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by Fritz Reuter**

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By the same Author,

AN OLD STORY OF MY FARMING DAYS 3 vols.

IN THE YEAR '13:

A

TALE OF MECKLENBURG LIFE

BY

FRITZ REUTER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE PLATT-DEUTSCH

BY

CHARLES LEE LEWES.

Authorized Edition.

LEIPZIG 1867

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

In presenting to the public this, the first English translation of one of Reuter's works, it may not be superfluous to say a few words concerning their author.

Though his name is unknown in England, in Germany he is one of the most popular authors of the day. His stories and poems are written in *Platt-deutsch*, and are read wherever that dialect is spoken, that is to say throughout Northern, or Lower, Germany,--extending from Memel in the extreme North East to Aix-la-Chapelle in the South West,--and even the Germans of the more southern and higher-lying States, where Platt-deutsch is unknown, now frequently learn it for the sole purpose of reading Reuter's works.

The following story, called in the original "Ut de Franzosentid", was published in 1860, and rapidly passed through several editions. It is one of a series to which Reuter has given the name of "Olle Kamellen" literally "old camomile-flowers", by which he means "old tales, old recollections, useful as homely remedies." It is one of the most popular of his works, and perhaps also the most translatable. Hence the reason for bringing it first before the English public.

The scene of the story is laid in Stavenhagen, or Stemhagen as it is called in Plattdeutsch, Reuter's native town. The characters introduced were all real people; and even their names have been retained.

The story opens at the moment when the German people was at length beginning to rise against Napoleon, and it gives a vivid picture of the state of feeling which then prevailed in Germany towards the French. The Germans were in the galling position of being forced to treat the French as allies, whilst hating them with an intense and unconquerable hatred. And this hatred, wide-spread over the whole country, is shown in the expressions of detestation ever bursting forth at the mention of the French name.

The language in which the story is written is closely allied to the Saxon, and has much more resemblance to English than High German has; but it is nevertheless a dialect, and bears the same relation to the High German as the child's language does to the man's; and my aim has been, while endeavouring to make the translation read like an English work, to adhere as closely as possible to the form and simplicity of the original.

HAMPSTEAD, *June* 1867.

IN THE YEAR '13.

CHAPTER I.

Showing why Miller Voss could not be made a bankrupt, and how he helped the Amtshauptmann in a great difficulty.

I was baptised, and had godfathers: four of them. And, if my godfathers were still alive, and walked through the streets with me, people would stop and say: "Look, what fine fellows! you won't see many such." They were indeed godfathers! And one of them was a head taller than the others, and towered above them as Saul did above his brethren. This was the old Amtshauptmann Weber. He used to wear a well-brushed blue coat, yellowish trousers, and well-blacked boots, and his face was so marked by the small-pox that it looked as if the Devil had been threshing his peas on it, or as if he had sat down upon his face on a cane-bottomed chair. On his broad forehead there stood written, and in his eyes too you could read, "Not the fear of Man but the fear of God." And he was the right man in the right place.

About eleven o'clock in the morning he might be seen sitting in an arm-chair in the middle of the room, whilst his wife fastened a napkin under his chin, put the powder on his hair, tied it behind and twisted it into a neat pigtail.

When the old gentleman walked up and down under the shade of the chestnut-trees at noon, his little rogue of a pigtail wagged merrily, and nodded over the collar of his blue coat as if it wanted to say to any one who would listen: "Yes, look old fellow! What do you think of me? I am only the tip of his hair, and if I can wag so comically out here, you may fancy how merry it must be inside his head."

When I took him a message from my father, and managed to give it straight off, he would pat me on the head, and then say: "Now, away with you, boy. Off, like a shot! When you pull the trigger the gun mustn't hang fire, but must go off like a flash of lightning. Run to Mamsell Westphalen, and ask her for an apple."

To my father he would say: "Well, friend, what do you think? Are not you glad that you have a son, boys are much better than girls; girls are always fretting and crying. Thank God, I have a boy too, my Joe.--What say you, eh!"

My father told my mother. "Do you know," said he, "what the old Amtshauptmann says? Boys are better than girls." Now, I was in the room at the time and overheard this, and of course I said to myself: "My godfather is always right, boys *are* better than girls, and every one should have his deserts." So I took the large piece of plumcake for myself and gave my sister the small one, and thought not a little of myself, for I knew now that I was the larger half of the apple. But this was not to last; the tables were to be turned.--

One day--it was at the time when the rascally French had just come back from Russia, and everything was in commotion--some one knocked at the Herr Amtshauptmann's door. "Come in," cried the old gentleman, and in came old Miller Voss of Gielow, ducking his head nearly down to the ground by way of a bow.

"Good afternoon, Herr Amtshauptmann," said he.

"Good morning. Miller."

Now, though the one said "good afternoon" and the other said "good morning," each was right from his own point of view; for the Miller got up at four o'clock in the morning, and with him it was afternoon, while with the Amtshauptmann it was still early in the morning, as he did not rise till eleven.

"What is it, Miller?"

"Herr Amtshauptmann, I've come to you about a weighty matter.--I'll tell you what it is:--I want to be made a bankrupt."

"What, Miller!"

"I want to be made a bankrupt, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Hm--Hm," muttered the Amtshauptmann, "that's an ugly business." And he paced up and down the room scratching his head. "How long have you been at the Bailiwick of Stemhagen?"

"Three and thirty years come Midsummer."

"Hm--Hm," again muttered the Amtshauptmann, "and how old are you, Miller?"

"Come peas-harvest five-and-sixty, or may be six-and-sixty; for as to our old Pastor Hammerschmidt he wasn't much given to writing, and didn't trouble his head about parish registers, and the Frau Pastor, who made the entries--I' faith she had a deal to do besides--only attended to them every three years, so that there might be enough to make it worth while; and

then some fine afternoon she would go through the village and write down the children's ages, but more according to height and size than to what they really were; and my mother always said she had cut off a year from me, because I was small and weakly. But less than five-and-sixty I'm not. I am sure of that."

During this speech the Amtshauptmann had kept walking up and down the room, listening with only one ear; he now stood still before the Miller, looked straight into his eyes, and said sharply: "Then, Miller Voss, you're much too old for anything of the kind."

"How so, Herr?" exclaimed the poor Miller, quite cast down.

"Bankruptcy is a hard matter; at your age you could not carry it through."

"Do you think so, Herr?"

"Yes, I do. We are both too old for it. We must leave such things to younger people. What do you think folks would say if I were to get myself declared bankrupt? Why, they would say, of course, the old Amtshauptmann up at the Schloss has gone quite mad! And," added he, laying his hand gently on the Miller's shoulder, "they would be right, Miller Voss. What say you, eh?"

The Miller looked down at the toes of his boots and scratched his head: "It's true, Herr."

"Tell me," said the old gentleman, patting him kindly on the shoulder, "where does the shoe pinch? What is troubling you?"

"Troubling! say you, Herr Amtshauptmann," shouted the Miller, clapping his hand to the side of his head as if a wasp had stung him. "Troubling! Torturing, you mean. Torturing!--That Jew! That cursed Jew! And then the lawsuit, Herr Amtshauptmann, the cursed lawsuit!"

"Look you, Miller, that's another of your follies, entangling yourself at your age in a lawsuit."

"True enough, Herr; but when I began it I was in my prime and thought to be able to fight it out; now, I see clear enough that your lawsuit has a longer breath than an honest Miller."

"But I think it's coming to an end now."

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann, and then I shall be hard up, for my affairs are in a bad way. The lawyers have muddled them, and as for my uncle, old Joe Voss, why his son who will soon get possession of all is a downright vagabond, and they say he's sworn a great oath to oust me from the Borcherts Inn at Malchin. But I have the right on my side, Herr Amtshauptmann. And how I got into this lawsuit I don't know to this day, for old Frau Borcherts while she was still alive--she was the aunt of my mother's sister's daughter--and Joe Voss--he was my cousin...."

"I know the story," interrupted the Amtshauptmann, "and if you would follow my advice, you would make it up."

