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Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
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**The Old Man of the Mountain,
The Lovecharm and Pietro of
Abano Tales from the German of
Tieck**

Ludwig Tieck

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Ludwig Tieck

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-1985-9

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THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN,
THE LOVECHARM,
AND
PIETRO OF ABANO.

TALES FROM THE GERMAN OF TIECK.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, 64, NEW BOND STREET.

1831.

THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

The name of Herr Balthasar was well known throughout the whole hill-country: not a child but had heard of his vast riches, and had some story to tell of him. Everybody too loved and honoured him; for his bounty was as great as his wealth: but at the same time he was viewed with fear; for he harast both himself and others by a number of strange whims which no one could understand; and his moodiness, his silent reserve, were especially irksome to those who were nearest about him. No person had seen him smile for many years; he scarcely ever came out of his large house on the hill above the little mountain-town, nearly the whole of which belonged to him: its inhabitants too were almost all his dependents, whom he had drawn thither to work in his manufactories, his mines, and his alum pits. Thus through his means this small spot was very thickly peopled, and enlivened by the greatest activity. Waggons and horses were continually moving to and fro; and the clatter of the working machinery was mixt up with the roar of waters, and with the various noises from the pounding and smelting-houses. The smoke of the coals however, the steam from the pits, and the black heaps of dross and slag piled up on high all around, gave the gloomy sequestered valley a still more dismal appearance; so that no one who travelled for the sake of seeking out and enjoying the beauties of nature, would have any mind to linger there.

Among the multitude of persons who in consequence of his large undertakings and the variety of his concerns were employed by old Herr Balthasar, none seemed to enjoy his confidence in so high a degree as Edward, the head overseer of his mines and manufactories, and the manager of his accounts. He was about thirty years old, tall and of a fine figure, had always something sprightly and good-humoured on his lips, and thus formed a striking contrast to his morose monosyllabic master, who had grown old before his time, and whose withered, wrinkled features, with the faint sad look from his hollow eyes, were no less repulsive to all, than Edward's cheerful frankness was attractive of confidence and affection.

It was still very early on a summer morning when Edward was looking thoughtfully down into the smoking valley: the sun lay behind a thick mass of clouds; and the mists that were travelling along the bottom, and mingled with the black vapours from the steaming pits, checked his view, and wrapt the landscape in a kind of grey veil. He mused over his youth, over the plans he had once formed, and then thought how, contrary to them all, he had become fixt in this melancholy solitude, which, as he was already verging on the maturity of manhood, he probably would never quit again. While he was thus losing himself in his meditations, young William hurried by him, fully equipt as it seemed for a journey, without even bidding him goodbye. The young man started as in passing he observed Edward standing there, and he looked very loth to meet his questions.

"How now?" said Edward; "are you already leaving us again, young man, after all the entreaties and persuasions it cost us both but three weeks ago to prevail on our master to take you into his house, and after he has just forgiven you your sudden departure the other day?"

"I must begone!" cried the young man: "do not stop me! I must submit to appear ungrateful; but I cannot help it."

"Without speaking to our master?" replied Edward; "without leave of absence? What are we to think of you? Besides Herr Balthasar will want you; for there is no one here just now to take your post of secretary."

"My dearest sir," exclaimed the young man uneasily, "if you knew my situation, you would not blame or think ill of me."

"Has our master offended you? have you any ground of complaint?"

"No, no! quite the contrary!" cried the young man impetuously; "the old gentleman is kindness itself; I appear to be base and good-for-nothing; but I have no other choice. Make the best excuse for me that your good nature and your conscience will let you."

"Be a man!" said Edward, giving him his hand and holding him fast: "you may earn a maintenance here, and may lay the foundations of your fortune hereafter: do not a second time thus wantonly

trifle away your master's confidence and mine. We took you in, when you came to us without a character, without any recommendation, almost without a name: Herr Balthasar departed for your sake from all his rules, which till then had always been inviolable; I have in a manner pledged myself for you: are you resolved to reward our confidence in this way, and to run thus rashly into suspicion? And can you hope that a month hence or later you will be received among us again?"

The young man was much distress, but tore himself forcibly away, and cried: "I know it too well, that I am closing this home, in which everything has gone so well with me, in which I have felt so happy, for ever against me. Misery and want await me, and the bitterest punishments for the thoughtlessness of my youth. But who can avoid his destiny? When a chariot is rushing headlong down a precipice, no human strength can arrest it."

