have thought such things mattered. What does matter, is to judge gently, and not to come down like a sledge-hammer on other people's failings. Who are we, any of us, that we should be hard on others?"

"And not come down like a sledge-hammer on other people's failings," he repeated slowly. "I wonder if I have ever judged gently."

"I believe you have," she answered.

He shook his head.

"No," he said; I have been a paltry fellow. I have been lying here, and elsewhere too, eating my heart away with bitterness, until you came. Since then I have sometimes forgotten to feel bitter. A little kindness does away with a great deal of bitterness."

He turned wearily on his side.

"I think I could sleep, Little Brick," he said, almost in a whisper. "I want to dream about your sermon. And I'm not to worry, am I?"

"No," she answered, as she stepped noiselessly across the room; "you are not to worry."

CHAPTER X.

THE DISAGREEABLE MAN IS SEEN IN A NEW LIGHT.

ONE specially fine morning a knock came at Bernardine's door. She opened it, and found Robert Allitsen standing there trying to recover his breath.

"I am going to Loschwitz, a village about twelve miles off," he said. "And I have ordered a sledge. Do you care to come too?"

"If I may pay my share," she said.

"Of course," he answered; "I did not suppose you would like to be paid for any better than I should like to pay for you."

Bernardine laughed.

"When do we start?" she asked.

"Now," he answered. "Bring a rug, and also that shawl of yours which is always falling down, and come at once without any fuss. We shall be

out for the whole day. What about Mrs. Grundy? We could manage to take her if you wished, but she would not be comfortable sitting amongst the photographic apparatus, and I certainly should not give up my seat to her."

"Then leave her at home," said Bernardine cheerily.

And so they settled it.

In less than a quarter of an hour they had started; and Bernardine leaned luxuriously back to enjoy to the full her first sledge-ride.

It was all new to her: the swift passing through the crisp air without any sensation of motion; the sleepy tinkling of the bells on the horses' heads; the noiseless cutting through of the snow-path.

All these weeks she had known nothing of the country, and now she found herself in the snow fairy-land of which the Disagreeable Man had often spoken to her. Around vast plains of untouched snow, whiter than any dream of whiteness, jeweled by the sunshine with priceless diamonds, numberless as the sands of the sea. The great pines bearing their burden of snow patiently, others less patient, having shaken themselves free from what the heavens had sent them to bear. And now the streams, flowing on reluctantly over ice-coated rocks, and the ice cathedrals formed by the icicles between the rocks.

And always the same silence, save for the tinkling of the horses' bells.

On the heights the quaint chalets, some merely huts for storing wood; on others, farms, or the homes of peasants; some dark brown, almost black, betraying their age; others of a paler hue, showing that the sun had not yet mellowed them into a deep rich color. And on all alike, the fringe of icicles. A wonderful white world.

It was a long time before Bernardine even wished to speak. This beautiful whiteness may become monotonous after a time, but there is something very awe-inspiring about it, something which catches the soul and holds it.

The Disagreeable Man sat quietly by her side. Once or twice he bent forward to protect the camera when the sledge gave a lurch.

After some time they met a procession of sledges laden with timber; and August, the driver, and Robert Allitsen exchanged some fun and merriment with the drivers in their quaint blue smocks. The noise of the conversation, and the excitement of getting past the sledges, brought Bernardine back to speech again.

"I have never before enjoyed anything so much," she said.

"So you have found your tongue," he said. "Do you mind talking a little now? I feel rather lonely."

This was said in such a pathetic, aggrieved tone, that Bernardine laughed and looked at her companion. His face wore an unusually bright expression. He was evidently out to enjoy himself.

"*You* talk," she said; "and tell me all about the country."

And he told her what he knew, and, amongst other things, about the avalanches. He was able to point out where some had fallen the previous year. He stopped in the middle of his conversation to tell her to put up her umbrella.

"I can't trouble to hold it for you," he said; "but I don't mind opening it. The sun is blazing to-day, and you will get your eyes bad if you are not careful. That would be a pity, for you seem to me rather better lately."

"What a confession for you to make of any one!" said she.

"Oh, I don't mean to say that you will ever get well," he added grimly. "You seem to have pulled yourself in too many directions for that. You have tried to be too alive; and now you are obliged to join the genus cabbage."

"I am certainly less ill than I was when I first came," she said; "and I feel in a better frame of mind altogether. I am learning a good deal in sad Petershof."

"That is more than I have done," he answered.

"Well, perhaps you teach instead," she said. "You have taught me several things. Now, go on telling me about the country people. You like them?"

"I love them," he said simply. "I know them well, and they know me. You see I have been in this district so long now, and have walked about so much, that the very woodcutters know me; and the drivers give me lifts on their piles of timber."

