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FOLK-LORE

AND

LEGENDS

GERMANY

W. W. GIBBINGS
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PREFATORY NOTE

[Pg v]

It is proposed that this shall be the first of a series of little volumes in which shall be presented in a handy form selections from the Folk-lore and legends of various countries. It has been well said that "the legendary history of a nation is the recital of the elements that formed the character of that nation; it contains the first rude attempts to explain natural phenomena, the traditions of its early history, and the moral principles popularly adopted as the rules for reward and punishment; and generally the legends of a people may be regarded as embodying the popular habits of thought and popular motives of action." The following legends of Germany cannot, we think, fail to interest those who read them. Some of the stories are invested with a charming simplicity of [Pg vi] thought which cannot but excite admiration. Others are of a weird, fantastic character fitted to a land of romantic natural features, of broad river, mountain, and deep forest. The humorous, the pathetic, the terrible, all find place in the German folk-tales, and it would be difficult to rise from their perusal without having received both amusement and instruction. The general lesson they convey is the sure punishment of vice and the reward of virtue; some way or another the villain always meets with his desert. In future volumes we shall deal with the legends of other countries, hoping that the public will bear us company in our excursions.

CONTENTS

[Pg vii]

[Pg viii]

INTRODUCTION

[Pg ix]

The value of national stories and legends has in late years become very widely recognised. Folk-lore has recently received a large amount of attention, and the thought and labour bestowed upon the subject have been rewarded by results which prove that its investigators have entered upon no unfruitful, however long neglected, field.

This book, and its successors in the series which it is proposed to issue, may come into the hands of some who, having little opportunity afforded them to consider how the legends and tales it contains may be of the value we claim for them, may be glad to have the "case" for legends and national stories presented to them in a few words.

The peasant's tale, the story preserved through centuries on the lips of old wives, the narrative

which has come down to us having done duty as a source of amusement in the fireside groups of [Pg x]
preceding generations, may seem to some to afford slight matter for reflection, and may even appear so grotesque in its incidents as to be fitted only to excite a smile of wonder at the simplicity of those among whom such stories could obtain reception, and surprise at the fantastic imagination in which such tales could find their origin. Modern thought has, however, been busy asking itself what is the meaning of these stories, and it has done much to supply itself with an answer. This, at least, it has done: it has discovered that these legends and tales, which so many have been inclined to cast aside as worthless, are of a singular value, as throwing a light which little else can afford upon the mind of primitive man. At first the collection of national stories was undertaken merely for the purpose of affording amusement. Folk-tales were diverting, so they found their way into print, and were issued as curious literary matter fitted to supply diversion for a vacant hour. Many of the tales are very beautiful, and their mere literary merit sufficed to make them sought for. But legendary lore was soon observed to possess much more value than could attach to its merely amusing features. It was obvious that in these legends were preserved the fragments of the beliefs of the ancient folk. "The mythology of one period," remarked Sir [Pg xi]
Walter Scott, "would appear to pass into the romance of the next century, and that into the nursery tale of the subsequent ages." "Fiction," said Sir John Malcolm, "resolves itself into its primitive elements, as, by the slow and unceasing action of the wind and rain, the solid granite is crumbled into sand. The creations embodied by the vivid imagination of man in the childhood of his race incorporate themselves in his fond and mistaken faith. Sanctity is given to his daydreams by the altar of the idol. Then, perhaps, they acquire a deceitful truth from the genius of the bard. Blended with the mortal hero, the aspect of the god glances through the visor of the helmet, or adds a holy dignity to the royal crown. Poetry borrows its ornaments from the lessons of the priests. The ancient god of strength of the Teutons, throned in his chariot of the stars, the Northern Wain, invested the Emperor of the Franks and the paladins who surrounded him with superhuman might. And the same constellation, darting down its rays upon the head of the long-lost Arthur, has given to the monarch of the Britons the veneration which once belonged to the son of 'Uthry Bendragon,' 'Thunder, the supreme leader,' and 'Eygyr, the generating power.' [Pg xii]
Time rolls on; faith lessens; the flocks are led to graze within the rocky circle of the giants, even the bones of the warriors moulder into dust; the lay is no longer heard; and the fable, reduced again to its original simplicity and nudity, becomes the fitting source of pastime to the untutored peasant and the listening child. Hence we may yet trace no small proportion of mystic and romantic lore in the tales which gladden the cottage fireside, or, century after century, soothe the infant to its slumbers." The works of the brothers Grimm, the appearance of the *Kinder- und Haus-Mährchen*, in 1812, and of the *Deutsche Mythologie*, in 1835, threw a new light on the importance of national tales, and awoke the spirit of scientific comparison which has made the study of Folk-lore productive of such valuable results.

With regard to the diffusion of national stories, it is remarkable that we find substantially identical narratives flourishing in the most widely separated countries, and this fact has given rise to several explanatory theories, none of which seems perfectly satisfactory. The philological discovery of the original unity of all the Aryan races may account for the possession by the Aryan [Pg xiii]
peoples of similar stories. It may be, as Sir George Cox suggests, a common inheritance of such tales as were current when the Aryans "still lived as a single people." We find, however, that these tales are also current among people whom, accepting this theory, we should least expect to find possessing them, and so the wide diffusion of the stories yet remains unsatisfactorily accounted for. Identity of imagination, inheritance, transmission, may each have played its part.

As to the origin of the tales much debate has arisen. It is obvious from the nature of the incidents of many of them that they could only have originated in a most primitive state of man. "Early man," says Sir George Cox, "had life, and therefore all things must have life also. The sun, the moon, the stars, the ground on which he trod, the clouds, storms, lightnings were all living beings; could he help thinking that, like himself, they were all conscious beings also?" Such, according to this authority, was the origin of primary myths, secondary and tertiary myths arising in the course of time from the gradual misunderstanding of phrases applied by primitive man to personified objects. According to Professor Max Müller, animism, or the investing all things with [Pg xiv]
life, springs not in the first place from man's thought, but from the language in which he clothes it. Man, he says, found himself speaking of all things in words having "a termination expressive of gender, and this naturally produced in the mind the corresponding idea of sex." He thus came to invest all objects with "something of an individual, active, sexual, and at last personal character." However hard it may be to discover the reason for the origin of the tendency to animism, the fact is certain that the tendency is to be found generally existing among savage peoples, and it would seem that we must accept the national stories which have come down to us embodying this tendency in grotesque incidents as relics handed down from the savage days of the people with whom the tales originated, as the expression of portions of their thought when they had as yet only attained to such a degree of civilisation as exists among savages of the present day.

Strange and grotesque as some of the national stories are, they may be regarded as embodying the fragments of some of man's most primitive beliefs; and recognising this, it will be impossible to dismiss the folk-tale as unworthy of careful consideration, nor may it be regarded as unfitted [Pg xv]
to afford us, if studied aright, very much more than merely such amusement as may be derived from its quaint incident and grotesque plot.

C. J. T.

GAFFER DEATH.

[Pg 1]

There was once a poor man who had twelve children, and he was obliged to labour day and night that he might earn food for them. When at length, as it so happened, a thirteenth came into the world, the poor man did not know how to help himself, so he ran out into the highway, determined to ask the first person he met to be godfather to the boy.

There came stalking up to him Death, who said—

"Take me for a godfather."

"Who are you?" asked the father.

"I am Death, who makes all equal," replied the stranger.

Then said the man—

"You are one of the right sort: you seize on rich and poor without distinction; you shall be the child's godfather."

Death answered—

"I will make the boy rich and renowned throughout the world, for he who has me for a friend can want nothing."

Said the man— [Pg 2]

"Next Sunday will he be christened, mind and come at the right time."

Death accordingly appeared as he had promised, and stood godfather to the child.

When the boy grew up his godfather came to him one day, and took him into a wood, and said—

"Now shall you have your godfather's present. I will make a most famous physician of you. Whenever you are called to a sick person, I will take care and show myself to you. If I stand at the foot of the bed, say boldly, 'I will soon restore you to health,' and give the patient a little herb that I will point out to you, and he will soon be well. If, however, I stand at the head of the sick person, he is mine; then say, 'All help is useless; he must soon die.'"

Then Death showed him the little herb, and said—

"Take heed that you never use it in opposition to my will."

It was not long before the young fellow was the most celebrated physician in the whole world.

"The moment he sees a person," said every one, "he knows whether or not he'll recover."

Accordingly he was soon in great request. People came from far and near to consult him, and they gave him whatever he required, so that he made an immense fortune. Now, it so happened [Pg 3] that the king was taken ill, and the physician was called upon to say whether he must die. As he went up to the bed he saw Death standing at the sick man's head, so that there was no chance of his recovery. The physician thought, however, that if he outwitted Death, he would not, perhaps, be much offended, seeing that he was his godfather, so he caught hold of the king and turned him round, so that by that means Death was standing at his feet. Then he gave him some of the herb, and the king recovered, and was once more well. Death came up to the physician with a very angry and gloomy countenance, and said—

"I will forgive you this time what you have done, because I am your godfather, but if you ever venture to betray me again, you must take the consequences."

Soon after this the king's daughter fell sick, and nobody could cure her. The old king wept night and day, until his eyes were blinded, and at last he proclaimed that whosoever rescued her from Death should be rewarded by marrying her and inheriting his throne. The physician came, but Death was standing at the head of the princess. When the physician saw the beauty of the king's daughter, and thought of the promises that the king had made, he forgot all the warnings he had received, and, although Death frowned heavily all the while, he turned the patient so that Death stood at her feet, and gave her some of the herb, so that he once more put life into her veins. [Pg 4]

When Death saw that he was a second time cheated out of his property, he stepped up to the physician, and said—

"Now, follow me."

He laid hold of him with his icy cold hand, and led him into a subterranean cave, in which there were thousands and thousands of burning candles, ranged in innumerable rows. Some were whole, some half burnt out, some nearly consumed. Every instant some went out, and fresh ones were lighted, so that the little flames seemed perpetually hopping about.

"Behold," said Death, "the life-candles of mankind. The large ones belong to children, those half consumed to middle-aged people, the little ones to the aged. Yet children and young people have oftentimes but a little candle, and when that is burnt out, their life is at an end, and they are mine."

The physician said—

"Show me my candle."

Then Death pointed out a very little candle-end, which was glimmering in the socket, and said—

"Behold!"

Then the physician said—

"O dearest godfather, light me up a new one, that I may first enjoy my life, be king, and husband of the beautiful princess."

"I cannot do so," said Death; "one must burn out before I can light up another." [Pg 5]

"Place the old one then upon a new one, that that may burn on when this is at an end," said the physician.

Death pretended that he would comply with this wish, and reached a large candle, but to revenge himself, purposely failed in putting it up, and the little piece fell and was extinguished. The physician sank with it, so he himself fell into the hands of Death.

THE LEGEND OF PARACELSUS. [Pg 6]

It once happened that Paracelsus was walking through a forest, when he heard a voice calling to him by name. He looked around, and at length discovered that it proceeded from a fir-tree, in the trunk of which there was a spirit enclosed by a small stopper, sealed with three crosses.

The spirit begged of Paracelsus to set him free. This he readily promised, on condition that the spirit should bestow upon him a medicine capable of healing all diseases, and a tincture which would turn everything it touched to gold. The spirit acceded to his request, whereupon Paracelsus took his penknife, and succeeded, after some trouble, in getting out the stopper. A loathsome black spider crept forth, which ran down the trunk of the tree. Scarcely had it reached the ground before it was changed, and became, as if rising from the earth, a tall haggard man, with squinting red eyes, wrapped in a scarlet mantle.

He led Paracelsus to a high, overhanging, craggy mount, and with a hazel twig, which he had broken off by the way, he smote the rock, which, splitting with a crash at the blow, divided itself [Pg 7] in twain, and the spirit disappeared within it. He, however, soon returned with two small phials, which he handed to Paracelsus—a yellow one, containing the tincture which turned all it touched to gold, and a white one, holding the medicine which healed all diseases. He then smote the rock a second time, and thereupon it instantly closed again.

Both now set forth on their return, the spirit directing his course towards Innsprück, to seize upon the magician who had banished him from that city. Now Paracelsus trembled for the consequences which his releasing the Evil One would entail upon him who had conjured him into the tree, and bethought how he might rescue him. When they arrived once more at the fir-tree, he asked the spirit if he could possibly transform himself again into a spider, and let him see him creep into the hole. The spirit said that it was not only possible, but that he would be most happy to make such a display of his art for the gratification of his deliverer.

Accordingly he once more assumed the form of a spider, and crept again into the well-known crevice. When he had done so, Paracelsus, who had kept the stopper all ready in his hand for the purpose, clapped it as quick as lightning into the hole, hammered it in firmly with a stone, and with his knife made three fresh crosses upon it. The spirit, mad with rage, shook the fir-tree as [Pg 8] though with a whirlwind, that he might drive out the stopper which Paracelsus had thrust in, but his fury was of no avail. It held fast, and left him there with little hope of escape, for, on account of the great drifts of snow from the mountains, the forest will never be cut down, and, although he should call night and day, nobody in that neighbourhood ever ventures near the spot.

Paracelsus, however, found that the phials were such as he had demanded, and it was by their means that he afterwards became such a celebrated and distinguished man.

HANS IN LUCK. [Pg 9]

Hans had served his master seven years, and at last said to him—

"Master, my time is up; I should like to go home and see my mother, so give me my wages."

And the master said—

"You have been a faithful and good servant, so your pay shall be handsome."

Then he gave him a piece of silver that was as big as his head. Hans took out his pocket-handkerchief, put the piece of silver into it, threw it over his shoulder, and jogged off homewards.

As he went lazily on, dragging one foot after another, a man came in sight, trotting along gaily on a capital horse.

"Ah!" said Hans aloud, "what a fine thing it is to ride on horseback! There he sits as if he were at home in his chair. He trips against no stones, spares his shoes, and yet gets on he hardly knows how."

The horseman heard this, and said—

"Well, Hans, why do you go on foot, then?"

"Ah!" said he, "I have this load to carry; to be sure, it is silver, but it is so heavy that I can't hold up my head, and it hurts my shoulder sadly." [Pg 10]

"What do you say to changing?" said the horseman. "I will give you my horse, and you shall give me the silver."

"With all my heart," said Hans, "but I tell you one thing: you will have a weary task to drag it along."

The horseman got off, took the silver, helped Hans up, gave him the bridle into his hand, and said —

"When you want to go very fast, you must smack your lips loud and cry, 'Jip.'"

Hans was delighted as he sat on the horse, and rode merrily on. After a time he thought he should like to go a little faster, so he smacked his lips and cried "Jip." Away went the horse full gallop, and before Hans knew what he was about, he was thrown off, and lay in a ditch by the wayside, and his horse would have run off if a shepherd, who was coming by driving a cow, had not stopped it. Hans soon came to himself, and got upon his legs again. He was sadly vexed, and said to the shepherd—

"This riding is no joke when a man gets on a beast like this, that stumbles and flings him off as if he would break his neck. However, I'm off now once for all. I like your cow a great deal better; one can walk along at one's leisure behind her, and have milk, butter, and cheese every day into the bargain. What would I give to have such a cow!" [Pg 11]

"Well," said the shepherd, "if you are so fond of her I will change my cow for your horse."

"Done!" said Hans merrily.

The shepherd jumped upon the horse and away he rode. Hans drove off his cow quietly, and thought his bargain a very lucky one.

"If I have only a piece of bread (and I certainly shall be able to get that), I can, whenever I like, eat my butter and cheese with it, and when I am thirsty I can milk my cow and drink the milk. What can I wish for more?" said he.

When he came to an inn he halted, ate up all his bread, and gave away his last penny for a glass of beer. Then he drove his cow towards his mother's village. The heat grew greater as noon came on, till at last he found himself on a wide heath that it would take him more than an hour to cross, and he began to be so hot and parched that his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth.

"I can find a cure for this," thought he; "now will I milk my cow and quench my thirst." So he tied her to the stump of a tree, and held his leathern cap to milk into, but not a drop was to be had.

While he was trying his luck, and managing the matter very clumsily, the uneasy beast gave him a kick on the head that knocked him down, and there he lay a long while senseless. Luckily a butcher came by driving a pig in a wheelbarrow. [Pg 12]

"What is the matter with you?" said the butcher, as he helped him up.

Hans told him what had happened, and the butcher gave him a flask, saying—

"There, drink and refresh yourself. Your cow will give you no milk; she is an old beast, good for nothing but the slaughter-house."

"Alas, alas!" said Hans, "who would have thought it? If I kill her, what will she be good for? I hate cow-beef; it is not tender enough for me. If it were a pig, now, one could do something with it; it would at any rate make some sausages."

"Well," said the butcher, "to please you I'll change and give you the pig for the cow."

"Heaven reward you for your kindness!" said Hans, as he gave the butcher the cow and took the pig off the wheelbarrow and drove it off, holding it by a string tied to its leg.

So on he jogged, and all seemed now to go right with him. He had met with some misfortunes, to be sure, but he was now well repaid for all. The next person he met was a countryman carrying a fine white goose under his arm. The countryman stopped to ask what was the hour, and Hans told him all his luck, and how he had made so many good bargains. The countryman said he was going to take the goose to a christening.

"Feel," said he, "how heavy it is, and yet it is only eight weeks old. Whoever roasts and eats it may cut plenty of fat off, it has lived so well." [Pg 13]

"You're right," said Hans, as he weighed it in his hand; "but my pig is no trifle."

Meantime the countryman began to look grave, and shook his head.

"Hark ye," said he, "my good friend. Your pig may get you into a scrape. In the village I have just come from the squire has had a pig stolen out of his sty. I was dreadfully afraid when I saw you that you had got the squire's pig. It will be a bad job if they catch you, for the least they'll do will be to throw you into the horse-pond."

Poor Hans was sadly frightened.

"Good man," cried he, "pray get me out of this scrape. You know this country better than I; take my pig and give me the goose."

"I ought to have something into the bargain," said the countryman; "however, I'll not bear hard upon you, as you are in trouble."

Then he took the string in his hand and drove off the pig by a side path, while Hans went on his way homeward free from care.

"After all," thought he, "I have the best of the bargain. First there will be a capital roast, then the fat will find me in goose-grease for six months, and then there are all the beautiful white feathers. I will put them into my pillow, and then I am sure I shall sleep soundly without rocking. [Pg 14] How happy my mother will be!"

As he came to the last village he saw a scissors-grinder, with his wheel, working away and singing—

> "O'er hill and o'er dale so happy I roam,
> Work light and live well, all the world is my home;
> Who so blythe, so merry as I?"

Hans stood looking for a while, and at last said—

"You must be well off, master grinder, you seem so happy at your work."

"Yes," said the other, "mine is a golden trade. A good grinder never puts his hand in his pocket without finding money in it—but where did you get that beautiful goose?"

"I did not buy it, but changed a pig for it."

"And where did you get the pig?"

"I gave a cow for it."

"And the cow?"

"I gave a horse for it."

"And the horse?"

"I gave a piece of silver as big as my head for that."

"And the silver?"

"Oh! I worked hard for that seven long years."

"You have thriven well in the world hitherto," said the grinder, "now if you could find money in your pocket whenever you put your hand into it your fortune would be made."

"Very true, but how is that to be managed?" [Pg 15]

"You must turn grinder like me," said the other. "You only want a grindstone, the rest will come of itself. Here is one that is only a little the worse for wear. I would not ask more than the value of your goose for it. Will you buy it?"

"How can you ask such a question?" said Hans. "I should be the happiest man in the world if I could have money whenever I put my hand in my pocket. What could I want more? There's the goose."

"Now," said the grinder, as he gave him a common rough stone that lay by his side, "this is a most capital stone. Do but manage it cleverly and you can make an old nail cut with it."

Hans took the stone, and went off with a light heart. His eyes sparkled with joy, and he said to himself—

"I must have been born in a lucky hour. Everything I want or wish comes to me of itself."

Meantime he began to be tired, for he had been travelling ever since daybreak. He was hungry too, for he had given away his last penny in his joy at getting the cow. At last he could go no further, and the stone tired him terribly, so he dragged himself to the side of the pond that he might drink some water and rest a while. He laid the stone carefully by his side on the bank, but as he stooped down to drink he forgot it, pushed it a little, and down it went, plump into the [Pg 16] pond. For a while he watched it sinking in the deep, clear water, then, sprang up for joy, and again fell upon his knees and thanked Heaven with tears in his eyes for its kindness in taking

away his only plague, the ugly, heavy stone.

"How happy am I!" cried he; "no mortal was ever so lucky as I am."

Then he got up with a light and merry heart, and walked on, free from all his troubles, till he reached his mother's house.

THE GREY MARE IN THE GARRET.

[Pg 17]

In the portal of the Church of the Apostles, near the new market in Cologne, hung a picture, the portraits of a certain Frau Richmodis von Aducht and her two children, of whom the following singular story is related. The picture was covered with a curtain which she worked with her own hands.

Her husband, Richmuth von Aducht, was, in the year of grace 1400, a rich burgomaster of Cologne, and lived at the sign of the Parroquet in the New Marckt. In that year a fearful plague desolated all quarters of the city. She fell sick of the pest, and, to all appearance, died. After the usual period had elapsed she was buried in the vaults of the Apostles' Church. She was buried, as the custom then was, with her jewelled rings on her fingers, and most of her rich ornaments on her person. These tempted the cupidity of the sexton of the church. He argued with himself that they were no use to the corpse, and he determined to possess them. Accordingly he proceeded in the dead of night to the vault where she lay interred, and commenced the work of sacrilegious [Pg 18] spoliation. He first unscrewed the coffin lid. He then removed it altogether, and proceeded to tear away the shroud which interposed between him and his prey. But what was his horror to perceive the corpse clasp her hands slowly together, then rise, and finally sit erect in the coffin. He was rooted to the earth. The corpse made as though it would step from its narrow bed, and the sexton fled, shrieking, through the vaults. The corpse followed, its long white shroud floating like a meteor in the dim light of the lamp, which, in his haste, he had forgotten. It was not until he reached his own door that he had sufficient courage to look behind him, and then, when he perceived no trace of his pursuer, the excitement which had sustained him so far subsided, and he sank senseless to the earth.

In the meantime Richmuth von Aducht, who had slept scarcely a moment since the death of his dear wife, was surprised by the voice of his old manservant, who rapped loudly at his chamber door, and told him to awake and come forth, for his mistress had arisen from the dead, and was then at the gate of the courtyard.

