



PART ONE

You need not thank me, my dear friend, for copying so much for you. You know that I had the good fortune to be brought up with the excellent lady from whose biography I send you excerpts and copies of letters that my Lord Seymour gathered from his English friend and from my Emilia. Believe me, it is a heartfelt pleasure that I can occupy myself with something that renews in me the sacred memory of the virtue and goodness of a person who has brought honor to our sex and to mankind.

The father of my beloved Lady Sidney³ was Colonel von Sternheim, only son of a professor at W., who provided him with the most careful education. Magnanimity, greatness of mind, and goodness of heart were the basic traits of his character. At the University of L., friendship united him with the somewhat younger Baron von P. so closely that he not only accompanied him on all his travels but for love of him also entered into military service with him. By associating with him and through his example, the formerly unruly mind of the baron became so pliant and well-meaning that his whole family was grateful to the young man who had led their beloved son to the paths of goodness.

An unforeseen event separated them: Upon the death of his elder brother, the baron had to leave military service and prepare to take over administration of the estates. Sternheim, deeply revered and loved by officers and common men, remained in the service and was given a colonel's commission and ennobled by the prince. "Your merit, not fortune, has elevated you," said the general, when in the name of the prince and in the presence of many persons he handed him the colonel's commission and the patent of nobility. According to general testimony, all his campaigns occasioned the full exercise of magnanimity, charity, and bravery.

Upon the declaration of peace, his first desire was to see the friend with whom he had continuously exchanged letters. His heart knew no other bond. He had already lost his father long before, and as the latter had himself been a stranger in W., his son was left with no close relatives. Colonel von Sternheim therefore traveled to P. to enjoy the quiet pleasures of friendship.

Baron P., his friend, had married an amiable lady and lived happily with his mother and two sisters on the beautiful estates his father had left him. The von P. family, one of the most respected in those parts, was often visited by the numerous members of the neighboring nobility. Baron P. alternately gave parties and small fêtes. The solitary days were spent in reading good books, proper management of the domain, and genteel and decent conduct of the household.

At times he held small concerts as well because the younger of the two young ladies played the piano, while the older played the lute and sang beautifully, accompanied by her brother and some of his men. The latter lady's state of mind disturbed this quiet scene. She was the only child of Baron P. and his first wife, a Lady Watson, whom he had married during an ambassadorial mission in England. In addition to all the gentle amiability of an Englishwoman, this young lady seemed to have inherited from her mother the melancholy which distinguishes that nation. A secret sorrow suffused her countenance. She loved solitude, which she put to use in diligently reading the best books, without, however, neglecting any opportunities of sequestering herself with the members of her family without outside company.

Her brother, the baron, who loved her tenderly, was troubled by the state of her health. He tried his best to divert her and discover the cause of her sadness. On several occasions he begged her to open her heart to her faithful, loving brother. She looked at him, thanked him for his solicitude, and with tear-filled eyes begged him to let her keep her secret and merely to love her. This disquieted him. He feared that some past error might be at the root of this sadness. He observed her closely at all times but discovered nothing that provided him with the slightest confirmation of his fear. She was always under his or her mother's eyes, talked with none of the household, and avoided every kind of conversation. Then, for a time, she forced herself to remain in society, and a quiet cheerfulness gave hope that the attack of melancholy had passed.

The family's joy over this recovery was increased by the unexpected arrival of Colonel von Sternheim, of whom the whole family had heard so much and whose excellence of mind and heart they had admired in his letters. He surprised them one evening in their garden. The baron's delight and the eager attention paid him by the others cannot be described. It did not take long before his nobility and kindness spread the same joy through the whole household. The colonel was presented as a special family friend to all the nobility of their acquaintance and was included in all their gatherings.

In the baron's house he gave an account of his life, recounting, with grace, without prolixity, and in that manly tone which characterizes the man of wisdom and the friend of mankind, the remarkable and useful

things he had seen. For him, in turn, they painted the picture of country life, with now the baron speaking of the benefits that the master's constant presence confers on those who serve him, now the old lady of that part of the rural economy which concerns the family matriarch, now the two young ladies of the pleasant diversions that life in the country offers at each season of the year. After this description followed the question, "My friend, would you not wish to spend the remaining days of your life in the country?"

"Yes, my dear baron, but it would have to be on my own lands and in the neighborhood of yours."

"That is quite possible, for only a mile from here there is an agreeable estate to be purchased. I have permission to go there whenever I wish; tomorrow we shall inspect it."

On the following day, both gentlemen rode there, accompanied by the pastor of P., a very worthy man from whom the ladies obtained a description of the moving scene that took place between the two friends. The baron showed the colonel the entire estate and conducted him into the pleasantly situated house adjacent to the garden. Here they took their breakfast. The colonel expressed his satisfaction with all that he had seen and asked the baron whether it were true that one might purchase this estate.

"Yes, my friend; do you like it?"

"Entirely; it would separate me from nothing that I love."

"Oh, how happy I am, my dear friend," said the baron as he embraced him; "I bought this estate these three years ago in order to offer it to you. I restored the house and have often, in this very cabinet, prayed for your preservation. Now I shall have the guide of my youth for my life's witness."

