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Author: Elizabeth von Arnim

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Editorial note: We now know that "Elizabeth and Her German Garden" was written by Elizabeth von Arnim (1866-1941). Born Mary Annette Beauchamp in Australia, she grew up in England and married a German, Count Henning August von Arnim-Schlagenthin. After the couple moved to his country estate she began writing children's books. Many of her early books were published "By the Author of 'Elizabeth and Her German Garden'," and later she published as simply "Elizabeth."

THE PRINCESS PRISCILLA'S FORTNIGHT

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ELIZABETH AND HER GERMAN GARDEN"

1905

"Oft have itch die Welt durchwandert, und have emmer gesehen, wie das Grosse am Kleinlichen  
scheitert, und das Edle von dem Ärtzenden Gift des AlltÄnglichen zerfressen wird."

FRITZING, "Erlebtes und Erlittenes."

Her Grand Ducal Highness the Princess Priscilla of Lothen-Kunitz was up to the age of twenty-one a most promising young lady. She was not only poetic in appearance beyond the habit of princesses but she was also of graceful and appropriate behavior. She did what she was told; or, more valuable, she did what was expected of her without being told. Her father, in his youth and middle age a fiery man, now an irritable old gentleman who liked good food and insisted on strictest etiquette, was proud of her on those occasions when she happened to cross his mind. Her mother, by birth an English princess of an originality uncomfortable and unexpected in a royal lady that continued to the end of her life to crop up at disconcerting moments, died when Priscilla was sixteen. Her sisters, one older and one younger than herself, were both far less pleasing to look upon than she was, and much more difficult to manage; yet each married a suitable prince and each became a credit to her House, while as for Priscilla,—well, as for Priscilla, I propose to describe her dreadful conduct.

But her first appearance. She was well above the average height of woman; a desirable thing in a princess, who, before everything, must impress the public with her dignity. She had a long pointed chin, and a sweet mouth with full lips that looked most kind. Her nose was not quite straight, one side of it being the least bit different from the other,—a slight crookedness that gave her face a charm absolutely beyond the reach of those whose features are what is known as chiseled. Her skin was of that fairness that freckles readily in hot summers or on winter days when the sun shines brightly on the snow, a delicate soft skin that is seen sometimes with golden eyelashes and eyebrows, and hair that is more red than gold. Priscilla had these eyelashes and eyebrows and this hair, and she had besides beautiful grey-blue eyes—calm pools of thought, the court poet called them, when her having a birthday compelled him to official raptures; and because everybody felt sure they were not really anything of the kind the poet's utterance was received with acclamations. Indeed, a princess who should possess such pools would be most undesirable—in Lothen-Kunitz nothing short of a calamity; for had they not had one already? It was what had been the matter with the deceased Grand Duchess; she would think, and no one could stop her, and her life in consequence was a burden to herself and to everybody else at her court. Priscilla, however, was very silent. She had never expressed an opinion, and the inference was that she had no opinion to express. She had not criticized, she had not argued, she had been tractable, obedient, meek. Yet her sisters, who had often criticized and argued, and who had rarely been obedient and never meek, became as I have said the wives of appropriate princes, while Priscilla,—well, he who runs may read what it was that Priscilla became.

But first as to where she lived. The Grand Duchy of Lothen-Kunitz lies in the south of Europe; that smiling region of fruitful plains, forest-clothed hills, and broad rivers. It is one of the first places Spring stops at on her way up from Italy; and Autumn, coming down from the north sunburnt, fruit-laden, and blest, goes slowly when she reaches it, lingering there with her serenity and ripeness, her calm skies and her windless days long after the Saxons and Prussians have lit their stoves and got out their furs. There figs can be eaten off the trees in one's garden, and vineyards glow on the hillsides. There the people are Catholics, and the Protestant pastor casts no shadow of a black gown across life. There as you walk along the white roads, you pass the image of the dead Christ by the wayside; mute reminder to those who would otherwise forget of the beauty of pitifulness and love. And there, so near is Kunitz to the soul

of things, you may any morning get into the train after breakfast and in the afternoon find yourself drinking coffee in the cool colonnades of the Piazza San Marco at Venice.

Kunitz is the capital of the duchy, and the palace is built on a hill. It is one of those piled-up buildings of many windows and turrets and battlements on which the tourist gazes from below as at the realization of a childhood's dream. A branch of the river Loo winds round the base of the hill, separating the ducal family from the red-roofed town along its other bank. Kunitz stretches right round the hill, lying clasped about its castle like a necklet of ancient stones. At the foot of the castle walls the ducal orchards and kitchen gardens begin, continuing down to the water's edge and clothing the base of the hill in a garment of blossom and fruit. No fairer sight is to be seen than the glimpse of these grey walls and turrets rising out of a cloud of blossom to be had by him who shall stand in the market place of Kunitz and look eastward up the narrow street on a May morning; and if he who gazes is a dreamer he could easily imagine that where the setting of life is so lovely its days must of necessity be each like a jewel, of perfect brightness and beauty.