"Bah!" said he, rather pettishly, "go thy ways, Hans; you dream, or are mad, or drunk. What you see is quite impossible. I should as soon believe my old grey mare had got into the garret as that my wife was at the courtyard gate."

Trot, trot, trot, trot, suddenly resounded high over his head. [Pg 19]

"What's that?" asked he of his servant.

"I know not," replied the man, "an' it be not your old grey mare in the garret."

They descended in haste to the courtyard, and looked up to the window of the attic. Lo and behold! there was indeed the grey mare with her head poked out of the window, gazing down with her great eyes on her master and his man, and seeming to enjoy very much her exalted station, and their surprise at it.

Knock, knock, knock went the rapper of the street gate.

"It is my wife!" "It is my mistress!" exclaimed master and man in the same breath.

The door was quickly unfastened, and there, truly, stood the mistress of the mansion, enveloped in her shroud.

"Are you alive or dead?" exclaimed the astonished husband.

"Alive, my dear, but very cold," she murmured faintly, her teeth chattering the while, as those of one in a fever chill; "help me to my chamber."

He caught her in his arms and covered her with kisses. Then he bore her to her chamber, and called up the whole house to welcome and assist her. She suffered a little from fatigue and fright, but in a few days was very much recovered.

The thing became the talk of the town, and hundreds flocked daily to see, not alone the lady that [Pg 20] was rescued from the grave in so remarkable a manner, but also the grey mare which had so strangely contrived to get into the garret.

The excellent lady lived long and happily with her husband, and at her death was laid once more in her old resting-place. The grey mare, after resting in the garret three days, was got down by means of scaffolding, safe and sound. She survived her mistress for some time, and was a general favourite in the city, and when she died her skin was stuffed, and placed in the arsenal as a curiosity. The sexton went mad with the fright he had sustained, and in a short time entered that bourn whence he had so unintentionally recovered the burgomaster's wife.

Not only was this memorable circumstance commemorated in the Church of the Apostles, but it was also celebrated in *bassi relievi* figures on the walls of the burgomaster's residence—the sign of the Parroquet in the New Marckt. The searcher after antiquities will, however, look in vain for either. They are not now to be found. Modern taste has defaced the porch where stood the one, and erected a shapeless structure on the site of the other.

THE WATER SPIRIT.

[Pg 21]

About the middle of the sixteenth century, when Zündorf was no larger than it is at present, there lived at the end of the village, hard by the church, one of that useful class of women termed midwives. She was an honest, industrious creature, and what with ushering the new-born into life, and then assisting in making garments for them, she contrived to creep through the world in comfort, if not in complete happiness.

The summer had been one of unusual drought, and the winter, of a necessity, one of uncommon scarcity, so that when the spring arrived the good woman had less to do than at any period in the preceding seven years. In fact she was totally unemployed. As she mused one night, lying abed, on the matter, she was startled by a sharp, quick knock at the door of her cottage. She hesitated for a moment to answer the call, but the knocking was repeated with more violence than before. This caused her to spring out of bed without more delay, and hasten to ascertain the wish of her impatient visitor. She opened the door in the twinkling of an eye, and a man, tall of stature, [Pg 22] enveloped in a large dark cloak, stood before her.

"My wife is in need of thee," he said to her abruptly; "her time is come. Follow me."

"Nay, but the night is dark, sir," replied she. "Whither do you desire me to follow?"

"Close at hand," he answered, as abruptly as before. "Be ye quick and follow me."

"I will but light my lamp and place it in the lantern," said the woman. "It will not cost me more than a moment's delay."

"It needs not, it needs not," repeated the stranger; "the spot is close by. I know every foot of ground. Follow, follow!"

There was something so imperative, and at the same time so irresistible, in the manner of the man that she said not another word, but drawing her warm cloak about her head followed him at once. Ere she was aware of the course he had taken, so dark was the night, and so wrapt up was she in the cloak and in her meditations, she found herself on the bank of the Rhine, just opposite to the low fertile islet which bears the same name as the village, and lies at a little distance from the shore.

"How is this, good sir?" she exclaimed, in a tone of surprise and alarm. "You have missed the way —you have left your road. Here is no further path."

"Silence, and follow," were the only words he spoke in reply; but they were uttered in such a [Pg 23] manner as to show her at once that her best course was obedience.

They were now at the edge of the mighty stream; the rushing waters washed their feet. The poor woman would fain have drawn back, but she could not, such was the preternatural power exercised over her by her companion.

"Fear not; follow!" he spoke again, in a kinder tone, as the current kissed the hem of her garments.

He took the lead of her. The waters opened to receive him. A wall of crystal seemed built up on either side of the vista. He plunged into its depths; she followed. The wild wave gurgled over them, and they were walking over the shiny pebbles and glittering sands which strewed the bed of the river.

And now a change came over her indeed. She had left all on earth in the thick darkness of a starless spring night, yet all around her was lighted up like a mellow harvest eve, when the sun shines refulgent through masses of golden clouds on the smiling pastures and emerald meadows of the west. She looked up, but she could see no cause for this illumination. She looked down, and her search was equally unsuccessful. She seemed to herself to traverse a great hall of surpassing transparency, lighted up by a light resembling that given out by a huge globe of [Pg 24] ground glass. Her conductor still preceded her. They approached a little door. The chamber within it contained the object of their solicitude. On a couch of mother-of-pearl, surrounded by sleeping fishes and drowsy syrens, who could evidently afford her no assistance, lay the sick lady.

"Here is my wife," spake the stranger, as they entered this chamber. "Take her in hand at once, and hark ye, mother, heed that she has no injury through thee, or——"

With these words he waved his hand, and, preceded by the obedient inhabitants of the river, who had until then occupied the chamber, left the apartment.

The midwife approached her patient with fear and trembling; she knew not what to anticipate.

What was her surprise to perceive that the stranger was like any other lady. The business in hand was soon finished, and midwife and patient began to talk together, as women will when an opportunity is afforded them.

"It surprises me much," quoth the former, "to see such a handsome young lady as you are buried down here in the bottom of the river. Do you never visit the land? What a loss it is to you!"

"Hush, hush!" interposed the Triton's lady, placing her forefinger significantly on her lips; "you peril your life by talking thus without guard. Go to the door; look out, that you may see if there be [Pg 25] any listeners, then I will tell something to surprise you."

The midwife did as she was directed. There was no living being within earshot.

"Now, listen," said the lady.

The midwife was all ear.

"I am a woman; a Christian woman like yourself," she continued, "though I am here now in the home of my husband, who is the spirit of these mighty waters."

"God be praised!" ejaculated her auditor.

"My father was the lord of the hamlet of Rheidt, a little above Lülsdorf, and I lived there in peace and happiness during my girlish days. I had nothing to desire, as every wish was gratified by him as soon as it was formed. However, as I grew to womanhood I felt that my happiness had departed. I knew not whither it had gone, or why, but gone it was. I felt restless, melancholy, wretched. I wanted, in short, something to love, but that I found out since. Well, one day a merry-making took place in the village, and every one was present at it. We danced on the green sward which stretches to the margin of the river; for that day I forgot my secret grief, and was among the gayest of the gay. They made me the queen of the feast, and I had the homage of all. As the sun was going down in glory in the far west, melting the masses of clouds into liquid gold, a [Pg 26] stranger of a noble mien appeared in the midst of our merry circle. He was garbed in green from head to heel, and seemed to have crossed the river, for the hem of his rich riding-cloak was dripping with wet. No one knew him, no one cared to inquire who he was, and his presence rather awed than rejoiced us. He was, however, a stranger, and he was welcome. When I tell you that stranger is my husband, you may imagine the rest. When the dance then on foot was ended, he asked my hand. I could not refuse it if I would, but I would not if I could. He was irresistible. We danced and danced until the earth seemed to reel around us. I could perceive, however, even in the whirl of tumultuous delight which forced me onward, that we neared the water's edge in every successive figure. We stood at length on the verge of the stream. The current caught my dress, the villagers shrieked aloud, and rushed to rescue me from the river.

"'Follow!' said my partner, plunging as he spoke into the foaming flood.

"I followed. Since then I have lived with him here. It is now a century since, but he has communicated to me a portion of his own immortality, and I know not age, neither do I dread death any longer. He is good and kind to me, though fearful to others. The only cause of complaint I have is his invariable custom of destroying every babe to which I give birth on the [Pg 27] third day after my delivery. He says it is for my sake, and for their sakes, that he does so, and he knows best."

She sighed heavily as she said this.

"And now," resumed the lady, "I must give you one piece of advice, which, if you would keep your life, you must implicitly adopt. My husband will return. Be on your guard, I bid you. He will offer you gold, he will pour out the countless treasures he possesses before you, he will proffer you diamonds and pearls and priceless gems, but—heed well what I say to you—take nothing more from him than you would from any other person. Take the exact sum you are wont to receive on earth, and take not a kreutzer more, or your life is not worth a moment's purchase. It is forfeit."

"He must be a cruel being, indeed," ejaculated the midwife. "God deliver me from this dread and great danger."

"See you yon sealed vessels?" spake the lady, without seeming to heed her fright, or hear her ejaculations.

The midwife looked, and saw ranged on an upper shelf of the apartment about a dozen small pots, like pipkins, all fast sealed, and labelled in unknown characters.

"These pots," pursued she, "contain the souls of those who have been, like you, my attendants in [Pg 28] childbirth, but who, for slighting the advice I gave them, as I now give you, and permitting a spirit of unjust gain to take possession of their hearts, were deprived of life by my husband. Heed well what I say. He comes. Be silent and discreet."

As she spake the water spirit entered. He first asked his wife how she did, and his tones were like the rushing sound of a current heard far off. Learning from her own lips that all was well with her, he turned to the midwife and thanked her most graciously.

"Now, come with me," he said, "I must pay thee for thy services."

She followed him from the sick-chamber to the treasury of the palace. It was a spacious crystal vault, lighted up, like the rest of the palace, from without, but within it was resplendent with

treasures of all kinds. He led her to a huge heap of shining gold which ran the whole length of the chamber.

"Here," said he, "take what you will. I put no stint upon you."

The trembling woman picked up a single piece of the smallest coin she could find upon the heap.

"This is my fee," she spake. "I ask no more than a fair remuneration for my labour."

The water spirit's brow blackened like a tempestuous night, and he showed his green teeth for a moment as if in great ire, but the feeling, whatever it was, appeared to pass away as quickly as it came, and he led her to a huge heap of pearls. [Pg 29]

"Here," he said, "take what you will. Perhaps you like these better? They are all pearls of great price, or may be you would wish for some memento of me. Take what you will."

But she still declined to take anything more, although he tempted her with all his treasures. She had not forgotten the advice of her patient.

"I desire nothing more from you, great prince as you are, than I receive from one of my own condition." This was her uniform answer to his entreaties—

"I thank you, but I may not take aught beside my due."

"If," said he, after a short pause, "you had taken more than your due, you would have perished at my hands. And now," proceeded the spirit, "you shall home, but first take this. Fear not."

As he spake he dipped his hand in the heap of gold and poured forth a handful into her lap.

"Use that," he continued, "use it without fear. It is my gift. No evil will come of it; I give you my royal word."

He beckoned her onward without waiting for her reply, and they were walking once again through the corridors of the palace.

"Adieu!" he said, waving his hand to her, "adieu!" [Pg 30]

Darkness fell around her in a moment. In a moment more she awoke, as from a dream, in her warm bed.

PETER KLAUS. [Pg 31]

Peter Klaus, a goatherd of Sittendorf, who tended herds on the Kyffhauser mountain, used to let them rest of an evening in a spot surrounded by an old wall, where he always counted them to see if they were all right. For some days he noticed that one of his finest goats, as they came to this spot, vanished, and never returned to the herd till late. He watched him more closely, and at length saw him slip through a rent in the wall. He followed him, and caught him in a cave, feeding sumptuously upon the grains of oats which fell one by one from the roof. He looked up, shook his head at the shower of oats, but, with all his care, could discover nothing further. At length he heard overhead the neighing and stamping of some mettlesome horses, and concluded that the oats must have fallen from their mangers.

While the goatherd stood there, wondering about these horses in a totally uninhabited mountain, a lad came and made signs to him to follow him silently. Peter ascended some steps, and, crossing a walled court, came to a glade surrounded by rocky cliffs, into which a sort of twilight made its way through the thick-leaved branches. Here he found twelve grave old knights playing at skittles, at a well-levelled and fresh plot of grass. Peter was silently appointed to set up the ninepins for them. [Pg 32]

At first his knees knocked together as he did this, while he marked, with half-stolen glances, the long beards and goodly paunches of the noble knights. By degrees, however, he grew more confident, and looked at everything about him with a steady gaze—nay, at last, he ventured so far as to take a draught from a pitcher which stood near him, the fragrance of which appeared to him delightful. He felt quite revived by the draught, and as often as he felt at all tired, received new strength from application to the inexhaustible pitcher. But at length sleep overcame him.

When he awoke, he found himself once more in the enclosed green space, where he was accustomed to leave his goats. He rubbed his eyes, but could discover neither dog nor goats, and stared with surprise at the height to which the grass had grown, and at the bushes and trees, which he never remembered to have noticed. Shaking his head, he proceeded along the roads and paths which he was accustomed to traverse daily with his herd, but could nowhere see any traces of his goats. Below him he saw Sittendorf; and at last he descended with quickened step, there to make inquiries after his herd. [Pg 33]

The people whom he met at his entrance to the town were unknown to him, and dressed and spoke differently from those whom he had known there. Moreover, they all stared at him when he inquired about his goats, and began stroking their chins. At last, almost involuntarily, he did the same, and found to his great astonishment that his beard had grown to be a foot long. He began

now to think himself and the world altogether bewitched, and yet he felt sure that the mountain from which he had descended was the Kyffhauser; and the houses here, with their fore-courts, were all familiar to him. Moreover, several lads whom he heard telling the name of the place to a traveller called it Sittendorf.

Shaking his head, he proceeded into the town straight to his own house. He found it sadly fallen to decay. Before it lay a strange herd-boy in tattered garments, and near him an old worn-out dog, which growled and showed his teeth at Peter when he called him. He entered by the opening, which had formerly been closed by a door, but found all within so desolate and empty that he staggered out again like a drunkard, and called his wife and children. No one heard; no voice answered him.

Women and children now began to surround the strange old man, with the long hoary beard, and [Pg 34] to contend with one another in inquiring of him what he wanted. He thought it so ridiculous to make inquiries of strangers, before his own house, after his wife and children, and still more so, after himself, that he mentioned the first neighbour whose name occurred to him, Kirt Stiffen. All were silent, and looked at one another, till an old woman said—

"He has left here these twelve years. He lives at Sachsenberg; you'll hardly get there to-day."

"Velten Maier?"

"God help him!" said an old crone leaning on a crutch. "He has been confined these fifteen years in the house, which he'll never leave again."

He recognised, as he thought, his suddenly aged neighbour; but he had lost all desire of asking any more questions. At last a brisk young woman, with a boy of a twelvemonth old in her arms, and with a little girl holding her hand, made her way through the gaping crowd, and they looked for all the world like his wife and children.

"What is your name?" said Peter, astonished.

"Maria."

"And your father?"

"God have mercy on him, Peter Klaus. It is twenty years since we sought him day and night on the Kyffhauser, when his goats came home without him. I was only seven years old when it happened."

The goatherd could no longer contain himself. [Pg 35]

"I am Peter Klaus," he cried, "and no other," and he took the babe from his daughter's arms.

All stood like statues for a minute, till one and then another began to cry—

"Here's Peter Klaus come back again! Welcome, neighbour, welcome, after twenty years; welcome, Peter Klaus!"

THE LEGEND OF RHEINECK.

[Pg 36]

Graf Ulric Von Rheineck was a very wild youth. Recklessly and without consideration did he plunge into every excess. Dissipation grew to be the habit of his life, and no sensual indulgence did he deny himself which could be procured by any means whatever. Amply provided for as he was, the revenues of his wide possessions, which comprehended Thal Rheineck, and the adjacent country, to the shore of the Rhine, and as far as the mouth of the Aar, were soon discovered to be insufficient for all his absorbing necessities. One by one his broad lands were alienated from him, piece after piece of that noble possession fell from his house, until finally he found himself without a single inch of ground which he could call his own, save the small and unproductive spot on which Rheineck stood. This he had no power to transfer, or perhaps it would have gone with the remainder. The castle had fallen sadly into disrepair, through his protracted absence from home, and his continual neglect of it,—indeed there was scarcely a habitable room within its [Pg 37] precincts, and he now had no means to make it the fitting abode of any one, still less of a nobleman of his rank and consequence. All without, as well as all within it, was desolate and dreary to the last degree. The splendid garden, previously the pride of his ancestors, was overrun with weeds, and tangled with parasites and creepers. The stately trees, which once afforded shelter and shade, as well as fruits of the finest quality and rarest kinds, were all dying or withered, or had their growth obstructed by destroying plants. The outer walls were in a ruinous condition, the fortifications were everywhere fallen into decay, and the alcoves and summer-houses had dropped down, or were roofless, and exposed to the weather. It was a cheerless prospect to contemplate, but he could not now help himself, even if he had the will to do so. Day after day the same scene of desolation presented itself to his eyes, night after night did the same cheerless chamber present itself to his view. It was his own doing. That he could not deny, and bitterly he rued it. To crown his helplessness and misery, his vassals and domestic servants abandoned him by degrees, one after another, and at last he was left entirely alone in the house of his fathers—a hermit in that most dismal of all solitudes, the desolate scene of one's childish, one's happiest recollections.

One evening about twilight, as he sat at the outer gate, looking sadly on the broad, bright river which flowed calmly beneath, he became aware of the presence of a stranger, who seemed to toil wearily up the steep acclivity on the summit of which the castle is situated. The stranger—an unusual sight within those walls then—soon reached the spot where Ulric sat, and, greeting the youth in the fashion of the times, prayed him for shelter during the night, and refreshment after his most painful journey. [Pg 38]

"I am," quoth the stranger, "a poor pilgrim on my way to Cologne, where, by the merits of the three wise kings—to whose shrine I am bound—I hope to succeed in the object of my journey."

Graf Ulric von Rheineck at once accorded him the hospitality he required, for though he had but scant cheer for himself, and nought of comfort to bestow, he had still some of the feeling of a gentleman left in him.

"I am alone here now," said he to the pilgrim, with a deep sigh. "I am myself as poor as Job. Would it were not so! My menials have left me to provide for themselves, as I can no longer provide for them. 'Twas ever the way of the world, and I blame them not for it. The last departed yesterday. He was an old favourite of my father's, and he once thought that he would not leave my service but with his life. We must now look to ourselves, however,—at least so he said. But that has nothing to do with the matter, so enter, my friend." [Pg 39]

They entered. By their joint exertions a simple evening meal was soon made ready, and speedily spread forth on a half-rotten plank, their only table.

"I have no better to offer you," observed the young Count, "but I offer you what I have with right goodwill. Eat, if you can, and be merry."

They ate in silence, neither speaking during the meal.

"Surely," said the pilgrim, when it was over,—"surely it may not be that the extensive cellars of this great castle contain not a single cup of wine for the weary wayfarer."

The Count was at once struck by the idea. It seemed to him as if he had never thought of it before, though in reality he had ransacked every corner of the cellars more than once.

"Come, let us go together and try," continued the pilgrim; "it will go hard with us if we find nought to wash down our homely fare."

Accompanied by his persuasive guest, the Count descended to the vaults, where the wines of Rheineck had been stored for ages. Dark and dreary did they seem to him. A chill fell on his soul as he strode over the mouldy floor.

"Here," said the pilgrim, with great glee,—"here, here! Look ye, my master, look ye! See! I have found a cup of the best."

The Count passed into a narrow cellar whither the pilgrim had preceded him. There stood his companion beside a full butt of burgundy, holding in his hand a massive silver cup, foaming over with the generous beverage, and with the other he pointed exultingly to his prize. The scene seemed like a dream to Ulric. The place was wholly unknown to him. The circumstances were most extraordinary. He mused a moment, but he knew not what to do in the emergency. [Pg 40]

"We will enjoy ourselves here," said the pilgrim. "Here, on this very spot, shall we make us merry! Ay, here, beside this noble butt of burgundy. See, 'tis the best vintage! Let us be of good cheer!"

The Count and his boon companion sat down on two empty casks, and a third served them for a table. They plied the brimming beakers with right goodwill; they drank with all their might and main. The Count became communicative, and talked about his private affairs, as men in liquor will. The pilgrim, however, preserved a very discreet silence, only interrupting by an occasional interjection of delight, or an opportune word of encouragement to his garrulous friend.

"I'll tell you what," began the pilgrim, when the Count had concluded his tale,—"I'll tell you what. Listen: I know a way to get you out of your difficulties, to rid you of all your embarrassments."

The Count looked at him incredulously for a moment; his eye could not keep itself steady for a longer space of time. There was something in the pilgrim's glance as it met his that greatly dissipated his unbelief, and he inquired of him how these things could be brought about. [Pg 41]

"But, mayhap," continued the pilgrim, apparently disregarding the manifest change in his companion's impressions regarding him,—"mayhap you would be too faint-hearted to follow my advice if I gave it you."

The Count sprang on his feet in a trice, and half-unsheathed his sword to avenge this taunt on his manhood, but the pilgrim looked so unconcerned, and evinced so little emotion at this burst of anger, that the action and its result were merely momentary. Ulric resumed his seat, and the pilgrim proceeded—

"You tell me that you once heard from your father, who had it from his father, that your great-grandfather, in the time when this castle was beleaguered by the Emperor Conrad, buried a vast treasure in some part of it, but which part his sudden death prevented him from communicating to his successor?"

The Count nodded acquiescence.

"It is even so," he said.

"In Eastern lands have I learned to discover where concealed treasures are hidden," pursued the pilgrim; "and——"

The Count grasped him by the hand. [Pg 42]

"Find them," he cried,—"find them for me, and a full half is thine! Oh, there is gold, and there are diamonds and precious stones of all kinds. They are there in abundance. My father said so! 'Tis true, 'tis true! Find them, find them, and then shall this old hall ring once more with the voice of merriment. Then shall we live! ay, we shall live! that we shall."

The pilgrim did not attempt to interrupt his ecstasies, or to interpose between him and the excess of his glee, but let him excite himself to the highest pitch with pictures of the pleasing future, until they had acquired almost the complexion of fact and the truth of reality for his distracted imagination. When he had exhausted himself, the wily tempter resumed—

"Oh yes, I know it all. I know where the treasure is. I can put your finger on it if I like. I was present when the old man buried it in the——"

"You present!" exclaimed Ulric, his hair standing on end with horror, for he had no doubts of the truth of the mysterious stranger's statements,—"you present!"