"But I can't, Herr, for Joe Voss's rascally son wouldn't be satisfied with less than half the money, and if I pay that, I shall be a beggar. No, Herr Amtshauptmann, it may go as it will, but one thing I'm resolved on, I won't give in though I go to prison for it. Is a ruffian like that, who struts about with his father's money in his pocket, spending it right and left, and who doesn't know what it is to have to keep up a house in these hard times--and who's never had his cattle carried off by those cursed French, nor his horses stolen out of the stable, nor his house plundered,--is such a rascal as that, to get the better of me? By your leave, Herr, I could kick the fellow."

"Miller Voss, gently, Miller Voss," said the old gentleman, "the lawsuit will come to an end sometime or other. It is going on."

"Going, Herr Amtshauptmann? It's flying, as the Devil said when he tied the Bible to his whip and swung it round his head."

"True, true. Miller Voss; but at present you're not much pressed."

"Pressed? Why, I'm fixed in a vice--in a vice, I say! That Jew, Herr Amtshauptmann, that thrice cursed Jew!"

"What Jew is it?" asks the Herr Amtshauptmann. And the Miller twirls his hat between his finger and thumb, looks cautiously round to see that no one is listening, draws closer to the old gentleman, and, laying a finger on his lip, whispers: "Itzig, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Whew!" said the old Herr. "How came you to be mixed up with that fellow?"

"Herr Amtshauptmann, how came the ass to have long ears? Some go to gather wild strawberries, and get stung by nettles. The sexton of Gägelow thought his wheelbarrow was full of holy angels, and when he had got to the top of the mountain and expected to see them fly up to heaven, the Devil's grandmother was sitting in the wheelbarrow, and she grinned at him and said: 'Neighbour, we shall meet again!' In my troubles, when the enemy had taken everything I had, I borrowed two hundred thalers from him, and for the last two years I have been obliged to

renew the bill from term to term, and the debt has crept up to five hundred thalers, and the day after to-morrow I shall be forced to pay it."

"But, Miller, did you sign?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Then you must pay. What's written is written."

"But, Herr Amtshauptmann, I thought...."

"It can't be helped, Miller; what's written is written."

"But the Jew?..."

"Miller, what's written is written."

"Then, Herr Amtshauptmann, what shall I do?"

The old gentleman began again to walk backwards and forwards in the room, tapping his forehead. At last he stopped, looked earnestly in the Miller's face, and said: "Miller, young people get out of such difficulties better than old ones; send me one of your boys."

The old Miller looked once more at the toes of his boots, and then turning his face away, said in a tone which went straight to the old Amtshauptmann's heart: "Sir, whom shall I send? My Joe was ground to death in the mill, and Karl was carried off to Russia by the French last year, and he's not come back."

"Miller," replied the old Amtshauptmann patting him on the back, "have you then no children at all?"

"I have," said he wiping a tear from his eye, "a little girl left."

"Well, Miller, I am not particularly fond of girls myself, they are always fretting and crying."

"That's true, sir, they *are* always fretting and crying."

"And they can be of no use in a matter like this, Miller."

"But what will happen to me then?"

"The Jew will put in an execution, and will take away everything."

"Well, Herr Amtshauptmann, the French have done that twice already, so the Jew may as well try it now. At any rate he will leave the millstone behind.--And you think I'm too old to be made bankrupt?"

"Yes, Miller, I fear so."

"Well, then, good day, Herr Amtshauptmann." And so saying he went away.

The old gentleman stands still a while and looks after the Miller as he goes across the courtyard of the Schloss, and says to himself: "It's hard for one old man to see another gradually going to ruin through the bad times and bad people. But who can help him?... The only thing is to give him time.--Five hundred thalers!! Who in these days can pay down five hundred thalers?... Take away old Roggenbom of Scharfzow, and I think you might set the whole bailiwick of Stemhagen, town and all, on its head, and no five hundred thalers would fall out.... And Roggenbom won't do it.... Possibly at Easter it might be done; but the Jew will not wait as long as that.--Yes, yes, they are hard times for everybody."

But while he thus stood and looked out of the window, the courtyard became full of life, and seven French Chasseurs rode in at the gate. One of them got down, and fastened his horse to the door of Mamsell Westphalen's hen-house, and went straight into the Amtshauptmann's room, and began swearing and gesticulating at him, while the old gentleman remained standing, and stared at him. But as it grew more serious, and the Frenchman began to draw his sword, the Amtshauptmann stepped towards the bell and called for his factotum Fritz Sahlmann, who used to run his errands for him, and "Fritz," said he, "run down to the Herr Burmeister^[1] and see if he cannot come up here a little while, for I have come to the end of my Latin."

And Fritz Sahlmann now comes down to my father and says: "Herr Burmeister, come quickly to the Amtshauptmann's help, or, by my life, things will go badly."

"Why, what's the matter?" asks my father.

"There are six rascally French Chasseurs in the courtyard at the Schloss,--and the Captain of them,--he is in with the Herr,--and has forgotten his manners,--and has drawn his sword, and is brandishing it before the eyes of the Herr, and the Herr stands fixed to the spot, and doesn't move an inch; for he knows about as much of French as the cow does of Sunday."

"The devil!" said my father and jumped up, for he was a quick, determined man, and did not know what fear meant.

When he entered the room, the Frenchman was rushing about like a wild beast, and the words came sputtering out of his mouth like the beer from a barrel without a bung. The Amtshauptmann was standing quite still, and had his French pocket dictionary in his hand, and whenever he caught a word the Frenchman said, he turned over the leaves to see what the dictionary made of it, and when my father came in, he asked: "My friend, what does the fellow want? Eh!... Ask the fellow what he wants."

My father thereupon began to speak to the Frenchman, but he was so loud and vehement, shouted and gesticulated so much, that the old Amtshauptmann asked: "What is he so excited for, friend?" Well, at last my father got out of the Frenchman what it was he wanted:--"fifteen fat oxen, and a load of corn, and seven hundred ells of green cloth, and a hundred louisd'ors;"--and a great deal "doo vang," (as my father told the Amtshauptmann) for himself, and his men besides. "My friend," then said the old Herr, "tell the fellow he is a scound...."

"Stop!" cried my father, "don't say that word, Herr Amtshauptmann, he will often have heard it lately, and maybe he understands it. No, I advise that we should give him plenty 'doo vang' now, it will be time enough to think of the rest afterwards." And the Herr Amtshauptmann agreed, and ordered Fritz Sahlmann to get glasses and wine from Mamsell Westphalen, "but not the best."

Well, the wine comes, and my father fills the Frenchman's glass and the Frenchman fills my father's, and they drink and fill alternately, and my father soon says: "Herr Amtshauptmann, you must sit down too and help me, for this fellow is a cask without a bottom."

"My friend," answered the Amtshauptmann, "I am an old man and the chief justiciary in his Grace's bailiwick of Stemhagen; it is not fitting that I should sit and drink with this fellow."

"Yes," said my father, "but Necessity knows no law, and besides, this is for our country."

And so the old Herr sat down and did his best. But after some time my father said: "Herr Amtshauptmann, the fellow is too many for us; what a mercy it would be if we could get hold of some one with a strong head." And as he said this, there came a knock at the door. "Come in."

"Good day," says old Miller Voss of Gielow, coming in, "good day, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Good day, Miller, what is the matter now?"

"O! Herr, I have come again about my lawsuit."

"There's no more time for that to-day; you see the position we are in."

But my father cried out: "Voss, come here, and do a Christian deed. Just seat yourself by this Frenchman and drink him down." Miller Voss looked first at my father and then at the Amtshauptmann, and thought to himself: "I've never been at a session like this before;" but nevertheless he soon found himself at home in it.

My father now goes to the Amtshauptmann, and says: "Herr Amtshauptmann, this is our man; he will finish the fellow, I know him."

"Good," said the old Herr, "but how are we to get rid of the six fellows out there in the courtyard?"

"They are but a band of ruffians and marauders," replied my father, "only let me do as I like, and I will soon get rid of them," and he called Fritz Sahlmann and said: "Fritz, my lad, go down through the Schloss-garden,--mind no one sees you,--and run to Droz the watchmaker; he is to put on his uniform and his black leggings and bearskin and sword and gun, and slip across the garden through the little green gate to the corner window, and then cough."