The colonel was extraordinarily moved. He could not sufficiently express his gratitude and his delight in the noble heart of his friend. He assured him that he would spend the rest of his life in this house, but at the same time he demanded to know what the estate had cost. The baron was obliged to reveal it and also to prove it by means of the bills of sale. The revenue was higher than seemed indicated by the purchase price, but the baron insisted upon accepting no more than he had spent.

"My friend," he said, "for three years I have done nothing but apply all the revenues of the estate to its improvement and beautification. I delighted myself with the thought, 'you are working for the retirement days of the best of men; here you will see him and relive in his company the happy times of your youth; his counsel and his example will add to the satisfaction of your soul and to the betterment of your family,'—these thoughts were my reward."

When they came home, the baron presented the colonel to his mother and sister as a new neighbor. All rejoiced to know that they would permanently enjoy his pleasant company.

The colonel took up residence immediately upon assuming ownership of the small domain consisting of only two villages. He also gave a banquet for the close neighbors, and thereafter he immediately began to build, adding two beautiful wings to the sides of the house, planting avenues of trees and a pretty grove for recreation, all in the English taste. He pursued this work with the greatest zeal. Nevertheless, from time to time his face was clouded. The baron observed this without, at first, showing that he did so, but in the following autumn he felt certain that the colonel's temper had altered and could then no longer remain silent. Sternheim came less frequently, talked less, and soon departed again. His servants regretted the strange melancholy afflicting their master.

The baron was the more troubled as his heart was also oppressed by the renewed sadness of his elder sister. He went to the colonel, found him alone and, engrossed in thought, embraced him with tender sadness, exclaiming, "Oh, my friend! How vain are even the noblest, the purest joys of our hearts! For long I lacked nothing but your presence; now that I see you, now that I hold you in my arms, I find you sad! Your heart, your confidence, are no longer mine. Have you perhaps yielded too much to the demands of friendship in making your home here? Dearest, best of friends, do not torture yourself! Your happiness is dearer to me than my own. I shall take back the estate; it will be precious to me because every part of it will renew for me your treasured memory and your image."

Here he paused; tears filled his eyes as they fastened on his friend's face. In it he saw mirrored a soul in the greatest agitation. The colonel stood up and embraced the baron, saying, "Noble P., never believe that my friendship, my trust toward you, are diminished; even less believe that I regret the decision to spend my days close to you. Oh, your nearness is dearer to me than you can imagine! I find that I must fight a passion which has attacked my heart for the first time. I had hoped to be sensible and magnanimous, but I have not yet become so to the extent which the state of my soul necessitates. But it is impossible for me to speak to you of that; my heart and solitude are the only confidants I can have."

The baron pressed him to his breast. "I know you to be truthful in all things," he said. "Thus I do not doubt your assurances of your undiminished friendship. But why do you come so rarely to see me? Why do you hurry away again so coldly?"

"Coldly, my friend! Coldly I hurry from your house? Oh P., if only you knew the burning longing that draws me to you, that keeps me for hours at my window, from which I see the dear house where all my desires, all my felicity dwell. Oh, P.!"

The baron became alarmed because the thought occurred to him that his friend might perhaps love his wife, and that he might be avoiding his

house because he sought to gain control of himself. He determined to be watchful and more reserved.

The colonel sat quietly and the baron, too, sought to regain his composure. At last the latter began thus: "My friend, I hold your secret inviolable; I will not force it from your bosom; but you have given me cause to think that at least part of that secret concerns my house. May I not inquire after that part?"

"No, no! Ask me nothing and leave me to myself!"

The baron fell silent and departed, sad and pensive.

The following day, the colonel came, asked the baron's pardon for having let him return home so unfeelingly the previous day, and said that it had distressed him the whole evening. "Dear baron," he added, "honor and magnanimity tie my tongue. Do not doubt my heart and love me!"

He remained the whole day in P. Lady Sophia and Lady Charlotte were asked by their brother to do all they could to cheer his friend. But the colonel stayed for the most part near the old lady and the baron's wife. In the evening, Lady Charlotte played the lute, the baron and two of the servingmen accompanied her, and Lady Sophia was entreated so earnestly to sing that in the end she complied.

The colonel placed himself in a window where, with the curtain half drawn, he listened to the little family concert, and became so entranced that he failed to notice his friend's wife standing so close as to hear him say, "Oh, Sophia, why are you my friend's sister? Why do the advantages of your birth oppose the lofty, the tender inclination of my heart?"

The lady was dismayed. To avoid the embarrassment he would have felt had he thought she overheard him, she withdrew, happy to be able to allay the uneasiness that plagued her husband because of the colonel's melancholy. As soon as all had gone to bed, she spoke to him of her discovery. The baron now understood what the colonel had meant when he defended himself on account of the supposed coldness of which he had been accused.

"Would the colonel be as dear to you as a brother, as he is as my friend?" he asked his wife.

"Certainly my dearest! For should not the deserts of this upright man have as much value as the advantages of name and birth?"

"Worthy, noble half of my being," cried the baron; "then help me overcome the prejudices of my mother and Sophia."

"I fear their prejudices less than I fear a prior inclination which our dear Sophia may nurture in her heart. I do not know its object, but she loves and has loved for long already. Attempts at writing down her observations, laments against fate, against parting, which I have found in her escritoire, have convinced me of it. I have watched her, but have been able to discover nothing further."

"I shall speak with her," said the baron, "and see whether there may not be a chink through which her heart might be espied."