The Princess Priscilla, however, knew better. To her unfortunately the life within the walls seemed of a quite blatant vulgarity; pervaded by lacqueys, by officials of every kind and degree, by too much food, too many dothes, by waste, by a feverish frittering away of time, by a hideous want of privacy, by a dreariness unutterable. To her it was a perpetual behaving according to the ideas officials had formed as to the conduct to be expected of princesses, a perpetual pretending not to see that the service offered was sheerest lip-service, a perpetual shutting of the eyes to hypocrisy and grasping selfishness. Conceive, you tourist full of illusions standing free down there in the market place, the frightfulness of never being alone a moment from the time you get out of bed to the time you get into it again. Conceive the deadly patience needed to stand passive and be talked to, amused, taken care of, all day long for years. Conceive the intolerableness, if you are at all sensitive, of being watched by eyes so sharp and prying, so eager to note the least change of expression and to use the conclusions drawn for personal ends that nothing, absolutely nothing, escapes them. Priscilla's sisters took all these things as a matter of course, did not care in the least how keenly they were watched and talked over, never wanted to be alone, liked being fussed over by their ladies-in-waiting. They, happy girls, had thick skins. But Priscilla was a dreamer of dreams, a poet who never wrote poems, but whose soul though inarticulate was none the less saturated with the desires and loves from which poems are born. She, like her sisters, had actually known no other states; but then she dreamed of them continuously, she desired them continuously, she read of them continuously; and though there was only one person who knew she did these things I suppose one person is enough in the way of encouragement if your mind is bent on rebellion. This old person, cause of all the mischief that followed, for without his help I do not see what Priscilla could have done, was the ducal librarian--\_Hofbibliothekar\_, head, and practically master of the wonderful collection of books and manuscripts whose mere catalogue made learned mouths in distant parts of Europe water and learned lungs sigh in hopeless envy. He too had officials under him, but they were unlike the others: meek youths, studious and short-sighted, whose business as far as Priscilla could see was to bow themselves out silently whenever she and her lady-in-waiting came in. The librarian's name was Fritzing; plain Herr Fritzing originally, but gradually by various stages at last arrived at the dignity and sonorousness of Herr Geheimarchivrath Fritzing. The Grand Duke indeed had proposed to

ennoble him after he had successfully taught Priscilla English grammar, but Fritzing, whose spirit dwelt among the Greeks, could not be brought to see any desirability in such a step. Priscilla called him Fritz when her lady-in-waiting dozed; dearest Fritz sometimes even, in the heat of protest or persuasion. But afterwards, leaving the room as solemnly as she had come in, followed by her wide-awake attendant, she would nod a formally gracious "Good afternoon, Herr Geheimrath," for all the world as though she had been talking that way the whole time. The Countess (her lady-in-waiting was the Countess Irmgard von Disthal, an ample slow lady, the unmarried daughter of a noble house, about fifty at this time, and luckily--or unluckily--for Priscilla, a great lover of much food and its resultant deep slumbers) would bow in her turn in as stately a manner as her bulk permitted, and with a frigidity so pronounced that in any one less skilled in shades of deportment it would have resembled with a singular completeness a sniff of scorn. Her frigidity was perfectly justified. Was she not a *\_hochgeboren\_*, a member of an ancient house, of luminous pedigree as far back as one could possibly see? And was he not the son of an obscure Westphalian farmer, a person who in his youth had sat barefoot watching pigs? It is true he had learning, and culture, and a big head with plenty of brains in it, and the Countess Disthal had a small head, hardly any brains, no soul to speak of, and no education. This, I say, is true; but it is also neither here nor there. The Countess was the Countess, and Fritzing was a nobody, and the condescension she showed him was far more grand ducal than anything in that way that Priscilla could or ever did produce.

Fritzing, unusually gifted, and enterprising from the first--which explains the gulf between pig-watching and *\_Hofbibliothekar\_*--had spent ten years in Paris and twenty in England in various capacities, but always climbing higher in the world of intellect, and had come during this climbing to speak English quite as well as most Englishmen, if in a stater, Johnsonian manner. At fifty he began his career in Kunitz, and being a lover of children took over the English education of the three princesses; and now that they had long since learned all they cared to know, and in Priscilla's case all of grammar at least that he had to teach, he invented a talent for drawing in Priscilla, who could not draw a straight line, much less a curved one, so that she should still be able to come to the library as often as she chose on the pretext of taking a drawing-lesson. The Grand Duke's idea about his daughters was that they should know a little of everything and nothing too well; and if Priscilla had said she wanted to study Shakespeare with the librarian he would have angrily forbidden it. Had she not had ten years for studying Shakespeare? To go on longer than that would mean that she was eager, and the Grand Duke loathed an eager woman.