"Yes," resumed the pilgrim; "I was present."

"But he is full a hundred years dead and buried," continued the Count.

"No matter for that, no matter for that," replied the guest abruptly; "many and many a time have we drunk and feasted and revelled together in this vault—ay, in this very vault." [Pg 43]

The Count knew not what to think, still less what to reply to this information. He could not fail to perceive its improbability, drunk as he was, but still he could not, for the life of him, discredit it.

"But," added the pilgrim, "trouble not yourself with that at present which you have not the power to comprehend, and speculate not on my proceedings, but listen to my words, and follow my advice, if you will that I should serve you in the matter."

The Count was silent when the stranger proceeded.

"This is Walpurgis night," he said. "All the spirits of earth and sea and sky are now abroad on their way to the Brocken. Hell is broke loose, you know, for its annual orgies on that mountain. When the castle clock tolls twelve go you into the chapel, and proceed to the graves of your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and your great-great-grandfather; take from their coffins the bones of their skeletons—take them all, mind ye. One by one you must then remove them into the moonlight, outside the walls of the building, and there lay them softly on the bit of green sward which faces to the south. This done, you must next place them in the order in which they lay in their last resting-place. When you have completed that task, you must return to the chapel, [Pg 44] and in their coffins you will find the treasures of your forefathers. No one has power over an atom of them, until the bones of those who in spirit keep watch and ward over them shall have been removed from their guardianship. So long as they rest on them, or oversee them, to the dead they belong. It is a glorious prize. 'Twill be the making of you, man, for ever!"

Ulric was shocked at the proposal. To desecrate the graves of his fathers was a deed which made him shudder, and, bad as he was, the thought filled him with the greatest horror, but the temptation was irresistible.

At the solemn hour of midnight he proceeded to the chapel, accompanied by the pilgrim. He entered the holy place with trembling, for his heart misgave him. The pilgrim stayed without, apparently anxious and uneasy as to the result of the experiment about to be made. To all the solicitations of the Count for assistance in his task he turned a deaf ear; nothing that he could say could induce him to set foot within the chapel walls.

Ulric opened the graves in the order in which they were situated, beginning with the one first from the door of the chapel. He proceeded to remove the rotting remains from their mouldering coffins. One by one did he bear their bleached bones into the open air, as he had been instructed, and placed them as they had lain in their narrow beds, under the pale moonbeams, on the plot of [Pg 45] green sward facing the south, outside the chapel walls. The coffins were all cleared of their tenants, except one which stood next to the altar, at the upper end of the aisle. Ulric approached this also to perform the wretched task he had set himself, the thoughts of the treasure he should become possessed of but faintly sustaining his sinking soul in the fearful operation. Removing the lid of this last resting-place of mortality, his heart failed him at the sight he beheld. There lay extended, as if in deep sleep, the corpse of a fair child, fresh and comely, as if it still felt and breathed and had lusty being. The weakness Ulric felt was but momentary. His companion called aloud to him to finish his task quickly, or the hour would have passed when his labour would avail him. As he touched the corpse of the infant the body stirred as if it had sensation. He shrank back in horror as the fair boy rose gently in his coffin, and at length stood upright within it.

"Bring back yon bones," said the phantom babe,—"bring back yon bones; let them rest in peace in the last home of their fathers. The curse of the dead will be on you otherwise. Back! back! bring

them back ere it be too late."

The corpse sank down in the coffin again as it uttered these words, and Ulric saw a skeleton lying in its place. Shuddering, he averted his gaze, and turned it towards the chapel door, where he had left his companion. But, horror upon horror! as he looked he saw the long, loose, dark outer [Pg 46] garment fall from the limbs of the pilgrim. He saw his form dilate and expand in height and in breadth, until his head seemed to touch the pale crescent moon, and his bulk shut out from view all beyond itself. He saw his eyes firing and flaming like globes of lurid light, and he saw his hair and beard converted into one mass of living flame. The fiend stood revealed in all his hideous deformity.

His hands were stretched forth to fasten on the hapless Count, who, with vacillating step, like the bird under the eye of the basilisk, involuntarily, though with a perfect consciousness of his awful situation, and the fearful fate which awaited him, every moment drew nearer and nearer to him. The victim reached the chapel door—he felt all the power of that diabolical fascination—another step and he would be in the grasp of the fiend who grinned to clutch him. But the fair boy who spoke from the grave suddenly appeared once more, and, flinging himself between the wretched Count and the door, obstructed his further progress.

"Avaunt, foul fiend!" spake the child, and his voice was like a trumpet-note; "avaunt to hell! He is no longer thine. Thou hast no power over him. Your hellish plot has failed. He is free, and shall live and repent."

As he said this he threw his arms around Ulric, and the Count became, as it were, at once [Pg 47] surrounded by a beatific halo, which lighted up the chapel like day. The fiend fled howling like a wild beast disappointed of its prey.

The remains of his ancestors were again replaced in their coffins by the Count, long ere the morning broke, and on their desecrated graves he poured forth a flood of repentant tears. With the dawn of day he quitted the castle of Rheineck. It is said that he traversed the land in the garb of a lowly mendicant, subsisting on the alms of the charitable, and it is likewise told that he did penance at every holy shrine from Cologne to Rome, whither he was bound to obtain absolution for his sins. Years afterwards he was found dead at the foot of the ancient altar in the ruined chapel. The castle went to ruin, and for centuries nought ever dwelt within its walls save the night-birds and the beasts of prey.

Of the original structure the ruins of one old tower are all that now remain. It is still firmly believed by the peasants of the neighbourhood, that in the first and the last quarter of the moon the spirit of Ulric, the last of the old lords of Rheineck, still sweeps around the ruin at the hour of midnight, and is occasionally visible to belated wanderers.

THE CELLAR OF THE OLD KNIGHTS IN THE KYFFHAUSER. [Pg 48]

There was a poor, but worthy, and withal very merry, fellow at Tilleda, who was once put to the expense of a christening, and, as luck would have it, it was the eighth. According to the custom of the time, he was obliged to give a plain feast to the child's sponsors. The wine of the country which he put before his guests was soon exhausted, and they began to call for more.

"Go," said the merry father of the newly baptized child to his eldest daughter, a handsome girl of sixteen,—"go, and get us better wine than this out of the cellar."

"Out of what cellar?"

"Why, out of the great wine-cellar of the old Knights in the Kyffhauser, to be sure," said her father jokingly.

The simple-minded girl did as he told her, and taking a small pitcher in her hand went to the mountain. In the middle of the mountain she found an aged housekeeper, dressed in a very old- [Pg 49] fashioned style, with a large bundle of keys at her girdle, sitting at the ruined entrance of an immense cellar. The girl was struck dumb with amazement, but the old woman said very kindly—

"Of a surety you want to draw wine out of the Knights' cellar?"

"Yes," said the girl timidly, "but I have no money."

"Never mind that," said the old woman; "come with me, and you shall have wine for nothing, and better wine too than your father ever tasted."

So the two went together through the half-blocked-up entrance, and as they went along the old woman made the girl tell her how affairs were going on at that time in Tilleda.

"For once," said she, "when I was young, and good-looking as you are, the Knights stole me away in the night-time, and brought me through a hole in the ground from the very house in Tilleda which now belongs to your father. Shortly before that they had carried away by force from Kelbra, in broad daylight, the four beautiful damsels who occasionally still ride about here on horses richly caparisoned, and then disappear again. As for me, as soon as I grew old, they made

me their butler, and I have been so ever since."

They had now reached the cellar door, which the old woman opened. It was a very large roomy cellar, with barrels ranged along both sides. The old woman rapped against the barrels—some [Pg 50] were quite full, some were only half full. She took the little pitcher, drew it full of wine, and said —

"There, take that to your father, and as often as you have a feast in your house you may come here again; but, mind, tell nobody but your father where you get the wine from. Mind, too, you must never sell any of it—it costs nothing, and for nothing you must give it away. Let any one but come here for wine to make a profit off it and his last bread is baked."

The girl took the wine to her father, whose guests were highly delighted with it, and sadly puzzled to think where it came from, and ever afterwards, when there was a little merry-making in the house, would the girl fetch wine from the Kyffhauser in her little pitcher. But this state of things did not continue long. The neighbours wondered where so poor a man contrived to get such delicious wine that there was none like it in the whole country round. The father said not a word to any one, and neither did his daughter.

Opposite to them, however, lived the publican who sold adulterated wine. He had once tasted the Old Knights' wine, and thought to himself that one might mix it with ten times the quantity of water and sell it for a good price after all. Accordingly, when the girl went for the fourth time with her little pitcher to the Kyffhauser, he crept after her, and concealed himself among the [Pg 51] bushes, where he watched until he saw her come out of the entrance which led to the cellar, with her pitcher filled with wine.

On the following evening he himself went to the mountain, pushing before him in a wheelbarrow the largest empty barrel he could procure. This he thought of filling with the choicest wine in the cellar, and in the night rolling it down the mountain, and in this way he intended to come every day, as long as there was any wine left in the cellar.

When, however, he came to the place where he had the day before seen the entrance to the cellar, it grew all of a sudden totally dark. The wind began to howl fearfully, and a monster threw him, his barrow, and empty butt, from one ridge of rocks to another, and he kept falling lower and lower, until at last he fell into a cemetery.

There he saw before him a coffin covered with black, and his wife and four of her gossips, whom he knew well by their dress and figures, were following a bier. His fright was so great that he swooned away.

After some hours he came to himself again, and saw, to his horror, that he was still in the dimly lighted vaults, and heard just above his head the well-known town clock of Tilleda strike twelve, and thereby he knew that it was midnight, and that he was then under the church, in the burying- [Pg 52] place of the town. He was more dead than alive, and scarcely dared to breathe.

Presently there came a monk, who led him up a long, long flight of steps, opened a door, placed, without speaking, a piece of gold in his hand, and deposited him at the foot of the mountain. It was a cold frosty night. By degrees the publican recovered himself, and crept, without barrel or wine, back to his own home. The clock struck one as he reached the door. He immediately took to his bed, and in three days was a dead man, and the piece of gold which the wizard monk had given him was expended on his funeral.

THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE. [Pg 53]

There was once a fisherman who lived with his wife in a ditch close by the seaside. The fisherman used to go out all day long a-fishing, and one day as he sat on the shore with his rod, looking at the shining water and watching his line, all of sudden his float was dragged away deep under the sea. In drawing it up he pulled a great fish out of the water. The fish said to him—

"Pray let me live. I am not a real fish. I am an enchanted prince. Put me in the water again and let me go."

"Oh!" said the man, "you need not make so many words about the matter. I wish to have nothing to do with a fish that can talk, so swim away as soon as you please."

Then he put him back into the water, and the fish darted straight down to the bottom, and left a long streak of blood behind him.

When the fisherman went home to his wife in the ditch, he told her how he had caught a great fish, and how it had told him it was an enchanted prince, and that on hearing it speak he had let [Pg 54] it go again.

"Did you not ask it for anything?" said the wife.

"No," said the man; "what should I ask it for?"

"Ah!" said the wife, "we live very wretchedly here in this nasty miserable ditch, do go back and

tell the fish we want a little cottage."

The fisherman did not much like the business; however, he went to the sea, and when he came there the water looked all yellow and green. He sat at the water's edge and said—

"O man of the sea,
Come listen to me,
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!"

Then the fish came swimming to him and said—

"Well, what does she want?"

"Ah!" answered the fisherman, "my wife says that when I had caught you, I ought to have asked you for something before I let you go again. She does not like living any longer in the ditch, and wants a little cottage."

"Go home, then," said the fish; "she is in the cottage already."

So the man went home, and saw his wife standing at the door of a cottage.

"Come in, come in," said she. "Is not this much better than the ditch?"

There was a parlour, a bedchamber, and a kitchen; and behind the cottage there was a little garden with all sorts of flowers and fruits, and a courtyard full of ducks and chickens. [Pg 55]

"Ah," said the fisherman, "how happily we shall live!"

"We will try to do so, at least," said his wife.

Everything went right for a week or two, and then Dame Alice said—

"Husband, there is not room enough in this cottage, the courtyard and garden are a great deal too small. I should like to have a large stone castle to live in, so go to the fish again and tell him to give us a castle."

"Wife," said the fisherman, "I don't like to go to him again, for perhaps he will be angry. We ought to be content with the cottage."

"Nonsense!" said the wife, "he will do it very willingly. Go along and try."

The fisherman went, but his heart was very heavy, and when he came to the sea it looked blue and gloomy, though it was quite calm. He went close to it, and said—

"O man of the sea,
Come listen to me,
For Alice my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!"

"Well, what does she want now?" said the fish.

"Ah!" said the man very sorrowfully, "my wife wants to live in a stone castle." [Pg 56]

"Go home, then," said the fish; "she is standing at the door of it already."

Away went the fisherman, and found his wife standing before a great castle.

"See," said she, "is not this grand?"

With that they went into the house together, and found a great many servants there, the rooms all richly furnished, and full of golden chairs and tables; and behind the castle was a garden, and a wood half a mile long, full of sheep, goats, hares, and deer; and in the courtyard were stables and cow-houses.

"Well," said the man, "now will we live contented and happy for the rest of our lives."

"Perhaps we may," said the wife, "but let us consider and sleep upon it before we make up our minds;" so they went to bed.

The next morning when Dame Alice awoke it was broad daylight, and she jogged the fisherman with her elbow, and said—

"Get up, husband, and bestir yourself, for we must be king of all the land."

"Wife, wife," said the man, "why should we wish to be king? I will not be king."

"Then I will," said Alice.

"But, wife," answered the fisherman, "how can you be king? The fish cannot make you king."

"Husband," said she, "say no more about it, but go and try. I will be king." [Pg 57]

So the man went away quite sorrowful, to think that his wife should want to be king. The sea

looked a dark grey colour, and was covered with foam, as he called the fish to come and help him.

"Well, what would she have now?" asked the fish.

"Alas!" said the man, "my wife wants to be king."

"Go home," said the fish, "she is king already."

Then the fisherman went home, and as he came close to the palace he saw a troop of soldiers, and heard the sound of drums and trumpets; and when he entered, he saw his wife sitting on a high throne of gold and diamonds, with a golden crown upon her head, and on each side of her stood six beautiful maidens.

"Well, wife," said the fisherman, "are you king?"

"Yes," said she, "I am king."

When he had looked at her for a long time, he said—

"Ah! wife, what a fine thing it is to be king! now we shall never have anything more to wish for."

"I don't know how that may be," said she. "Never is a long time. I am king, 'tis true; but I begin to be tired of it, and I think I should like to be emperor."

"Alas! wife, why should you wish to be emperor?" said the fisherman. [Pg 58]

"Husband," said she, "go to the fish. I say I will be emperor."

"Ah! wife," replied the fisherman, "the fish cannot make an emperor; and I should not like to ask for such a thing."

"I am king," said Alice; "and you are my slave, so go directly."

So the fisherman was obliged to go, and he muttered as he went along—

"This will come to no good. It is too much to ask. The fish will be tired at last, and then we shall repent of what we have done."

He soon arrived at the sea, and the water was quite black and muddy, and a mighty whirlwind blew over it; but he went to the shore, and repeated the words he had used before.

"What would she have now?" inquired the fish.

"She wants to be emperor," replied the fisherman.

"Go home," said the fish, "she is emperor already."

So he went home again, and as he came near, he saw his wife sitting on a very lofty throne made of solid gold, with a crown on her head, full two yards high; and on each side of her stood her guards and attendants in a row, ranged according to height, from the tallest giant to a little dwarf, no bigger than one's finger. And before her stood princes, and dukes, and earls; and the [Pg 59] fisherman went up to her, and said—

"Wife, are you emperor?"

"Yes," said she, "I am emperor."

"Ah!" said the man, as he gazed on her, "what a fine thing it is to be emperor!"

"Husband," said she, "why should we stay at being emperor? We will be pope next."

"O wife, wife!" said he. "How can you be pope? There is but one pope at a time in Christendom."

"Husband," said she, "I will be pope this very day."

"But," replied the husband, "the fish cannot make you pope."

"What nonsense!" said she. "If he can make an emperor, he can make a pope; go and try him."

So the fisherman went; but when he came to the shore the wind was raging, the sea was tossed up and down like boiling water, and the ships were in the greatest distress and danced upon the waves most fearfully. In the middle of the sky there was a little blue; but towards the south it was all red, as if a dreadful storm was rising. The fisherman repeated the words, and the fish appeared before him.

"What does she want now?" asked the fish.

"My wife wants to be pope," said the fisherman.

"Go home," said the fish; "she is pope already."

Then the fisherman went home, and found his wife sitting on a throne, with three crowns on her [Pg 60] head, while around stood all the pomp and power of the Church. On each side were two rows of burning lights of all sizes; the greatest as large as a tower, and the smallest no larger than a rushlight.

"Well, wife," said the fisherman, as he looked at all this grandeur, "are you pope?"

"Yes," said she; "I am pope."

"Well," replied he, "it is a grand thing to be pope; and now you must be content, for you can be nothing greater."

"I will consider about that," replied the wife.

Then they went to bed; but Dame Alice could not sleep all night for thinking what she should be next. At last morning came, and the sun rose.

"Ha!" thought she, as she looked at it through the window, "cannot I prevent the sun rising?"

At this she was very angry, and wakened her husband, and said—

"Husband, go to the fish, and tell him I want to be lord of the sun and moon."

The fisherman was half asleep; but the thought frightened him so much that he started and fell out of bed.

"Alas! wife," said he, "cannot you be content to be pope?"

"No," said she, "I am very uneasy, and cannot bear to see the sun and moon rise without my leave. Go to the fish directly." [Pg 61]

Then the man went trembling for fear. As he was going down to the shore a dreadful storm arose, so that the trees and the rocks shook, the heavens became black, the lightning played, the thunder rolled, and the sea was covered with black waves like mountains, with a white crown of foam upon them. The fisherman came to the shore, and said—

"O man of the sea,
Come listen to me,
For Alice, my wife,
The plague of my life,
Hath sent me to beg a boon of thee!"

"What does she want now?" asked the fish.

"Ah!" said he, "she wants to be lord of the sun and moon."

"Go home," replied the fish, "to your ditch again."

And there they live to this very day.

THE MOUSE TOWER. [Pg 62]

To the traveller who has traversed the delightful environs of the Rhine, from the city of Mentz as far as Coblentz, or from the clear waves of this old Germanic stream gazed upon the grand creations of Nature, all upon so magnificent a scale, the appearance of the old decayed tower which forms the subject of the ensuing tradition forms no uninteresting object. It rises before him as he mounts the Rhine from the little island below Bingen, toward the left shore. He listens to the old shipmaster as he relates with earnest tone the wonderful story of the tower, and, shuddering at the description of the frightful punishment of priestly pride and cruelty, exclaims in strong emotion—

"The Lord be with us!"

For, as the saying runs, it was about the year of Our Lord 968, when Hatto II., Duke of the Ostrofranks, surnamed Bonosus, Abbot of Fulda, a man of singular skill and great spiritual endowments, was elected Archbishop of Mentz. He was also a harsh man, and being extremely avaricious, heaped up treasure which he guarded with the utmost care. [Pg 63]

It so happened, under his spiritual sway, that a cruel famine began to prevail in the city of Mentz and its adjacent parts, insomuch that in a short time numbers of the poorer people fell victims to utter want. Crowds of wretches were to be seen assembled before the Archbishop's palace in the act of beseeching with cries and prayers for some mitigation of their heavy lot.

But their harsh lord refused to afford relief out of his own substance, reproaching them at the same time as the authors of their own calamity by their indolence and want of economy. But the poor souls were mad for food, and in frightful and threatening accents cried out—

"Bread, bread!"

Fearing the result, Bishop Hatto ordered a vast number of hungry souls to range themselves in order in one of his empty barns under the pretence of supplying them with provisions. Then, having closed the doors, he commanded his minions to fire the place, in which all fell victims to the flames. When he heard the death shouts and shrieks of the unhappy poor, turning towards the menial parasites who abetted his crime he said—

"Hark you! how the mice squeak!"

But Heaven that witnessed the deed did not permit its vengeance to sleep. A strange and unheard of death was preparing to loose its terrors upon the sacrilegious prelate. For behold, [Pg 64] there arose out of the yet warm ashes of the dead an innumerable throng of mice which were seen to approach the Bishop, and to follow him whithersoever he went. At length he flew into one of his steepest and highest towers, but the mice climbed over the walls. He closed every door and window, yet after him they came, piercing their way through the smallest nooks and crannies of the building. They poured in upon him, and covered him from head to foot, in numberless heaps. They bit, they scratched, they tortured his flesh, till they nearly devoured him. So great was the throng that the more his domestics sought to beat them off, the more keen and savagely, with increased numbers, did they return to the charge. Even where his name was found placed upon the walls and tapestries they gnawed it in their rage away.

In this frightful predicament the Bishop, finding that he could obtain no help on land, bethought of taking himself to the water. A tower was hastily erected upon the Rhine. He took ship and shut himself up there. Enclosed within double walls, and surrounded by water, he flattered himself that the rushing stream would effectually check the rage of his enemies. Here too, however, the vengeance of offended Heaven gave them entrance. Myriads of mice took to the stream, and swam and swam, and though myriads of them were swept away, an innumerable throng still [Pg 65] reached the spot. Again they climbed and clattered up the walls. The Bishop heard their approach. It was his last retreat. They rushed in upon him with more irresistible fury than before, and, amidst stifled cries of protracted suffering, Bishop Hatto at length rendered up his cruel and avaricious soul.

THE DANCERS. [Pg 66]

The Sabbath-day drew to a close in the summer-tide of the year of grace one thousand and one, and the rustics of Ramersdorf amused themselves with a dance, as was their wont to do, in the courtyard of the monastery. It was a privilege that they had enjoyed time immemorial, and it had never been gainsaid by the abbots who were dead and gone, but Anselm von Lowenberg, the then superior of the convent, an austere, ascetic man, who looked with disdain and dislike on all popular recreations, had long set his face against it, and had, moreover, tried every means short of actual prohibition to put an end to the profane amusement. The rustics, however, were not to be debarred by his displeasure from pursuing, perhaps, their only pleasure; and though the pious abbot discountenanced their proceedings, they acquiesced not in his views, and their enjoyment was not one atom the less.