Now as concerns Droz the watchmaker, he was by birth a Neufchatelois; he had served under many flags, amongst them the French, and at last had come to a halt in my native town, where he had married a widow and settled. He had hung up his French uniform, and in the evening twilight when it was too dark to see to mend watches, he used to put it on and strut up and down his little room, but with his head bare, as the ceiling was too low for him to wear his bearskin. And then he would talk about "la grande nation" and "le grand Empereur" and command the division: Right wheel: Left wheel: Right about face: till his wife and children crept behind the bed for fear. But he was a good man and would not hurt a fly, and the next day "la grande nation" would be safe in the cupboard, and he mending away at his watches and eating Mecklenburg dumplings dipped in the fat of Mecklenburg bacon.

Well, while the watchmaker was buttoning on his leggings and putting on his bearskin. Miller Voss sat drinking with the Frenchman, both working well at the Amtshauptmann's red wine, and the Frenchman clinked glasses with the Miller and said: "A vous!" and the Miller then took his glass, drank and said: "Pooh, pooh!" and then the Miller clinked glasses with the Frenchman, and the Frenchman thanked him and said: "Serviteur," and then the Miller drank again and said: "Rasc'ly cur!" And in this way they went on drinking and talking French together.

Gradually they became more and more friendly, and the Frenchman put his sword in its sheath, and before very long they were in each other's arms. At this moment a cough was heard under the corner window, and my father stole out and gave the watchmaker directions what he was to do. But the Herr Amtshauptmann kept walking up and down, wondering what the Duke would say to all this if he were to see it, and said to the Miller: "Miller, don't give in, I will not forget you." And the Miller did not give in, but drank sturdily on.

Meanwhile the watchmaker went stealthily back again through the Schloss-garden, and when he came on to the road leading up to the Schloss, he slapped himself on the breast and drew himself up to his full height, for he was now "grande nation" again, and he marched in at the Schloss-gate in military style which suited him well, for he was a fine-looking fellow. The six Chasseurs who were standing by their horses, looked at him and whispered together, and one of them went after him and demanded whence he came and whither he was going. But Droz looked scornfully over his shoulder at him and answered him sharply and shortly in French that he was the quartermaster of the seventy-third Regiment, and that it would be up from Malchin in half-an-hour, and he must first of all speak to "Monsieur le Baillif." The Chasseur turned pale, and as Droz began to talk about marauders and related how his Captain had had a couple shot the day before, first one and then another jumped on to his horse, and although a few did chatter together for a moment or two and pointed to the Schloss, yet none of them felt inclined to stay any longer, and almost before you could lift your finger, the courtyard was empty. And we boys stood at the Brandenburg gate and watched the six French Chasseurs as they floundered about in the mud, for it was just the season for the Mecklenburg roads, being the spring and the thaw having just set in.

CHAPTER II.

What Mamsell Westphalen and the watchmaker talked about; why Friedrich wanted to cut the buttons off the Frenchman's trousers; how he put him to bed in the Stemhagen Wood; and why Fieka did not accept the Malchin Merchant.

As soon as the courtyard was clear, the watchmaker marched with sword and gun into Mamsell Westphalen's pantry; and Mamsell Westphalen dried her eyes and said: "Herr Droï, you are an angel of deliverance." She always called him Droï instead of Droz because she thought Droï was better French and that people did not pronounce it properly.--The angel of deliverance now put his musket down beside the soap-tub, hung up his sword on the meat hook, threw his bearskin on a chair, and seated himself on the table; he then drew forth a checked handkerchief, laid it on his knees and folded it neatly, passed it twice slowly under his nose, and then pulled out his large round snuff box and offered it to Mamsell Westphalen saying: "Plait i'?"

"Certainly," said Mamsell Westphalen, "it platee's me; for, Herr Droï, my eyes are very bad, and they have been getting weaker ever since last autumn.--it was then I had my great illness, and the doctors gave it a long name, but, Herr Droï, I said it was nothing but the common hay-fever, and I hold to that still."

So saying she set before Herr Droï a delicious roast duck and a bottle of wine, of the Amtshauptmann's best, and made a little bobbing curtsey, and said in her turn: "Platee?"

Well, it "plaiti'd" the watchmaker very much, and it seemed to him as if he *were* an angel of deliverance, and Mamsell Westphalen's pantry a paradise after his dumplings and bacon; and when he was at his second bottle, he talked a great deal about the "vin de Vaud" and "ze beauteeful Suisse." "Ah!" said he, "je suis fier de mon pays, it must zat you come one time to my pays, zere zing ze birds and zere murmurent ze brooks."

Darkness had gradually crept upon them, when all on a sudden Fritz Sahlmann burst into the room and said: "Well, here's a pretty business! The Herr Amtshauptmann is striding up and down the garden without any hat on, talking to himself; the Herr Burmeister has made off without saying a word to anybody; Miller Voss's Friedrich has been standing at the gate for the last hour swearing away at the 'cursed patriots' and the 'gallowsbird Dumouriez,' and the Miller is holding his fist in the Frenchman's face, and asking what the French have done with the four horses and six oxen which they robbed him of; and the Frenchman is sitting there and not moving an inch, only rolling his eyes about."

"Fritz Sahlmann," asked Mamsell Westphalen, "doesn't he move at all?"

"No, Mamsell."

"I know you're a bit of a coward, and that you don't always speak the truth. Tell me, Fritz, on your conscience, are you sure that he does not move?"

"No, Mamsell, he does not move or stir a bit."

"Well then, Herr Droï, let us go upstairs; we will soon set him to the right about; but take some of your instruments for cutting and stabbing with you, and if you see he is going to do me any harm, you must protect me. And you, Fritz Sahlmann, run to the Miller's Friedrich and tell him that he is to put up his horses and come in here, for better *is* better, and 'what one can do easily won't be difficult for two."

So Friedrich now comes in, and gets a huge dram, and shakes himself, as is the custom after a good draught, and the procession moves forward towards the Amtshauptmann's room: Friedrich in front, then Mamsell Westphalen, who had taken the watchmaker's arm, and finally Fritz Sahlmann in the rear.

As they entered the room, the Miller sat at the table, a broad grin on his round face, and before him two glasses which he clinked together, first the one against the other, and then the other against the one, drinking for himself and the Frenchman too. He had taken off his coat, the work having made him warm. On his head he had got the Frenchman's helmet with the long horse-hair plume; and round his huge body, as well as it would go, the Frenchman's sword. The latter lay stretched on the sofa, arrayed in the Herr Amtshauptmann's white cotton nightcap and flowered dressing-gown; and the rogue of a Miller had given him, instead of his sword, a long quill pen, which he silently waved about in the air, for he could not speak a word.

When Mamsell Westphalen got to the door and beheld this spectacle, she set her arms a-kimbo, as every right-thinking elderly person would naturally do under such circumstances, and asked: "Miller Voss, what is this? What do you call this? What do you mean by this?"

The Miller tried to answer, but burst out laughing, and could with difficulty and only after some time, bring out, "Fun."

"What!" exclaimed Mamsell Westphalen. "Is that a proper answer for a man with wife and children? Do you call *that* respect for your superiors, to play such tricks in the Amtshauptmann's study? Herr Droï, follow me!" So saying, she went over to where the Frenchman lay, snatched the nightcap from his head, gave him a couple of boxes on the ear, said merely: "The poor innocent nightcap!" and, "You pig!" and turned round and cried out to Friedrich: "Friedrich, come here and help me take off the Herr's dressing-gown from this fellow; and you, Herr Droï--for you will understand such things--take the soup-dish off that stupid Miller's head, and unbuckle his sword."

When that was done, she said: "Fritz Sahlmann, you chatterbox, mind you don't say a word to the Herr Amtshauptmann about what has happened to his things, for he would be sure to burn them, and how could the innocent nightcap and dressing-gown help it if grown-up men will behave like schoolboys?" As she said this, she looked sharply at the grinning Miller, replaced the cork in the half-finished bottle, put her arms once more a-kimbo, and said: "Well, what's to be done now?"

"I know," cried Friedrich; and he pulled his clasp-knife out of his pocket, and opened it with a snap, then walked up to the Frenchman, tore open his coat, and was proceeding to insert the knife, when Mamsell Westphalen rushed in between them, crying:

"Good heavens, Friedrich! Is the devil tempting you? Surely you would not murder him?"