On the next morning, the baron went to see Lady Sophia, and after many kind inquiries about her health, he took her hands in his. "Dear, precious Sophia," said he, "you assure me of your well-being; why then this sorrowful face? Why the tone of grief? Why the fondness for solitude? Why do so many sighs escape this noble and kind heart? Oh, if you knew how much concern you have caused me during your long period of melancholy, you would not have closed your heart to me."

Here she was overwhelmed by her affection for him. She did not withdraw her hands; she pressed her brother's to her breast and laid her head on his shoulder. "Brother, you break my heart! I cannot bear the thought that I have caused you sorrow. I love you as my own life. I am happy. Bear with me and never talk to me of marriage."

"Why, my child? You would make a worthy man so happy!"

"And a worthy man would make me happy too; but I know—" Tears prevented her from saying more.

"Oh Sophia, do not obstruct the honest emotion of your soul. Pour out its sentiments into the faithful bosom of your brother. Child, I believe there is a man whom you love, with whom your heart has an alliance."

"No brother, my heart has no alliance—"

"Is this true, my Sophia?"

"Yes, my brother, yes. . . ." Here the baron folded her in his arms. "Oh, that you had the resolute, the beneficent soul of your mother!"

She was surprised. "Why, my brother? What do you mean? Have I done aught that is wrong?"

"Never my dear, never. But you could come to that if prejudice mattered more to you than virtue and reason."

"Brother, you confuse me. In what event would I renounce virtue and reason?"

"You must not take it thus. The case of which I am thinking is not contrary to virtue and reason, and yet they could both lose their claims with you."

"Brother, talk plainly; I am determined to answer according to my innermost sentiments."

"Sophia, the assurance that your heart is without alliance permits me to ask you what you would do if a man of wisdom and virtue were to love you and ask for your hand, but were not of ancient nobility."

At these last words she became frightened; she trembled and could not compose herself. The baron did not wish to torture her heart for long, but rather continued, "If this man were the friend to whom your brother owes the goodness and felicity of his heart—Sophia, what would you do?"

She did not speak but became thoughtful and by turns blushed and grew pale.

“I alarm you, my sister. The colonel loves you. This passion accounts for his sadness, for he is doubtful of being accepted. I confess to you freely that I wish I could recompense him, through you, for all the favors he has shown me. But if your heart is against it, then forget all I have said to you.”

The young lady struggled to find courage but was silent a good while. Finally she asked the baron, “Brother, is it certain that the colonel loves me?” Then the baron told her all he had learned of the colonel’s love through conversations with him and finally through the longings which his wife had overheard.

“My brother,” said Sophia, “I am of a candid nature, and you so well deserve my entire trust that I shall not defer telling you that the colonel is the only man on earth whose wife I wish to become.”

“The disparity of birth then is not objectionable to you?”

“Not at all; his noble heart, his learning, and his friendship for you make amends for his deficiency of birth.”

“Noble-minded maiden! You gladden me by your decision, dearest Sophia. But why did you ask me to say nothing of marriage to you?”

“Because I feared you were talking of another,” said she softly, while her burning face lay on her brother’s shoulder.

He embraced her and kissed her hand. “This hand,” he said, “will be a boon to my friend. From me he will receive it. But, my child, Mama and Charlotte will oppose you; will you remain steadfast?”

“Brother, you shall see that I have an English heart. But as I have answered all your questions, I must pose one, too: What did you think of my sadness, seeing that you asked me about it so often?”

“I thought there might be a secret love, and I feared its object because you were so secretive.”

“Then my brother did not believe that the letters of his friend which he read to us, and all else which he told us of that excellent man, could make an impression on my heart?”

“Dear Sophia, was it then my friend’s merit that troubled you so? Fortunate man, whom a noble maiden loves for his virtue! God bless my sister for her candor! Now I can cure my friend’s heart of its consuming grief.”

“Do all that can content him, only spare me in doing so; you know that a woman may not love unbidden.”

“Calm yourself, my child; your honor is my own.”

Here he left her and went to his wife, to inform her of the joyful discovery. Then he hastened to the colonel, whom he found sad and grave. Various attempts at conversation met but with brief response. A fatal restlessness was in all his gestures.

“Did I disturb you, colonel?” the baron asked in a voice that expressed the tenderest friendship of a young man toward his mentor, while he took the colonel’s hand.

"Yes, dear baron, you have interrupted my decision to go away for a while."

"Travel? And—alone?"

"Dear P., I am in a frame of mind which makes my company unpleasant; I want to see what diversion may do."

"My dearest friend, may I not look into your heart? Can I do nothing for your peace of mind?"

"You have done enough for me. You are the joy of my life. What I lack now must be supplied by good sense and time."

"Sternheim, you spoke lately of a passion which you must overcome. I know you; your heart can nurture no indecent, no evil passion. It must be love that makes your days a torment."

"Never, P., never shall you know what causes my present grief."

"Worthy friend, I shall deceive you no longer. I know the object of your love. Your affection has found a witness; I am indeed fortunate: You love my Sophia." The baron put his arms around the colonel who was quite beside himself; he tried to disengage himself; he was uneasy.

"P., what are you saying? What are you asking me?"

"I want to know whether the hand of my sister is the felicity you desire."

"Impossible, for it would be a misfortune for you all."

"I have then your confession; but wherein lies the misfortune?"