The day had been very beautiful, and the evening was, if possible, more so. Gaily garbed maidens of the village and stalwart rustics filled the courtyard of the convent. A blind fiddler, who had [Pg 67] fiddled three generations off the stage, sat in front of a group of elders of either sex, who, though too old and too stiff to partake in the active and exciting amusement, were still young enough to enjoy looking on. A few shaven crowns peered from the latticed casements which looked out on to the merry scene. The music struck up, the dance began. Who approaches? Why are so many anxious glances cast in yonder direction? It is the Abbot.

"Cease your fooling," he spake to them, in a solemn tone; "profane not the place nor the day with your idle mirth. Go home, and pray in your own homes for the grace of the Lord to govern ye, for ye are wicked and wilful and hard of heart as the stones!"

He waved his hand as if to disperse them, but his words and his action were equally unheeded by the dancers and the spectators.

"Forth, vile sinners!" he pursued. "Forth from these walls, or I will curse ye with the curse."

Still they regarded him not to obey his behest, although they so far noticed his words as to return menacing look for look, and muttered threats for threat with him. The music played on with the same liveliness, the dancers danced as merrily as ever, and the spectators applauded each display of agility.

"Well, then," spake the Abbot, bursting with rage, "an ye cease not, be my curse on your head— [Pg 68] there may ye dance for a year and a day!"

He banned them bitterly; with uplifted hands and eyes he imprecated the vengeance of Heaven on their disobedience. He prayed to the Lord to punish them for the slight of his directions. Then he sought his cell to vent his ire in solitude.

From that hour they continued to dance until a year and a day had fully expired. Night fell, and they ceased not; day dawned, and they danced still. In the heat of noon, in the cool of the evening, day after day there was no rest for them, their saltation was without end. The seasons rolled over them. Summer gave place to autumn, winter succeeded summer, and spring decked the fields with early flowers, as winter slowly disappeared, yet still they danced on, through coursing time and changing seasons, with unabated strength and unimpaired energy. Rain nor hail, snow nor storm, sunshine nor shade, seemed to affect them. Round and round and round they danced, in heat and cold, in damp and dry, in light and darkness. What were the seasons—

what the times or the hour or the weather to them? In vain did their neighbours and friends try to arrest them in their wild evolutions; in vain were attempts made to stop them in their whirling career; in vain did even the Abbot himself interpose to relieve them from the curse he had laid on them, and to put a period to the punishment of which he had been the cause. The strongest man [Pg 69] in the vicinity held out his hand and caught one of them, with the intention of arresting his rotation, and tearing him from the charmed circle, but his arm was torn from him in the attempt, and clung to the dancer with the grip of life till his day was done. The man paid his life as the forfeit of his temerity. No effort was left untried to relieve the dancers, but every one failed. The sufferers themselves, however, appeared quite unconscious of what was passing. They seemed to be in a state of perfect somnambulism, and to be altogether unaware of the presence of any persons, as well as insensible to pain or fatigue. When the expiration of their punishment arrived, they were all found huddled together in the deep cavity which their increasing gyrations had worn in the earth beneath them. It was a considerable time before sense and consciousness returned to them, and indeed they never after could be said to enjoy them completely, for, though they lived long, they were little better than idiots during the remainder of their lives.

THE LITTLE SHROUD. [Pg 70]

There was once a woman who had a little son of about seven years old, who was so lovely and beautiful that no one could look upon him without being kind to him, and he was dearer to her than all the world beside. It happened that he suddenly fell ill and died, and his mother would not be comforted, but wept for him day and night. Shortly after he was buried he showed himself at night in the places where he had been used in his lifetime to sit and play, and if his mother wept, he wept also, and when the morning came he departed. Since his mother never ceased weeping, the child came one night in the little white shroud in which he had been laid in his coffin, and with the chaplet upon his head, and seating himself at her feet, upon the bed, he cried—

"O mother, mother, give over crying, else I cannot stop in my coffin, for my shroud is never dry because of your tears, for they fall upon it."

When his mother heard this she was sore afraid, and wept no more. And the babe came upon [Pg 71] another night, holding in his hand a little taper, and he said—

"Look, mother, my shroud is now quite dry, and I can rest in my grave."

Then she bowed to the will of Providence, and bore her sorrow with silence and patience, and the little child returned not again, but slept in his underground bed.

THE ARCH ROGUE. [Pg 72]

There once lived, years ago, a man known only by the name of the Arch Rogue. By dint of skill in the black art, and all arts of imposition, he drove a more flourishing trade than all the rest of the sorcerers of the age. It was his delight to travel from one country to another merely to play upon mankind, and no living soul was secure, either in house or field, nor could properly call them his own.

Now his great reputation for these speedy methods of possessing himself of others' property excited the envy of a certain king of a certain country, who considered them as no less than an invasion of his royal prerogative. He could not sleep a wink for thinking about it, and he despatched troops of soldiers, one after another, with strict orders to arrest him, but all their search was in vain. At length, after long meditation, the king said to himself—

"Only wait a little, thou villain cutpurse, and yet I will have thee."

Forthwith he issued a manifesto, stating that the royal mercy would be extended to so light- [Pg 73] fingered a genius, upon condition that he consented to appear at court and give specimens of his dexterity for his majesty's amusement.

One afternoon, as the king was standing at his palace window enjoying the fine prospect of woods and dales, over which a tempest appeared to be then just gathering, some one suddenly clapped him upon the shoulder, and on looking round he discovered a very tall, stout, dark-whiskered man close behind him, who said—

"Here I am."

"Who are you?" inquired the king.

"He whom you look for."

The king uttered an exclamation of surprise, not unmixed with fear, at such amazing assurance. The stranger continued, "Don't be alarmed. Only keep your word with me, and I will prove myself quite obedient to your orders."

This being agreed on, the king acquainted his royal consort and the whole court that the great sleight-of-hand genius had discovered himself, and soon, in a full assembly, his majesty proceeded to question him, and lay on him his commands.

"Mark what I say," he said, "nor venture to dispute my orders. To begin, do you see yon rustic, not far from the wood, busy ploughing?"

The conjurer nodded assent.

"Then go," continued the king,—"go and rob him of his plough and oxen without his knowing anything about it." [Pg 74]

The king flattered himself that this was impossible, for he did not conceive how the conjurer could perform such a task in the face of open day,—and if he fail, thought he, I have him in my power, and will make him smart.

The conjurer proceeded to the spot, and as the storm appeared to increase, the rain beginning to pour down in torrents, the countryman, letting his oxen rest, ran under a tree for shelter, until the rain should have ceased. Just then he heard some one singing in the wood. Such a glorious song he had never heard before in all his life. He felt wonderfully enlivened, and, as the weather continued dull, he said to himself—

"Well, there's no harm in taking a look. Yes; I'll see what sport is stirring," and away he slipped into the wood, still further and further, in search of the songster.

In the meanwhile the conjurer was not idle. He changed places with the rustic, taking care of the oxen while their master went searching through the wood. Darting out of the thicket, in a few moments he had slashed off the oxen's horns and tails, and stuck them, half hid, in the ploughman's last furrow. He then drove off the beasts pretty sharply towards the palace. In a short time the rustic found his way back, and looking towards the spot for his oxen could see [Pg 75] nothing of them. Searching on all sides, he came at last to examine the furrow, and beheld, to his horror, the horns and tails of his poor beasts sticking out of the ground. Imagining that a thunderbolt must have struck the beasts, and the earth swallowed them up, he poured forth a most dismal lamentation over his lot, roaring aloud until the woods echoed to the sound. When he was tired of this, he bethought him of running home to find a pick and a spade to dig his unlucky oxen out of the earth as soon as possible.

As he went he was met by the king and the conjurer, who inquired the occasion of his piteous lamentation.

"My oxen! my poor oxen!" cried the boor, and then he related all that had happened to him, entreating them to go with him to the place. The conjurer said—

"Why don't you see if you cannot pull the oxen out again by the horns or by the tail?"

With this the rustic, running back, seized one of the tails, and, pulling with all his might, it gave way and he fell backward.

"Thou hast pulled thy beast's tail off," said the conjurer. "Try if thou canst succeed better with his horns. If not, thou must even dig them out."

Again the rustic tried with the same result, while the king laughed very heartily at the sight. As the worthy man now appeared excessively troubled at his misfortunes, the king promised him [Pg 76] another pair of oxen, and the rustic was content.

"You have made good your boast," said the king to the conjurer, as they returned to the palace; "but now you will have to deal with a more difficult matter, so muster your wit and courage. To-night you must steal my favourite charger out of his stable, and let nobody know who does it."

Now, thought the king, I have trapped him at last, for he will never be able to outwit my master of the horse, and all my grooms to boot. To make the matter sure, he ordered a strong guard under one of his most careful officers to be placed round the stable court. They were armed with stout battle-axes, and were enjoined every half-hour to give the word, and pace alternately through the court. In the royal stables others had the like duty to perform, while the master of the horse himself was to ride the favourite steed the whole time, having been presented by the king with a gold snuff-box, from which he was to take ample pinches in order to keep himself awake, and give signal by a loud sneeze. He was also armed with a heavy sword, with which he was to knock the thief on the head if he approached.

The rogue first arrayed himself in the master of the bedchamber's clothes, without his leave. About midnight he proceeded to join the guards, furnished with different kinds of wine, and told them that the king had sent him to thank them for so cheerfully complying with his orders. He [Pg 77] also informed them that the impostor had been already caught and secured, and added that the king had given permission for the guards to have a glass or two, and requested that they would not give the word quite so loudly, as her majesty had not been able to close her eyes. He then marched into the stables, where he found the master of the horse astride the royal charger, busily taking snuff and sneezing at intervals. The master of the bedchamber poured him out a sparkling glass to drink to the health of his majesty, who had sent it, and it looked too excellent to resist. Both master and guards then began to jest over the Arch Rogue's fate, taking, like good subjects, repeated draughts—all to his majesty's health. At length they began to experience their

effects. They gaped and stretched, sank gradually upon the ground, and fell asleep. The master, by dint of fresh pinches, was the last to yield, but he too blinked, stopped the horse, which he had kept at a walk, and said—

"I am so confoundedly sleepy I can hold it no longer. Take you care of the charger for a moment. Bind him fast to the stall—and just keep watch."

Having uttered these words, he fell like a heavy sack upon the floor and snored aloud. The conjurer took his place upon the horse, gave it whip and spur, and galloped away through the sleeping guards, through the court gates, and whistled as he went. [Pg 78]

Early in the morning the king, eager to learn the result, hastened to his royal mews, and was not a little surprised to find the whole of his guards fast asleep upon the ground, but he saw nothing of his charger.

"What is to do here?" he cried in a loud voice. "Get up; rouse, you idle varlets!"

At last one of them, opening his eyes, cried out—

"The king! the king!"

"Ay, true enough, I am here," replied his majesty, "but my favourite horse is not. Speak, answer on the instant."

While the affrighted wretches, calling one to another, rubbed their heavy eyes, the king was examining the stalls once more, and, stumbling over his master of the horse, turned and gave him some hearty cuffs about the ears. But the master only turned upon the other side, and grumbled —

"Let me alone, you rascal, my royal master's horse is not for the like of you."

"Rascal!" exclaimed the king, "do you know who it is?" and he was just about to call his attendants, when he heard hasty footsteps, and the conjurer stood before him.

"My liege," he said, "I have just returned from an airing on your noble horse. He is, indeed, a fine animal, but once or so I was obliged to give him the switch."

The king felt excessively vexed at the rogue's success, but he was the more resolved to hit upon [Pg 79] something that should bring his fox skin into jeopardy at last. So he thought, and the next day he addressed the conjurer thus—

"Thy third trial is now about to take place, and if you are clever enough to carry it through, you shall not only have your life and liberty, but a handsome allowance to boot. In the other case you know your fate. Now listen. This very night I command you to rob my queen consort of her bridal ring, to steal it from her finger, and let no one know the thief or the way of thieving."

When night approached, his majesty caused all the doors in the palace to be fast closed, and a guard to be set at each. He himself, instead of retiring to rest, took his station, well armed, in an easy chair close to the queen's couch.

It was a moonlight night, and about two in the morning the king plainly heard a ladder reared up against the window, and the soft step of a man mounting it. When the king thought the conjurer must have reached the top, he called out from the window—

"Let fall."

The next moment the ladder was dashed away, and something fell with a terrible crash to the ground. The king uttered an exclamation of alarm, and ran down into the court, telling the queen, who was half asleep, that he was going to see if the conjurer were dead. But the rogue had [Pg 80] borrowed a dead body from the gallows, and having dressed it in his own clothes, had placed it on the ladder. Hardly had the king left the chamber before the conjurer entered it and said to the queen in the king's voice—

"Yes, he is stone dead, so you may now go quietly to sleep, only hand me here your ring. It is too costly and precious to trust it in bed while you sleep."

The queen, imagining it was her royal consort, instantly gave him the ring, and in a moment the conjurer was off with it on his finger. Directly afterwards the king came back.

"At last," he said, "I have indeed carried the joke too far. I have repaid him. He is lying there as dead as a door nail. He will plague us no more."

"I know that already," replied the queen. "You have told me exactly the same thing twice over."

"How came you to know anything about it?" inquired his majesty.

"How? From yourself to be sure," replied his consort. "You informed me that the conjurer was dead, and then you asked me for my ring."

"I ask for the ring!" exclaimed the king. "Then I suppose you must have given it to him," continued his majesty, in a tone of great indignation; "and is it even so at last? By all the saints, [Pg 81] this is one of the most confounded, unmanageable knaves in existence. I never knew anything to equal it."

Then he informed the queen of the whole affair, though before he arrived at the conclusion of his tale she was fast asleep.

Soon after it was light in the morning the wily conjurer made his appearance. He bowed to the earth three times before the queen and presented her with the treasure he had stolen. The king, though excessively chagrined, could not forbear laughing at the sight.

"Now hear," said he, "thou king of arch rogues. Had I only caught a sight of you through my fingers as you were coming, you would never have come off so well. As it is, let what is past be forgiven and forgotten. Take up your residence at my court, and take care that you do not carry your jokes too far, for in such a case I may find myself compelled to withdraw my favour from you if nothing worse ensue."

BROTHER MERRY.

[Pg 82]

In days of yore there was a war, and when it was at an end a great number of the soldiers that had been engaged in it were disbanded. Among the rest Brother Merry received his discharge, and nothing more for all he had done than a very little loaf of soldier's bread, and four halfpence in money. With these possessions he went his way. Now a saint had seated himself in the road, like a poor beggar man, and when Brother Merry came along, he asked him for charity to give him something. Then the soldier said—

"Dear beggar man, what shall such as I give you? I have been a soldier, and have just got my discharge, and with it only a very little loaf and four halfpence. When that is gone I shall have to beg like yourself."

However, he divided the loaf into four parts, and gave the saint one, with a halfpenny. The saint thanked him, and having gone a little further along the road seated himself like another beggar in the way of the soldier. When Brother Merry came up the saint again asked alms of him, and [Pg 83] the old soldier again gave him another quarter of the loaf and another halfpenny.

The saint thanked him, and seated himself in the way a third time, like another beggar, and again addressed Brother Merry. Brother Merry gave him a third quarter of the loaf, and the third halfpenny.

The saint thanked him, and Brother Merry journeyed on with all he had left—one quarter of the loaf and a single halfpenny. When he came to a tavern, being hungry and thirsty, he went in and ate the bread, and spent the halfpenny in beer to drink with it. When he had finished, he continued his journey, and the saint, in the disguise of a disbanded soldier, met him again and saluted him.

"Good day, comrade," said he; "can you give me a morsel of bread, and a halfpenny to get a drop of drink?"

"Where shall I get it?" answered Brother Merry. "I got my discharge, and nothing with it but a loaf and four halfpence, and three beggars met me on the road and I gave each of them a quarter of the loaf and a halfpenny. The last quarter I have just eaten at the tavern, and I have spent the last halfpenny in drink. I am quite empty now. If you have nothing, let us go begging together."

"No, that will not be necessary just now," said the saint. "I understand a little about doctoring, [Pg 84] and I will in time obtain as much as I need by that."

"Ha!" said Brother Merry, "I know nothing about that, so I must go and beg by myself."

"Only come along," replied the saint, "and if I can earn anything, you shall go halves."

"That will suit me excellently," replied Brother Merry.

So they travelled on together.

They had not gone a great distance before they came to a cottage in which they heard a great lamenting and screaming. They went in to see what was the matter, and found a man sick to the death, as if about to expire, and his wife crying and weeping loudly.

"Leave off whining and crying," said the saint. "I will make the man well again quickly enough," and he took a salve out of his pocket and cured the man instantly, so that he could stand up and was quite hearty. Then the man and his wife, in great joy, demanded—

"How can we repay you? What shall we give you?"

The saint would not, however, take anything, and the more the couple pressed him the more firmly he declined. Brother Merry, who had been looking on, came to his side, and, nudging him, said—

"Take something; take something. We want it badly enough."

At length the peasant brought a lamb, which he desired the saint to accept, but he declined it [Pg 85] still. Then Brother Merry jogged his side, and said—

"Take it, you foolish fellow; take it. We want it badly enough."

At last the saint said—

"Well, I'll take the lamb, but I shall not carry it. You must carry it."

"There's no great hardship in that," cried Brother Merry. "I can easily do it;" and he took it on his shoulder.

After that they went on till they came to a wood, and Brother Merry, who was very hungry, and found the lamb a heavy load, called out to the saint—

"Hallo! here is a nice place for us to dress and eat the lamb."

"With all my heart," replied his companion; "but I don't understand anything of cooking, so do you begin, and I will walk about until it is ready. Don't begin to eat until I return. I will take care to be back in time."

"Go your ways," said Brother Merry; "I can cook it well enough. I'll soon have it ready."

The saint wandered away, while Brother Merry lighted the fire, killed the lamb, put the pieces into the pot, and boiled them. In a short time the lamb was thoroughly done, but the saint had not returned; so Merry took the meat up, carved it, and found the heart. [Pg 86]

"That is the best part of it," said he; and he kept tasting it until he had finished it.

At length the saint came back, and said—

"I only want the heart. All the rest you may have, only give me that."

Then Brother Merry took his knife and fork, and turned the lamb about as if he would have found the heart, but of course he could not discover it. At last he said, in a careless manner—

"It is not here."

"Not there? Where should it be, then?" said the saint.

"That I don't know," said Merry; "but now I think of it, what a couple of fools we are to look for the heart of a lamb. A lamb, you know, has not got a heart."

"What?" said the saint; "that's news, indeed. Why, every beast has a heart, and why should not the lamb have one as well as the rest of them?"

"No, certainly, comrade, a lamb has no heart. Only reflect, and it will occur to you that it really has not."

"Well," replied his companion, "it is quite sufficient. There is no heart there, so I need none of the lamb. You may eat it all."

"Well, what I cannot eat I'll put in my knapsack," said Brother Merry.

Then he ate some, and disposed of the rest as he had said. Now, as they continued their journey, [Pg 87] the saint contrived that a great stream should flow right across their path, so that they must be obliged to ford it. Then said he—

"Go you first."

"No," answered Brother Merry; "go you first," thinking that if the water were too deep he would stay on the bank where he was. However, the saint waded through, and the water only reached to his knees; but when Brother Merry ventured, the stream seemed suddenly to increase in depth, and he was soon up to his neck in the water.

"Help me, comrade," he cried.

"Will you confess," said the saint, "that you ate the lamb's heart?"

The soldier still denied it, and the water got still deeper, until it reached his mouth. Then the saint said again—

"Will you confess, then, that you ate the lamb's heart?"

Brother Merry still denied what he had done, and as the saint did not wish to let him drown he helped him out of his danger.

They journeyed on until they came to a kingdom where they heard that the king's daughter lay dangerously ill.

"Holloa! brother," said the soldier, "here's a catch for us. If we can only cure her we shall be [Pg 88] made for ever."

The saint, however, was not quick enough for Brother Merry.

"Come, Brother Heart," said the soldier, "put your best foot forward, so that we may come in at the right time."

But the saint went still slower, though his companion kept pushing and driving him, till at last

they heard that the princess was dead.

"This comes of your creeping so," said the soldier.

"Now be still," said the saint, "for I can do more than make the sick whole; I can bring the dead to life again."

"If that's true," said Brother Merry, "you must at least earn half the kingdom for us."

At length they arrived at the king's palace, where everybody was in great trouble, but the saint told the king he would restore his daughter to him. They conducted him to where she lay, and he commanded them to let him have a caldron of water, and when it had been brought, he ordered all the people to go away, and let nobody remain with him but Brother Merry. Then he divided the limbs of the dead princess, and throwing them into the water, lighted a fire under the caldron, and boiled them. When all the flesh had fallen from the bones, the saint took them, laid them on a table, and placed them together in their natural order. Having done this, he walked [Pg 89] before them, and said—

"Arise, thou dead one!"

As he repeated these words the third time the princess arose, alive, well, and beautiful.

The king was greatly rejoiced, and said to the saint—

"Require for thy reward what thou wilt. Though it should be half my empire, I will give it you."

But the saint replied—

"I desire nothing for what I have done."

"O thou Jack Fool!" thought Brother Merry to himself. Then, nudging his comrade's side, he said —

"Don't be so silly. If you won't have anything, yet I need somewhat."

The saint, however, would take nothing, but as the king saw that his companion would gladly have a gift, he commanded the keeper of his treasures to fill his knapsack with gold, at which Brother Merry was right pleased.

Again they went upon their way till they came to a wood, when the saint said to his fellow-traveller—

"Now we will share the gold."

"Yes," replied the soldier, "that we can."

Then the saint took the gold and divided it into three portions.

"Well," thought Brother Merry, "what whim has he got in his head now, making three parcels, [Pg 90] and only two of us?"

"Now," said the saint, "I have divided it fairly, one for me, and one for you, and one for him who ate the heart."

"Oh, I ate that," said the soldier, quickly taking up the gold. "I did, I assure you."

"How can that be true?" replied the saint. "A lamb has no heart."

"Ay! what, brother? What are you thinking of? A lamb has no heart? Very good! When every beast has why should that one be without?"

"Now that is very good," said the saint. "Take all the gold yourself, for I shall remain no more with you, but will go my own way alone."

"As you please, Brother Heart," answered the soldier. "A pleasant journey to you, my hearty."

The saint took another road, and as he went off—

"Well," thought the soldier, "it's all right that he has marched off, for he is an odd fellow."

Brother Merry had now plenty of money, but he did not know how to use it, so he spent it and gave it away, till in the course of a little time he found himself once more penniless. At last he came into a country where he heard that the king's daughter was dead.