But he had nothing to say against a little drawing; and it was during the drawing-lessons of the summer Priscilla was twenty-one that the Countess Disthal slept so peacefully. The summer was hot, and the vast room cool and quiet. The time was three o'clock--immediately, that is, after luncheon. Through the narrow open windows sweet airs and scents came in from the bright world outside. Sometimes a bee would wander up from the fruit-gardens below, and lazily drone round shady corners. Sometimes a flock of pigeons rose swiftly in front of the windows, with a flash of shining wings. Every quarter of an hour the cathedral clock down in the town sent up its slow chime. Voices of people boating on the river floated up too, softened to melodiousness. Down at the foot of the hill the red roofs of the town glistened in the sun. Beyond them lay the sweltering cornfields. Beyond them forests and villages. Beyond them a blue line of hills. Beyond them, said Priscilla to herself, freedom. She sat in her white dress at a table in one of the deep windows, her head on its long slender neck, where the little rings of

red-gold hair curled so prettily, bent over the drawing-board, her voice murmuring ceaselessly, for time was short and she had a great many things to say. At her side sat Fritzing, listening and answering. Far away in the coolest, shadiest corner of the room slumbered the Countess. She was lulled by the murmured talk as sweetly as by the drone of the bee.

"Your Grand Ducal Highness receives many criticisms and much advice on the subject of drawing from the Herr Geheimrath?" she said one day, after a lesson during which she had been drowsily aware of much talk.

"The Herr Geheimrath is most conscientious," said Priscilla in the stately, it-has-nothing-to-do-with-you sort of tone she found most effectual with the Countess; but she added a request under her breath that the lieber Gott might forgive her, for she knew she had told a fib.

Indeed, the last thing that Fritzing was at this convulsed period of his life was what his master would have called conscientious. Was he not encouraging the strangest, wickedest, wildest ideas in the Princess? Strange and wicked and wild that is from the grand ducal point of view, for to Priscilla they seemed all sweetness and light. Fritzing had a perfect horror of the Grand Duke. He was everything that Fritzing, lean man of learning, most detested. The pleasantest fashion of describing the Grand Duke will be simply to say that he was in all things, both of mind and body, the exact opposite of Fritzing. Fritzing was a man who spent his time ignoring his body and digging away at his mind. You know the bony aspect of such men. Hardly ever is there much flesh on them; and though they are often ugly enough, their spirit blazes at you out of wonderful eyes. I call him old Fritzing, for he was sixty. To me he seemed old; to Priscilla at twenty he seemed coeval with pyramids and kindred hoarinesses; while to all those persons who were sixty-one he did not seem old at all. Only two things could have kept this restless soul chained to the service of the Grand Duke, and those two things were the unique library and Priscilla. For the rest, his life at Kunitz revolted him. He loathed the etiquette and the fuss and the intrigues of the castle. He loathed each separate lady-in-waiting, and every one of the male officials. He loathed the vulgar abundance and inordinate length and frequency of the meals, when down in the town he knew there were people a-hungered. He loathed the lacqueys with a quite peculiar loathing, scowling at them from under angry eyebrows as he passed from his apartment to the library; yet such is the power of an independent and scornful spirit that though they had heard all about Westphalia and the pig-days never once had they, who made insolence their study, dared be rude to him.

Priscilla wanted to run away. This, I believe, is considered an awful thing to do even if you are only a housemaid or somebody's wife. If it were not considered awful, placed by the world high up on its list of Utter Unforgivablenesses, there is, I suppose, not a woman who would not at some time or other have run. She might come back, but she would surely have gone. So bad is it held to be that even a housemaid who runs is unfailingly pursued by maledictions more or less definite according to the education of those she has run from; and a wife who runs is pursued by social ruin, it being taken for granted that she did not run alone. I know at least two wives who did run alone. Far from wanting yet another burden added to them by adding to their lives yet another man, they were anxiously endeavouring to get as far as might be from the man they had got already. The world, foul hag with the

downcast eyes and lascivious lips, could not believe it possible, and was quick to draw its dark mantle of disgrace over their shrinking heads. One of them, unable to bear this, asked her husband's pardon. She was a weak spirit, and now lives prostrate days, crushed beneath the unchanging horror of a husband's free forgiveness. The other took a cottage and laughed at the world. Was she not happy at last, and happy in the right way? I go to see her sometimes, and we eat the cabbages she has grown herself. Strange how the disillusioned find their peace in cabbages.