"Yes, you have my confession. Your sister is the first woman toward whom my whole soul inclines, but I shall overcome that inclination. You shall not be accused of sacrificing to your friendship a proper respect for your forebears. Lady Sophia shall not on my account lose any claim to happiness and privilege. Swear to me that you will not say one word of this to her, or you see me today for the last time."

"You think nobly, my friend, but you must not become unjust. Your departure would sadden not only me, but Sophia and my wife. You shall be my brother!"

"P., you torture me more with this encouragement than does the impossibility which counters my wishes."

"Friend, you have the voluntary, tender consent of my sister. You have my wife's and my own best wishes. We have thought of all that you can think of. Shall I beg you to become the husband of Sophia von P.?"

"Oh God, how severely you judge my heart! You believe then that it is stubborn pride that makes me irresolute?"

"I shall not answer. Embrace me and call me brother. Tomorrow you shall be so. Sophia is yours. Do not look upon her as Lady P. but rather as an amiable and virtuous young woman whose possession will felicitate all your days to come and joyfully accept this boon from the hand of your faithful friend."

“Sophia mine? Mine in free affection? Enough! You bestow all; I can do nothing other than freely renounce all.”

“Renounce? After being assured that you are loved?—Oh my sister, how badly have I served your excellent heart!”

“What are you saying, P.? And how can you tear my heart with such a reproach? If you are high-minded, shall I not be so, too? Shall I close my eyes to the disapproving looks of the neighboring nobility?”

“Yes, you shall—when your joy and happiness is in question.”

“What then would you have me do?”

“Let me return home with the request that I speak with my mother of my wish, and come to us when I send you word.”

The colonel could say no more. He embraced the baron, who returned home and went directly to his mother, who was attended by the two young ladies and his wife. He conducted the older young lady to her room because he wanted to give her the account of his visit in private, and asked her to leave him for a while with their lady mother and Charlotte. On rejoining them, he made a formal proposal on behalf of his friend. The old lady was taken aback; he observed it and said, “Dearest mother, all your concerns are well-founded. The noble class must be perpetuated through noble alliances. But Sternheim’s virtues have been the foundation of all great families. People are not wrong in thinking that great attributes of the soul could be inherited by daughters and sons and that every father should, therefore, seek the daughter of a nobleman for a noble son. I, too, do not really wish to advocate that marriage outside one’s condition become the custom; but here is a special case, a case which rarely occurs: Sternheim’s merits, together with the character of a genuine colonel, a title which should itself be considered noble, justify the hope I have given him.”

“In truth, my son, I have scruples. But the man has earned my entire esteem. I should like to see him happy.”

“My wife, what say you?”

“That in the case of a man such as this one, a justifiable exception may be made. I shall gladly call him brother.”

“Not I,” said Lady Charlotte.

“Why not, my dear?”

“Because this fine match is being made at the expense of my happiness.”

“How so, Charlotte?”

“Because who will seek out our house for a marriage if the elder daughter has been thus thrown away?”

“Thrown away? On a man of virtue and honor, on a friend of your brother’s?”

“Perhaps you have another university friend of like virtue who will apply for me in order to reinforce his budding honor, and you will then once again have ready reasons for your consent.”

“Charlotte, my daughter, what language!”

“I must use it because no one in the whole family thinks of me and our forefathers.”

“I see, Charlotte; and when one thinks of one’s ancestors, one may insult one’s brother and a noble-minded gentleman?” said the young Baroness P.

“I have already heard the exception you make on behalf of the ‘noble-minded gentleman.’ Other families will also make exceptions if a son of theirs should want Charlotte for a wife.”

“Charlotte, he who renounces you because of Sternheim is not worthy of your hand or of a connection with me. You see that I am proud of the ‘wicked’ younger sister, even though I ‘throw away’ the ‘good’ older one on a university friend.”

“The younger sister must certainly be wicked if she does not want to be used to repay a debt.”

“How unreasonably malicious my sister can be! You have nothing to fear from my proposals. I shall speak for no one but a Sternheim, and for him a character like yours is not sufficiently noble, even if you were a princess.”

“Gracious Mama, do you hear how I am mistreated because of that miserable fellow?”

“You have abused your brother’s patience. Can you not advance your objections more calmly?”

She was about to speak, but her brother interrupted her: “Charlotte, say no more; the expression ‘miserable fellow’ has cost you your brother! The affairs of my house no longer concern you. Your heart dishonors the forebears of whom you are so proud. Oh, how few would be the nobility if only those could call themselves noble who could prove their claims by possessing the virtues of the noble souls which the founders of their houses had.”

“Dear son, do not become too zealous. It really would be unfortunate if our daughters were so easily inclined to marry below themselves.”

“There is no danger of that. Rarely does there exist a Sophia who loves a man merely because of his good sense and magnanimity.”

Lady Charlotte here withdrew.

“But did not you yourself once cite your beloved English, who are less forgiving of daughters who marry outside their condition than of sons, because a daughter must give up her name and bear that of her husband, consequently demeaning herself?”

“That is quite true, but in England my friend would have been exempted a thousand times from conforming to this principle, and the maiden who loved him would have been renowned as a high-minded young woman.”

"I well see, my son, that this alliance is a closed question. But have you considered that people will say you are sacrificing your sister to an exaggerated friendship and that I am acting the stepmother in consenting?"