"But if you have any sense of honour," answered Edward, "if you would not leave us all at a loss what to make of you, you ought to stay now at all events; for I am quite unable to conceive what power can be driving you away from us thus suddenly. You know, the most expensive and valuable cloths in our magazine have been purloined day after day; and though this has been going on so long we have not been able to get any trace of the offender."

"I must put up even this suspicion," said William with a quick blush. "There is no saving me now, and I have nothing more to lose: nor do I deserve the good opinion of any honest man, be he even the meanest of my brethren."

After these mysterious words the young man hurried away, without even looking round again. Edward followed him with his eyes, and observed how he bent his steps hastily toward the little town, ran almost at full speed through the streets, and turned into a footpath on the other side, to climb up a steep rock. He there lost sight of him in the mountain solitude.

The mist meanwhile had somewhat broken, and the little dells with their trees and bushes were seen rising out of it, like green islands, illumined by the morning sun, with ever and anon a house or hut half hidden by leaves leaning against the side of the hill.

An old miner, who worked a good way off in the pits belonging to the prince, came up now very much out of humour to Edward. "Another run over here to no purpose!" he cried peevishly: "I wanted to speak to the young shatter-brained jackanapes; and now I hear from the smelting-lads down in the town, that he has just been scampering through it, and not a soul can tell where he is gone."

"What business have you with him, friend Conrad?" asked Edward.

"What business should one have with young chaps such as he!" replied the cross old man. "There have I had to buy him a wonderful book about mines over yonder, of the white-headed master miner who is as old as the hills, and who has been blind these three years: the marvellous grey-beard copied the book ages ago, when he was young and had a younker's itching for knowing more than his neighbours, from the manuscript of a travelling Tyrolese, and took the trouble of scratching likenesses of all the foolish pictures in it. Now however that he is blind, he can't see to read it; so I have bought it for young master Lorenz, our William here; and lo! the coxcomb is clean over the mountains."

"What does the little book contain?" said Edward.

"Only look into it yourself," continued the other: "all sorts of stories about ghosts and spectres; clews for finding out the places over there in the high mountains, where one meets with gold and diamonds at the bottom of caves and sand pits in spots which mortal man has seldom set foot in. There are a number of marks, they say, which in ages of yore were carved on the hard rocks or written on the banks of the brooks: certain knowing Italians notcht and scored the places some two or three hundred years ago, and stuck in pieces of tin and pebbles which they laid after a fashion of their own: now however, the old man tells me, they are hard to find; for the mountain-spirits and goblins, who hate being disturbed, have shoved away many of the stones that might have served for signposts, and have utterly deranged their order."

Edward laughed as he turned over the leaves of the strange book.

"None of your scoffing, young gentleman!" cried the old man: "so you too are one of their super-clever new-fangled wiseacres. But if

you were once to see what I have seen, when all alone far down underground, cut off from the heavens and the whole world, with no light but my lamp, and no sound but my own hammer within hearing, and the terrible tall spirit of the mountain came to me; I'd wager you would twist your face into some other look, and would not laugh as you do here where the merry morning sun is shining on you. Everybody can grin; but seeing is the lot of few; and still fewer can behave like men, when their eyes are thrown open."

"I will pay you for the book, my good old man," replied Edward kindly, "and keep it for our William till he comes back again."

"Ha ha!" cried the miner, laughing heartily and putting up the money; "and read it too, and pore over it by yourself, and go on Sundays and holidays to look out for the marks and the secret passages. Only don't let them befool you, young man, or cajole, or frighten you; and when you have found anything, keep a fast hold. Look you, the lord of these hills, or the old man of the mountain, as many choose to call him, knows all about the matter: he has thrust his hands into the pockets of all the richest ghosts and elves and goblins; and they have been forced to empty them out for him."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Edward a good deal surprised; and at the same time he wanted to give the besmeared book back again to the old man, saying with some irritation: "since you cannot trust me, or rather hold me to be such a fool, keep the treasure-casket yourself for our friend, and only give the master miner his money."