"You are not surly with the poor people, then?" said Bernardine; "though I must say I cannot imagine you being genial. Were you ever genial, I wonder?"

"I don't think that has ever been laid to my charge," he answered.

The time passed away pleasantly. The Disagreeable Man was scarcely himself to-day; or was it that he was more like himself? He seemed in a boyish mood; he made fun out of nothing, and laughed with such young fresh laughter, that even August, the grave blue-

spectacled driver, was moved to mirth. As for Bernardine, she had to look at Robert Allitsen several times to be sure that he was the same Robert Allitsen she had known two hours ago in Petershof. But she made no remark, and showed no surprise, but met his merriness half way. No one could be a cheerier companion than herself when she chose.

At last they arrived at Loschwitz. The sledge wound its way around the sloshy streets of the queer little village, and finally drew up in front of the Gasthaus. It was a black sunburnt chalet, with green shutters, and steps leading up to a green balcony. A fringe of sausages hung from the roof; red bedding was scorching in the sunshine; three cats were sunning themselves on the steps; a young woman sat in the green balcony knitting. There were some curious inscriptions on the walls of the chalet, and the date was distinctly marked "1670."

An old woman over the way sat in her doorway spinning. She looked up as the sledge

stopped before the Gasthaus; but the young woman in the green balcony went on knitting and saw nothing.

A buxom elderly Hausfrau came out to greet the guests. She wore a naturally kind expression on her old face, but when she saw who the gentlemen was, the kindness positive increased to kindness superlative.

She first retired and called out:

"Liza, Fritz, Liza, Trudchen, come quickly!"

Then she came back, and cried:

"Herr Allitsen, what a surprise!"

She shook his hand times without number, greeted Bernardine with motherly tenderness, and interspersed all her remarks with frantic cries of "Liza, Fritz, Trudchen, make haste!"

She became very hot and excited, and gesticulated violently.

All this time the young woman sat knitting, but not looking up. She had been beautiful, but her face was worn now, and her eyes had that vacant stare which betokens the vacant mind.

The mother whispered to Robert Allitsen:

"She notices no one now; she sits there always waiting."

Tears came into the kind old eyes.

Robert Allitsen went and bent down to the young woman, and held out his hand.

"Catharina," he said gently.

She looked up then, and saw him, and recognized him.

Then the sad face smiled a welcome.

He sat near her, and took her knitting in his hand, pretending to examine what she had done, chatting to her quietly all the time. He asked her what she had been doing with herself since he had last seen her, and she said:

"Waiting. I am always waiting."

He knew that she referred to her lover, who had been lost in an avalanche the eve before their wedding morning. That was four years ago, but Catharina was still waiting. Allitsen remembered her as a bright young girl, singing in the Gasthaus, waiting cheerfully on the

guests: a bright gracious presence. No one could cook trout as she could; many a dish of trout had she served up for him. And now she sat in the sunshine knitting and waiting, scarcely ever looking up. That was her life.

"Catharina," he said, as he gave her back her knitting, "do you remember how you used to cook me the trout."

Another smile passed over her face. Yes, she remembered.

"Will you cook me some to-day?"

She shook her head, and returned to her knitting.

Bernardine watched the Disagreeable Man with amazement. She could not have believed that his manner could be so tender and kindly. The old mother standing near her whispered:

"He was always so good to us all; we love him, every one of us. When poor Catharina was betrothed five years ago, it was to Herr Allitsen we first told the good news. He has a wonderful way about him—just look at him

with Catharina now. She has not noticed any one for months, but she knows him, you see."

At that moment the other members of the household came: Liza, Fritz, and Trudchen; Liza, a maiden of nineteen, of the homely Swiss type; Fritz, a handsome lad of fourteen; and Trudchen, just free from school, whith her school-satchel swung on her back. There was no shy-ness in their greeting; the Disagreeable Man was evidently an old and much-loved friend, and inspired confidence, not awe. Trudchen fumbled in his coat pocket, and found what she expected to find there, some sweets, which she immed-iately began to eat, perfectly contented and self-satisfied. She smiled and nodded at Robert Allitsen, as though to reassure him that the sweets were not bad, and that she was enjoying them.

"Liza will see to lunch," said the old mother. "You shall have some mutton cutlets and some *forellen*. But before she goes she has something to tell you."

"I am betrothed to Hans," Liza said, blushing.

"I always knew you were fond of Hans," said the Disagreeable Man. "He is a good fellow Liza and I'm glad you love him. But haven't you just teased him!"

"That was good for him," Liza said brightly.

"Is he here to-day?" Robert Allitsen asked.

Liza nodded.

"Then I shall take your photographs," he said.

While they had been speaking Catharina rose from her seat, and passed into the house. Her mother followed her, and watched her go into the kitchen.