"Dear Mama, let it be so! Our motive will console us; and the happiness of my sister, together with the merits of my friend, will be so apparent that people will cease to condemn us."

Lady Sophia was then brought in by her brother. She prostrated herself before her mother. The good lady embraced her. "Dear daughter," said she, "your brother has assured me that this bond accords with your wishes; otherwise I should not have consented. It is true, the man lacks nothing but a gentle birth. But—God bless you both!"

In the meantime, the baron had left to find the colonel, who entered the room almost beside himself; but he went straight to the old lady, kissed her hands on bended knee, and said with manly grace, "Madam, ever believe that I look upon your consent as a condescending goodness; be assured also that I shall never prove unworthy of that goodness."

She was kind enough to say, "I am pleased, colonel, that your merits have found a reward in my house."

Then he kissed the hands of his friend's wife. "How much gratitude and reverence do I owe to the generous first advocate of my heart's desire!"

"Not at all, colonel. I am proud to have contributed to the felicity of your heart; your brotherly friendship shall be my reward."

He wanted to speak to his friend who, however, motioned him toward Lady Sophia. He knelt silently by her, and finally the noble man spoke: "Madam, my heart was created to reverence virtue. How was it possible to see an excellent soul like yours, attended by all external charms, without my feelings being enlivened into wishes? I would have smothered those wishes, but your brother's faithful friendship emboldened me to hope for your affection. You have not spurned me. May God reward your loving heart and let me never lose these virtues that have gained me your respect!"

Lady Sophia replied only with a bow and gave him her hand with a sign to rise. Thereupon the baron approached them and, holding both by the hand, led them to his mother.

"Gracious Mama," he said, "in me, nature has given you a son by whom you are entirely honored and loved; in my friend, fate has given you a second son who is deserving of all your esteem and kindness. You have often wished that our Sophia might be happy. Her union to this brilliant, worthy man will fulfill that maternal wish. Lay your hands on the hands of your children; I know that your maternal blessing is sacred and precious to their hearts."

The lady placed her hands on theirs and said, "My children, if God vouchsafe you as many blessings and pleasures as I shall ask of Him, you will lack nothing."

Now the baron embraced the colonel as his brother, and also the happy bride, whom he thanked tenderly for the sentiments she had shown to his friend. The colonel dined with them. Lady Charlotte did not come to the table. The wedding took place without ostentatious display.

Several days after the ceremony, a letter was written by

Lady Sternheim to Her Mother

Although the bad weather and a slight indisposition prevent me from attending my gracious Mama in person, I shall not deny my heart the great pleasure of conversing with you by letter.

The company of my dear husband and the consideration of the duties assigned to me within the circle of my new life truly compensate me for the loss of all other amusements and pleasures, but they also vividly renew all the noble sentiments my heart has ever nurtured. Among these belongs the grateful love which your goodness has deserved from me for these many years, during which I have found in your excellent soul all the faithful and tender care that I could have received from my real mother.

And yet I must confess that your gracious consent to my union with Sternheim is the greatest kindness you have shown me. This has secured my life's whole happiness, which I neither seek nor recognize elsewhere than in circumstances wherein one can live according to one's character and inclinations. Such was my wish, and Providence has granted it to me: a man whose mind and heart are worthy of my entire admiration; a moderate but independent fortune whose amount and income suffice to maintain our household in noble moderation, yet agreeably to our rank, and that further affords our hearts the joy of succoring many families of industrious peasants and of encouraging them with small gifts.

Permit me to recount to you a conversation I had with the dear man whose name I bear.

After my gracious Mama, my brother, sister, and my sister-in-law were gone, I realized, so to speak for the first time, the whole significance of my union. The change in my name indicated to me the change in my duties which I saw ranged before me. These reflections, which wholly occupied my mind, were, I think, made more vivid by external matters: a different home, the absence of all those with whom I had lived from my childhood, the first agitation at their departure, etc. All this gave me I know not what grave appearance, which my husband noticed. With an expression of gentle joy he came to me as I sat thoughtfully in my closet, stopped in the middle of the room, looked at me with tender solicitude, and said, 'You are thoughtful, dearest wife, may I disturb you?'

I could not answer, but gave him my hand. He kissed it; and after he had pulled up a chair close to me, he began: 'I revere your whole family;

but I must say that I welcome this day, from whence I can dedicate all the sentiments of my heart solely to my wife. Give me your trust as you have given me your esteem, and believe that you will never be unhappy with the man whom you have so generously preferred to all others. Your father's house is not far from us, and here in this one your magnanimous heart will take pleasure in making me, our servants, and our tenants happy.

"I know that for many years you had charge of the economy of your mother's house. Let me ask you to keep that office and all that pertains to it in this house also. You will greatly oblige me by doing so, since I intend to employ all my leisure for the good of our little domain. I view that employment not only as the exercise of benevolence and justice, but I intend also to determine whether the circumstances of my dependants might be improved by a different distribution of the farms, by better management of the schools, tillage, and animal husbandry.

"I have acquired some knowledge of all these matters; for in the fortunate middle class of human society into which I was born, the enlargement of the mind and the exercise of most virtues are considered not only as duties but also as the basis for our prosperity. I shall always gratefully remember these advantages because it is to them that I owe the inestimable felicity of your love. Had I been born to the rank and fortune that I now possess, perhaps my eagerness to make a name for myself would not have been so great. But the most valuable gift which Providence bestowed on me in the past years of my life was the father it gave me, because in other circumstances I certainly would have lacked the faithful and wise guide that he was to me in my youth.