Priscilla, then, wanted to run away. What is awful in a housemaid and in anybody's wife became in her case stupendous. The spirit that could resolve it, decide to do it without being dragged to it by such things as love or passion, calmly looking the risks and losses in the face, and daring everything to free itself, was, it must be conceded, at least worthy of respect. Fritzing thought it worthy of adoration; the divinest spirit that had ever burned within a woman. He did not say so. On the contrary, he was frightened, and tried angrily, passionately, to dissuade. Yet he knew that if she wavered he would never forgive her; she would drop at once from her high estate into those depths in his opinion where the dull average of both sexes sprawled for ever in indiscriminate heaps. Priscilla never dreamed of wavering. She, most poetic of princesses, made apparently of ivory and amber, outwardly so cool and serene and gentle, was inwardly on fire. The fire, I should add, burnt with a very white flame. Nothing in the shape of a young man had ever had the stoking of it. It was that whitest of flames that leaps highest at the thought of abstractions--freedom, beauty of life, simplicity, and the rest. This, I would remark, is a most rare light to find burning in a woman's breast. What she was, however, Fritzing had made her. True the material had been extraordinarily good, and for ten years he had done as he liked with it. Beginning with the simpler poems of Wordsworth--he detested them, but they were better than soiling her soul with Longfellow and Mrs. Hemans--those lessons in English literature, meant by the authorities to be as innocuous to her as to her sisters, had opened her eyes in a way nothing else could have done to the width of the world and the littleness of Kunitz. With that good teacher, as eager to lead as she to follow, she wandered down the splendid walks of culture, met there the best people of all ages, communed with mighty souls, heard how they talked, saw how they lived, and none, not one, lived and talked as they lived and talked at Kunitz.

Imagine a girl influenced for ten years, ten of her softest most wax-like years, by a Fritzing, taught to love freedom, to see the beauty of plain things, of quietness, of the things appertaining to the spirit, taught to see how ignoble it is, how intensely, hopelessly vulgar to spend on one's own bodily comforts more than is exactly necessary, taught to see a vision of happiness possible only to those who look to their minds for their joys and not to their bodies, imagine how such a girl, hearing these things every afternoon almost of her life, would be likely to regard the palace mornings and evenings, the ceremonies and publicity, all those hours spent as though she were a celebrated picture, forced everlastingly to stand in an attitude considered appropriate and smile while she was being looked at.

"No one," she said one day to Fritzing, "who hasn't himself been a princess can have the least idea of what it is like."

"Ma'am, it would be more correct to say herself in place of himself."

"Well, they can't," said Priscilla.

"Ma'am, to begin a sentence with the singular and continue it with the plural is an infraction of all known rules."

"But the sentiments, Fritz--what do you think of the sentiments?"

"Alas, ma'am, they too are an infraction of rules."

"What is not in this place, I should like to know?" sighed Priscilla, her chin on her hand, her eyes on that distant line of hills beyond which, she told herself, lay freedom.

She had long ago left off saying it only to herself. I think she must have been about eighteen when she took to saying it aloud to Fritz. At first, before he realized to what extent she was sick for freedom, he had painted in glowing colours the delights that lay on the other side of the hills, or for that matter on this side of them if you were alone and not a princess. Especially had he dwelt on the glories of life in England, glories attainable indeed only by the obscure such as he himself had been, and for ever impossible to those whom Fate obliges to travel in state carriages and special trains. Then he had come to scent danger and had grown wary; trying to put her off with generalities, such as the inability of human beings to fly from their own selves, and irrelevancies such as the amount of poverty and wretchedness to be observed in the east of London; refusing to discuss France, which she was always getting to as the first step towards England, except in as far as it was a rebellious country that didn't like kings; pointing out with no little temper that she had already seen England; and finishing by inquiring very snappily when her Grand Ducal Highness intended to go on with her drawing.

Now what Priscilla had seen of England had been the insides of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle; of all insides surely the most august. To and from these she had been conveyed in closed carriages and royal trains, and there was so close a family likeness between them and Kunitz that to her extreme discomfort she had felt herself completely at home. Even the presence of the Countess Disthal had not been wanting. She therefore regarded this as not seeing England at all, and said so. Fritz remarked tartly that it was a way of seeing it most English people would envy her; and she was so unable to believe him that she said Nonsense.

But lately her desires had taken definite shape so rapidly that he had come to dread the very word hill and tum cold at the name of England. He was being torn in different directions; for he was, you see, still trying to do what other people had decided was his duty, and till a man gives up doing that he will certainly be torn. How great would be the temptation to pause here and consider the mangled state of such a man, the wounds and weakness he will suffer from, and how his soul will have to limp through life, if it were not that I must get on with Priscilla.



One day, after many weeks of edging nearer to it, of going all round it yet never quite touching it, she took a deep breath and told him she had determined to run away. She added an order that he was to help her. With her most grand ducal air she merely informed, ordered, and forbade. What she forbade, of course, was the betrayal of her plans. "You may choose," she said, "between the Grand Duke and myself. If you tell him, I have done with you for ever."

Of course he chose Priscilla.

His agonies now were very great. Those last lacerations of conscience were terrific. Then, after nights spent striding, a sudden calm fell upon him. At length he could feel what he had always seen, that there could not be two duties for a man, that no man can serve two masters, that a man's one dear duty is to be in the possession of his soul and live the life it approves: in other and shorter words, instead of leading Priscilla, Priscilla was now leading him.