"Ah!" thought he, "that may turn out well. I'll bring her to life again." [Pg 91]

Then he went to the king and offered his services. Now the king had heard that there was an old soldier who went about restoring the dead to life, and he thought that Brother Merry must be just the man. However, he had not much confidence in him, so he first consulted his council, and they agreed that as the princess was certainly dead, the old soldier might be allowed to see what he could do. Brother Merry commanded them to bring him a caldron of water, and when every one had left the room he separated the limbs, threw them into the caldron, and made a fire under it, exactly as he had seen the saint do. When the water boiled and the flesh fell from the bones, he took them and placed them upon the table, but as he did not know how to arrange them he piled them one upon another. Then he stood before them, and said—

"Thou dead, arise!" and he cried so three times, but all to no purpose.

"Stand up, you vixen! stand up, or it shall be the worse for you," he cried.

Scarcely had he repeated these words ere the saint came in at the window, in the likeness of an old soldier, just as before, and said—

"You impious fellow! How can the dead stand up when you have thrown the bones thus one upon another?"

"Ah! Brother Heart," answered Merry, "I have done it as well as I can." [Pg 92]

"I will help you out of your trouble this time," said the saint; "but I tell you this, if you ever again undertake a job of this kind, you will repent it, and for this you shall neither ask for nor take the least thing from the king."

Having placed the bones in their proper order, the saint said three times—

"Thou dead, arise!" and the princess stood up, sound and beautiful as before. Then the saint immediately disappeared again out of the window, and Brother Merry was glad that all had turned out so well. One thing, however, grieved him sorely, and that was that he might take nothing from the king.

"I should like to know," thought he, "what Brother Heart had to grumble about. What he gives with one hand he takes with the other. There is no wit in that."

The king asked Brother Merry what he would have, but the soldier durst not take anything. However, he managed by hints and cunning that the king should fill his knapsack with money, and with that he journeyed on. When he came out of the palace door, however, he found the saint standing there, who said—

"See what a man you are. Have I not forbidden you to take anything, and yet you have your knapsack filled with gold?"

"How can I help it," answered the soldier, "if they would thrust it in?" [Pg 93]

"I tell you this," said the saint, "mind that you don't undertake such a business a second time. If you do, it will fare badly with you."

"Ah! brother," answered the soldier, "never fear. Now I have money, why should I trouble myself with washing bones?"

"That will not last a long time," said the saint; "but, in order that you may never tread in a forbidden path, I will bestow upon your knapsack this power, that whatsoever you wish in it shall be there. Farewell! you will never see me again."

"Adieu," said Brother Merry, and thought he, "I am glad you are gone. You are a wonderful fellow. I am willing enough not to follow you."

He forgot all about the wonderful property bestowed upon his knapsack, and very soon he had spent and squandered his gold as before. When he had but fourpence left, he came to a public-house, and thought that the money must go. So he called for three pennyworth of wine and a pennyworth of bread. As he ate and drank, the flavour of roasting geese tickled his nose, and, peeping and prying about, he saw that the landlord had placed two geese in the oven. Then it occurred to him what his companion had told him about his knapsack, so he determined to put it to the test. Going out, he stood before the door, and said—

"I wish that the two geese which are baking in the oven were in my knapsack." [Pg 94]

When he had said this, he peeped in, and, sure enough, there they were.

"Ah! ah!" said he, "that is all right. I am a made man."

He went on a little way, took out the geese, and commenced to eat them. As he was thus enjoying himself, there came by two labouring men, who looked with hungry eyes at the one goose which was yet untouched. Brother Merry noticed it, and thought that one goose would be enough for him. So he called the men, gave them the goose, and bade them drink his health. The men thanked him, and going to the public-house, called for wine and bread, took out their present, and commenced to eat. When the hostess saw what they were dining on, she said to her goodman —

"Those two men are eating a goose. You had better see if it is not one of ours out of the oven."

The host opened the door, and lo! the oven was empty.

"O you pack of thieves!" he shouted. "This is the way you eat geese, is it? Pay for them directly, or I will wash you both with green hazel juice."

The men said—

"We are not thieves. We met an old soldier on the road, and he made us a present of the goose."

"You are not going to hoax me in that way," said the host. "The soldier has been here, but went [Pg 95] out of the door like an honest fellow. I took care of that. You are the thieves, and you shall pay for

the geese."

However, as the men had no money to pay him with, he took a stick and beat them out of doors.

Meanwhile, as Brother Merry journeyed on, he came to a place where there was a noble castle, and not far from it a little public-house. Into this he went, and asked for a night's lodging, but the landlord said that his house was full of guests, and he could not accommodate him.

"I wonder," said Brother Merry, "that the people should all come to you, instead of going to that castle."

"They have good reason for what they do," said the landlord, "for whoever has attempted to spend the night at the castle has never come back to show how he was entertained."

"If others have attempted it, why shouldn't I?" said Merry.

"You had better leave it alone," said the host; "you are only thrusting your head into danger."

"No fear of danger," said the soldier, "only give me the key and plenty to eat and drink."

The hostess gave him what he asked for, and he went off to the castle, relished his supper, and when he found himself sleepy, laid himself down on the floor, for there was no bed in the place. [Pg 96] He soon went to sleep, but in the night he was awoke by a great noise, and when he aroused himself he discovered nine very ugly devils dancing in a circle which they had made around him.

"Dance as long as you like," said Brother Merry; "but don't come near me."

But the devils came drawing nearer and nearer, and at last they almost trod on his face with their misshapen feet.

"Be quiet," said he, but they behaved still worse.

At last he got angry, and crying—

"Holla! I'll soon make you quiet," he caught hold of the leg of a stool and struck about him.

Nine devils against one soldier were, however, too much, and while he laid about lustily on those before him, those behind pulled his hair and pinched him miserably.

"Ay, ay, you pack of devils, now you are too hard for me," said he; "but wait a bit. I wish all the nine devils were in my knapsack," cried he, and it was no sooner said than done.

There they were. Then Brother Merry buckled it up close, and threw it into a corner, and as all was now still he lay down and slept till morning, when the landlord of the inn and the nobleman to whom the castle belonged came to see how it had fared with him. When they saw him sound [Pg 97] and lively, they were astonished, and said—

"Did the ghosts, then, do nothing to you?"

"Why, not exactly," said Merry; "but I have got them all nine in my knapsack. You may dwell quietly enough in your castle now; from henceforth they won't trouble you."

The nobleman thanked him and gave him great rewards, begging him to remain in his service, saying that he would take care of him all the days of his life.

"No," answered he; "I am used to wander and rove about. I will again set forth."

He went on until he came to a smithy, into which he went, and laying his knapsack on the anvil, bade the smith and all his men hammer away upon it as hard as they could. They did as they were directed, with their largest hammers and all their might, and the poor devils set up a piteous howling. When the men opened the knapsack there were eight of them dead, but one who had been snug in a fold was still alive, and he slipped out and ran away to his home in a twinkling.

After this Brother Merry wandered about the world for a long time; but at last he grew old, and began to think about his latter end, so he went to a hermit who was held to be a very pious man and said—

"I am tired of roving, and will now endeavour to go to heaven."

"There stand two ways," said the hermit; "the one, broad and pleasant, leads to hell; the other is [Pg 98] rough and narrow, and that leads to heaven."

"I must be a fool indeed," thought Brother Merry, "if I go the rough and narrow road;" so he went the broad and pleasant way till he came at last to a great black door, and that was the door of hell.

He knocked, and the door-keeper opened it, and when he saw that it was Merry he was sadly frightened, for who should he be but the ninth devil who had been in the knapsack, and he had thought himself lucky, for he had escaped with nothing worse than a black eye. He bolted the door again directly, and running to the chief of the devils, said—

"There is a fellow outside with a knapsack on his back, but pray don't let him in, for he can get all hell into his knapsack by wishing it. He once got me a terribly ugly hammering in it."

So they called out to Brother Merry, and told him that he must go away, for they should not let him in.

"Well, if they will not have me here," thought Merry, "I'll e'en try if I can get a lodging in heaven. Somewhere or other I must rest."

So he turned about and went on till he came to the door of heaven, and there he knocked. Now the saint who had journeyed with Merry sat at the door, and had charge of the entrance. Brother Merry recognised him, and said—

"Are you here, old acquaintance? Then things will go better with me." [Pg 99]

The saint replied—

"I suppose you want to get into heaven?"

"Ay, ay, brother, let me in; I must put up somewhere."

"No," said the saint; "you don't come in here."

"Well, if you won't let me in, take your dirty knapsack again. I'll have nothing that can put me in mind of you," said Merry carelessly.

"Give it me, then," said the saint.

Brother Merry handed it through the grating into heaven, and the saint took it and hung it up behind his chair.

"Now," said Brother Merry, "I wish I was in my own knapsack."

Instantly he was there; and thus, being once actually in heaven, the saint was obliged to let him stay there.

FASTRADA. [Pg 100]

By the side of the "Beautiful Doorway," leading into the cloisters of the cathedral at Mainz, stands, worked into the wall, a fragment of the tomb of Fastrada, the fourth wife of the mighty monarch Charlemagne according to some authorities, the third according to others. Fastrada figures in the following tradition related by the author of the Rhyming Chronicle.

When the Kaiser, Karl, abode at Zurich, he dwelt in a house called "The Hole," in front of which he caused a pillar to be erected with a bell on the top of it, to the end that whoever demanded justice should have the means of announcing himself. One day, as he sat at dinner in his house, he heard the bell ring, and sent out his servants to bring the claimant before him; but they could find no one. A second and a third time the bell rang, but no human being was still to be seen. At length the Kaiser himself went forth, and he found a large serpent, which had twined itself round the shaft of the pillar, and was then in the very act of pulling the bell rope.

"This is God's will," said the monarch. "Let the brute be brought before me. I may deny justice to none of God's creatures—man or beast." [Pg 101]

The serpent was accordingly ushered into the imperial presence; and the Kaiser spoke to it as he would to one of his own kind, gravely asking what it required. The reptile made a most courteous reverence to Charlemagne, and signed in its dumb way for him to follow. He did so accordingly, accompanied by his court; and the creature led them on to the water's edge, to the shores of the lake, where it had its nest. Arrived there, the Kaiser soon saw the cause of the serpent's seeking him, for its nest, which was full of eggs, was occupied by a hideous toad of monstrous proportions.

"Let the toad be flung into the fire," said the monarch solemnly, "and let the serpent have possession of its nest restored to it."

This sentence was carried at once into execution. The toad was burnt, and the serpent placed in possession. Charlemagne and his court then returned to the palace.

Three days afterwards, as the Kaiser again sat at dinner, he was surprised at the appearance of the serpent, which this time glided into the hall unnoticed and unannounced.

"What does this mean?" thought the king.

The reptile approached the table, and raising itself on its tail, dropped from its mouth, into an empty plate which stood beside the monarch, a precious diamond. Then, again abasing itself before him, the crawling creature glided out of the hall as it had entered, and was speedily lost to view. This diamond the monarch caused to be set in a costly chased ring of the richest gold; and he then presented the trinket to his fair wife, the much-beloved Fastrada. [Pg 102]

Now this stone had the virtue of attraction, and whoso received it from another, so long as they wore it, received also the intensest love of that individual. It was thus with Fastrada, for no sooner did she place the ring on her finger than the attachment of Charlemagne, great before, no

longer knew any bounds. In fact his love was more like madness than any sane passion. But though this talisman had full power over love, it had no power over death; and the mighty monarch was soon to experience that nothing may avert the fiat of destiny.

Charlemagne and his beloved bride returned to Germany, and, at Ingelheim palace, Fastrada died. The Kaiser was inconsolable. He would not listen to the voice of friendship, and he sorrowed in silence over the dead body of his once beautiful bride. Even when decay had commenced, when the remains, late so lovely, were now loathsome to look on, he could not be induced to leave the corpse for a moment, or to quit the chamber of death in which it lay. The court were all astounded. They knew not what to make of the matter. At length Turpin, [Pg 103] Archbishop of Rheims, approached the corpse, and being made aware of the cause, by some supernatural communication contrived to engage the emperor's attention while he removed the charm. The magic ring was found by him in the mouth of the dead empress, concealed beneath her tongue.

Immediately that the talisman was removed the spell was broken, and Charlemagne now looked on the putrid corpse with all the natural horror and loathing of an ordinary man. He gave orders for its immediate interment, which were at once carried into execution, and he then departed from Ingelheim for the forest of the Ardennes. Arrived at Aix-la-Chapelle, he took up his abode in the ancient castle of Frankenstein, close by that famous city. The esteem, however, that he had felt for Fastrada was now transferred to the possessor of the ring, Archbishop Turpin; and the pious ecclesiastic was so persecuted by the emperor's affection that he finally cast the talisman into the lake which surrounds the castle.

An immediate transference of the royal liking took place, and the monarch, thenceforth and for ever after during his lifetime, loved Aix-la-Chapelle as a man might love his wife. So much did he become attached to it, that he directed that he should be buried there; and there accordingly his remains rest unto this day.

THE JEW IN THE BUSH. [Pg 104]

A faithful servant had worked hard for his master, a thrifty farmer, for three long years, and had been paid no wages. At last it came into the man's head that he would not go on thus any longer, so he went to his master and said—

"I have worked hard for you a long time, and without pay, too. I will trust you to give me what I ought to have for my trouble, but something I must have, and then I must take a holiday."

The farmer was a sad miser, and knew that his man was simple-hearted, so he took out three crowns, and thus gave him a crown for each year's service. The poor fellow thought it was a great deal of money to have, and said to himself—

"Why should I work hard and live here on bad fare any longer? Now that I am rich I can travel into the wide world and make myself merry."

With that he put the money into his purse, and set out, roaming over hill and valley. As he jogged along over the fields, singing and dancing, a little dwarf met him, and asked him what made him [Pg 105] so merry.

"Why, what should make me down-hearted?" replied he. "I am sound in health and rich in purse; what should I care for? I have saved up my three years' earnings, and have it all safe in my pocket."

"How much may it come to?" said the mannikin.

"Three whole crowns," replied the countryman.

"I wish you would give them to me," said the other. "I am very poor."

Then the good man pitied him, and gave him all he had; and the dwarf said—

"As you have such a kind heart, I will grant you three wishes—one for each crown,—so choose whatever you like."

The countryman rejoiced at his luck, and said—

"I like many things better than money. First, I will have a bow that will bring me down everything I shoot at; secondly, a fiddle that will set every one dancing that hears me play upon it; and, thirdly, I should like to be able to make every one grant me whatever I ask."

The dwarf said he should have his three wishes, gave him the bow and the fiddle, and went his way.

Our honest friend journeyed on his way too, and if he was merry before, he was now ten times more so. He had not gone far before he met an old Jew. Close by them stood a tree, and on the [Pg 106] topmost twig sat a thrush, singing away most joyfully.

"Oh what a pretty bird!" said the Jew. "I would give a great deal of my money to have such a one."

"If that's all," said the countryman, "I will soon bring it down."

He took up his bow, off went his arrow, and down fell the thrush into a bush that grew at the foot of the tree. The Jew, when he saw that he could have the bird, thought he would cheat the man, so he put his money into his pocket again, and crept into the bush to find the prize. As soon as he had got into the middle, his companion took up his fiddle and played away, and the Jew began to dance and spring about, capering higher and higher in the air. The thorns soon began to tear his clothes, till they all hung in rags about him, and he himself was all scratched and wounded, so that the blood ran down.

"Oh, for heaven's sake!" cried the Jew. "Mercy, mercy, master! Pray stop the fiddle! What have I done to be treated in this way?"

"What hast thou done? Why, thou hast shaved many a poor soul close enough," said the other. "Thou art only meeting thy reward;" and he played up another tune yet merrier than the first.

Then the Jew began to beg and pray, and at last he said he would give plenty of his money to be set free. He did not, however, come up to the musician's price for some time, so he danced him [Pg 107] along brisker and brisker. The higher the Jew danced, the higher he bid, till at last he offered a round hundred crowns that he had in his purse, and had just gained by cheating some poor fellow. When the countryman saw so much money, he said—

"I agree to the bargain," and, taking the purse and putting up his fiddle, he travelled on well pleased.

Meanwhile the Jew crept out of the bush, half naked, and in a piteous plight, and began to ponder how he should take his revenge and serve his late companion some trick. At length he went to a judge, and said that a rascal had robbed him of his money, and beaten him soundly into the bargain, and that this fellow carried a bow at his back, and had a fiddle hanging round his neck. The judge sent out his bailiffs to bring up the man whenever they should find him. The countryman was soon caught, and brought up to be tried.

The Jew began his tale, and said he had been robbed of his money.

"Robbed, indeed!" said the countryman; "why, you gave it me for playing you a tune, and teaching you to dance."

The judge said that was not likely; that the Jew, he was sure, knew better what to do with his money; and he cut the matter short by sending the countryman off to the gallows.

Away he was taken, but as he stood at the foot of the ladder, he said— [Pg 108]

"My Lord Judge, may it please your worship to grant me but one boon?"

"Anything but thy life," replied the other.

"No," said he; "I do not ask my life. Only let me play upon my fiddle for the last time."

The Jew cried out—

"Oh, no! no! no! for heaven's sake don't listen to him! don't listen to him!"

But the judge said—

"It is only for this once, poor fellow! He will soon have done."

The fact was he could not say no, because the dwarf's third gift enabled the countryman to make every one grant whatever he asked.

Then the Jew said—

"Bind me fast, bind me fast, for pity's sake!"

The countryman seized his fiddle and struck up a merry tune, and at the first note judge, clerks, and jailer were set agoing. All began capering, and no one could hold the Jew. At the second note the hangman let his prisoner go and danced also, and by the time the first bar of the tune was played all were dancing together—judge, court, Jew, and all the people who had followed to look on. At first the thing went merrily and joyously enough, but when it had gone on a while, and there seemed to be no end of either playing or dancing, all began to cry out and beg the [Pg 109] countryman to leave off. He stopped, however, not a whit the more for their begging, till the judge not only gave him his life, but paid him back the hundred crowns.

Then the countryman called the Jew, and said—

"Tell us now, you rogue, where you got that gold, or I shall play on for your amusement only."

"I stole it," replied the Jew, before all the people. "I acknowledge that I stole it, and that you earned it fairly."

Then the countryman stopped his fiddling, and left the Jew to take his place at the gallows.

THE ELVES.

[Pg 110]

The happy day at length arrived on which Count Hermann von Rosenberg was married to his beloved Catherine, a princess of the house of Gonzaca. The event was celebrated by a magnificent banquet and festival, and it was late before the Count and Countess could leave their guests. The young Countess was already asleep, and Hermann was sinking into a slumber, when he was aroused by hearing the sounds of soft and gentle music, and, the door of his apartment flying open, a joyous bridal procession entered the room. The figures engaged in this extraordinary scene were not more than two or three spans high. The bride and bridegroom were in the centre of the procession, and the musicians preceded it.

Hermann rose up in bed, and demanded what brought them there, and why they had aroused him, whereupon one of the company stepped up to him, and said—

"We are attendant spirits of that peaceful class who dwell in the earth. We have dwelt for many years beneath this thy birthplace, and have ever watched over thy dwelling to preserve it from misfortune. Already have we taken good care of the ashes of your forefathers that they should not fall into the power of hostile and evil spirits, and as faithful servants we watch over the welfare of your house. Since thou hast this day been married for the continuance of thy name and ancient race, we have represented to you this bridal ceremony, in hopes that you will grant us full permission to keep and celebrate this joyous festival, in return for which we promise to serve you and your house with the greatest readiness."

[Pg 111]

"Very well," said Hermann, laughing; "make yourselves as merry in my castle as you please."

They thanked him, and took their departure. Hermann could not, however, banish from his mind this remarkable scene, and it was daybreak before he fell asleep. In the morning his thoughts were still occupied with it, yet he never mentioned one word of the occurrence to his wife.

In the course of time the Countess presented him with a daughter. Scarcely had Hermann received intelligence of this event before a very diminutive old crone entered the apartment and informed him that the elfin bride, whom he had seen in the miniature procession on the night of his nuptials, had given birth to a daughter. Hermann was very friendly to the visitor, wished all happiness to the mother and child, and the old woman took her departure. The Count did not, however, mention this visit to his wife.

[Pg 112]

A year afterwards, on the approach of her second confinement, the Countess saw the elves on the occasion of her husband receiving another of their unexpected visits. The little people entered the chamber in a long procession in black dresses, carrying lights in their hands, and the little women were clothed in white. One of these stood before the Count holding up her apron, while an old man thus addressed her—

"No more, dear Hermann, can we find a resting-place in your castle. We must wander abroad. We are come to take our departure from you."

"Wherefore will you leave my castle?" inquired Hermann. "Have I offended you?"

"No, thou hast not; but we must go, for she whom you saw as a bride on your wedding-night lost, last evening, her life in giving birth to an heir, who likewise perished. As a proof that we are thankful for the kindness you have always shown us, take a trifling proof of our power."

When the old man had thus spoken, he placed a little ladder against the bed, which the old woman who had stood by ascended. Then she opened her apron, held it before Hermann, and said—

"Grasp and take."

He hesitated. She repeated what she had said. At last he did what she told him, took out of her apron what he supposed to be a handful of sand, and laid it in a basin which stood upon a table by his bedside. The little woman desired him to take another handful, and he did once more as she bade him. Thereupon the woman descended the ladder; and the procession, weeping and lamenting, departed from the chamber.

[Pg 113]

When day broke, Hermann saw that the supposed sand which he had taken from the apron of the little woman was nothing less than pure and beautiful grains of gold.

But what happened? On that very day he lost his Countess in childbirth, and his new-born son. Hermann mourned her loss so bitterly that he was very soon laid beside her in the grave. With him perished the house of Rosenberg.

THE CONCLAVE OF CORPSES.

[Pg 114]

Some three hundred years since, when the convent of Kreutzberg was in its glory, one of the monks who dwelt therein, wishing to ascertain something of the hereafter of those whose bodies lay all undecayed in the cemetery, visited it alone in the dead of night for the purpose of prosecuting his inquiries on that fearful subject. As he opened the trap-door of the vault a light

burst from below; but deeming it to be only the lamp of the sacristan, the monk drew back and awaited his departure concealed behind the high altar. The sacristan emerged not, however, from the opening; and the monk, tired of waiting, approached, and finally descended the rugged steps which led into the dreary depths. No sooner had he set foot on the lowermost stair, than the well-known scene underwent a complete transformation in his eyes. He had long been accustomed to visit the vault, and whenever the sacristan went thither, he was almost sure to be with him. He therefore knew every part of it as well as he did the interior of his own narrow cell, and the [Pg 115] arrangement of its contents was perfectly familiar to his eyes. What, then, was his horror to perceive that this arrangement, which even but that morning had come under his observation as usual, was altogether altered, and a new and wonderful one substituted in its stead.