"No," exclaimed the old man; "what has once been made over and paid for, must stay in the hands of the buyer: that is a sacred law, and if we break it, the maste rminer and I shall be under a ban. But whom do I mean, ask you, by the old man of the mountain, or by the lord of these hills? Are you ignorant of that? and have already been here a round dozen of years and more. Why, this is the name all the world gives to your high and mighty manufacturer, mineholder, merchant, gold-maker, ghost-seer, your all-powerful man of millions, your Balthasar. And perhaps you would make believe into the bargain that you don't know how he comes by all his unnatural riches. Ay, ay, friend, the pale old sour-faced growler has them all in leading-strings, the whole posse of spirits: he is often absent for weeks, and tarrying with them in their secret chambers: then they

pay away to him; then they break their old crowns in bits, and pour out the diamonds into his skinny hands; then they strike with their magical rods against the stone walls, and the water-damsels must needs swim up from the bottom of the brooks, and bring him gifts, corals, and pearls, and turkisses. As for gold he scarce heeds it now: he has a tribe of little elves that wash it out of the sand for him, and gather it up, like bees, into balls and grains, and then carry it like honey, and stuff his cane with it. Ay, ay, my worthy smooth-faced pedlar of all wisdom's small wares! this is why the old man is for ever moping so, and never dares laugh; this is why he loses his wits if he chances to hear music, which gladdens the heart of every godly man; this is why he never goes into company, and is always fretful and cross-grained: for he knows full well what end he must come to, and that all his earthly grandeur cannot buy him off; because he has forsaken his God, and no human being ever saw him in a church."

"This is the hateful part of superstition," exclaimed Edward indignantly, "which otherwise would only deserve our contempt, and which, if it did not thus deprave the understanding and the heart, might delight us by its poetical features, and furnish the imagination with much fantastical amusement. Are you not ashamed, old man, to think and prate in this way of the most virtuous, the most beneficent of men? How many human beings are fed and supplied with comforts by his extensive transactions? is he not always giving the needy a share in the blessings with which heaven rewards his industry? He spends his life in thought, in watching, in care, in writing, in toil, for the sake of nourishing thousands, who but for him would perish without employment; and as whatever he undertakes with so much judgement is favoured by fortune, fools are audacious enough to slander his understanding which they cannot comprehend, and his virtues which they are unable to appreciate, with their stupid impertinent extravagances."

"Fortune!" laught the miner: "you talk of fortune, and fancy that in using the silliest word in the world you have said something: why, it is the very same thing that I mean and believe; only that you don't understand what you say, nor can anybody make any sense of it. My jewel, the earth, the water, the air, mountains, forests, and vallies, are no dead lifeless dogs, as you mayhap think them. All

sorts of things dwell and bustle about in them, things that you call powers and the like: these can't endure to have their old quiet abodes turned topsy-turvy in this manner, and dug away and blown up with gunpowder under their very feet. The whole country for miles and miles round is smoking and steaming, and clattering, and hammering; people are shovelling and poking, and digging, and blasting, and laying waste with fire and water even into the entrails of the earth; not a forest finds mercy; there are glass-houses, and alum works, and copper mines, and bleaching-grounds, and spinning-jennies: look you, this must bring mishap or goodhap to the man who sets such a sight of things a-going; it can't all end in nothing. Where there are no human beings, there dwell the silent spirits of the mountains and woods: but if they are too much squeezed,—for when not prest for room and left in peace they will live on good terms with man and beast,—but when one elbows them too close, and into their very ribs, they grow pettish and mischievous: then come deaths, earthquakes, floods, conflagrations, landslips, and all the other things they bring to pass; or else you must put a stiff yoke on them, and then they will serve you indeed, but against the grain, and the more toll they have to pay to anybody, the worse friends are they to him at the last. Now this, young master, is what you are pleased to call fortune."

The dispute would probably have lasted some time longer, unless an elderly man had now approacht them, whom Edward, whenever he was able, was glad to avoid. On this occasion however Eleazar came too quickly upon him, and besides had so much business to talk over, that the head overseer was compelled to stay and hear what the manager of the looms had to say. Eleazar was a little sickly man, self-willed and sullen, even more so than his master, the old man of the mountain, as Conrad, after the custom of the neighbourhood, had called him.