She did more than lead him; she drove him. The soul he had so carefully tended and helped to grow was now grown stronger than his own; for there was added to its natural strength the tremendous daring of absolute inexperience. What can be more inexperienced than a carefully guarded young princess? Priscilla's ignorance of the outside world was pathetic. He groaned over her plans—for it was she who planned and he who listened—and yet he loved them. She was a divine woman, he said to himself; the sweetest and noblest, he was certain, that the world would ever see.

Her plans were these:

First, that having had twenty-one years of life at the top of the social ladder she was now going to get down and spend the next twenty-one at the bottom of it. (Here she gave her reasons, and I will not stop to describe Fritzing's writhings as his own past teachings grinned at him through every word she said.)

Secondly, that the only way to get to the bottom being to run away from Kunitz, she was going to run.

Thirdly, that the best and nicest place for living at the bottom would be England. (Here she explained her conviction that beautiful things grow quite naturally round the bottom of ladders that cannot easily reach the top; flowers of self-sacrifice and love, of temperance, charity, godliness—delicate things, with roots that find their nourishment in common soil. You could not, said Priscilla, expect soil at the top of ladders, could you? And as she felt that she too had roots full of potentialities, she must take them down to where their natural sustenance lay waiting.)

Fourthly, they were to live somewhere in the country in England, in the humblest way.

Fifthly, she was to be his daughter.

"Daughter?" cried Fritzing, bounding in his chair. "Your Grand Ducal Highness forgets I have friends in England, every one of whom is aware that I never had a wife."

"Niece, then," said Priscilla.

He gazed at her in silence, trying to imagine her his niece. He had two sisters, and they had stopped exactly at the point they were at when they helped him, barefoot, to watch Westphalian pigs. I do not mean that they had not ultimately left the little farm, gone into stockings, and married. It is their minds I am thinking of, and these had never budged. They were like their father, a doomed dullard; while Fritzing's mother, whom he resembled, had been a rather extraordinary woman in a rough and barbarous way. He found himself wholly unable to imagine either of his sisters the mother of this exquisite young lady.

These, then, baldly, were Priscilla's plans. The carrying of them out was left, she informed him, altogether to Fritzing. After having spent several anxious days, she told him, considering whether she ought to dye her hair black in order to escape recognition, or stay her own colour but disguise herself as a man and buy a golden beard, she had decided that these were questions Fritzing would settle better than she could. "I'd dye my hair at once," she said, "but what about my wretched eyelashes? Can one dye eyelashes?"

Fritzing thought not, and anyhow was decidedly of opinion that her eyelashes should not be tampered with; I think I have said that they were very lovely. He also entirely discouraged the idea of dressing as a man. "Your Grand Ducal Highness would only look like an extremely conspicuous boy," he assured her.

"I could wear a beard," said Priscilla.

But Fritzing was absolutely opposed to the beard.

As for the money part, she never thought of it. Money was a thing she never did think about. It also, then, was to be Fritzing's business. Possibly things might have gone on much longer as they were, with a great deal of planning and talking, and no doing, if an exceedingly desirable prince had not signified his intention of marrying Priscilla. This had been done before by quite a number of princes. They had, that is, not signified, but implored. On their knees would they have implored if their knees could have helped them. They were however all poor, and Priscilla and her sisters were rich; and how foolish, said the Grand Duke, to marry poor men unless you are poor yourself. The Grand Duke, therefore, took these young men aside and crushed them, while Priscilla, indifferent, went on with her drawing. But now came this one who was so eminently desirable that he had no need to do more than merely signify. There had been much trouble and a great deal of delay in finding him a wife, for he had insisted on having a princess who should be both pretty and not his cousin. Europe did not seem to contain such a thing. Everybody was his cousin, except two or three young women whom he was rude enough to call ugly. The Kunitz princesses had been considered in their turn and set aside, for they too were cousins; and it seemed as if one of the most splendid thrones in Europe would either have to go queen-less or be sat upon by somebody plain, when fate brought the Prince to a great public ceremony in Kunitz, and he saw Priscilla and fell so violently in love with her that if she had been fifty times his cousin he would still have married her.

That same evening he signified his intention to the delighted Grand Duke, who immediately fell to an irrelevant praising of God.

"Bosh," said the Prince, in the nearest equivalent his mother-tongue provided.