A dim lurid light pervaded the desolate abode of darkness, and it just sufficed to give to his view a sight of the most singular description.

On each side of him the dead but imperishable bodies of the long-buried brothers of the convent sat erect in their lidless coffins, their cold, starry eyes glaring at him with lifeless rigidity, their withered fingers locked together on their breasts, their stiffened limbs motionless and still. It was a sight to petrify the stoutest heart; and the monk's quailed before it, though he was a philosopher, and a sceptic to boot. At the upper end of the vault, at a rude table formed of a decayed coffin, or something which once served the same purpose, sat three monks. They were the oldest corses in the charnel-house, for the inquisitive brother knew their faces well; and the cadaverous hue of their cheeks seemed still more cadaverous in the dim light shed upon them, while their hollow eyes gave forth what looked to him like flashes of flame. A large book lay open before one of them, and the others bent over the rotten table as if in intense pain, or in deep and fixed attention. No word was said; no sound was heard; the vault was as silent as the grave, its [Pg 116] awful tenants still as statues.

Fain would the curious monk have receded from this horrible place; fain would he have retraced his steps and sought again his cell; fain would he have shut his eyes to the fearful scene; but he could not stir from the spot, he felt rooted there; and though he once succeeded in turning his eyes to the entrance of the vault, to his infinite surprise and dismay he could not discover where it lay, nor perceive any possible means of exit. He stood thus for some time. At length the aged monk at the table beckoned him to advance. With slow tottering steps he made his way to the group, and at length stood in front of the table, while the other monks raised their heads and glanced at him with a fixed, lifeless look that froze the current of his blood. He knew not what to do; his senses were fast forsaking him; Heaven seemed to have deserted him for his incredulity. In this moment of doubt and fear he bethought him of a prayer, and as he proceeded he felt himself becoming possessed of a confidence he had before unknown. He looked on the book before him. It was a large volume, bound in black, and clasped with bands of gold, with fastenings of the same metal. It was inscribed at the top of each page

"*Liber Obedientiæ.*"

He could read no further. He then looked, first in the eyes of him before whom it lay open, and [Pg 117] then in those of his fellows. He finally glanced around the vault on the corpses who filled every visible coffin in its dark and spacious womb. Speech came to him, and resolution to use it. He addressed himself to the awful beings in whose presence he stood, in the words of one having authority with them.

"*Pax vobis*," 'twas thus he spake—"Peace be to ye."

"*Hic nulla pax*," replied an aged monk, in a hollow, tremulous tone, baring his breast the while —"Here is no peace."

He pointed to his bosom as he spoke, and the monk, casting his eye upon it, beheld his heart within surrounded by living fire, which seemed to feed on it but not consume it. He turned away in affright, but ceased not to prosecute his inquiries.

"*Pax vobis, in nomine Domini*," he spake again—"Peace be to ye, in the name of the Lord."

"*Hic non pax*," the hollow and heartrending tones of the ancient monk who sat at the right of the table were heard to answer.

On glancing at the bared bosom of this hapless being also the same sight was exhibited—the heart surrounded by a devouring flame, but still remaining fresh and unconsumed under its operation. Once more the monk turned away and addressed the aged man in the centre.

"*Pax vobis, in nomine Domini*," he proceeded.

At these words the being to whom they were addressed raised his head, put forward his hand, [Pg 118] and closing the book with a loud clap, said—

"Speak on. It is yours to ask, and mine to answer."

The monk felt reassured, and his courage rose with the occasion.

"Who are ye?" he inquired; "who may ye be?"

"We know not!" was the answer, "alas! we know not!"

"We know not, we know not!" echoed in melancholy tones the denizens of the vault.

"What do ye here?" pursued the querist.

"We await the last day, the day of the last judgment! Alas for us! woe! woe!"

"Woe! woe!" resounded on all sides.

The monk was appalled, but still he proceeded.

"What did ye to deserve such doom as this? What may your crime be that deserves such dole and sorrow?"

As he asked the question the earth shook under him, and a crowd of skeletons uprose from a range of graves which yawned suddenly at his feet.

"These are our victims," answered the old monk. "They suffered at our hands. We suffer now, while they are at peace; and we shall suffer."

"For how long?" asked the monk.

"For ever and ever!" was the answer.

"For ever and ever, for ever and ever!" died along the vault. [Pg 119]

"May God have mercy on us!" was all the monk could exclaim.

The skeletons vanished, the graves closing over them. The aged men disappeared from his view, the bodies fell back in their coffins, the light fled, and the den of death was once more enveloped in its usual darkness.

On the monk's revival he found himself lying at the foot of the altar. The grey dawn of a spring morning was visible, and he was fain to retire to his cell as secretly as he could, for fear he should be discovered.

From thenceforth he eschewed vain philosophy, says the legend, and, devoting his time to the pursuit of true knowledge, and the extension of the power, greatness, and glory of the Church, died in the odour of sanctity, and was buried in that holy vault, where his body is still visible.

Requiescat in pace!

LEGENDS OF RUBEZAHL, OR NUMBER-NIP. [Pg 120]

Once upon a time a glazier who was travelling across the mountains, feeling very tired from the heavy load of glass which he was carrying, began to look about to discover a place where he might rest it. Rubezahl, who had been watching for some time, no sooner saw this than he changed himself into a little mound, which the glazier not long afterwards discovered in his way, and on which, well pleased, he proposed to seat himself. But his joy was not of long continuance, for he had not sat there many minutes before the heap vanished from under him so rapidly, that the poor glazier fell to the ground with his glass, which was by the fall smashed into a thousand pieces.

The poor fellow arose from the ground and looked around him, but the mound of earth on which he had before seated himself was no longer visible. Then he began bitterly to lament, and to sigh with heartfelt sorrow over his untoward fate. At length he started once more on his journey. [Pg 121] Upon this Rubezahl, assuming the appearance of a traveller, accosted him, and inquired why he so lamented, and what was the great sorrow with which he was afflicted. The glazier related to him the whole affair, how that, being weary, he had seated himself upon a mound by the wayside, how this had suddenly overthrown him, and broken to pieces his whole stock of glass, which was well worth eight dollars, and how, in short, the mound itself had suddenly disappeared. He declared that he knew not in the least how to recover his loss and bring the business to a good ending. The compassionate mountain sprite comforted him, told him who he was, and that he himself had played him the trick, and at the same time bade him be of good cheer, for his losses should be made good to him.

Upon this Rubezahl transformed himself into an ass, and directed the glazier to sell him at the mill which lay at the foot of the mountain, and to be sure to make off with the purchase-money as quickly as possible. The glazier accordingly immediately bestrode the transformed mountain sprite, and rode him down the mountain to the mill, where he offered him for sale to the miller at the price of ten dollars. The miller offered nine, and the glazier, without further haggling, took the money and went his way.

When he was gone the miller sent his newly purchased beast to the stable, and the boy who had [Pg 122] charge of him immediately filled his rack with hay. Upon this Rubezahl exclaimed—

"I don't eat hay. I eat nothing but roasted and boiled, and that of the best."

The boy's hair stood on end. He flew to his master, and related to him this wondrous tale, and he no sooner heard it than he hastened to the stable and there found nothing, for his ass and his nine dollars were alike vanished.

But the miller was rightly served, for he had cheated in his time many poor people, therefore Rubezahl punished in this manner the injustice of which he had been guilty.

In the year 1512 a man of noble family, who was a very tyrant and oppressor, had commanded one of his vassals or peasants to carry home with his horses and cart an oak of extraordinary magnitude, and threatened to visit him with the heaviest disgrace and punishment if he neglected to fulfil his desires. The peasant saw that it was impossible for him to execute the command of his lord, and fled to the woods with great sorrow and lamentation.

There he was accosted by Rubezahl, who appeared to him like a man, and inquired of him the cause of his so great sorrow and affliction. Upon this the peasant related to him all the circumstances of the case. When Rubezahl heard it he bade him be of good cheer and care not, [Pg 123] but go home to his house again, as he himself would soon transport the oak, as his lord required, into his courtyard.

Scarcely had the peasant got well home again before Rubezahl took the monstrous oak-tree, with its thick and sturdy boughs, and hurled it into the courtyard of the nobleman, and with its huge stem, and its many thick branches, so choked and blocked up the entrance that no one could get either in or out. And because the oak proved harder than their iron tools, and could in no manner or wise, and with no power which they could apply to it, be hewn or cut in pieces, the nobleman was compelled to break through the walls in another part of the courtyard, and have a new doorway made, which was only done with great labour and expense.

Once upon a time Rubezahl made, from what materials is not known, a quantity of pigs, which he drove to the neighbouring market and sold to a peasant, with a caution that the purchaser should not drive them through any water.

Now, what happened? Why these same swine having chanced to get sadly covered with mire, what must the peasant do, but drive them to the river, which they had no sooner entered than the pigs suddenly became wisps of straw, and were carried away by the stream. The purchaser was, moreover, obliged to put up with the loss, for he could neither find his pigs again, nor could he [Pg 124] discover the person from whom he had bought them.

Rubezahl once betook himself to the Hirschberg, which is in the neighbourhood of his forest haunts, and there offered his services as a woodcutter to one of the townsmen, asking for his remuneration nothing more than a bundle of wood. This the man promised him, accepting his offer, and pointed out some cart-loads, intending to give him some assistance. To this offer of help in his labours Rubezahl replied—

"No. It is quite unnecessary. All that is to be done I can very well accomplish by myself."

Upon this his new master made a few further inquiries, asking him what sort of a hatchet he had got, for he had noticed that his supposed servant was without one.

"Oh," said Rubezahl, "I'll soon get a hatchet."

Accordingly he laid hands upon his left leg, and pulled that and his foot and all off at the thigh, and with it cut, as if he had been raving mad, all the wood into small pieces of proper lengths and sizes in about a quarter of an hour, thus proving that a dismembered foot is a thousand times more effectual for such purposes than the sharpest axe.

In the meanwhile the owner (who saw plainly that mischief was intended) kept calling upon the wondrous woodcutter to desist and go about his business. Rubezahl, however, kept incessantly answering—

"No, I won't stir from this spot until I have hewn the wood as small as I agreed to, and have got [Pg 125] my wages for so doing."

In the midst of such quarrelling Rubezahl finished his job, and screwed his leg on again, for while at work he had been standing on one leg, after the fashion of a stork. Then he gathered together into one bundle all he had cut, placed it on his shoulder, and started off with it towards his favourite retreat, heedless of the tears and lamentations of his master.

On this occasion Rubezahl did not appear in the character of a sportive or mischievous spirit, but as an avenger of injustice, for his employer had induced a number of poor men to bring wood to his home upon the promise of paying them wages, which, however, he had never paid them. Rubezahl laid at the door of each of these poor men as much of the wood he carried away as would repay them, and so the business was brought to a proper termination.

It once happened that a messenger vexed or played some trick upon Rubezahl, who thereupon revenged himself in the following manner, and so wiped out the score.

The messenger, in one of his journeys over the mountains, entered an hotel to refresh himself, and placed his spear as usual behind the door. No sooner had he done so than Rubezahl carried off the spear, transformed himself into a similar one, and took its place. [Pg 126]

When the messenger, after taking his rest, set forth again with the spear, and had got some little way on his journey, it began slipping about every now and then in such a manner that the messenger began pitching forward into the most intolerable mire, and got himself sadly bespattered. It did this so often that at last he could not tell for the soul of him what had come to the spear, or why he kept slipping forward with it instead of seizing fast hold of the ground.

He looked at it longways and sideways, from above, from underneath, but in spite of all his attempts, no change could he discover.

After this inspection he went forward a little way, when suddenly he was once more plunged into the morass, and commenced crying—

"Woe is me! woe is me!" at his spear, which led him into such scrapes, and did nothing to release him from them. At length he got himself once more to rights, and then he turned the spear the wrong way upwards. No sooner had he done so than he was driven backwards instead of forwards, and so got into a worse plight than ever.

After this he laid the spear across his shoulder like a pikeman, since it was no use to trail it upon the earth, and in this fashion he started on. But Rubezahl continued his tricks by pressing on the [Pg 127] messenger as though he had got a yoke on his back. He changed the spear from one shoulder to the other, until at last, from very weariness, he threw away the bewitched weapon, imagining that the Evil One must possess it, and went his way without it.

He had not proceeded above a quarter of a mile, when, looking carelessly about him, he was astounded to find his spear by his side. He was sadly frightened, and little knew what to make of it. At last he boldly ventured to lay hands upon it. He did so, and lifted it up, but he could not conceive how he should carry it. He had no desire to trail it any more on the ground, and the thought of carrying it on his shoulder made him shudder. He decided, however, to give it another trial, carrying it in his hand. Fresh troubles now arose. The spear weighed so heavy that he could not stir it a foot from the spot, and though he tried first one hand and then another, all his efforts were in vain.

At last he bethought him of riding upon the spear, as a child bestrides a stick. A wonderful change now came over the weapon. It ran on as though it had been a fleet horse, and thus mounted the messenger rode on without ceasing until he descended the mountain and came into the city, where he excited the wonder, delight, and laughter of the worthy burghers.

Although he had endured some trouble in the early part of his journey, the messenger thought he [Pg 128] had been amply compensated at the close, and he comforted himself by making up his mind that in all future journeys he was destined to perform he would bestride his nimble spear. His good intentions were, however, frustrated. Rubezahl had played his game, and had had all the amusement he desired with the poor knave. Accordingly he scampered away, leaving in his place the real spear, which never played any more tricks, but, after the old fashion of other spears, accompanied its master in a becoming and orderly style.

A poor woman, who got her living by gathering herbs, once went, accompanied by her two children, to the mountains, carrying with her a basket in which to gather the plants, which she was in the habit of disposing of to the apothecaries. Having chanced to discover a large tract of land covered with such plants as were most esteemed, she busied herself so in filling her basket that she lost her way, and was troubled to find out how to get back to the path from which she had wandered. On a sudden a man dressed like a peasant appeared before her, and said—

"Well, good woman, what is it you are looking for so anxiously? and where do you want to go?"

"Alas!" replied she, "I am a poor woman who has neither bit nor sup, for which reason I am [Pg 129] obliged to wander to gather herbs, so that I may buy bread for myself and my hungry children. I have lost my way, and cannot find it. I pray you, good man, take pity on me, and lead me out of the thicket into the right path, so that I may make the best of my way home."

"Well, my good woman," replied Rubezahl, for it was he, "make yourself happy. I will show you the way. But what good are those roots to you? They will be of little benefit. Throw away this rubbish, and gather from this tree as many leaves as will fill your basket; you will find them answer your purpose much better."

"Alas!" said the woman, "who would give a penny for them? They are but common leaves, and good for nothing."

"Be advised, my good woman," said Rubezahl; "throw away those you have got, and follow me."

He repeated his injunction over and over again in vain, until he got tired, for the woman would not be persuaded. At last, he fairly laid hold of the basket, threw the herbs out by main force, and

supplied their place with leaves from the surrounding bushes. When he had finished, he told the woman to go home, and led her into the right path.

The woman, with her children and her basket, journeyed on some distance; but they had not gone far before she saw some valuable herbs growing by the wayside. No sooner did she perceive them than she longed to gather them, for she hoped that she should obtain something for them, [Pg 130] while the leaves with which her basket was crammed were, she thought, good for nothing. She accordingly emptied her basket, throwing away the rubbish, as she esteemed it, and having filled it once more with roots, journeyed on to her dwelling at Kirschdorf.

As soon as she arrived at her home she cleansed the roots she had gathered from the earth which clung around them, tied them neatly together, and emptied everything out of the basket. Upon doing this, something glittering caught her eye, and she commenced to make a careful examination of the basket. She was surprised to discover several ducats sticking to the wickerwork, and these were clearly such of the leaves as remained of those which she had so thoughtlessly thrown away on the mountains.

She rejoiced at having preserved what she had, but she was again sorely vexed that she had not taken care of all that the mountain spirit had gathered for her. She hastened back to the spot where she had emptied the basket, in hopes of finding some of the leaves there; but her search was in vain—they had all vanished.

THE HUNTER HACKELNBERG AND THE TUT-OSEL. [Pg 131]

The Wild Huntsman, Hackelnberg, traverses the Hartz mountains and the Thuringian forest, but he seems mostly to prefer the Hakel, from which place he derives his name, and especially the neighbourhood of Dummburg. Ofttimes is he heard at night, in rain and storm, when the moonlight is breaking by fits and starts through the troubled sky, following with his hounds the shadows of the wild beasts he slew in days of yore. His retinue generally proceed from the Dummburg, straight over the Hakel to the now desolate village of Ammendorf.

He has only been seen by a few children, who, having been born on a Sunday, had the power of seeing spirits. Sometimes he met them as a lonely huntsman, accompanied by one solitary hound. Sometimes he was seen in a carriage drawn by four horses, and followed by six dogs of the chase. But many have heard the low bellowing of his hounds, and the splashing of his horse's feet in the swamps of the moor; many have heard his cry of "Hu! hu!" and seen his associate and forerunner [Pg 132] —the Tut-Osel, or Tooting Ursula.

Once upon a time three wanderers seated themselves in the neighbourhood of the Dummburg. The night was already far advanced. The moon gleamed faintly through the chasing clouds. All around was still. Suddenly they heard something rush along over their heads. They looked up, and an immense screech-owl flew before them.

"Ha!" cried one of them, "there is the Tut-Osel! Hackelnberg, the Wild Huntsman, is not far off."

"Let us fly," exclaimed the second, "before the spirits overtake us."

"We cannot fly," said the third; "but you have nothing to fear if you do not irritate him. Lay yourselves down upon your faces when he passes over us. But, remember, you must not think of addressing Hackelnberg, lest he treat you as he treated the shepherd."

The wanderers laid themselves under the bushes. Presently they heard around them the rushing by, as it were, of a whole pack of hounds, and high in the air above them they heard a hollow sound like that of a hunted beast of the forest, and ever and anon they trembled at hearing the fearful-toned voice of the Wild Huntsman uttering his well-known "Hu! hu!" Two of the wanderers pressed close to the earth, but the third could not resist his inclination to have a peep at what [Pg 133] was going on. He looked up slantingly through the branches, and saw the shadow of a huntsman pass directly over him.

Suddenly all around was hushed. The wanderers rose slowly and timidly, and looked after Hackelnberg; but he had vanished, and did not return.

"But who is the Tut-Osel?" inquired the second wanderer, after a long pause.

"In a distant nunnery in Thuringia," replied the first, "there once lived a nun named Ursula, who, even during her lifetime, tormented all the sisterhood by her discordant voice, and oftentimes interrupted the service of the church, for which reason they called her Tut-Osel, or Tooting Ursula. If matters were bad while she lived, they became far worse when she died. At eleven o'clock every night she now thrust her head through a hole in the convent tower and tooted most miserably, and every morning at about four o'clock she joined unasked in the matin song.

"For a few days the sisterhood endured this with a beating heart, and on bended knees; but on the fourth morning, when she joined in the service, and one of the nuns whispered tremblingly to her neighbour—

"'Ha! it is surely our Tut-Osel!' the song ceased, the hair of the nuns stood on end, and they all rushed from the church, exclaiming—

"'Ha! Tut-Osel! Tut-Osel!' [Pg 134]

"Despite the penances and chastisements with which they were threatened, not one of the nuns would enter the church again until the Tut-Osel was banished from the walls of the nunnery. To effect this, one of the most celebrated exorcists of the day, a Capuchin friar, from a cloister on the banks of the Danube, was sent for; and he succeeded, by prayer and fasting, in banishing Ursel in the shape of a screech-owl to the far-distant Dummburg.

"Here she met Hackelnberg, the Wild Huntsman, and found in his wood-cry, 'Hu! hu!' as great delight as he did in her 'U! hu!' So they now always hunt together; he glad to have a spirit after his own kind, and she rejoiced in the extreme to be no longer compelled to reside within the walls of a cloister, and there listen to the echo of her own song."

"So much for the Tut-Osel. Now tell us how it fared with the shepherd who spoke to Hackelnberg."

"Listen to the marvellous adventure," said the third wanderer. "A shepherd once hearing the Wild Huntsman journeying through the forest, encouraged the spirit hounds, and called out—

"'Good sport to you, Hackelnberg.'

"Hackelnberg instantly turned round and roared out to him, in a voice like thunder—

"'Since you have helped me to set on the hounds, you shall have part of the spoil.' [Pg 135]

"The trembling shepherd tried to hide himself, but Hackelnberg hurled the half-consumed haunch of a horse into the shepherd's cart with such violence that it could scarcely be removed."

THE ALRAUN. [Pg 136]

It is a well-known tradition near Magdeburg, that when a man who is a thief by inheritance,—that is to say, whose father and grandfather and great-grandfather before him, three generations of his family, have been thieves; or whose mother has committed a theft, or been possessed with an intense longing to steal something at the time immediately preceding his birth; it is the tradition that if such a man should be hanged, at the foot of the gallows whereon his last breath was exhaled will spring up a plant of hideous form known as the Alraun or Gallows Mannikin. It is an unsightly object to look at, and has broad, dark green leaves, with a single yellow flower. The plant, however, has great power, and whosoever is its possessor never more knows what it is to want money.

It is a feat full of the greatest danger to obtain it. If not taken up from the root, clean out of the soil, it is altogether valueless, and he who makes the experiment wantonly risks his life. The moment the earth is struck with the spade, the bitterest cries and shrieks burst forth from it, and [Pg 137] while the roots are being laid bare demons are heard to howl in horrid concert. When the preparatory work is done, and when the hand of the daring man is laid on the stem to pluck forth his prize, then is it as if all the fiends of hell were let loose upon him, such shrieking, such howling, such clanging of chains, such crashing of thunder, and such flashing of forked lightning assail him on every side. If his heart fail him but for one moment his life is forfeit. Many a bold heart engaged in this trial has ceased to beat under the fatal tree; many a brave man's body has been found mangled and torn to pieces on that accursed spot.