"Diable," said Herr Droï, and caught hold of Friedrich's arm; and Fritz Sahlmann threw up the window and shouted: "Herr Amtshauptmann, Herr Amtshauptmann, it's beginning now." Smack! He got a blow on the mouth. It seemed, however, to come quite naturally to him, for Mamsell Westphalen gave him daily three--more or less.

Friedrich remained where he was, and said coolly: "What do you mean? Do you think I'm a cannibal? I was only going to cut the buttons off his trousers. We used always to do it when we took any prisoners when I served in Holland under the Duke of Brunswick against the cursed patriots and the gallowsbird Dumouriez in the year '90;" and, turning to Mamsell Westphalen, he added "You see, Mamsell, then they can't escape, for if they tried, their trousers would fall down over their knees."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Friedrich, for saying such a thing. What have I got to do with the Frenchman's trousers? Our business is to think what we are to do with this fellow!"

"Do? Do, indeed?" cried Miller Voss, "What do you mean? Where I go, he goes; and we have sworn eternal friendship; and he's a jolly Frenchman, and I'm a jolly Mecklenburger, and whoever wants to know about it, let him come here." And he looked at them all, one after another. As nobody said anything, he clapped the Frenchman on the shoulder and said: "Brother, you shall go with me."

"That will be best," said Mamsell Westphalen; "then we shall be rid of both of them. Herr Droï, take hold of him." And the one "grande nation" took the other "grande nation's" legs, and Friedrich took his head; Fritz Sahlmann carried the light, Mamsell Westphalen commanded the

whole, and the Miller stumbled along after her.

"Now," said Friedrich, "in with him into the waggon under the straw! That's it. Now lie there! Fritz Sahlmann, put the horses to. And you, Herr Droz, help me up with the Miller; but take care he does not lose his balance, for I know him, and he slips over if you're not careful."

When the Miller was seated, Friedrich asked: "Well, is everything on board?"

"Everything," replied Mamsell Westphalen.

"Well then, gee-up," said Friedrich. But scarcely had they gone a couple of paces when the watchmaker cried out, "Halte, halte, Frédéric! you have forget ze camerade's horse, it stop in ze logis for ze leetle poules."

"Yes," said Fritz Sahlmann; "it's standing in the hen-house."

"Well, then, wo!" cried Friedrich; "fasten it to the tail of the waggon."

They set about doing so; but before it was done, the old Amtshauptmann came back from his walk in the garden, and asked what the matter was. "Oh! nothing, nothing!" said Mamsell Westphalen; "only Miller Voss has invited the Frenchman to go home with him and spend the night up at the Gielow Mill."

"It's all right then," said the old Herr. "Good-bye, Miller. I shall not forget you."

The Miller muttered something in his teeth about fine weather, and Mamsell Westphalen whispered to Fritz Sahlmann to run up in advance and take the Frenchman's helmet and sword out of the Herr Amtshauptmann's room, so that he should not see them. "Take them into my room," said she, "and put them behind my bed." Friedrich now applied his whip to the horses, and drove down the hill into the Malchin road, and said to himself: "This'll be the proof; if the Miller remains sitting on his sack with all this jolting, he will be able to get down from the waggon alone to-night." But when they had got as far as the Barns, and he turned round to look, the Miller lay between the foremost and the hindmost sack, and Friedrich thought: "He won't get down without help to-night, that's clear." And he threw a couple of sacks over the Miller to prevent his getting cold.

And so they passed through the Barns, and the horses trotted along at an even pace through the heavy roads and the dark night; and all kinds of thoughts came into Friedrich's head. First of all, he thought of the Miller's wife, and what she had said once before when the Miller had come home in this state; but *then* he had been alone--what would she say to-night when there were two of them? and what would the Miller's daughter, Fieka, say to it? and he shook his head: "It can't go well anyhow." And then he remembered how it was just about this time of year and in such a night that he had run away from the Prussians at Prenzlau, ten years before, and how until he got to Stenhagen he had been obliged to sleep in the open air, and had covered himself over with hawthorn boughs. And then, too, he recollected--and as the remembrance came back upon him he gnashed his teeth--the time when he was in France under the Duke of Brunswick, and had no clothes and nothing inside him except craving hunger, and how the French had hunted and pursued them, and how many of his comrades had fallen dead by the roadside, amongst them his best friend, Kristian Krüger, and how the people had had no pity for him. "And my two beautiful bays," he added to himself, "which they took away from me, and here I must drive two lame old broken-winded jades. It's a shame they should be tormented drawing a harpy of a marauder along these heavy roads--a fellow who's not a real soldier, even. Cursed patriots! Gallowsbird Dumouriez!" These were his oaths when he was angry. "Wo!" he cried, jumped down from the waggon, went round to the back of it, raised up the straw, drew the Frenchman half out by his leg, then laid him across his shoulders, carried him into the Stenhagen Wood, and laid him down under a beech-tree. "Yes," said he, as the Frenchman moved rather uneasily, "it's rather damp, no doubt, but then you're damp inside; so why shouldn't you be damp outside too?" And he looked up at the sky and said, "For the end of February it's a nice warm night, and if the cuckoo isn't singing just now, I heard him singing in this beech-tree last summer, and he'll sing here again this year, please God." And, on the Frenchman giving a slight shudder as though he were cold, he added: "It's a bit cool, camerade, isn't it? I might cover you with a good three foot of clay and nobody be the wiser, but I'll show you that I have a Christian heart." With that he went to the waggon, fetched a couple of armfuls of straw, and threw it over the Frenchman and said: "Now adieu! I can't take you with me; for why should the Miller's wife and Fieka be troubled with you?"--climbed into the waggon again and drove off.

When they were near the mill, he woke up the Miller and said: "Miller, sit up straight on the sack. I'll help you down again." Voss sat up and said: "Thank you, Herr Amtshauptmann;" and stared wildly about to see where he was, and asked whose horse that was running after the waggon. When he had a little recovered his senses, he put his hand under the straw and asked: "Friedrich, where's the Frenchman?" "Yes, where is he?" answered Friedrich; and drew up before the door, and jumped down, and helped the Miller off before the women came out with a light. The Miller scrambled up the steps, and his wife came out to meet him, "Well, father, how has it gone?" she asked. The Miller stumbled over the doorsill into the room, laid hat and gloves on the table, and walked up and down the room a couple of times, fixing his eyes on the cracks of the floor to steady himself, and at last brought out the words: "It's very hard work."

"So I see," said his wife. Fieka sat at the other side of the table mending clothes.

And the Miller walked up and down again proudly and asked: "Don't you see anything remarkable about me to-night?"

"Indeed I do," replied his wife; "you have been sitting drinking again with Baker Witte and have forgotten your wife and children, and that we are all ruined."

"Oh! that's what you think? Well then, let me tell you, even wise hens sometimes lay outside the nest. No, I have been drinking with the Herr Amtshauptmann, and the Herr Burmeister, and a French General, or something of that sort, and the Herr Amtshauptmann has told me, he won't forget me, for 'this was for our country.'--And Fieka, I say to you, don't throw yourself away. You needn't do it. I wouldn't mind your marrying the Malchin Merchant; but you don't want to."

Fieka looked up from her work and said: "Father, don't talk of that,--at least not this evening."

"Very well. You are right, my child.--Remember, you are my only one now, for where are Karl and Joe? Ah! merciful heaven!--But I only said, don't throw yourself away; that was all I said.--And, Mother, about the money, think of what the old Herr Amtshauptmann said. 'Miller Voss, I will not forget you!'--But the Frenchman, where is he? Donnerwetter! where's the Frenchman? He was lying in the straw. Friedrich must know," and he threw up the window and shouted: "Friedrich, Friedrich, don't you hear me?"

Friedrich heard him well enough, but he winked to himself and said: "Yes, yes, cry away as long as you like. Why should I go and blurt out what the Miller's wife can see for herself plainly enough? I'm not going to burn my fingers." So saying he fastened up the Frenchman's horse and took off the saddle, and as he took down the valise he said: "The Devil, isn't this heavy!" and laid it in the oat bin, gave his horses their last feed, lay down on his bed, and slept as if nothing had happened that day.

As the Miller was beginning to fume because Friedrich did not come, his wife said: "Father, never mind him; you are tired and wearied with the jolting of the waggon--come to bed; Fieka shall warm a little beer for you to drive out the night air."