"I heard yesterday," said Eleazar, "of a carriage that was to stop the night in the next town; as I went by I told William of it; and now the fellow, who seemed aghast at the tidings, is up and off. My master will as usual have to endure loss and vexation from these vagabond knaves, whom he is so fond of trusting before his old tried friends."

His eyes fell on the curious book, he looked into it, and seemed delighted. "If you like the nonsensical stuff," said Edward, "I will make you a present of it, in case William, for whom I have bought it, does not return."

"Thank you, thank you, from my heart!" cried Eleazar, sniggering, as he lifted his sharp little eyes, and a strange smirking grin made his yellow crumpled face still uglier than before.

"So you really meant what you said!" exclaimed the old miner: "well! the revelations of the spirit of the earth are in better keeping under the guard of that sickly gentleman, than with such a merry care-for-nought." He then turned down the hill on the side opposite to that which led toward the town, to betake himself to his mine; while Eleazar seemed buried in thought as he read with great eagerness in his newly acquired treasure.

Meanwhile Edward was watching a carriage that was toiling up the hill from the valley, and had just come through the wood. "Are we to have a visit?" he exclaimed with some surprise.

"Heyday! what!" returned Eleazar: "it is our old master's carriage to be sure, which he has again been lending to the folks over yonder for a wedding; and his other coach has been sent off to a christening in the village at the further end of the mountains. Two such equipages! and he never uses either himself, since he never stirs out of the house; and coachmen and lacquies always on their legs to wait on some beggarly strangers, who don't even thank him when his carriages and horses go to wreck, and new ones are to be bought at the end of every four years."

"Can you really find fault with this bountiful kindness?" replied Edward: but Eleazar relieved him from the trouble of prolonging the dispute, by carrying off his book in great haste, without once looking at him. Edward breathed more freely when delivered from the presence of this odious misanthrope, who took every opportunity of loading his benefactor with the bitterest abuse.

The coach meanwhile was labouring up the second hill; and from the slow and unsteady footing of the horses it was evident they must have come out of the plain. The carriage too, Edward now saw clearly, was a strange one, and must probably be bringing some

unexpected visitant. With much panting and straining at length the horses dragged the coach up the last slope; and an elderly lady got out at the door of the great house, and sent her maid and servant with the carriage to the inn in the town.

Edward was surprised; for the lady, whose face still betrayed that she had once been handsome, was entirely unknown to him. "You will allow me," she said with a sweet-toned voice, "to rest here under the portico for a moment; after which I should wish to speak to Herr Balthasar."

Edward felt at a loss what to do, and led the lady with evident uneasiness to a chair in the entrance hall. "If you will give me leave," he then said, "I will attend you into the parlour, and order you some breakfast."

"Thank you for all your kindness," she cried: "the only thing I wish for, is an interview with the master of the house. Is he up yet? In what room shall I find him?"

"That none of us knows," answered Edward: "until he himself opens his door, nobody ventures to go to him; and it is still shut. His wont however is to rise early, and he says he sleeps but little. Whether he employs these early solitary hours in reading, or in prayer and devotion, no one can tell; so great is his reserve toward everybody. But as to announcing you—even by and by—I know not: for we all have the strictest orders, never to let in any stranger to him: he speaks to no one, except his managers and servants on business at stated hours; and from this rule during the twelve years that I have known him he has not once departed. Strangers who have anything to request of him must declare their wishes to me or to master Eleazar; and we either settle the matter directly ourselves, or, if it does not lie immediately in our power, we make a report to him on the subject, without his ever setting eyes on the person. These whimsical rules, if you choose so to call them, render his solitude unapproachable; and that is the very thing he wishes."

"O God!" cried the lady with a tone of anguish: "and must this journey then, this hard effort of mine, be all utterly in vain? For how could I ever find words to express my wishes and requests to a perfect stranger? O dear good Sir, your eye bespeaks and reveals the kindness of your heart: for my sake, for the sake of a miserable,

deeply afflicted woman, make an exception this once to the strict custom of the house, and tell your master that I am here."

At this moment they heard the sound of a large bell. "That is the sign," said Edward, "that we may go and speak to him, and that his room is open. I will say everything for you that you wish; but I know beforehand it is to no purpose, and I shall bring down his anger on my own head, without doing you any service."