There is, however, happily, only one day in the month, the first Friday, on which this plant appears, and on the night of that day only may it be plucked from its hiding-place. The way it is done is this. Whoso seeks to win it fasts all day. At sundown he sets forth on his fearful adventure, taking with him a coal-black hound, which has not a single fleck of white on its whole body, and which he has compelled likewise to fast for four-and-twenty hours previously. At midnight he takes his stand under the gallows, and there stuffs his ears with wool or wax, so that he may hear nothing. As the dread hour arrives, he stoops down and makes three crosses over the Alraun, and then commences to dig for the roots in a perfect circle around it. When he has [Pg 138] laid it entirely bare, so that it only holds to the ground by the points of its roots, he calls the hound to him, and ties the plant to its tail. He then shows the dog some meat, which he flings to a short distance from the spot. Ravenous with hunger, the hound springs after it, dragging the plant up by the root, but before he can reach the tempting morsel he is struck dead as by some invisible hand.

The adventurer, who all the while stood by the plant to aid in its uprooting should the strength of the animal prove insufficient, then rushes forward, and, detaching it from the body of the dead hound, grasps it firmly in both hands. He then wraps it up carefully in a silken cloth, first, however, washing it well in red wine, and then bears it homeward. The hound is buried in the spot whence the Alraun has been extracted.

On reaching home the man deposits his treasure in a strong chest, with three locks, and only visits it every first Friday in the month, or, rather, after the new moon. On these occasions he again washes it with red wine, and enfolds it afresh in a clean silken cloth of white and red colours.

If he has any question to ask, or any request to make, he then puts the one or proffers the other. If he wish to know of things in the future, the Alraun will tell him truly, but he will only get one [Pg 139] answer in the moon, and nothing else will be done for him by the plant. If he desire to obtain some substantial favour, he has it performed for him on making his request, but then the Alraun will answer no inquiries as to the future until the next day of visitation shall arrive.

Whoso has this wonder of the world in his possession can never take harm from his foes, and never sustain any loss. If he be poor, he at once becomes rich. If his marriage be unblest by offspring, he at once has children.

If a piece of gold be laid beside the Alraun at night, it is found to be doubled in the morning, and so on for any sum whatsoever, but never has it been known to be increased more than two pieces for each one.

On the demise of the owner only a youngest son can inherit the Alraun. To inherit it effectually he must place a loaf of white bread and a piece of money in the coffin of his father, to be buried along with his corpse. If he fail to do so, then is the possession, like many others of great name in the world, of no value to him. Should, however, the youngest son fail before the father, then the Alraun rightfully belongs to the eldest, but he must also place bread and money in the coffin of his brother, as well as in that of his father, to inherit it to any purpose.

THE GOOSE-GIRL. [Pg 140]

The king of a great land died, and left his queen to take care of their only child. This child was a daughter, who was very beautiful, and her mother loved her dearly and was very kind to her. When she grew up, she was betrothed to a prince who lived a great way off; and as the time drew near for her to be married, she got ready to set off on her journey to his country. The queen, her mother, packed up a great many costly things—jewels, gold and silver trinkets, fine dresses, and, in short, everything that became a royal bride. She gave her a waiting-maid to ride with her and give her into the bridegroom's hands, and each had a horse for the journey. The princess' horse was called Falada, and could speak.

When the time came for them to set out, the aged mother went into the princess's bedchamber, took a knife, and having cut her finger till it bled, let three drops of the blood fall upon a handkerchief, and gave it to the princess, saying—

"Take care of it, dear child, for it is a charm that may be of use to you on the road."

They all took a sorrowful leave of the princess, and she put the handkerchief into her bosom, got [Pg 141] upon her horse, and set off on her journey to her bridegroom's kingdom.

One day as they were riding along by a brook, the princess began to feel very thirsty, and said to her maid—

"Pray get down, and fetch me some water in my golden cup out of yonder brook, for I want to drink."

"Nay," said the maid, "if you are thirsty, get off yourself and stoop down by the water and drink. I shall not be your waiting-maid any longer."

The princess got down, and knelt over the brook and drank, for she was frightened, and dared not bring out her cup; and she wept, and said—

"Alas! what will become of me?"

The three drops of blood answered her, and said—

> "Alas, alas! if thy mother knew it,
> Sadly, sadly, would she rue it."

The princess was very gentle and meek, so she said nothing to her maid's ill-behaviour, but got upon her horse again.

They all rode further on their journey, till the day grew so warm and the sun so scorching that the bride began to feel very thirsty again; and at last, when they came to a river, she forgot her maid's rude speech, and said—

"Pray get down, and fetch me some water to drink in my cup." [Pg 142]

But the maid answered her, and even spoke more haughtily than before—

"Drink if you will, but I shall not be your waiting-maid."

Then the princess got off her horse, and lay down, and held her head over the running stream, and cried and said—

"What will become of me?"

And the drops of blood answered her again as before. As the princess leaned down to drink, the

handkerchief on which was the blood fell from her bosom and floated away on the water, but the princess was so frightened that she did not notice it. Her maid, however, saw it, and was very glad, for she knew the charm, and she saw that the poor bride would be in her power now that she had lost the drops of blood. So when the bride had done drinking, and would have got upon Falada again, the maid said—

"I will ride upon Falada, and you may have my horse instead;" so the princess was forced to give up her horse, and soon afterwards to take off her royal clothes and put on her maid's shabby ones.

At last, as they drew near the end of their journey, this treacherous servant threatened to kill her mistress if she ever told any one what had happened; but Falada saw it all, and marked it well.

Then the waiting-maid got upon Falada, while the real bride rode upon the other horse, and they went on in this way until they came at last to the royal court. There was great joy at their coming, and the prince flew to meet them, and lifted the maid from her horse, thinking she was the one who was to be his wife. She was led upstairs to the royal chamber, but the true princess was told to stay in the court below. [Pg 143]

Now the old king happened just then to have nothing else to do, so he was amusing himself by sitting at his window looking at what was going on, and he saw her in the courtyard. As she looked very pretty, and too delicate for a waiting-maid, he went up into the royal chamber to ask the bride who it was she had brought with her that was thus left standing in the court below.

"I brought her with me for the sake of her company on the road," replied she. "Pray give the girl some work to do, that she may not be idle."

The king could not for some time think of any work for her to do, but at last he said—

"I have a lad who takes care of my geese, she may go and help him."

Now the name of this lad, whom the princess was to help in watching the king's geese, was Conrad.

The false bride said to the prince—

"Dear husband, pray do me one piece of kindness."

"That I will," said the prince.

"Then tell one of your knackers to cut off the head of the horse I rode upon, for it was very unruly, and plagued me sadly on the road." [Pg 144]

In reality she was very much afraid lest Falada should some day or other speak, and tell all that she had done to the princess. She carried her point, and the faithful Falada was killed. When the true princess heard of it she wept, and begged the man to nail up Falada's head over a large dark gate of the city, through which she had to pass every morning and evening, that there she might see him sometimes. The slaughterer said he would do as she wished, and he cut off the head, and nailed it up under the dark gate.

Early the next morning, as the princess and Conrad went through the gate, she said sorrowfully—

"Falada, Falada, there thou hangest!"

The head answered—

"Bride, bride, there thou goest!
Alas, alas! if thy mother knew it,
Sadly, sadly would she rue it."

Then they went out of the city, and drove the geese on. When they were come to a meadow she sat down upon a bank there, and let down her waving locks of hair, which were like pure gold; and when Conrad saw it he ran up, and would have pulled some of the locks out, but the princess cried—

"Blow, breezes, blow! [Pg 145]
Let Conrad's hat go!
Blow, breezes, blow!
Let him after it go!
O'er hills, dales, and rocks,
Away be it whirled,
Till my golden locks
Are all combed and curled."

Then there came a wind so strong that it blew off Conrad's hat. Away it flew over the hills, and he was forced to turn and run after it, so that when he came back she had done combing and curling her hair, and had put it up again safely, and he could not get any of it. He was very angry and sulky, and would not speak to her; but they watched the geese until it grew dark, and then drove them homewards.

The next morning, as they were going through the dark gate, the poor girl looked up at Falada's

head, and cried—

"Falada, Falada, there thou hangest!"

It answered—

"Bride, bride, there thou goest!
Alas, alas! if thy mother knew it,
Sadly, sadly would she rue it."

Then she drove on the geese, and sat down again in the meadow, and began to comb out her hair as before, and Conrad ran up to her, and wanted to take hold of it. The princess repeated the words she had used the day before, when the wind came and blew away his hat, and off it flew a great way, over the hills and far away, so that he had to run after it. When he returned, she had [Pg 146] bound up her hair again, and all was safe. So they watched the geese until it grew dark.

In the evening, after they came home, Conrad went to the old king and said—

"I won't have that strange girl to help me to keep the geese any longer."

"Why?" said the king.

"Because instead of doing any good she does nothing but tease me all day long."

Then the king made him tell what had happened, and Conrad said—

"When we go in the morning through the dark gate with our flock of geese, she cries and talks with the head of a horse that hangs upon the wall, and the head answers her."

And Conrad went on telling the king what had happened in the meadow where the geese fed; how his hat was blown away, and how he was forced to run after it and leave his flock of geese to themselves. The old king told the boy to go out again the next day, and when morning came he placed himself behind the dark gate, and heard how the princess spoke to Falada, and how Falada answered. Then he went into the field and hid himself in a bush by the meadow's side, and he soon saw with his own eyes how they drove the flock of geese, and how, after a little time, she let down her hair that glittered in the sun. Then he heard her call the wind, and soon there came [Pg 147] a gust that carried away Conrad's hat, and away he went after it, while the girl went on combing and curling her hair. All this the old king saw; so he went home without having been observed, and when the goose-girl came back in the evening, he called her aside and asked her why she did so. She burst into tears, and said—

"That I must not tell you nor any man, or I shall lose my life."

The old king begged hard, but she would tell him nothing. Then he said—

"If you will not tell me thy story, tell thy grief to the iron stove there," and then he went away.

Then the princess crept into the stove, and, weeping and lamenting, she poured forth her whole heart, saying—

"I am alone in the whole world, though I am a king's daughter. A treacherous waiting-maid has taken my place and compelled me to put off my royal dress, and even taken my place with my bridegroom, while I have to work as a goose-girl. If my mother knew it, it would break her heart."

The old king, however, was standing by the stove, listening to what the princess said, and overheard it all. He ordered royal clothes to be put upon her, and gazed at her in wonder, she was so beautiful. Then he called his son, and told him that he had only a false bride, for that she was merely the waiting-maid, while the true bride stood by. The young prince rejoiced when he [Pg 148] saw the princess's beauty, and heard how meek and patient she had been, and the king ordered a great feast to be got ready for all his court. The bridegroom sat at the top of the table, with the false princess on one side and the true one on the other; but the waiting-maid did not recognise the princess, for her beauty was quite dazzling.

When they had eaten and drunk, and were very merry, the old king said he would tell them a tale. So he began, and told all the story of the princess, as if it were a tale he had heard, and he asked the waiting-woman what she thought ought to be done to any one who behaved so badly as the servant in the story.

"Nothing better," said the false bride, "than that she should be thrown into a cask stuck round with sharp nails, and that two white horses should be put to it, and should drag it from street to street till she were dead."

"Thou art she," said the old king, "and as thou hast judged thyself, so it shall be done to thee."

Then the young prince was married to his true wife, and they reigned over the kingdom in peace and happiness all their lives.

HANS JAGENTEUFEL. [Pg 149]

It is commonly believed that if any person is guilty of a crime for which he deserves to lose his head, he will, if he escape punishment during his lifetime, be condemned after his death to wander about with his head under his arm.

In the year 1644 a woman of Dresden went out early one Sunday morning into a neighbouring wood for the purpose of collecting acorns. In an open space, at a spot not very far from the place which is called the Lost Water, she heard somebody blow a very strong blast upon a hunting-horn, and immediately afterwards a heavy fall succeeded, as though a large tree had fallen to the ground. The woman was greatly alarmed, and concealed her little bag of acorns among the grass. Shortly afterwards the horn was blown a second time, and on looking round she saw a man without a head, dressed in a long grey cloak, and riding upon a grey horse. He was booted and [Pg 150] spurred, and had a bugle-horn hanging at his back.

As he rode past her very quietly she regained her courage, went on gathering the acorns, and when evening came returned home undisturbed.

Nine days afterwards, the woman returned to that spot for the purpose of again collecting the acorns, and as she sat down by the Forsterberg, peeling an apple, she heard behind her a voice calling out to her—

"Have you taken a whole sack of acorns and nobody tried to punish you for doing so?"

"No," said she. "The foresters are very kind to the poor, and they have done nothing to me—the Lord have mercy on my sins!"

With these words she turned about, and there stood he of the grey cloak, but this time he was without his horse, and carried his head, which was covered with curling brown hair, under his arm.

The woman shrank from him in alarm, but the spirit said—

"Ye do well to pray to God to forgive you your sins, it was never my good lot to do so."

Thereupon he related to her how that he had lived about one hundred and thirty years before, and was called Hans Jagenteufel, as his father had been before him, and how his father had often besought him not to be too hard upon poor people, how he had paid no regard to the advice his [Pg 151] father had given him, but had passed his time in drinking and carousing, and in all manner of wickedness, for which he was now condemned to wander about the world as an evil spirit.

THE WAITS OF BREMEN. [Pg 152]

An honest farmer had once an ass that had been a faithful hard-working slave to him for a great many years, but was now growing old, and every day more and more unfit for work. His master therefore was tired of keeping him to live at ease like a gentleman, and so began to think of putting an end to him. The ass, who was a shrewd hand, saw that some mischief was in the wind, so he took himself slily off, and began his journey towards Bremen.

"There," thought he to himself, "as I have a good voice, I may chance to be chosen town musician."

After he had travelled a little way, he spied a dog lying by the roadside, and panting as if very tired.

"What makes you pant so, my friend?" said the ass.

"Alas!" said the dog, "my master was going to knock me on the head, because I am old and weak, and can no longer make myself useful to him in hunting, so I ran away. But what can I do to earn my livelihood?"

"Hark ye," said the ass, "I am going to Bremen to turn musician. Come with me, and try what you [Pg 153] can do in the same way."

The dog said he was willing, and on they went.

They had not gone far before they saw a cat sitting in the middle of the road, with tears in her eyes, and making a most rueful face.

"Pray, my good lady," said the ass, "what's the matter with you? You look quite out of spirits."

"Ah, me!" said the cat. "How can a body be in good spirits when one's life is in danger? Because I am beginning to grow old, and had rather lie at my ease before the fire than run about the house after the mice, my mistress laid hold of me, and was going to drown me, and though I have been lucky enough to get away from her, I know not how I am to live."

"Oh!" said the ass, "by all means go with us to Bremen. You are a good night-singer, and may make your fortune as one of the waits."

The cat was pleased with the thought, and joined the party. Soon afterwards, as they were passing by a farmyard, they saw a cock perched upon a gate, screaming out with all his might

and main.

"Bravo!" said the ass. "Upon my word, you make a famous noise. Pray, what is all this about?"

"Why," said the cock, "I was just now telling all our neighbours that we were to have fine weather for our washing-day; and yet my mistress and the cook don't thank me for my pains, but threaten [Pg 154] to cut my head off to-morrow, and make broth of me for the guests that are coming on Sunday."

"Heaven forbid!" said the ass. "Come with us. Anything will be better than staying here. Besides, who knows, if we take care to sing in tune, we may get up a concert of our own, so come along with us."

"With all my heart," replied the cock; so they all four went on jollily together towards Bremen.

They could not, however, reach the town the first day, so when night came on they turned off the high-road into a wood to sleep. The ass and the dog laid themselves down under a great tree, and the cat climbed up into the branches; while the cock, thinking that the higher he sat the safer he should be, flew up to the very top of the tree, and then, according to his custom, before he sounded his trumpet and went to sleep, looked out on all sides to see that everything was well. In doing this he saw afar off something bright, and calling to his companions, said—

"There must be a house no great way off, for I see a light."

"If that be the case," replied the ass, "we had better change our quarters, for our lodging here is not the best in the world."

"Besides," said the dog, "I should not be the worse for a bone or two."

"And may be," remarked the cat, "a stray mouse will be found somewhere about the premises." [Pg 155]

So they walked off together towards the spot where the cock had seen the light; and as they drew near, it became larger and brighter, till they came at last to a lonely house, in which was a gang of robbers.

The ass, being the tallest of the company, marched up to the window and peeped in.

"Well," said the cock, "what do you see?"

"What do I see?" replied the ass. "Why, I see a table spread with all kinds of good things, and robbers sitting round it making merry."

"That would be a noble lodging for us," said the cock.

"Yes," rejoined the ass, "if we could only get in."

They laid their heads together to see how they could get the robbers out, and at last they hit upon a plan. The ass set himself upright on his hind-legs, with his fore-feet resting on the window; the dog got upon his back; the cat scrambled up to the dog's shoulders, and the cock flew up and sat upon the cat. When all were ready the cock gave the signal, and up struck the whole band of music. The ass brayed, the dog barked, the cat mewed, and the cock crew. Then they all broke through the window at once, and came tumbling into the room amongst the broken glass, with a hideous clatter. The robbers, who had been not a little frightened by the opening [Pg 156] concert, had now no doubt that some frightful hobgoblins had broken in upon them, and scampered away as fast as they could.

The coast once clear, the travellers soon sat down and despatched what the robbers had left, with as much eagerness as if they had not hoped to eat again for a month. As soon as they had had enough they put out the lights, and each once more sought out a resting-place to his liking. The donkey laid himself down upon a heap of straw in the yard; the dog stretched himself upon a mat behind the door; the cat rolled herself up on the hearth before the warm ashes; the cock perched upon a beam on the top of the house; and as all were rather tired with their journey, they soon fell fast asleep.

About midnight, however, when the robbers saw from afar that the lights were out and that all was quiet, they began to think that they had been in too great a hurry to run away; and one of them, who was bolder than the rest, went to see what was going on. Finding everything still, he marched into the kitchen, and groped about till he found a match in order to light a candle. Espying the glittering fiery eyes of the cat, he mistook them for live coals, and held the match to them to light it. The cat, however, not understanding such a joke, sprang at his face, and spat, and scratched him. This frightened him dreadfully, and away he ran to the back door, where the [Pg 157] dog jumped up and bit him in the leg. As he was crossing over the yard the ass kicked him; and the cock, who had been awakened by the noise, crew with all his might.

At this the robber ran back as fast as he could to his comrades, and told the captain that a horrid witch had got into the house, and had scratched his face with her long bony fingers—that a man with a knife in his hand had hidden himself behind the door, and stabbed him in the leg—that a black monster stood in the yard and struck him with a club—and that the devil sat upon the top of the house, and cried out—

"Throw the rascal up here!"

After this the robbers never dared to go back to the house; but the musicians were so pleased

with their quarters, that they never found their way to Bremen, but took up their abode in the wood. And there they live, I dare say, to this very day.

THE FLAMING CASTLE.

[Pg 158]

Upon a high mountain in the Tyrol there stands an old castle, in which there burns a fire every night, and the flashes of that fire are so large that they rise up over the walls, and may be seen far and wide.

It happened once that an old woman in want of firewood was gathering the fallen twigs and branches upon this castle-crowned mountain, and at length arrived at the castle door. To indulge her curiosity she began peering about her, and at last entered, not without difficulty, for it was all in ruins and not easily accessible. When she reached the courtyard, there she beheld a goodly company of nobles and ladies seated and feasting at a huge table. There were, likewise, plenty of servants, who waited upon them, changing their plates, handing round the viands, and pouring out wine for the party.

As she thus stood gazing upon them, there came one of the servants, who drew her on one side, and placed a piece of gold in the pocket of her apron, upon which the whole scene vanished in an instant, and the poor frightened old woman was left to find her way back as well as she could. [Pg 159] However, she got outside the courtyard, and there stood before her a soldier with a lighted match, whose head was not placed upon his neck, but held by him under his arm. He immediately addressed the old woman, and commanded her not to tell any one what she had seen and heard upon peril of evil befalling her.

At length the woman reached home, full of anguish, still keeping possession of the gold, but telling no one whence she had obtained it. When the magistrates, however, got wind of the affair, she was summoned before them, but she would not speak one word upon the subject, excusing herself by saying that if she uttered one word respecting it great evil would ensue to her. When, however, they pressed her more strictly, she discovered to them all that had happened to her in the Fiery Castle, even to the smallest particular. In an instant, almost before her relation was fully ended, she was carried away, and no one could ever learn whither she fled.

A year or two afterwards, a young nobleman, a knight, and one well experienced in all things, took up his abode in those parts. In order that he might ascertain the issue of this affair, he set out on foot with his servant in the middle of the night on the road to the mountain. With great difficulty they made the ascent, and were on their way warned six times by an unknown voice to desist from their attempt.

They kept on, however, heedless of this caution, and at length reached the door of the castle. [Pg 160] There again stood the soldier as a sentinel, and he called out as usual—

"Who goes there?"

The nobleman, who was bold of heart, gave for answer—

"It is I."

Upon this the spirit inquired further—

"Who art thou?"

This time the nobleman made no answer, but desired his servant to hand him his sword. When this was done, a black horseman came riding out of the castle, against whom the nobleman would have waged battle. The horseman, however, dragged him up upon his horse and rode with him into the courtyard, while the soldier chased the servant down the mountain. The nobleman was never more seen.

THE MONKS AT THE FERRY.

[Pg 161]

From time immemorial a ferry has existed from Andernach to the opposite side of the Rhine. Formerly it was more in use than at present, there being then a greater intercourse between the two shores of the river, much of which might be traced to the Convent of St. Thomas, once the most important and flourishing nunnery on the river.

Close by this ferry, on the margin of the Rhine, but elevated somewhat above the level of the water, stands a long, roofless, ruinous building, the remains of the castle of Friedrichstein, better known, however, to the peasantry, and to all passengers on the river, as the Devil's House. How it came by this suspicious appellative there are many traditions to explain. Some say that the Prince of Neuwied, who erected it, so ground down his subjects for its construction, that they unanimously gave it that name. Others derive its popular *sobriquet* from the godless revelries of the same prince within its walls, and the wild deeds of his companions in wickedness; while a third class of local historians insist upon it that the ruin takes its name from the congregation of [Pg 162]

fiendish shapes which resort there on special occasions, and the riot and rout which they create in the roofless chambers, reeking vaults, and crumbling corridors of the desolate edifice. It is to this ruin, and of the adjacent ferry, that the following legend belongs.