"Mother," he answered, "you're right as usual, I am dreadfully tired, for money business is so wearying. Well, it's in order now--as good as in order at least--for the Herr Amtshauptmann said: 'Miller Voss, I shall not forget you.' I must be in again at Stenhagen early to-morrow morning."

So saying, he went to bed, and was asleep and snoring in five minutes.

Mother and daughter sat up a while longer, Fieka lost in thought and knitting away rapidly. "Fieka, you are industrious," said her mother at last; "and I don't fold my hands and lay them in my lap either; and Father has worked and done what he could all his life. But what is the use of it all? The bad times come and what the French have left, the Jews and lawyers take; the day after to-morrow we must pay Itzig five hundred thalers, and we haven't a shilling."

"But Father speaks as if it were all right now?"

"Don't trust what he says this evening; a red sky in the morning and a red sky in the evening are very different things; but he was right about one thing this evening; if you had only accepted the Malchin Merchant!"

"Mother dear," said Fieka and laid her hand gently in her mother's and looked up into her face, "He was not the right one."

"Few people are able to marry exactly as they would like now-a-days, daughter; there is always something. The Merchant is well off and if your father and I knew that you were well provided for, it would take a great stone off our hearts."

"Mother, dear mother, don't talk so. Would you have me leave you when you're in trouble, and in a dishonest way?"

"Dishonest, Fieka?"

"Yes, dishonest, mother," she answered, "for when the Merchant sought me, he thought we were rich, and therefore he wished to have me, but I would not deceive him. I knew we were poor, for though you and father in your goodness have tried to keep it from me that we had lost our money, I have seen it for a long while. Now, pretty nearly every one knows it, so if any one comes and wants to marry me, he will want me and not my money; and perhaps he will be the right one."

Then she got up, and put her knitting things away and kissed her mother. "Good night," she said and went into her bedroom.

The Miller's wife, after sitting thinking some time longer, sighed: "She's right, and we must trust in God, who orders all for the best."

She too went to bed, and everything lay in deep quiet. Only the Mill went working on without

ceasing or resting, grinding and groaning, flinging its arms about like a man in sore trouble striving and struggling to rise above the toil of daily life. And from the wheel the water ever drips like bitter sweat; and deep down below the stream rushes on with its monotonous chant: "Nought avails it, nought avails it. I am thy heart. As long as I flow wave upon wave, wish upon wish, so long hast thou no rest. But when autumn comes and the corn is ripe, my stream will slacken; and then the miller will close his mill, and everything be standing still,--and then 'tis Sunday."

CHAPTER III.

Why Fritz Sahlmann got a box on the ears, and the watchmaker spent the night fighting with Mamsell Westphalen's four-post bed, and why the French Colonel paid a visit to the watchmaker in a red blanket.

When the Miller's waggon had driven off, the Amtshauptmann began to walk towards the house, but suddenly turning round again, he went up to Herr Droz and asked: "Droz, how much do I owe you?" Droz said as well as he could that he had been very glad to do it, for "ze Allemagne is now my patrie and I am tout for ze patrie."

"I don't mean that," said the old Herr, "I meant for my watch which you set to rights for me?" Droz replied that that was already paid for, adding "ze leetle boy, Fritz Sahlmann, had make it all right."

"I am quite aware of that," said the old Herr; "but, my dear Droz, a watchmaker must be paid not only for what he does to a watch but also for what he does not do, and therefore take this," and he put a couple of thalers into his hand and went into the house.

"Oh! let him go," said Mamsell Westphalen, "he's a curious old gentleman, but he means it well. But Herr Droz now come in with me and stay a bit in my room for this weather is enough to make one's soul freeze in one's body."

Herr Droz went with her, but they had scarcely sat down when in came Fritz Sahlmann with the Frenchman's sword in his hand, and the Frenchman's helmet on his head, and a moustache which he had grown on the instant with the snuff of a candle. Smack! he had a box on his ears from Mamsell Westphalen: "Monkey!" and she took the sword and helmet from him and put them by her bed: "Monkey, have you nothing better to do than to be playing your tricks on an evening like this when we're all in such trouble? Go down to Herr Droz's good wife, represent my compliments to her, and she is not to be anxious; Herr Droz is with me, and there is no danger."

Fritz Sahlmann goes; and now they both sit down and tell one another about old times and new, that is to say, they try; but what Mamsell Westphalen says, Herr Droz does not understand well, and what Herr Droz says, Mamsell Westphalen understands very badly indeed.

"He are bon," said Droz and chinks the two thalers in his hand.

"Of course, they're good," replied Mamsell Westphalen, "do you think the Amtshauptmann would give you bad money?"

"Ah! not bad money! I mean *him*, lui-même," and he pointed to the room above.

"Oh! the Herr Amtshauptmann you mean is bong. Yes, certainly he is bong, but the older he gets the more whimsical he grows, for he turns night into day and day into night, Herr Droz. Just think, here have I to sit up and roast and fry right into the middle of the night because he won't eat his supper till eleven or even twelve o'clock; and if it is burnt or dried up, he begins to scold, and then Frau Amtshauptmann who is very soft-hearted, she begins to cry. Then I say, 'Frau Amtshauptmann, why do you cry? Can we help it if he will live like a heathen? Leave off crying, we have a good conscience.' But Herr Droz it's very hard for me, a lone person, to sit here and listen to the storm raging round the Schloss, and the rain beating against the windows, and the owls hooting, and the winds whistling along the passages, as if all the evil spirits were let loose. Just listen! what weather it is again!--Herr Droz, are you at all afraid?"

"Oh, non!" replied Herr Droz; but he sat still and listened to the weather outside and said at last: "Leesten, Mamsell, du tonnerre!"

"What! Pommes de terre?" asked Mamsell Westphalen, "what have potatoes to do with the weather at this season?"

"I not mean ze leetle boys wid ze brown jack'ts, I mean"--and here he made a rapid gesture with his hand indicating forked lightning--"I mean ze bright tsick-tsack wid rumpel, pumpel, rat-

tat-te-tah."

"Then you are right, Herr Droï, for it really does go rumpel, pumpel, rat-tat-te-tah, out of doors."

"Ah!" said Herr Droï, "zat are ze tambours, zat are my camerades, ze grenadier." And he jumped up and marched up and down with his bearskin on his head, for here it was high enough; and then he stood still again: "Écoutez, zey march on ze marché, on ze market, and écoutez, zat are ze grand canons!"

And Mamsell Westphalen sat there with her hands folded in her lap and looked at him and shook her head and said: "How his soldiering does cling to him! He's generally a well-behaved man, what does he want to be looking so fierce for now? It's just like the old coachmen, when they can drive no longer, they are still always cracking their whips."

Presently the wife of Stalsch the weaver came in at the door,--she was Mamsell Westphalen's oracle and newspaper, bringing her the news of the town, and for every mouthful of news she brought to the castle, she took away a plateful of food,--she had turned her gown up over her head and the rain was streaming off her as from the roof of a house. She shook herself once, twice--

"Br-r-r, what a night it is," she said.

"That it is, Frau Meister," answered Mamsell Westphalen;--she always called her Frau Meister to show that she was the wife of a *master* weaver, "not for Stalsch's sake" she would say, "no, for my own sake, for what would people say if I were to be intimate with a woman of no standing. I can be proud like other folk."

"Mamsell," said the Frau Meister, "I came up to tell you the market-place is full of Frenchmen, and they've brought with them ever so many great cannons, and the Burmeister has sent for my husband, and has ordered him this dark night and in this weather to the villages round about to tell the peasants to be here with their waggons at noon tomorrow, and you see if you don't get some one quartered on you to-night."

"Heaven preserve us!" exclaimed Mamsell Westphalen, and went to the door and called to Hanchen and Corlin (the maids) and told them to light the fire in the blue room next hers, and to put up a couple of bedsteads for the Devil would soon send a bigmouthed French Colonel and a chattering ape of an adjutant up to the Schloss, and turning round to her company: "There they may lie," she said, "and if the ghost in the blue room is a Christian ghost it's not much sleep they'll get to-night and that's the best luck I wish them. For, Herr Droï," she went on, "the next room to this is haunted. Do you believe in ghosts?"

Herr Droï said, no.