"I should like to cook the *forellen*," she said very quietly.

It was months since she had done anything in the house. The old mother's heart beat with pleasure.

"Catharina, my best loved child!" she whispered; and she gathered the poor suffering soul near to her.

In about half an hour the Disagreeable Man

and Bernardine sat down to their meal. Robert Allitsen had ordered a bottle of Sassella, and he was just pouring it out when Catharina brought in the *forellen.*

"Why, Catharina," he said, "you don't mean you've cook them? Then they will be good!"

She smiled, and seemed pleased, and then went out of the room.

Then he told Bernardine her history, and spoke with such kindness and sympathy that Bernardine was again amazed at him. But she made no remark.

"Catharina was always sorry that I was ill," he said. "When I stayed here, as I have done, for weeks together, she used to take every care of me. And it was a kindly sympathy which I could not resent. In those days I was suffering more than I have done for a long time now, and she was very pitiful. She could not bear to hear me cough. I used to tell her that she must learn not to feel. But you see she did not learn her lesson, for when this trouble

came on her, she felt too much. And you see what she is."

They had a cheery meal together, and then Bernardine talked with the old mother, whilst the Disagreeable Man busied himself with his camera. Liza was for putting on her best dress, and doing her hair in some wonderful way. But he would not hear of such a thing. But seeing that she looked disappointed, he gave in, and said she should be photographed just as she wished; and off she ran to change her attire. She went up to her room a picturesque, homely working girl, and she came down a tidy, awkward-looking young woman, with all her finery on, and all her charm off.

The Disagreeable Man grunted, but said nothing.

Then Hans arrived, and then came the posing, which caused much amusement. They both stood perfectly straight, just as a soldier stands before presenting arms. Both faces were perfectly expressionless. The Disagreeable Man was in despair.

"Look happy!" he entreated.

They tried to smile, but the anxiety to do so produced an expression of melancholy which was too much for the gravity of the photographer. He laughed heartily.

"Look as though you weren't going to be photographed," he suggested. "Liza, for goodness sake look as though you were baking the bread; and Hans, try and believe that you are doing some of your beautiful carving."

The patience of the photographer was something wonderful. At last he succeeded in making them appear at their ease. And then he told Liza that she must go and change her dress, and be photograped now in the way he wished. She came down again, looking fifty times prettier in her working clothes.

Now he was in his element. He arranged Liza and Hans on the sledge of timber, which had then driven up, and made a picturesque group of them all; Hans and Liza sitting side by side on the timber, the horses stand-

ing there so patiently after their long journey through the forest, the driver lean' ıg against his sledge smoking his long china pipe.

"That will be something like a picture," he said to Bernardine, when the performance was over. "Now I am going for about a mile's walk. Will you come with me and see what I am going to photograph, or will you rest here till I come back?"

She choose the latter, and during his absence was shown the treasures and possessions of a Swiss peasant's home.

She was taken to see the cows in the stalls, and had a lecture given her on the respective merits of Schneewitchen, a white cow, Kartoffelkuchen, a dark brown one, and Roselin, the beauty of them all. Then she looked at the spinning wheel, and watched the old Hausfrau turn the treadle. And so the time passed, Bernardine making good friends of them all. Catharina had returned to her knitting and began working, and, as before, not noticing any one. But

Bernardine sat by her side, playing with the cat, and, after a time Catharina looked up at Bernardine's little thin face, and after some hesitation, stroked it gently with her hand.

"Fraulein is not strong," she said tenderly. "If Fraulien lived here, I should take care of her."

That was a remnant of Catharina's past. She had always loved everything that was ailing and weakly.

Her hand rested on Bernardine's hand Bernardine pressed it in kindly sympathy, thinking the while of the girl's past happiness and present bereavement.

"Liza is betrothed," she said, as though to herself. "They don't tell me ; but I know. I was betrothed once."

She went on knitting. And that was all she said to herself.

Then after a pause she said :

"Fraulein is betrothed ?"

Bernardine smiled, and shook her head, and Catharina made no further inquiries. But she looked up from her work from time to time, and seemed pleased that Bernardine still stayed with her. At last the old mother came to say that the coffee was ready, and Bernardine followed her into the parlor.

She watched Bernardine drinking the coffee, and finally poured herself out a cup too.

"This is the first time Herr Allitsen has ever brought a friend," she said. "He has always been alone. Fraulein is betrothed to Herr Allitsen—is that so? Ah, I am glad. He is so good and so kind."

"Bernardine stopped drinking her coffee.

"No, I am not betrothed," she said cheerily. "We are just friends; and not always that either. We quarrel."

"All lovers do that," persisted Frau Steinhart triumphantly.

