to her feet. ‘I was prepared for a vicious man but
not for a ... devil!’ — opened, avoiding him like a leper, the room door
and said: ‘Call the Commandant!’ ‘Julietta!’ Lady G. cried in astonishment.
The Marquise stared with a lethal wildness now at the Count,
now at her mother, her breath came fast, her face was flaming; the gaze
of a fury is not more terrible. The Commandant and the Forester came
in. 'To this man, Father,' she said before they were through the door, 'I cannot be married', dipped her hand into a stoup of holy water affixed to the back of the door and in one large throw sprinkled father, mother and brother with it, and vanished.

The Commandant, surprised by this apparition, asked what had happened; and went white at that decisive moment seeing Count F. there in the room. The mother took the Count by the hand and said: 'Ask no questions. With all his heart this young man regrets what has occurred. Give him your blessing; do it, do it; then everything will still end happily.' The Count stood like a man annihilated. The Commandant laid his hand on him; his eyelashes twitched, his lips were as white as chalk. 'May heaven's curse be lifted from off this head!' he cried. 'When is it your intention to marry?' - 'Tomorrow,' said the mother, answering for him since he could not speak, 'tomorrow or today, as you like. The Count, who has shown such admirable eagerness to make good his wrongdoing, the soonest opportunity will suit him best.' - 'Then I shall have the pleasure of meeting you tomorrow at the Augustinians' church at eleven,' said the Commandant, bowed to him, summoned wife and son to follow him into the Marquise's room, and left him standing where he was.

They tried in vain to get the Marquise to tell them why she had behaved so strangely; she lay in a high fever, would not hear a word about a marriage and begged to be left alone. Being asked: why had she suddenly changed her mind and what made the Count more hateful to her than anyone else she looked distractedly at her father with wide eyes, and gave no answer. Lady G. said: had she forgotten that she was going to have a child? To which she replied that in her situation she must think of herself more than her child; and again, calling on all the saints and angels to be her witnesses, she swore that she would not marry. The father, seeing the obvious over-excitement of her emotions, declared that she must keep her word; left her and, after the proper consultation in writing with the Count, made the arrangements for the wedding. He presented the Count with a marriage contract in which he was to renounce all the husband's rights and agree to all the duties that would be imposed on him. The Count returned the paper signed and soaked with his tears. When next morning the Commandant handed this paper to the Marquise her spirits were a little calmer. She read it through several times, sitting up in bed; folded it thoughtfully, opened it and read it through again; and then announced that she would be there in the Augustinians' church at eleven o'clock. She rose, dressed, without saying a word, got into the carriage with her family as the clock was striking, and drove off.

Only in the church porch was the Count permitted to join the family. Throughout the ceremony the Marquise stared fixedly at the painting on the altar; not one fleeting glance did she grant the man with whom she exchanged rings. When the priest had joined them the Count offered her his arm; but as soon as they were outside the church the Countess bowed and withdrew from him; the Commandant asked would he have the honour of seeing him in his daughter's apartments from time to time, to which the Count stammered something that nobody understood, took off his hat to the company, and disappeared. He took an apartment in M., and spent some months there without once setting foot in the Commandant's house, where the Countess remained. It was entirely owing to his delicate, dignified and exemplary behaviour on all occasions when he came at all into contact with the family that, after the Countess had given birth to a son, he was invited to the christening. The Countess, who, wrapped in shawls, was sitting on her bed, saw him only for a moment when he appeared in the door and greeted her from a distance with great reverence. Into the cradle, among the gifts with which the guests had welcomed the new arrival, he threw two documents: the one, as was discovered after his departure, being a gift of twenty thousand roubles to the boy, and the other a testament in which, in the event of his death, he made the mother the heir of all his fortune. From that day forth, at the instigation of Lady G., he was often invited, the house was open to him, soon no evening passed without his putting in an appearance. He began, since his feelings told him that on all sides now, in a world as fallible and fragile as ours is, he was forgiven, his courtship of the Countess, his wife, over again; and a year later, for the second time, she said yes to him, and a second marriage was celebrated too, more joyous than the first, at the conclusion of which the family removed to V. Quite a series of little Russians now followed the first; and when the Count, in a happy moment, asked his wife why on that terrible third of the month when she seemed prepared to face a vicious man she had fled from him as though he were the devil, she replied, putting her arms around him: he would not on that occasion have appeared to her like a devil had he not on his first appearance seemed to her an angel.