Presently there was a noise outside and as Mamsell Westphalen looked out at the window, yes, there was a French Colonel with his adjutant coming in at the gate, and a couple of orderlies were following them. They were taken into the blue room where they put on dry clothes, and then they went up to the Amtshauptmann's room and had supper.

Herr Droï in the meantime sat deep in thought, muttering over and over again "Diable" and "Diantre", and on their questioning him it came out that he was in great fear; it might be his death he said, for if he were to go out in his uniform and the bearskin and sword and gun, he might be seen by one of the orderlies or one of the French sentries or some ruffian or other of a Frenchman and they might ask him where he came from and where he was going to, and then if he could not give a satisfactory account of himself, there would be the devil's own work, and the story of this afternoon might come out, and what would happen then?

"Herr Droï," said Mamsell Westphalen, "that's a bad business. You couldn't put on that imp Fritz Sahlmann's things, for if you did manage to squeeze yourself into them, they would be much too short for you. And the Herr Amtshauptmann's clothes? No, Herr Droï, you mustn't ask that of me. It would be just as if I were to set fire to the Schloss with my own hands. And, heaven be praised, we have no other men here. But Herr Droï you saved us when we were in danger this afternoon, and so I will save you in return. Your wife knows that you're up here amongst Christian folk. You shall sleep to-night in my four-post bedstead, and I will sleep with the housemaid; I'll put on fresh linen. Come, Frau Meister." So saying she went out, and presently she came back again, put fresh sheets on the bed and asked once more: "Herr Droï, are you not afraid?"

And Herr Droï again replied that he was not.

"That's all right," said she; "for it often goes tap--tap--tap, in a curious way close by. But it never comes into the room. I have had a horseshoe nailed over the door.--Listen, just listen! The Frenchmen are going to bed now. Just listen to the chattering! Herr Droï can you understand it all?"

"Ah, yes," said Herr Droï.

"I can easily believe it, for the wall is very thin. This was one large room once, but now it's made into two. Well, good night, Herr Droï. Come, Frau Meister."

So saying she went out, followed by the Frau Meister, and shortly afterwards by Herr Droï too, who suddenly remembered he had a message for the Frau Meister to take to his wife. Scarcely were the three out of the room, when some one flew along the corridor where the night-lamp was burning, into Mamsell Westphalen's room. It was that young rogue Fritz Sahlmann, and under his arm he had a lump of ice as large as a pumpkin; he climbed up the bedpost like a cat, and laid the lump of ice on the top of the bed. "Wait a little while, you old termagant, this is for the box on the ears I got," he said to himself. "It will perhaps cool you a little." And he slid down again and was out of the door in a moment.

Herr Droï now came back again, undressed, laid "la grande nation" on a chair by the side of the bed, blew out his candle, lay down, and stretched himself out in the nice soft bed and said: "Ah! que c'est bon;" then listened to the storm outside and the rain pouring down and the jabbering of the Frenchmen. At last the chattering ceased; and Herr Droï was half asleep and half awake--when tap--tap--tap. "Haha," thought Herr Droï, in French, "that's the ghost in the next room;" and he listened to hear what his countrymen would have to say to it. They lay quite still; but tap--tap--tap--it goes again and now it seems to Herr Droï to be in his room. Yes, it is in his room; and if it's in the room, it must have come in at the door. How else could it get in? So he caught up one of his shoes and flung it at the door. Bang! went the shoe against the door; the noise resounded through the corridor as if a thunderbolt had fallen. The Frenchmen in the next room began to move and to speak to one another. All however was soon quiet again, but tap--tap--tap--it went once more, close to Herr Droï's bed. He raised himself up and bent over the side of the bed to be able to hear better.--splash!--fell a drop on his bald head--and splash! another on his nose, and on stretching out his hands he found the bedclothes were beginning to get wet through. "Diantre!" he exclaimed, in French, "there's a hole in the roof, and the rain's coming in through the ceiling. What's to be done?" Of course he at once thought of moving his bed as any other sensible person in his place would have done. He therefore got up and began to drag at the head of the old bed, but forgot all about the French Chasseur's helmet and sword which were standing in the corner and which now fell rattling and jangling along the wall down to the ground. Herr Droï was not a little startled and stood still and listened and--yes--the two Frenchmen had been awakened by the noise and were raging and swearing.

"But," thought he, "even this much must have done some good," and he crept into bed again. But the lump of ice was now nearly melted and the water of course came streaming through on to the bed; he lay still a while, but it kept coming faster and faster, and the water came through the bedclothes, and he got quite cold and he thought, in French, "they will be fast asleep now, if I can only bring the foot of the bed as far away from the wall, I shall get rid of this rain," and got up and began to move the foot of the bed;--crash! fell his musket along the wall on to the floor; and if there was no noise before, there was certainly noise now.

The poor watchmaker stood there biting his lip, biting his nails, and holding his breath as if his very breathing might wake the Frenchmen, who were already swearing half aloud and crying "*silence*" and tapping against the wall.

"Que faire?" he said to himself, in French. "The first want must be supplied, as the old woman said when she burned her kneading-trough to heat the water for the bread;" crept into bed again and said, "Heaven be praised at last I'm out of the drip."

But he had got out of the drip to come into the torrent, for--dash!--it came down from above,--splash! it poured into the bed. He felt cold and wet, like a frog in spring. It was all of no use. He must get up once more and turn the bed round again; but softly so as not to throw anything over. He pulled it into one corner, it had been dry there before; he pulled it into the other corner, there too it had been dry before, and in this way he went pulling the bed about the livelong night always gently, very gently, but wherever he went there was water.

At last he stood still in the middle of the room, and thought and thought, and finally slapped his forehead, in French, saying: "Fool that I am!" for a light had flashed across him, that's to say across his mind, for in the room it was quite dark. But a light in the room he must have. So he stole out into the corridor--yes--the nightlamp was still burning; he lighted his candle, and went back, looked up at the top of the bed and saw something lying there, muttered: "Ah, Canaille!" and mounted on to the bed, but could not reach. He stretched himself out as far as he could and tried to get the lump of ice, but it was so slippery he could not hold it. Parbleu! half an inch more. He leant his whole weight against the top of the bed when--crack it went, and bed and ice and Droï all fell in a heap against the wall, and there lay Herr Droï among the innocent white curtains, helplessly kicking his feet about, as if they could express the state of their owner's mind.

All at once the door opens, and in comes the French Colonel. In order not to catch cold he had thrown a red blanket over his shoulders and in his hand he held a double-barrelled pistol. Behind him stood the adjutant with a drawn sword. Herr Droï scrambles out from under the bed-curtains, puts on his bearskin, then draws himself up to his full height and makes a salute saying: "Bon soir, mon colonel."

The Colonel looked at Droï, and the adjutant looked at the Colonel. They saw that they had a

Frenchman to deal with. They saw the black leggings and the whole "grande nation" lying beside the bed. They saw the sword and gun, and--worse and worse--they saw the Chasseur's sabre and helmet. What's this? What's the meaning of this? Herr Droï stammers out something. Herr Droï begins to tell them about Jena and Marengo. Herr Droï begins to tell lies. Herr Droï lies capitally, pity they don't believe him. In the room and in the corridor there is a fearful noise; the Colonel calls Herr Droï a deserter and marauder, the adjutant calls for the orderlies, the orderlies in haste and in scant apparel,--as if some one had fallen into the water and they wanted to jump in after him without wetting their trousers,--rush in from one side of the corridor, while from the other side advances Mamsell Westphalen with the cook and the housemaid. In her hand she has a large stable lantern, but otherwise she is not well off as to clothes. She holds one hand up to her eyes as if the light of the lantern blinded her, and the housemaid looks over her (Mamsell Westphalen's) shoulder and says to the cook "Good heavens, Corlin, do look."

"For shame," says Mamsell Westphalen, "what is she to look at? what have you got to look at? and what is there here to look at? We have come here on account of this heathenish noise at a time when every one ought to be asleep, and because we heard Herr Droï's voice crying out in terror and trouble. And now turn about." The two women and Mamsell Westphalen turn their backs on the Frenchmen and Mamsell says: "Herr French Colonel, what is this? what do you call this? and what is the meaning of this? Why don't you let Herr Droï sleep in peace in my room? This is a christian house and a quiet house, and we are not accustomed to such ways." And she added to herself half aloud "one of them will be sure to understand me."