He went dejectedly down the long passage: for it pained him that he could not assist the lady whose noble form moved and interested him. Old Balthasar was sitting in deep thought, his head leaning on his arm, at his writing-table: he looked up cheerfully and kindly at Edward's greeting, and held out his hand. When the young man, after making a long preface to excuse himself and conciliate his master, mentioned the wife of a privy-counsellor, whose maiden name was Fernich, the old man started up suddenly from his desk as if struck by lightning, with a frightful cry.

"Fernich! Elizabeth!" he then exclaimed, with fearful vehemence; "she, she here? in my house! O God, O heaven, quickly, quickly let her come in! O do make haste, my dear friend;" he cried out again, and his voice failed him.

Edward was almost terrified, and went back to bring the stranger to Balthasar. In the mean time she had been joined by the young lady of the house, an adopted child, but whom the old man loved with the same tenderness and treated just as if she had been his own. The stranger trembled, and when she reached the old man's apartment was near fainting: Balthasar dried his tears, and was unable to find words, as he led the pale lady to a chair: he made a sign, and Edward left the room, in great anxiety about his old friend, whom he had never seen so strongly moved, and with whom owing to this singular scene he stood on an entirely new footing.

"It was very good of you, Rose," he said to the young blooming girl, "to entertain the stranger lady while she was waiting."

"It was all to very little purpose," answered she, blushing: "for she was so faint and exhausted that, whatever I could say, she did nothing but weep. She must surely be sick, or have some heavy load on

her heart. It has made me quite sorrowful, and I too have been crying. These eyes in our head are certainly very funny creatures, just like little children. They run about, and stare, and gaze at every thing new, shining and twinkling with joy; and then they grow so serious and sad, and when the pain at one's heart is very sore, they bubble with tears and overflow, and anon they become bright and glad again. There must be a vast number of sorrows in the world, my dear Edward."

"May heaven preserve you from any very melancholy trials!" replied he: "hitherto your young life has glided along as peacefully as a swan over a silent pool."

"You fancy," cried she laughing, "that such a thing as I cannot have had any sorrows of its own, much less very bitter and painful ones. You are mightily mistaken."

"Well?" asked Edward earnestly.

"One can't remember all in a moment what one's sorrows are," said the good-natured girl: "wait a little. When I think of sundry great misfortunes in the world, about which I have heard people talking at times, then indeed there does not seem to be very much in what I have had to go through: yet for little things like me a little misfortune is quite big enough. Now is not it a real grievance that I must never hear music? that I don't know how people look, or how they feel, when they are dancing? Ah, dearest Edward, the other day, when we were taking a drive, we passed by the little inn over yonder on the other side of the town, where the country folks were having a dance: their jumping about, the sound of the fiddles, the strange glee in the airs made such an odd impression on me, I cannot tell whether I felt glad, or sad to the very bottom of my heart. Here in our neighbourhood we must never have any music, either in the inn or anywhere else. Then when I hear of plays and operas, I cannot quite persuade myself that such wonderful things are really and truly to be found in the world. The lights, the numbers of finely drest people, and then a real stage, and a whole story acted upon it, which I am to believe to be true: can there be anything more curious? And is not it then a grievous affliction, that I am to grow old here, without ever in my whole life catching a single short glimpse of all these grand doings? Tell me, dear Edward, you too are a good

man, is this wish of mine, are those sights themselves very sinful? Herr Eleazar indeed says they are, and my dear fatherly uncle thinks the same of them, and hates everything of the sort: but the king and the magistrates allow them, and learned people approve them, and write and compose the things that are to be acted: can all this then be so very wicked?"

"My dear child," said Edward with the utmost friendliness, "how sorry I am that I cannot procure you even this innocent pleasure! But you know yourself how strict Herr Balthasar is in all these matters."

"O yes," she replied: "why the miners in our town here must never even hum a tune; we must never drive more than just two miles from the gate; and no amusing book, no poem, no novel is ever let come into the house. And added to all this we are perpetually frightened with being told that such a number of thoughts and fancies, and all that one is fond of dreaming about in many a lonesome hour, are impious sins. At such times I muse over all sorts of little stories about the loveliest spirits, and beautiful vallies, and how the miller finds his love in the mill-stream, who by and by turns out to be a princess and makes him a king, or how the fisherman jumps into the river, and at the bottom finds the most glittering and gorgeous wonders. Or a little shepherdess is playing with her lambs on the meadow, and a handsome prince, sitting upon a great horse, rides by and falls in love with her. And then, if the evening bells chance to peal through the dusk, and the wind brings the noise of the hammering and knocking from yon black mountain, or I hear the sledge-hammer from afar, I could cry, and yet in fact am glad at my very heart. But our surly gloomy Eleazar, one day that I was telling him of this, abused me bitterly, and said that busying oneself with such thoughts is the very pitch of sin and wickedness. And yet I can't help it; for it all comes into my head just of its own accord."