This was very bad. Not, I mean, that the Prince should have said Bosh, for he was so great that there was not a Grand Duke in Europe to whom he might not have said it if he wanted to; but that Priscilla should have been in imminent danger of marriage. Among Fritzing's many preachings there had been one, often repeated in the strongest possible language, that of all existing contemptibilities the very most contemptible was for a woman to marry any one she did not love; and the peroration, also extremely forcible, had been an announcement that the prince did not exist who was fit to tie her shoestrings. This Priscilla took to be an exaggeration, for she had no very great notion of her shoestrings; but she did agree with the rest. The subject however was an indifferent one, her father never yet having asked her to marry anybody; and so long as he did not do so she need not, she thought, waste time thinking about it. Now the peril was upon her, suddenly, most unexpectedly, very menacingly. She knew there was no hope from the moment she saw her father's face quite distorted by delight. He took her hand and kissed it. To him she was already a queen. As usual she gave him the impression of behaving exactly as he could have wished. She certainly said very little, for she had long ago learned the art of being silent; but her very silences were somehow exquisite, and the Grand Duke thought her perfect. She gave him to understand almost without words that it was a great surprise, an immense honour, a huge compliment, but so sudden that she would be grateful to both himself and the Prince if nothing more need be said about it for a week or two--nothing, at least, till formal negotiations had been opened. "I saw him yesterday for the first time," she pleaded, "so naturally I am rather overwhelmed."

Privately she had thought, his eyes, which he had never taken off her, kind and pleasant; and if she had known of his having said Bosh who knows but that he might have had a chance? As it was, the moment she was alone she sent flying for Fritzing. "What," she said, "do you say to my marrying this man?"

"If you do, ma'am," said Fritzing, and his face seemed one blaze of white conviction, "you will undoubtedly be eternally lost."

They fled on bicycles in the dusk. The goddess Good Luck, who seems to have a predilection for sinners, helped them in a hundred ways. Without her they would certainly not have got far, for both were very ignorant of the art of running away. Once flight was decided on Fritzing planned elaborately and feverishly, got things thought out and arranged as well as he, poor harassed man, possibly could. But what in this law-bound world can sinners do without the help of Luck? She, amused and smiling dame, walked into the castle and smote the Countess Disthal with influenza, crushing her down helpless into her bed, and holding her there for days by the throat. While one hand was doing this, with the other she gaily swept the Grand Duke into East Prussia, a terrific distance, whither, all unaware of how he was being trifled with, he thought he was being swept by an irresistible desire to go, before the business of Priscilla's public betrothal should begin, and shoot the roebucks of a friend.

The Countess was thrust into her bed at noon of a Monday in October. At three the Grand Duke started for East Prussia, incognito in a motor--you know the difficulty news has in reaching persons in motors. At four one of Priscilla's maids, an obscure damsel who had been at the mercy of the others and was chosen because she hated them, tripped out of the castle with shining eyes and pockets heavy with bribes, and caused herself to be whisked away by the afternoon express to Cologne. At six, just as the castle guard was being relieved, two persons led their bicycles through the archway and down across the bridge. It was dark, and nobody recognized them. Fritzing was got up sportingly, almost waggishly--heaven knows his soul was not feeling waggish--as differently as possible from his usual sober clothes. Somehow he reminded Priscilla of a circus, and she found it extremely hard not to laugh. On his head he had a cap with ear-pieces that hid his grey hair; round his neck a gaudy handkerchief muffled well about his face; immense goggles doaked the familiar overhanging eyebrows and deep-set eyes, goggles curiously at variance with the dapper briskness of his gaitered legs. The Princess was in ordinary blue serge, short and rather shabby, it having been subjected for hours daily during the past week to rough treatment by the maid now travelling to Cologne. As for her face and hair, they were completely hidden in the swathings of a motor-veil.

The sentinels stared rather as these two figures pushed their bicycles through the gates, and undoubtedly did for some time afterwards wonder who they could have been. The same thing happened down below on the bridge; but once over that and in the town all they had to do was to ride straight ahead. They were going to bicycle fifteen miles to Rahl, a small town with a railway station on the main line between Kunitz and Cologne. Express trains do not stop at Rahl, but there was a slow train at eight which would get them to Gerstein, the capital of the next duchy, by midnight. Here they would change into the Cologne express; here they would join the bribed maid; here luggage had been sent by Fritzing,--a neat bag for himself, and a neat box for his niece. The neat box was filled with neat garments suggested to him by the young lady in the shop in Gerstein where he had been two days before to buy them. She told him of many other articles which, she said, no lady's wardrobe could be considered complete without; and the distracted man, fearing the whole shop would presently be put into trunks and sent to the station to meet them, had ended by flinging down two notes for a hundred

marks each and bidding her keep strictly within that limit. The young lady became very scornful. She told him that she had never heard of any one being clothed from head to foot inside and out, even to brushes, soap, and an umbrella, for two hundred marks. Fritzing, in dread of conspicuous masses of luggage, yet staggered by the girl's conviction, pulled out a third hundred mark note, but added words in his extremity of so strong and final a nature, that she, quailing, did keep within this limit, and the box was packed. Thus Priscilla's outfit cost almost exactly fifteen pounds. It will readily be imagined that it was neat.