"Well, you ask him yourself," said Bernardine, much amused. She had never looked upon

Robert Allitsen in that light before. "See, there he comes."

Bernardine was not present at the court martial; but this was what occurred. Whilst the Disagreeable Man was paying the reckoning, Frau Steinhart said in her most motherly tones:

"Fraulein is a very dear young lady: Herr Allitsen has made a wise choice. He is betrothed at last."

The Disagreeable Man stopped counting out the money.

"Stupid old Frau Steinhart!" he said good-naturedly. "People like myself don't get betrothed. We get buried instead!"

"Na, na!" she answered. "What a thing to say—and so unlike you too! No, but tell me."

"Well, I am telling you the truth," he replied. "If you don't believe me, ask Fraulein herself."

"I have asked her," said Frau Steinhart, "and she told me to ask you."

The Disagreeable Man was much amused. He had never thought of Bernardine in that way.

He paid the bill, and then did something which rather astonished Frau Steinhart, and half convinced her.

He took the bill to Bernardine, told her the amount of her share, and she repaid him then and there.

There was a twinkle in her eye as she looked up at him. Then the composure of her features relaxed, and she laughed.

He laughed too, but no comment was made upon the episode. Then began the good-byes, and the preparations for the return journey.

Bernardine bent over Catharina, and kissed her sad face.

"Fraulein will come again?" she whispered eagerly.

And Bernardine promised. There was something in Bernardine's manner which had won the poor girl's fancy: some unspoken sympathy, some quiet geniality.

Just as they were starting, Frau Steinhart whispered to Robert Allitsen .

"It is a little disappointing to me, Herr Allitsen. I did so hope you were betrothed."

August, the blue-spectacled driver, cracked his whip, and off the horses started homewards.

For some time there was no conversation between the two occupants of the sledge. Bernardine was busy thinking about the experiences of the day, and the Disagreeable Man seemed in a brown study. At last he broke the silence by asking her how she liked his friends, and what she thought of Swiss home life ; and so the time passed pleasantly.

He looked at her once, and said she seemed cold.

"You are not warmly clothed," he said, "I have an extra coat. Put it on ; don't make a fuss, but do so at once. I know the climate, and you don't."

She obeyed, and said she was all the cosier for it.

As they were nearing Petershof, he said half-nervously:

"So my friends took you for my betrothed. I hope you are not offended."

"Why should I be?" she said frankly. "I was only amused, because there never were two people less lover like than you and I are."

"No, that's quite true," he replied in a tone of voice which betokened relief.

"So that I really don't see that we need concern ourselves further in the matter," she added, wishing to put him quite at his ease. "I'm not offended, and you are not offended, and there's an end of it."

"You seem to me to be a very sensible young woman in some respects," the Disagreeable Man remarked after a pause. He was now quite cheerful again, and felt he could really praise his companion. "Although you have read so much, you seem to me sometimes to take a sensible view of things. Now, I don't want to be betrothed to you, any more than I suppose you want to be betrothed to me. And yet we can talk quietly about the matter without a

scene. That would be impossible with most women."

Bernardine laughed.

"Well, I only know," she said cheerily, "that I have enjoyed my day very much, and I'm much obliged to you for your companionship. The fresh air, and the change of surroundings, will have done me good."

His reply was characteristic of him.

"It is the least disagreeable day I have spent for many months," he said quietly.

"Let me settle with you for the sledge now," she said, drawing out her purse, just as they came in sight of the Kurhaus.

They settled money matters, and were quits.

Then he helped her out of the sledge, and he stooped to pick up the shawl she dropped.

"Here is the shawl you are always dropping," he said. "You're rather cold, aren't you? Here, come to the restaurant and have some brandy. Don't make a fuss. I know what's the right thing for you."

She followed him to the restaurant, touched by his rough kindness. He himself took nothing, but he paid for her brandy.

That evening after *table-d'hote*, or rather after he had finished his dinner, he rose to go to his room as usual He generally went off without a remark. But to-night he said :

"Good-night, and thank you for your companionship. It has been my birthday to-day, and I've quite enjoyed it."

CHAPTER XI.

"IF ONE HAS MADE THE ONE GREAT SACRIFICE."

THERE was a suicide in the Kurhaus one afternoon. A Dutchman, Vandervelt, had received rather a bad account of himself from the doctor a few days previously, and in a fit of depression, so it was thought, he had put a bullet throught his head. It had occurred through Marie's unconscious agency. She found him lying on his sofa when she went as usual to take him his afternoon glass of milk. He asked her to give him a packet which was on the top shelf of his cupboard.

"Willingly," she said, and she jumped nimbly on the chair, and gave him the case.

"Anything more ?" she asked kindly, as she watched him draw himself up from the sofa. She thought at the time that he looked wild