"Because of his prudence and his knowledge of my mind, and perhaps of the human heart generally, he concealed from me the greatest part of his wealth, first to prevent the negligence with which only sons of the rich apply themselves to learning, and further to avoid the temptations to which this kind of young person is exposed, and because he thought that, when once I had learned to employ well the powers of my soul for myself and others, in times to come I would also know how to make wise and noble use of these earthly goods.

"Therefore, my father sought to make me good and happy through virtue and knowledge before he gave me the means by which I could gain for myself and distribute to others all the varieties of material wealth and pleasure. The love and exercise of virtue, he said, bestow on their possessor a happiness that is independent of fate and men. At the same time through the example of his noble actions and through the instruction and delight that his counsel and companionship afford, he becomes a moral benefactor of his fellow men.

"Through such principles and an education founded upon them, he made me a worthy friend for your brother and, as I flatter myself, a worthy

possessor of your heart. Half of my life is now over. Thank God it has been marked neither by extraordinary misfortunes nor by transgressions against my duties! The blessed moment when the kind and noble heart of Sophia P. was moved to favor me was the moment when the design for the true happiness of my remaining days was complete. Tender gratitude and reverence for you will be the constant inclination of my soul."

Here he paused, kissed both my hands, and asked my pardon for talking so much.

I could do no less than assure him that I had listened with pleasure, and I asked him to continue because I believed he wished to say more to me.

"I do not want to tire you, dearest wife; but I wish you to see my whole heart. Since you seem to wish it, I shall touch on just a few more points.

"At each step of my studies and military service, I have made it a habit to inquire carefully into all the duties to myself, my superiors, and others that I was obligated to fulfill there. According to the understanding thus gained, I apportioned my attention and time. My ambition urged me to do promptly and thoroughly all that was required of me. When it was done, I also considered the diversions which were best suited to my disposition. I have applied similar reflections to my present circumstances, and now I find myself charged with four kinds of obligations.

"The first, to my amiable wife, is easy for me because my whole heart will always be ready to fulfill it. The second is to your family and the rest of the nobility, whom I will show through my actions—without flattery or servility—that I was not unworthy of the hand of Sophia P. and of being accepted into the baronial class. The third obligation is to the persons of the class from which I was raised. I will never give them cause to think that I have forgotten my origin. They shall see neither pride nor base humility in me. Fourth, there are the duties to my subordinates, for whose well-being I shall take care in all ways, so that the subjection into which fate has placed them is not only tolerable but pleasant to their hearts; and I shall strive to conduct myself in a way that they shall gladly accede to the distinction that temporal fortune has made between me and them.

"The worthy pastor in P. has undertaken to provide me with a young man to be curate of my parish, with whose help I would like to fulfill a desire I have long cherished for several changes in the usual way of instructing the people.

"I am thoroughly convinced of the worth and value of the great truths of our religion; but the fact that their recitation has little effect on the hearts of most listeners has made me doubt the method of instruction, rather than making me suspect that the human heart is so absolutely inclined to evil as some believe. How often, after hearing the sermon of a famous man, have

I compared the moral profit I derived from it and that which the common man might have gained, and found it in truth empty for the latter. Those parts that the preacher dedicated to the glory of learning or to the detailed but not too intelligible exposition of various speculative propositions were useless for the improvement of most persons, and certainly not from any lack of good will on their part. For if I, who from early youth had exercised the powers of my intellect and acquainted myself with abstract ideas, had trouble finding useful applications for those parts of the sermon, how then would the workman and his children fare with them? Because I am far removed from that ungracious sort of pride that has caused persons of fortune and rank to believe that the common man must neither be given enlightened concepts of religion nor must his understanding be broadened, it is my wish that my pastor, out of genuine kindness toward his neighbor and the recognition of the whole extent of his obligations, shall impart to the congregation entrusted to him that measure of understanding that they need for the joyful and eager discharge of their duties toward God, their superiors, their neighbors, and themselves.

“The humble man is born with the same desire for happiness and pleasure as the great man and like him is often led astray by that desire. Therefore, I also wish them imbued with proper concepts of happiness and pleasure. The way to their hearts, I believe, can best be found through observations about the physical world, which are most likely to move them, as every glance of their eyes, every step of their feet, lead them in that direction. Once their hearts are opened through recognizing the benevolent hand of their Creator and made content through historical comparisons of their homes and circumstances with those of other people who are, like them, children of God, then one can also show them the moral side of the world and the obligations that they must fulfill to achieve a tranquil life for themselves and their loved ones and to assure their eternal well-being.

“Should my pastor be satisfied merely with a show of good behavior during the final days of his parishioners, I shall be very dissatisfied with him. And if he intends to safeguard the improvement of their souls merely with so-called fire-and-brimstone sermons without opening and convincing their minds, he will not remain my pastor for long. If he directs his notice more to their diligence in church attendance than their actions in daily life, I shall not consider him to be a true friend of mankind nor a good shepherd.

“I shall take great care with the school to ensure that it is well-appointed and that the schoolmaster receives proper compensation as well as possesses the forbearance that the weakness of childhood necessitates.