Painfully the two fugitives rode through the cobbled streets of Kunitz. Priscilla was very shaky on a bicycle, and so was Fritzing. Some years before this, when it had been the fashion, she had bicycled every day in the grand ducal park on the other side of the town. Then, tired of it, she had given it up; and now for the last week or two, ever since Fritzing had told her that if they fled it would have to be on bicycles, she had pretended a renewed passion for it, riding every day round and round a circle of which the chilled and astonished Countess Disthal, whose duty it was to stand and watch, had been the disgusted central point. But the cobbles of Kunitz are very different from those smooth places in the park. All who bicycle round Kunitz know them as trying to the most skilful. Naturally, then, the fugitives advanced very slowly, Fritzing's heart in his mouth each time they passed a brightly-lit shop or a person who looked at them. Conceive how nearly this poor heart must have jumped right out of his mouth, leaving him dead, when a policeman who had been watching them strode suddenly into the middle of the street, put up his hand, and said, "Halt."

Fritzing, unstrung man, received a shock so awful that he obeyed by falling off. Priscilla, wholly unused to being told to halt and absorbed by the difficulties of the way, did not grasp that the order was meant for her and rode painfully on. Seeing this, the policeman very gallantly removed her from her bicycle by putting his arms round her and lifting her off. He set her quite gently on her feet, and was altogether a charming policeman, as unlike those grim and ghastly eyes of the law that glare up and down the streets of, say, Berlin, as it is possible to imagine.

But Priscilla was perfectly molten with rage, insulted as she had never been in her life. "How dare you-- how dare you," she stammered, suffocating; and forgetting everything but an overwhelming desire to box the giant's ears she had actually raised her hand to do it, which would of course have been the ruin of her plan and the end of my tale, when Fritzing, recovering his presence of mind, cried out in tones of unmistakable agony, "Niece, be calm."

She calmed at once to a calm of frozen horror.

"Now, sir," said Fritzing, assuming an air of brisk bravery and guiltlessness, "what can we do for you?"

"Light your lamps," said the policeman, laconically.

They did; or rather Fritzing did, while Priscilla stood passive.

"I too have a niece," said the policeman, watching Fritzing at work; "but I light no lamps for her. One should not wait on one's niece. One's niece should wait on one."

Fritzing did not answer. He finished lighting the lamps, and then held Priscilla's bicycle and started her.

"I never did that for my niece," said the policeman.

"Confound your niece, sir," was on the tip of Fritzing's tongue; but he gulped it down, and remarking instead as pleasantly as he could that being an uncle did not necessarily prevent your being a gentleman, picked up his bicycle and followed Priscilla.

The policeman shook his head as they disappeared round the corner. "One does not light lamps for one's niece," he repeated to himself. "It's against nature. Consequently, though the peppery Fräulein may well be somebody's niece she is not his."

"Oh," murmured Priscilla, after they had ridden some way without speaking, "I'm deteriorating already. For the first time in my life I've wanted to box people's ears."

"The provocation was great, ma'am," said Fritzing, himself shattered by the spectacle of his Princess being lifted about by a policeman.

"Do you think--" Priscilla hesitated, and looked at him. Her bicycle immediately hesitated too, and swerving across the road taught her it would have nothing looked at except its handles. "Do you think," she went on, after she had got herself straight again, "that the way I'm going to live now will make me want to do it often?"

"Heaven forbid, ma'am. You are now going to live a most noble life--the only fitting life for the thoughtful and the earnest. It will be, once you are settled, far more sheltered from contact with that which stirs ignoble impulses than anything your Grand Ducal Highness has hitherto known."

"If you mean policemen by things that stir ignoble impulses," said Priscilla, "I was sheltered enough from them before. Why, I never spoke to one. Much less"--she shuddered--"much less ever touched one."

"Ma'am, you do not repent?"

"Heavens, no," said Priscilla, pressing onward.

Outside Rahl, about a hundred yards before its houses begin, there is a pond by the wayside. Into this, after waiting a moment peering up and down the dark road to see whether anybody was looking, Fritzing hurled the bicycles. He knew the pond was deep, for he had studied it the day he bought Priscilla's outfit; and the two bicycles one after the other were hurled remorselessly into the middle of it,

disappearing each in its turn with a tremendous splash and gurgle. Then they walked on quickly towards the railway station, infinitely relieved to be on their own feet again, and between them, all unsuspected, walked the radiant One with the smiling eyes, she who was half-minded to see this game through, giving the players just so many frights as would keep her amused, the fickle, laughing goddess Good Luck.

They caught the train neatly at RÃ¼hl. They only had to wait about the station for ten minutes before it came in. Hardly any one was there, and nobody took the least notice of them. Fritzing, after a careful look round to see if it contained people he knew, put the Princess into a second-class carriage labelled \_Frauen\_, and then respectfully withdrew to another part of the train. He had decided that second-class was safest. People in that country nearly always travel second-class, especially women,--at all times in such matters more economical than men; and a woman by herself in a first-class carriage would have been an object of surmise and curiosity at every station. Therefore Priscilla was put into the carriage labelled \_Frauen\_, and found herself for the first time in her life alone with what she had hitherto only heard alluded to vaguely as the public.