"Dear innocent creature!" said Edward, and seized the blooming girl's hand.

"To you," she went on, "one may talk of all this, and you understand everything in the right way: but other people immediately begin scolding me, because they put a wrong meaning into everything. It was just the same with my old nurse, who is now dead.

You had been a long time in the house before I ever thought I could tell you anything or trust you; I was so very little then and used to play with my doll. Dear Heaven, it is now full ten years since the last time I dandled my Clary, as we called her. To my old Bridget, and my father, and Eleazar, and the cook, I thought I might say everything, because they were so grave: you were always laughing; and this made me fancy that you did not rightly belong to us. Now when prayer time came, they would not let me look at Clary, or carry her with me; but she was shut up in the cupboard. This made me very sorry; for I fancied she must be crying after me. So I found out a way, and took her along with me hid under my pinafore, and held her close to my heart to keep her warm; and when we came into the prayer-room I began by praying in private to God that he would forgive me if I was too fond of my Clary, that he would pardon me too, great and mighty as he was, for having brought her in secret into his high presence, and that he would not think I meant to deceive him or to treat him with disrespect, for he knew it was not so. After this preface I fancied I had made my peace, and repeated my usual prayers very devoutly. Thus all went on well for a week: then Bridget found me out. O gracious! then there was a great to do: even my good father said, this shewed how the human heart from its very infancy is so corrupt and wicked as to give itself up to the idolatry of worthless and contemptible things. I cannot understand even now what he meant by these words. Whenever one loves anything, is it not very beautiful and perfectly right that one does not pry into it and finger it too closely? What is a rose, when I pull it to pieces? It is so perishable, and therefore so dear. Was it my poor Clary's fault, that she was only a leather doll? Last week I was looking at her again one day, and could not make out myself how I came to be so fond of her formerly; and yet I could almost have cried to think that none of the feelings of those days will ever come back to me again. But surely this cannot be fickleness in me now, any more than my love ten years ago was idolatry and wickedness."

"Dear angel," said Edward tenderly, "our heart is trained by the love of visible perishable objects for the love of the invisible and eternal. When I see a child playing thus fondly and innocently with puppets of its own making, and crying for love and delight over the

lifeless toy, I could fancy that at such hours angels gather about the little creature and sport lovingly around it."

"Ah," exclaimed Rose, "that is a beautiful notion!"

"When however," continued Edward, "heart truly bends to heart, when two souls meet and give up themselves to each other in love, this faith and feeling of theirs invests the invisible with a palpable reality, and brings it for all eternity before them."

"That again I don't understand," said the maiden pondering; "but if you mean that sort of love which is necessary for a wedding, and to make a truly happy marriage, I think very differently on that score."

"How so?" asked the young man.

"That is a hard matter to explain," answered the girl, putting on a look of deep thought.

"Supposing now," said Edward, forcing himself to laugh, that he might hide his emotion, "you had to marry tomorrow, whom would you choose? Which of all the men you have hitherto met with, do you like the best? Have you enough confidence in me to answer me this question honestly?"

"Why should not I?" she replied: "for I need not even spend a moment in considering the point."

"And ... and the man you have already chosen?"

"Is of course our Eleazar."

Edward started back in utter amazement. "A moment ago you did not understand me, he said after a pause; and now you have told me a riddle that terrifies me."

"And yet," she answered with perfect simplicity, "it is the most natural thing in the world. My father too, I fancy, has already made up his mind, that our honest Eleazar is to be my future husband. Were I to love and choose you, there would be nothing remarkable in it; for I like you, and so does every body else; no one can help feeling confidence in you; and at the same time you are very handsome, and always friendly and good-humoured, so that, when one has once become acquainted with you, one hardly knows how to