“A twofold catechism shall be taught there, namely the one on the established duties of a Christian and with each article a clear, simple application to their daily lives; and in addition a ‘catechism’ of thorough knowl-

edge of farming and gardening, of animal husbandry, and the management of woodlands and forests, and such things as the obligations of their calling and of benevolence toward their offspring. In general, I wish to see my dependants act kindly toward their neighbors before they lay claim to a reputation for piety.

“I shall leave to the official whom I found here his salary and the management of the accounts. But to administer justice, to superintend compliance with the laws, and to supervise the police and the people’s industriousness, I shall use the valiant young man whose acquaintance I made in P. I shall seek to obtain my subjects’ trust in him and myself, in order to learn their circumstances and manage all their affairs like a true father and guardian. Good counsel, friendly admonition, and reprobation aimed at improvement not oppression shall be the means I employ; and the generous hopes of my heart would be sadly betrayed if my careful exercise of the master’s duties and an equal effort by the pastor and officials, in addition to the example of goodness and benevolence, did not have a beneficial effect on my subordinates’ hearts.”

Here he ceased and asked my pardon for having spoken so much and so long.

“You must be tired, dearest Sophia,” said he, while putting his arm around me.

What could I do in the fullness of my heart but embrace him with tears of joy.

“Tired, my dearest husband? How could I be tired by the happy prospect of future days marked by your virtue and charity.”

Dearest Mama, how blessed is my lot! God keep you long to witness it!



There was no one happier than Sternheim and his wife, whose very footprints were revered by their subjects. Justice and beneficence were practiced in equal measure within the boundaries of their small domain. Agricultural experiments were first conducted on the master’s lands, then taught to the people; and the first peasant to show himself willing to change was given the means necessary to do so. Sternheim was well aware that without such inducements the peasants would never undertake even the most useful change if it called for the loss of money or land.

“What I gave them at first,” he said, “will later be returned to me through the increased tithe, and the experience will best convince the good people that I meant them well.”

Though it takes me yet farther from the main subject of my narrative, I must give you news of the poorhouse at S. (to my mind a good institution), as an example of the universally useful and beneficent acts which the

worthy pair derived part of their felicity from planning and executing. I can do this no better than by sending you an extract from a letter by Baron P. to his mother:

How faithfully does my friend fulfill the promise which I made you of the happiness of our Sophia! How pleasant is one's entrance into this house, where the noblest simplicity and natural order give an air of grandeur to the whole establishment! The servants are intent upon the discharge of their duties with cheerful deference and industry; the master and mistress wear a blissful expression that springs from kindness and sagacity—both of them blessing me for my resolute intercession in favor of their union.

And how great a contrast there is between my brother's two small villages and all those larger and more populous ones that I saw on my return journey from the court! Through the cheerful and diligent industry of their inhabitants, they both resemble two well-organized beehives; and Sternheim is amply rewarded for his care in distributing the acreage more equitably, by means of which each of his subordinates received exactly as much as he can cultivate with his own strength and means. But the newly purchased seat of the Count of A., situated exactly between the two villages, is intended for the execution of a still more blessed inspiration.

It has been converted into a poorhouse for his subjects. On one side, downstairs, lives a valiant schoolmaster who has become too old to supervise effectively the instruction of the children and is now appointed to maintain good order and oversee the work. Upstairs is the apartment of the physician charged with caring for the sick of the poorhouse and the two villages. In the summertime, all must work, as their strength permits, in an adjacent seed nursery and the vegetable garden that belongs to it. The yield of both is intended for the poor. On rainy days and in winter, the women must spin flax, and suitable men, wool, both of which will be used for their own and other needy persons' linen and apparel. They will receive well-prepared, healthful food.

The master of the house will pray with them in the mornings and evenings. The women will work in one and the men in the other room, both of which will be heated by one stove. The meals will be taken in the women's room. It is the larger one, because they must set the table and do the sewing and laundering. That poor widow or elderly spinster who has the best reputation for industry and good conduct in the village shall be the first overseer and director, as the poor man of like reputation shall be among the men.

For their sleeping quarters, the upper story of the house has been divided by a solid wall into two parts, each of which has five rooms with two beds each and everything necessary for each person. On one side, towards

the garden, are the men; on the other, towards the village, the women. There will be two persons to each room, so that if one should meet with a mishap, the other can render or seek aid. From the middle of the window a wooden partition will run from the ceiling to the floor, several feet beyond the length of the bedsteads, so that both can, in a manner, be private; and also, so that if one grows ill, the other may better preserve his portion of wholesome air. Two separate stairs will lead to the two parts, so that no impropriety may occur.

The workmen who must attend to the cultivation of the fields will also be set under the worthy master, and since it is intended that they shall receive better wages than elsewhere, the best and most knowledgeable workers in farming matters will be selected, with preference given to those of good reputation.

Modest alms shall be dispensed to the vagrant poor, wages for the employment offered them, and they shall be permitted to stop working an hour earlier than is customary, so that while it is still daylight they can reach the nearest village outside the domain—an hour and a quarter removed. At his own expense, Sternheim has built a road to it, straight as an arrow and with trees planted along its sides, as he has done also from one of his villages to the other. During the night, the appointed watchmen of the two localities must walk all the way to the poorhouse by turns and call out the hours.