It was in the time when the celebrated Convent of St. Thomas over Andernach existed in its pristine magnificence, that late on an autumnal night the ferryman from that city to the Devil's House on the other side of the river, who lived on the edge of the bank below the ruins of the ancient palace of the kings of Austrasia, was accosted by a stranger, who desired to be put across just as the man was about to haul up his boat for the day. The stranger seemed to be a monk, for he was closely cowled, and gowned from head to foot in the long, dark, flowing garb of some ascetic order.

"Hilloa! ferry," he shouted aloud as he approached the shore of the river, "hilloa!"

"Here, ahoy! here, most reverend father!" answered the poor ferryman. "What would ye have with me?"

"I would that you ferry me across the Rhine to yonder shore of the river," replied the monk. "I come from the Convent of St. Thomas, and I go afar on a weighty mission. Now, be ye quick, my good friend, and run me over."

"Most willingly, reverend father," said the ferryman. "Most willingly. Step into my boat, and I'll [Pg 163] put you across the current in a twinkling."

The dark-looking monk entered the boat, and the ferryman shoved off from the bank. They soon reached the opposite shore. The ferryman, however, had scarce time to give his fare a good-evening ere he disappeared from his sight, in the direction of the Devil's House. Pondering a little on this strange circumstance, and inwardly thinking that the dark monk might as well have paid him his fare, or, at least, bade him good-night before he took such unceremonious leave, he rowed slowly back across the stream to his abode at Andernach.

"Hilloa! ferry," once more resounded from the margin of the river as he approached, "hilloa!"

"Here, ahoy!" responded the ferryman, but with some strange sensation of fear. "What would ye?"

He rowed to the shore, but he could see no one for a while, for it was now dark. As he neared the landing-place, however, he became aware of the presence of two monks, garbed exactly like his late passenger, standing together, concealed by the shadow of the massive ruins.

"Here! here!" they cried.

"We would ye would ferry us over to yonder shore of the river," said the foremost of the twain. "We go afar on a weighty errand from the Convent of St. Thomas, and we must onwards this [Pg 164] night. So be up quick, friend, and run us over soon."

"Step in, then," said the ferryman, not over courteously, for he remembered the trick played on him by their predecessor.

They entered the boat, and the ferryman put off. Just as the prow of the boat touched the opposite bank of the river, both sprang ashore, and disappeared at once from his view, like him who had gone before them.

"Ah!" said the ferryman, "if they call that doing good, or acting honestly, to cheat a hard-working poor fellow out of the reward of his labour, I do not know what bad means, or what it is to act knavishly."

He waited a little while to see if they would return to pay him, but finding that they failed to do so, he put across once more to his home at Andernach.

"Hilloa! ferry," again hailed a voice from the shore to which he was making, "hilloa!"

The ferryman made no reply to this suspicious hail, but pushed off his boat from the landing-place, fully resolved in his own mind to have nothing to do with any more such black cattle that night.

"Hilloa! ferry," was again repeated in a sterner voice. "Art dead or asleep?"

"Here, ahoy!" cried the ferryman. "What would ye?"

He had thought of passing downwards to the other extremity of the town, and there mooring his [Pg 165] barque below the place she usually lay in, lest any other monks might feel disposed to make him their slave without offering any recompense. He had, however, scarcely entertained the idea, when three black-robed men, clothed as the former, in long, flowing garments, but more closely cowled, if possible, than they, stood on the very edge of the stream, and beckoned him to them. It was in vain for him to try to evade them, and as if to render any effort to that effect more nugatory, the moon broke forth from the thick clouds, and lit up the scene all around with a radiance like day.

"Step in, holy fathers! step in! quick!" said he, in a gruff voice, after they had told him the same tale in the very same words as the three others had used who had passed previously.

They entered the boat, and again the ferryman pushed off. They had reached the centre of the

stream, when he bethought him that it was then a good time to talk of his fee, and he resolved to have it, if possible, ere they could escape him.

"But what do you mean to give me for my trouble, holy fathers?" he inquired. "Nothing for nothing, ye know."

"We shall give you all that we have to bestow," replied one of the monks. "Won't that suffice?"

"What is that?" asked the ferryman.

"Nothing," said the monk who had answered him first. [Pg 166]

"But our blessing," interposed the second monk.

"Blessing! bah! That won't do. I can't eat blessings!" responded the grumbling ferryman.

"Heaven will pay you," said the third monk.

"That won't do either," answered the enraged ferryman. "I'll put back again to Andernach!"

"Be it so," said the monks.

The ferryman put about the head of his boat, and began to row back towards Andernach, as he had threatened. He had, however, scarcely made three strokes of his oars, when a high wind sprang up and the waters began to rise and rage and foam, like the billows of a storm-vexed sea. Soon a hurricane of the most fearful kind followed, and swept over the chafing face of the stream. In his forty years' experience of the river, the ferryman had never before beheld such a tempest—so dreadful and so sudden. He gave himself up for lost, threw down his oars, and flung himself on his knees, praying to Heaven for mercy. At that moment two of the dark-robed monks seized the oars which he had abandoned, while the third wrenched one of the thwarts of the boat from its place in the centre. All three then began to belabour the wretched man with all their might and main, until at length he lay senseless and without motion at the bottom of the boat. The barque, which was now veered about, bore them rapidly towards their original destination. The only [Pg 167] words that passed on the occasion were an exclamation of the first monk who struck the ferryman down.

"Steer your boat aright, friend," he cried, "if you value your life, and leave off your prating. What have you to do with Heaven, or Heaven with you?"

When the poor ferryman recovered his senses, day had long dawned, and he was lying alone at the bottom of his boat. He found that he had drifted below Hammerstein, close to the shore of the right bank of the river. He could discover no trace of his companions. With much difficulty he rowed up the river, and reached the shore.

He learned afterwards from a gossiping neighbour, that, as the man returned from Neuwied late that night, or rather early the next morning, he met, just emerging from the Devil's House, a large black chariot running on three huge wheels, drawn by four horses without heads. In that vehicle he saw six monks seated *vis-à-vis*, apparently enjoying their morning ride. The driver, a curious-looking carl, with a singularly long nose, took, he said, the road along the edge of the river, and continued lashing his three coal-black, headless steeds at a tremendous rate, until a sharp turn hid them from the man's view.

DOCTOR ALL-WISE. [Pg 168]

There was a poor peasant, named Crab, who once drove two oxen, with a load of wood, into the city, and there sold it for two dollars to a doctor. The doctor counted out the money to him as he sat at dinner, and the peasant, seeing how well he fared, yearned to live like him, and would needs be a doctor too. He stood a little while in thought, and at last asked if he could not become a doctor.

"Oh yes," said the doctor, "that may be easily managed. In the first place you must purchase an A, B, C book, only taking care that it is one that has got in the front of it a picture of a cock crowing. Then sell your cart and oxen, and buy with the money clothes, and all the other things needful. Thirdly, and lastly, have a sign painted with the words, 'I am Doctor All-Wise,' and have it nailed up before the door of your house."

The peasant did exactly as he had been told; and after he had doctored a little while, it chanced that a certain nobleman was robbed of a large sum of money. Some one told him that there lived in the village hard by a Doctor All-Wise, who was sure to be able to tell him where his money had [Pg 169] gone. The nobleman at once ordered his carriage to be got ready and rode into the city, and having come to the doctor, asked him if he was Dr. All-Wise.

"Oh yes," answered he, "I am Doctor All-Wise, sure enough."

"Will you go with me, then," said the nobleman, "and get me back my money?"

"To be sure I will," said the doctor; "but my wife Grethel must go with me."

The nobleman was pleased to hear this, made them both get into the carriage with him, and away

they all rode together. When they arrived at the nobleman's house dinner was already prepared, and he desired the doctor to sit down with him.

"My wife Grethel, too," said the doctor.

As soon as the first servant brought in the first dish, which was some great delicacy, the doctor nudged his wife, and said—

"Grethel, that is the first," meaning the first dish.

The servant overheard his remark, and thought he meant to say he was the first thief, which was actually the case, so he was sore troubled, and said to his comrades—

"The doctor knows everything. Things will certainly fall out ill, for he said I was the first thief."

The second servant would not believe what he said, but at last he was obliged, for when he [Pg 170] carried the second dish into the room, the doctor remarked to his wife—

"Grethel, that is the second."

The second servant was now as much frightened as the first, and was pleased to leave the apartment. The third served no better, for the doctor said—

"Grethel, that is the third."

Now the fourth carried in a dish which had a cover on it, and the nobleman desired the doctor to show his skill by guessing what was under the cover. Now it was a crab. The doctor looked at the dish, and then at the cover, and could not at all divine what they contained, nor how to get out of the scrape. At length he said, half to himself and half aloud—

"Alas! poor crab!"

When the nobleman heard this, he cried out—

"You have guessed it, and now I am sure you will know where my money is."

The servant was greatly troubled at this, and he winked to the doctor to follow him out of the room, and no sooner did he do so than the whole four who had stolen the gold stood before him, and said that they would give it up instantly, and give him a good sum to boot, provided he would not betray them, for if he did their necks would pay for it. The doctor promised, and they conducted him to the place where the gold lay concealed. The doctor was well pleased to see it, [Pg 171] and went back to the nobleman, and said—

"My lord, I will now search in my book and discover where the money is."

Now the fifth servant had crept into an oven to hear what the doctor said. He sat for some time turning over the leaves of his A, B, C book, looking for the picture of the crowing cock, and as he did not find it readily, he exclaimed—

"I know you are in here, and you must come out."

Then the man in the oven, thinking the doctor spoke of him, jumped out in a great fright, saying—

"The man knows everything."

Then Doctor All-Wise showed the nobleman where the gold was hidden, but he said nothing as to who stole it. So he received a great reward from all parties, and became a very famous man.

THE WHITE MAIDEN. [Pg 172]

It is now centuries since a young noble of the neighbourhood was hunting in the valleys which lie behind the hills that skirt the Rhine opposite the ancient town of St. Goar. In the heat of the pursuit he followed the game to the foot of the acclivity on which are seated the ruins of Thurnberg, and there it disappeared all at once from his view. It was the noon of a midsummer day, and the sun shone down on him with all its strength. Despairing of being able to find the object of his pursuit, he determined to clamber up the steep hillside, and seek shelter and repose in the shadow of the old castle, or, mayhap, in one of its many crumbling chambers. With much labour he succeeded in reaching the summit, and there, fatigued with his toil, and parched with a burning thirst, he flung himself on the ground beneath one of the huge towers, some of whose remains still rear their heads on high, and stretched out his tired limbs in the full enjoyment of rest.

"Now," said he, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow,—"now could I be happy indeed, if [Pg 173] some kind being would bring me a beaker of the cool wine, which, they say, is ages old, down there in the cellars of this castle."

He had scarce spoken the words when a most beautiful maiden stepped forth from a cleft in the ivy-covered ruin, bearing in one hand a huge silver beaker of an antique form, full to the very brim of foaming wine. In her other hand she held a large bunch of keys of all sizes. She was clad in white from head to foot, her hair was flaxen, her skin was like a lily, and she had such loving

eyes that they at once won the heart of the young noble.

"Here," said she, handing him the beaker, "thy wish is granted. Drink and be satisfied."

His heart leaped within him with joy at her condescension, and he emptied the contents of the goblet at a single draught. All the while she looked at him in such a manner as to intoxicate his very soul, so kindly and confidential were her glances. The wine coursed through his veins like liquid fire, his heart soon burned with love for the maiden, and the fever of his blood was by no means appeased by the furtive looks which ever and anon she cast upon him. She apparently read his state of mind, and when his passion was at its highest pitch, and all restraint seemed put an end to by the potent effects of love and wine, she disappeared in a moment by the way she came. The noble rushed after her in the hope of detaining the fugitive, or, at least, of catching a [Pg 174] parting glimpse of her retreating form, but the ivy-encircled cleft, through which she seemed to have flitted, looked as though it had not been disturbed for centuries, and as he tried to force his way to the gloomy cavern below, a crowd of bats and owls and other foul birds of evil omen, aroused from their repose, rose upwards, and, amidst dismal hootings and fearful cries, almost flung him backward with the violence of their flight. He spent the remainder of the afternoon in search of the lost one, but without success. At the coming of night he wended his way homeward, weary, heart-sick, and overwhelmed with an indefinable sensation of sadness.

From that day forth he was an altered man—altered in appearance as well as in mind and in manners. Pleasure was a stranger to his soul, and he knew no longer what it was to enjoy peace. Wherever he went, whatever pursuit he was engaged in, whether in the chase, in the hall, in lady's bower, or in chapel, his eye only saw one object—the White Maiden. At the board she stood in imagination always before him, offering to his fevered lips the cool, brimming beaker; and in the long-drawn aisles of the chapel she was ever present, beckoning him from his devotions to partake of the generous beverage which she still bore in her right hand. Every matron or maiden he met seemed by some wondrous process to take her shape, and even the very trees of the [Pg 175] forest all looked to his thought like her.

Thenceforward he commenced to haunt the ruins in which she had appeared to him, still hoping to see, once again, her for whom he felt he was dying, and living alone in that hope. The sun scorched him, but it was nothing to the fever that burned within him. The rain drenched him, but he cared not for it. Time and change and circumstance seemed all forgotten by him, everything passed by him unheeded. His whole existence was completely swallowed up in one thought—the White Maiden of the ruined castle, and that, alas! was only vexation of spirit. A deadly fever seized him. It was a mortal disease. Still he raved, in his delirium, but of her. One morn a woodman, who occasionally provided him with food, found him a corpse at the entrance of the crevice in the wall whence the maiden had seemed to come, and where she had disappeared. It was long rumoured that he had struggled bravely with death—or rather that he could not die, because the curse was upon him—until the maiden, garbed in white as usual, appeared to him once more. That then he stretched forth his hands—she stooped over him. He raised his head—she kissed his lips—and he died.

The White Maiden, tradition says, has not since been seen in the ruins of Thurnberg.

THE STURGEON. [Pg 176]

The Convent of Schwartz-Rheindorf was founded in the year of our Lord 1152 by the Bishop of Cologne, Arnold Graf von Wied, for the reception of noble ladies alone, and was placed by him under the strict rule of St. Benedict. The prelate, who died in the year 1159, lies buried beneath the high altar of the church.

Among the many other rights and privileges conferred on the convent by the Bishop was the right of fishing in the river, within certain limits above and below the convent's territorial boundaries. This was a most valuable right for a long period.

The certainty of a profitable fishing was always heralded by the appearance of two immense sturgeon. They came at the commencement of each year, harbingers of good luck, and they were ever succeeded by shoals of river fish, in such numbers as to be absolutely inexhaustible until the expiration of the season. Of these sturgeon the one, a huge male, always allowed himself to be taken by the fishermen, but the female was never captured. It was understood by those who [Pg 177] knew all about these matters that on her freedom depended the fisher's success. This good fortune lasted for centuries.

It was, however, remarked that as the discipline of the convent became more and more relaxed, and grace grew to be less and less among its inmates, the fishing became more and more unprofitable. The sturgeon, it is true, still made their appearance, but they were spent and thin, and altogether unlike those which had been wont of yore to visit the fishing-ground of the sisterhood. The abbess and the nuns, however, either could not or they would not perceive the cause of the falling off in the take, or the change in the appearance of the sturgeon, but the common people who dwelt in the vicinity of the convent, and especially those poor persons to whom the river had been heretofore a source of support, were neither slow in seeing the cause nor in publishing the consequences to the world. Thus stood matters: dissoluteness of life on the

one hand, distress on the other; profligacy and poverty, extravagance and starvation, linked inseparably together.

It was midwinter. On the bank of the river stood the purveyor of the convent, accompanied by the lady abbess herself and a great number of the nuns. They waited to watch the first haul made by the fishermen on the New Year's morning, according to the custom which had prevailed in the convent for centuries. It was not usual for the river to be open at that time, but this year there [Pg 178] was not a piece of ice on its surface. The fishermen put out in their boats, and cast their nets into the current; then, making the circuit of the spot, they returned to the bank and commenced to haul them in. Little difficulty was at first experienced by them in this operation. For several years preceding the supply of fish had scarcely sufficed to defray the expense of catching. It would seem, however, as if fortune were inclined to smile on the sisterhood once more. The nets had not been more than half drawn in when the fishermen began to perceive that they contained something heavier than usual. The lady abbess and the nuns were made acquainted with the circumstance, and they watched, in eager expectancy, the landing of the fish. The nets were at length with much trouble hauled on shore.

"Hilloa!" said the principal fisherman, an aged man, to the purveyor of the convent, "hast thou ever seen such monsters before? My soul! but this will glad the hearts of the whole convent, and make many poor folk happy, an it be but the harbinger of a return to the old times."

While he spoke two immense sturgeon were landed. The abbess and her train approached the landing-place, and admired the strength and superior size of the fish.

"It would be but folly to set one of them free," she partially soliloquised and partially spoke to the [Pg 179] purveyor. "The convent has not had such a treat for years past, and we absolutely require some change. I'll warrant me they will eat delightfully."

The purveyor, a wily Jewish-looking fellow, who passed for an Italian, at once assented to the observations of his mistress, and added a few remarks of his own in support of them. Not so, however, the old fisherman, who overheard the conversation, having approached the abbess with the purveyor to learn her will and pleasure as to the disposal of the fish.

"Nay, nay, master," he interposed, in his rough way, "not so fast, not so fast. My father fished on this river for full fifty years, and my father's father did the same; and fifty years have I drawn net here too, all in the service of the noble ladies of Schwartz-Rheindorf. Never, in that time, knew I other than this done with these fish—the one to be let free, the other to be given away among the poor. I'll do nought else with them."

The abbess and the purveyor were but ill-pleased to hear what the old man said.

"You must do as I bid you, Herman," said the former.

"You must obey my lady, your mistress," echoed the latter. "She is too good and gracious to ye."

"Not I," said the old man bluntly,—"not I. For all the broad lands on the Rhine I would not have hand, act, nor part in such a matter. Do as ye list, but I'll be none your servant in the matter."

The old man walked away as he said these words, and neither the entreaties of the abbess, the [Pg 180] threats of the purveyor, nor the interposition of some of the nuns present could bring him back.

Others, however, were soon found among his companions who were less scrupulous; and the two fish were accordingly removed to the convent, and consigned to the care of the cook, to be served up for dinner that day.

The dinner-hour arrived—the sisterhood were all seated at table—the servitors, marshalled by the supple purveyor, made their appearance, bearing the expected banquet in large covered dishes. A hasty grace was muttered, and then every eye was turned to the covers. The abbess had ordered the sturgeon to be served up first.

"And now, sisters," she said, with a complacent look of benignant condescension, "I hope soon to know how you approve of our dinner. It is my constant study to make you happy, and my efforts are unceasing to afford you every gratification in my power. Let us begin."

The covers were removed in a twinkling by the servitors, the carvers clattered their knives and forks impatiently; but what was the surprise of all, when every dish as it was uncovered was found to be empty. The wrath of the abbess rose at the sight, and the zeal of the nuns knew no bounds in seconding her indignation. The cook was hurriedly sent for. He stood before the [Pg 181] excited sisterhood an abject, trembling wretch, far more like one who expected to be made a victim of himself, than one who would voluntarily make victims of others.

"How is this, villain?" exclaimed the abbess, her face reddening with rage.

"How's this, villain?" echoed threescore female voices, some of them not musical.

"Ay, how is this, hound?" growled the purveyor.

"Do you mock us?" continued the abbess, as the cook stood trembling and silent.

"Do you mock us?" echoed the purveyor, with as much dignity as he could impart into his thin, meagre figure.

"Speak!" said the abbess in a loud voice, while the cook cast his eyes around as if seeking aid against the excited throng the room contained,—"speak!"

Thus urged, the cook proceeded to explain—as far, at least, as he was able. He declared that he had cut up and cooked the sturgeon, according to the directions he had received from the purveyor, and that, when dinner was served up, he had sent them up dressed in the manner that official had directed.

The abbess and her nuns were much puzzled how to explain this extraordinary occurrence, and each busied herself in conjectures which, as usual in such cases, never approached the fact. At [Pg 182] this juncture the aged fisherman entered the room.

"My lady," he said to the abbess, when he learnt what had occurred, "it is the judgment of Heaven. Even now I saw the fish in the river. I knew them well, and I'll swear to them if necessary. They floated away, swimming down the stream, and I am a much mistaken man if ever ye see them any more."

The pleasurable anticipations of the day that the sisters had entertained were completely annihilated; but it would have been well for them if the consequences of their avarice and gluttony had ended with that hour. Never more did the sturgeon make their appearance, and the part of the stream which pertained to the convent thenceforth ceased to produce fish of any kind whatsoever.

People say that the Reformation had the effect of wooing the finny tribe back to their old haunts. At all events, whatever may have been the cause, it is the fact that there is not at present a less plentiful supply in this spot than there is in any other part of that rich river.

SAINT ANDREW'S NIGHT. [Pg 183]

It is commonly believed in Germany that on St. Andrew's night, St. Thomas' night, and Christmas and New Year's nights, a girl has the power of inviting and seeing her future lover. A table is to be laid for two persons, taking care, however, that there are no forks upon it. Whatever the lover leaves behind him must be carefully preserved, for he then returns to her who has it, and loves her passionately. The article must, however, be kept carefully concealed from his sight, for he would otherwise remember the torture of superhuman power exercised over him which he that night endured, become conscious of the charms employed, and this would lead to fatal consequences.

A fair maiden in Austria once sought at midnight, after performing the necessary ceremonies, to obtain a sight of her lover, whereupon a shoemaker appeared having a dagger in his hand, which he threw at her and then disappeared. She picked up the dagger which he had thrown at her and concealed it in a trunk.

Not long afterwards the shoemaker visited, courted, and married her. Some years after her [Pg 184] marriage she chanced to go one Sunday about the hour of vespers to the trunk in search of something that she required for her work the next day. As she opened the trunk her husband came to her, and would insist on looking into it. She kept him off, until at last he pushed her away, and there saw his long-lost dagger. He immediately seized it, and demanded how she obtained it, because he had lost it at a very particular time. In her fear and alarm she had not the power to invent any excuse, so declared the truth, that it was the same dagger he had left behind him the night when she had obliged him to appear to her. Her husband hereupon grew enraged, and said, with a terrible voice—

"'Twas you, then, that caused me that night of dreadful misery?"

With that he thrust the dagger into her heart.

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Transcriber's Note:

Hyphenation has been made consistent.

Archaic and variable spelling is preserved as printed.

The advertising material has been moved to follow the title page.

The last two stories were omitted from the Table of Contents in the original. These have been added.

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