The French Colonel looked at himself, as he stood there in his red blanket, and Herr Droï with the bearskin on his head, and his thin-legged adjutant skipping about in his zeal, and Mamsell Westphalen's broad back; and the whole scene looked so comical, he burst out laughing and said in good German that she was only to go on, he could understand her well enough, for he was a German, a Westphalian (Westphalen).

"That's my name," said Mamsell Westphalen.

The Colonel laughed and said he was only a Westphalian by birth, his name was "von Toll."

Mamsell Westphalen dropped a low curtsey, backwards. "Begging your pardon, are you perhaps a relative of Toll our postmaster and innkeeper down in the town?"

The Colonel said that he had not the honour, but that he was almost freezing; that the orderlies were to remain with Herr Droï, for he must be a French deserter, and they were also to search for the French Chasseur to whom the helmet and sabre belonged.

Herr Droï now began again to lie, and Mamsell Westphalen felt quite ashamed of him and turned round in anger and said: "For shame, Herr Droï, to be stuffing the easy chair that ought to make you comfortable in your old age with wickedness, you're making a hard pillow for your conscience." Then making a little curtsey, she said to the colonel, "My compliments, Herr Colonel von Toll," and marched off with the two maids.

The others also went; and soon all was still again, and the Herr Amtshauptmann had no suspicion of what was passing in his house for he slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER IV.

How the Miller felt next morning; why Friedrich appeared to the Miller's wife like the serpent in the Garden of Paradise; and why Fieka thought Joe Voss's son was sent to them by Providence.

The next morning Miller Voss felt as if he had half-a-dozen sparrows in his head, which were pecking away at flies. It was not, he said to himself, because of last night's deep drinking. No, it was chiefly because of the Frenchman.

"Mother," said he as he pulled on his boots,--and he nodded his head and looked knowingly into their wide tops, "red wine is a fine thing in the evening, but, in the morning, it seems to me it's no better than brandy or beer. However, if you jump over a dog you jump over his tail too. But where is the Frenchman? He lay in the straw, and Friedrich must know what has become of him."

"Father," said his wife, "never mind that now. Friedrich must come soon you know, for it's time for the first breakfast."

The Miller went into the room, sat down at the table where the large bowl of barley-broth was standing and helped himself; then the mother helped herself and then Fieka and, lastly, the two

maid-servants; for such was the custom in those days; and no miller had yet heard of coffee.

The Miller ate, then laid down his spoon: "Where can Friedrich be?" He began eating again, then went to the window and shouted across the yard; "Friedrich." Still no Friedrich.

The bowl of broth was empty; the servants took away the things, and the Miller said: "When I have hired a servant, I'm not going to have him play the fine gentleman!"--and was just setting out to look after him, when Friedrich came in, carrying something under his arm.

"Where have you been, you vagabond?" asked the Miller?

"Miller," said Friedrich, and drew his clasp-knife out of his pocket and stuck it under the door-latch, "don't speak like that; it's not fit for you, nor yet for me. When wild geese are in the air it's ill sowing peas, and when gossiping women are in the room it's best not to say what you don't wish everybody to know. So I waited till the maids had left the room. Here!" and he threw something on to the table so that it rang again. "Here, Miller Voss. I've not brought you the fox himself, nor yet his skin, but here's his leather bag."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the Miller, and hastily seized the valise and began unbuckling the straps.

"What does it mean?" said Friedrich "You must find that out for yourself; it's no business of mine. I have taken my share already."

The Miller shook the valise over the table, and a packet of silver spoons fell out and a quantity of silver coin, and beautiful, round, yellow gold--and a little box came to light, and when the Miller's wife opened it, there lay rings and broaches with gold chains coiled in amongst them like serpents among brilliant flowers.

"Heaven preserve us!" she cried, and let the box fall.

Fieka had stood there looking on, her hands pressed to her bosom and her eyes getting larger and larger. She now threw herself, pale as death, across the table, laid her arms over the gold and silver treasure and cried:

"It is the Frenchman's! It is the Frenchman's. It is not ours."

When she lifted up her head, and glanced at her father, she looked as if some one had stabbed her with a knife, and the anguish of death was in her face as she said "Father, father."

And the old Miller sat there fidgeting about with his night-cap, and he looked at his child in her anguish and then again at the glittering money. All at once he sprang up, nearly overturning the table, and cried:

"God in Heaven! I know nothing about it. I don't know what has become of him; he lay in the straw, that I know," and added in a feeble voice, "Friedrich must know the rest."

Fieka left the money, and darted towards Friedrich. "Where is the Frenchman?" she screamed.

Friedrich, with his old iron face, stood quietly looking at her. "God save us!" he said at last. "Is this to be a court of justice then? Why, Fieka, Fieka! Do I look like a robber and murderer? I laid the Frenchman with my own hands under a beech-tree in the Stemhagen wood, and, if the night air hasn't been too cool for him, he'll be lying there now--still as a rat--for he was dead drunk."

"That he was," said the Miller.

Fieka looked first at Friedrich and then at her old father, who was listening to what Friedrich was saying, "Friedrich," she said, "how could I help thinking it. You are always talking about killing and murdering Frenchmen." And she put her apron up to her eyes, threw herself down on the bench behind the large, tile-covered stove, and began to cry bitterly.

"Dumouriez! That I am," said Friedrich, "and if I could wring the necks of those d--d patriots I'd do it. But a man who could not defend himself?--And for his money too!" ... muttered something in his beard and went to the door; he took his knife from under the latch, and then turned round and said:

"Miller, the air is clear again, for the two girls are gone to their work. I have given you the things; consider well what you do with them. If you wish to keep them--well and good. I have nothing to say against it, for, according to my poor wits you've a right to them. The French have taken more than this from you; and, if you don't wish it to be talked about, I, for my part, can be silent. But if you are going to deliver it up to the Amtshauptmann, and have to swear that nothing has been taken out of it, just say that I have taken my share."

"Friedrich, Friedrich," said the Miller's wife, "do not be bringing yourself into trouble, nor us either.--At this moment you seem to me to be like the serpent in the Garden of Paradise."

"Frau," replied Friedrich, "everybody knows best what *he* ought to do himself. Two years ago when I had been taking salt to the Inn at Klaukow for Rathsherr Krüger of Malchin, and was

going to pay my bill, and put an eight-groschen piece down on the table, an infamous rascal of a Chasseur pounced upon it, and when I tried to get it back, three of them fell upon me and nearly beat me to death. I have taken the eight groschen, but the blows I keep in store for them. And if this fellow did not do it himself, perhaps his brother did, or his comrade--the account remains in the family. The eight groschen I shall certainly keep." And so saying he went out at the door.

The Miller, meanwhile, had been walking up and down the room, and had rubbed his head, and had scratched his head, had stood still and looked at the money, and when Friedrich went out, he walked up to his cupboard, brought out Adler Erben of Rostock's Calendar, and looked for that which he had looked for a hundred times before, and sighed "Yes, it is tomorrow." His wife stood with her back against the clock, wringing her hands.

"Yes," said the Miller, "if we keep it, we shall be out of our troubles."

"O God, Father!" groaned his wife, and looked up anxiously in his face.

"And the fellow has stolen it," he went on; "the silver spoons have a crest; but even if it can be found out who they have belonged to, the money is from all sorts of places and won't easily find its way back to the right pockets."

"Father," said his wife, "you risk your neck if the fellow accuses you publicly of having taken them from him."

"He won't open his mouth, for if he has to tell where the money has all come from, they won't quite feed him on raisins and almond cakes.--And after all, have we taken it? They fastened the horse to the tail of the waggon up at the Schloss, and the horse brought the leather bag into the stable to Friedrich last night. Who can say I took it?"

Thereupon he began to count the money, and sort it into heaps.

"Yes, but it does not belong to us," said his wife.

"Who does it belong to, then?" asked the Miller. "It doesn't belong to the Frenchman either; and, if we wanted to give it back to him, where is he?"

"Why, Friedrich tells you he is in the Stemhagen Wood."

"Indeed!" said the Miller scornfully. "Do you think then that he would lie there in this weather from eight o'clock in the evening till nine o'clock in the morning? He will have gone on his way long ago; and who is to order me to run after him with his money?"

He began to count again, and his wife sat down and folded her hands in her lap, and sighed. "You know who orders it."