She sat down in a corner with an odd feeling of surprise at being included in the category \_Frauen\_, and giving a swift timid glance through her veil at the public confronting her was relieved to find it consisted only of a comfortable mother and her child.

I know not why the adjective comfortable should so invariably be descriptive of mothers in Germany. In England and France though you may be a mother, you yet, I believe, may be so without being comfortable. In Germany, somehow, you can't. Perhaps it is the climate; perhaps it is the food; perhaps it is simply want of soul, or that your soul does not burn with a fire sufficiently consuming. Anyhow it is so. This mother had all the good-nature that goes with amplitude. Being engaged in feeding her child with \_belegte BrÃ¶dchen\_--that immensely satisfying form of sandwich--she at once offered Priscilla one.

"No thank you," said Priscilla, shrinking into her corner.

"Do take one, FrÃ¶ulein," said the mother, persuasively.

"No thank you," said Priscilla, shrinking.

"On a journey it passes the time. Even if one is not hungry, thank God one can always eat. Do take one."

"No thank you," said Priscilla.

"Why does she wear that black thing over her face?" inquired the child. "Is she a witch?"

"Silence, silence, little worthless one," cried the mother, delightedly stroking his face with half a \_BrÃ¶dchen\_. "You see he is clever, FrÃ¶ulein. He resembles his dear father as one egg does another."

"Does he?" said Priscilla, immediately conceiving a prejudice against the father.

"Why don't she take that black thing off?" said the child.

"Hush, hush, small impudence. The Fräulein will take it off in a minute. The Fräulein has only just got in."

"Mutti, is she a witch? Mutti, Mutti, is she a witch, Mutti?"

The child, his eyes fixed anxiously on Priscilla's swathed head, began to whimper.

"That child should be in bed," said Priscilla, with a severity born of her anxiety lest, to calm him, humanity should force her to put up her veil. "Persons who are as intelligent as that should never be in trains at night. Their brains cannot bear it. Would he not be happier if he lay down and went to sleep?"

"Yes, yes; that is what I have been telling him ever since we left Kunitz"--Priscilla shivered--"but he will not go. Dost thou hear what the Fräulein says, Hans-Joachim?"

"Why don't she take that black thing off?" whimpered the child.

But how could the poor Princess, however anxious to be kind, take off her veil and show her well-known face to this probable inhabitant of Kunitz?

"Do take it off, Fräulein," begged the mother, seeing she made no preparations to do so. "When he gets ideas into his head there is never peace till he has what he wants. He does remind me so much of his father."

"Did you ever," said Priscilla, temporizing, "try him with a little--just a little slap? Only a little one," she added hastily, for the mother looked at her oddly, "only as a sort of counter-irritant. And it needn't be really hard, you know--"

"\_Ach\_, she's a witch--Mutti, she's a witch!" shrieked the child, flinging his face, butter and all, at these portentous words, into his mother's lap.

"There, there, poor tiny one," soothed the mother, with an indignant side-glance at Priscilla. "Poor tiny man, no one shall slap thee. The Fräulein does not allude to thee, little son. The Fräulein is thinking of bad children such as the sons of Schultz and thy cousin Meyer. Fräulein, if you do not remove your veil I fear he will have convulsions."

"Oh," said the unhappy Priscilla, getting as far into her corner as she could, "I'm so sorry--but I--but I really can't."



"She's a witch, Mutti!" roared the child, "I tell it to thee again--therefore is she so black, and must not show her face!"

"Hush, hush, shut thy little eyes," soothed the mother, putting her hand over them. To Priscilla she said, with an obvious dawning of distrust, "But Fräulein, what reason can you have for hiding yourself?"

"Hiding myself?" echoed Priscilla, now very unhappy indeed, "I'm not hiding myself. I've got--I've got--I'm afraid I've got a--an affection of the skin. That's why I wear a veil."

"\_Ach\_, poor Fräulein," said the mother, brightening at once into lively interest. "Hans-Joachim, sleep," she added sharply to her son, who tried to raise his head to interrupt with fresh doubts a conversation grown thrilling. "That is indeed a misfortune. It is a rash?"

"Oh, it's dreadful," said Priscilla, faintly.

"\_Ach\_, poor Fräulein. When one is married, rashes no longer matter. One's husband has to love one in spite of rashes. But for a Fräulein every spot is of importance. There is a young lady of my acquaintance whose life-happiness was shipwrecked only by spots. She came out in them at the wrong moment."

"Did she?" murmured Priscilla.

"You are going to a doctor?"

"Yes--that is, no--I've been."

"Ah, you have been to Kunitz to Dr. Kraus?"

"Y--es. I've been there."

"What does he say?"

"That I must always wear a veil."

"Because it looks so bad?"

"I suppose so."

There was a silence. Priscilla lay back in her corner exhausted, and shut her eyes. The mother stared fixedly at her, one hand mechanically stroking Hans-Joachim, the other holding him down.

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