My sister intends to establish a small foundling home for poor orphans nearby, to earn grace for the child she carries under her loving, benevolent heart. My thought, gracious Mama, is to create such an almshouse within my larger and more far-flung domains, and, if possible, to encourage several other noblemen to do likewise.

Vagrant or local beggars receive nothing from any of the farmers. As their means and free will dictate, the latter merely give alms to the house after each harvest, and in this manner all the poor are cared for humanely and without abuse of their benefactors. Drunkards, gamblers, profligates, and idlers are assessed a fine—partly in forced labor and partly in money—which is used for the benefit of the poorhouse. Next month, four men and five women will take up residence in the house. My sister goes there each day to make the final preparations.

In his Sunday sermon, the pastor will preach on the subject of true charity and the worthy poor, and will read to the whole congregation the particulars of the endowment and the duties of those who will be admitted there. Then he will call those who have been admitted by their names before the altar and will admonish them, particularly regarding the proper use of this benefit and regarding their conduct toward God and their neighbor in the final and quiet days of their lives. Likewise, he will admonish the physician, the master of the house, and the housekeeper as to their duties. I am certain we will all come from P. for this event.



The neighboring nobility respected and loved Colonel Sternheim so much that they asked him to be host to several young noblemen who had returned from their travels and were now to be married in order to carry on their line. It was desired, therefore, that they observe and learn the actual management of a nobleman's estates. Among them was the Young Count Loebau, who had the opportunity to meet Lady Charlotte P.—now at last contented—at the Sternheims' and to unite with her in marriage.

Sternheim accepted quite gladly the noble task of instructing these young gentlemen in the proper governance of one's dependents. His humanity lightened his labor with the thought that he was perhaps instilling into them the necessary compassion for the lowly and unfortunate, whose hard and toilsome lives are so often burdened and embittered by the harshness and pride of the great.

Convinced that example is more effective than lengthy conversations, he took the young men everywhere with him and conducted himself before them as the occasion demanded. He explained why he had ordered this, forbidden that, or had made this or that other decision; and, according to his knowledge of each one's estate, he added little applications for them individually.

They witnessed all his employments and shared in his amusements. During the latter, he often earnestly implored them never to seek amusement at the expense of their poor dependants, for which the hunt offered especially ample opportunity. He called it a decent diversion which, however, a benevolent and humane master should always seek to combine with his people's well-being.

He sought also to imbue them with the love of reading; and history in particular afforded him the opportunity to speak of the moral world, its evils and mutability, and to explain to them the duties of service at Court and in the wars, and to exercise their mind in reflection and judgment.

"The history of the moral world," said he, "fits us to associate with human beings—to improve them, support them, and be content with our lot; but the observation of the physical world makes us good creatures, according to the will of our Creator. By showing us our weakness, while on the other hand teaching us to admire His greatness, goodness, and wisdom, we learn to love and revere Him nobly. Furthermore, these observations console and divert us in the various troubles and vexations which—in the moral world—are often heaped more copiously on the heads of the great and wealthy than on the cottage of the peasant who is oppressed by few other cares than for his sustenance."

Thus he alternated between discourse and example. In his house they saw how happy is the union of a worthy man with a virtuous woman. They

saw them show affectionate and gentle regard toward each other, and observed how the servants revered them and stood ready to lay down their lives for their gracious as well as grave master and mistress.

Sternheim was also pleased that all these young gentlemen became grateful and devoted friends who, in their letters to him, always sought his advice. The association with the admirable Baron P., who often gave little fêtes for them, had contributed much to their perfection.

His wife had presented him with a daughter, who grew up very prettily and—as Sternheim had the misfortune of losing her mother in childbed together with a newborn son—she was from her ninth year her father's consolation and his sole joy on earth. This was the more true after Baron P., whose health had been weakened through a fall from his horse, died a few months later without issue. In his last will he had not only provided well for his excellent wife, but had also, in accordance with the law of the land, named as his heirs the Countess of Loebau, his younger sister, and the young Sophia von Sternheim, the daughter of his elder sister. This seemed unjust to the count and countess but was valid nevertheless.

Almost completely bowed by grief over the untimely death of her son, the old Baroness of P. took up residence with Sternheim and undertook to supervise the young lady. The colonel comforted her soul through his respectful affection and the example he set in his patient submission to fate. The high-minded parson and his daughters were almost the only company in which they took pleasure.

Nevertheless, young Sophia enjoyed the most excellent education of her mind and heart. A daughter of the pastor who was of the same age was given her for a companion, partly to excite competition in their learning and partly to prevent the young lady from gathering only somber impressions in her early youth, which might easily have occurred in the company of her grandmother and father. For both of them often wept over their losses; and then Sternheim would lead the twelve-year-old lady to the picture of her mother and would speak of her virtue and goodness of heart with so much emotion that the young lady, kneeling by his side, sobbed and often wished to die in order to be with her mother. This made the colonel fear that her sensitive soul might develop an overly strong inclination toward melancholy tenderness and, through overirritability of the nerves, might become unable to bear pain and sorrow. Thus he sought to control himself and show his daughter how to bear the misfortunes which usually wound the best persons most deeply.

Because the young lady displayed a fine talent for learning, he cultivated it with the study of the several parts of philosophy, history, and languages, among which she learned English to perfection. In music she achieved perfection on the lute and in singing. Dancing—as much as a lady should know of it—was an art that rather received perfection from her than