Fieka was still sitting on the bench crying by herself. The Miller went on counting the money, but looked up so frequently at Fieka that it seemed as if he must certainly miscount. At last he had finished, and leaning with his two hands on the table, he looked once more over the treasure, and said,--"A third of this gold and silver would make more than seven hundred thalers in Prussian money. Now, we are out of our troubles."

Then Fieka stood up and dried her eyes; her face was pale and quiet;--"Our troubles are only just beginning," she said in a low voice.

"Don't talk like that, Fieka," said her father, and turned his head away from her.

"From this time forward we shall eat unblessed bread, and sleep unblessed sleep, and you can bury the money and bury your own good name with it.

"There is no question of burying," said the Miller, "No indeed! I shall pay my debts with it honestly."

"Honestly, Father? And if it were so--which it is not--would not the old Herr Amtshauptmann ask you what money you had paid the Jew with? And would not the French ask where you got the horse from? And how can you be sure that Friedrich will not tell?"

The Miller looked half taken aback and half angry, and was just going to burst out as people do when any one catches them in some stupid or dishonest act. They try to silence their conscience by bluster, as children in the dark try to keep away the ghosts by whistling and singing. But Fieka did not let the storm come; she flung her arms round her father, looked straight into his eyes, and cried--"Father! Father! Take the money to the bailiwick; give it to the Herr Amtshauptmann. You know he said he would not forget you. How often you have told me about your old father, and about your mother, how she honestly earned her bread to the end of her life by spinning; and how often you have told me about when you were an apprentice, and your finding the other apprentice's purse, and how you gave it back to him, and how glad he was, and how glad you were."

"That was quite a different thing," said the Miller. "I knew who that money belonged to, but I don't know whose this is, and I haven't either taken or stolen it. I have a clear conscience."

All at once the Miller's wife jumped up from her chair, and cried, "Good Heavens! A strange man has just passed the window and he is coming in."

"Bolt the door!" shouted the Miller, and turned sharply round towards the money; knocked up against the table, and shook down some of the gold pieces which went rolling along the floor.

"Is that your clear conscience?" asked Fieka, and looked at her father and mother, and said: "Mother, unbolt the door. The man is sent by Providence; he brings a blessing upon the house."

Her mother unbolted the door, and stood with her eyes cast down, while the Miller grew very red, and turned hastily round, and looked out at the window.

A knock came. "Come in," said Fieka, and in stepped a fine young fellow of about two-and-twenty. He glanced round the room rather curiously as if he had long been wishing to know how it stood with them; made a proper bow with a little scrape of the foot, and said--

"Good morning."

"Good morning," returned Fieka.

The Miller did not move, and his wife stooped down and picked up the gold pieces which had fallen on the floor. As the two elders did not return his greeting, and he became aware of the money on the table, the young man said--

"I am afraid I am in the way?"

"Oh, no!" said Fieka and put a chair for him by the tile-stove, "Father will soon have done his business."

"Yes, directly," said the Miller, and he opened the window, and called out "Friedrich, get out the little cart, and put the horse to, and fasten the Frenchman's horse behind. We are going to the bailiwick." He shut the window, and said, turning to his wife and daughter: "Well! That's done. Now, pack the things into the leather bag, and Friedrich can put it into the cart"--went up to the stranger and said "welcome."

"Miller Voss," said the young man, rising and giving the Miller his hand, "don't let me disturb you. I can wait; for, though the matter I have come to you about is important, there is no great hurry.--In fact what I chiefly came for was to see my relations."

"Relations?" said the Miller, and looked at him doubtingly.

"Yes," said the other, "I am Joe Voss's son, your twin-brother's child;" and as the Miller was silent, and drew back his hand, he added: "a fortnight ago, I came of age, and then I thought to myself, 'I have no brother or sister or any relation hereabouts, I must drive over to Stemhagen and see if there is no one there who will care to know Joe Voss's son.'" And, so saying he went up to the Miller's wife, and gave her his hand, and then to Fieka; and, as the miller still stood pondering and looking as if the mice had taken the butter off his bread, he added: "Uncle, the lawsuit is weighing on your mind; let it be, we can be friends all the same."

"The devil we can!" said the Miller. "And you've been boasting to people that you would oust me from the Borcherts Inn."

"Whom have I said it to?" asked Heinrich. "People will talk. Can I help it? My father began the quarrel;--he thought he was in the right--my guardian has gone on with it; and I have stood by. But a pretty sum of money has slipped through my fingers, I honestly confess, and it shall not be my fault if we don't come to an understanding."

"You want to beat the bush; your lawyer has advised you to come here."

"I advise myself, uncle," said the young man, and took up his hat, "for, if I were to listen much longer to the lawyer's advice, the water would run short and my mill would stop. It's very different for you. Any one who can lard his leather bag like that, can fry a long time without burning." And he pointed to the valise which was just packed.

"What the devil does that matter to you?" thundered the Miller, and turned hastily round quite black in the face. "That money ... that money is not mine."

Fieka went up to her father, and stroked his cheek. "Father, he did not mean anything wrong."

"No," said Heinrich, "I came with good intentions, and I will not go away in anger if I can help it. So I wish you good morning. My waggon is standing out there before the yard gate only a couple of paces off."

"Stop," said Fieka, "Cousin Heinrich, do not be in such a hurry. Father's head is full of business that must be attended to this morning. It would vex him very much if you were to leave us in ill will."

"Fieka," said the old Miller, and turned round, and kissed his daughter on the forehead, "you

have been twice right and I twice wrong, this morning; you are a darling child," and he gave his hand to the young man.--"Heinrich, it shall never be said that I drove Joe Voss's son out of my house with hard words. You want to go away without having anything to eat or drink? No, my son, you must stay here till I come back, for I must be off now to the bailiwick, I have pressing business. Look, Friedrich is waiting. Well, goodbye! and if you are really in earnest about coming to an understanding, something may be done. Goodbye, mother; goodbye, Fieka." And he went out and mounted into his waggon.

CHAPTER V.

In which Friedrich translates the Prussian motto "suum cuique" for the Miller's benefit, and goes on a wild-goose chase after the Frenchman: and the Miller finds he has sat down on a swarm of bees.

"Miller," said Friedrich as they left the mill and came out into the high road, "have you ever seen an old woman break her pitcher and then put the pieces together and say 'that's how it was?'"

"Why?" asked the Miller.

"Oh! nothing," said Friedrich, and he waved his whip vacantly over the horses as if it were the season for flies. The Miller sat lost in thought.

After a time Friedrich asked again--"Miller, have you ever seen a boy out of whose hand a sparrow has just escaped, look into his empty hand and say 'O!'"

"Why?" asked the Miller.

Friedrich simply repeated "Oh! nothing."

The Miller sat still again, and all sorts of things passed through his mind, and he puzzled over some such rule-of-three sum as: "What will the bushel of oats come to next Easter if I don't pay the Jew to-morrow?" and was soon lost in the fractions.

They drive on and on. At last Friedrich turns half round and asks--"Miller, do you know the proverb: 'don't pour your dirty water away till you have got clean?'"

The Miller began to get angry, and after thinking for some time what Friedrich was driving at with these questions, he said: "Are you chaffing me?"

"Chaffing?" said Friedrich. "No, heaven forbid!--I didn't mean anything.--But I know another saying, and that is, 'If you have a thing, you've got it.' And we Prussians have an eagle for our crest, and underneath is a Latin verse which fits that saying as close as your finger and thumb when you nip a pig's tail. And the sergeant of my company--he was a runaway student--he understood the verse and translated it: 'Hold fast what you've got, and take what you can get.' Now, this proverb is handy at times, 'specially in time of war." Turning round again he went on. "Miller Voss, cursed be the shilling I steal from my neighbour, and cursed be the wheat, oats, or barley I cheat my master of; but in time of war it's quite different. The Turks and the French are the country's enemy, and the country's enemy is not better by a hair than the arch-enemy. What said old Captain von Restorp? 'Injury must be done to the enemy in every way!' Now, Miller Voss," and he pointed to the valise, "that would be an injury."

"Hold your tongue," said the Miller sharply, "the thing is settled. I'll have nothing to do with the money, I'll take it to the bailiwick,--and I wish I could take the Frenchman along with it. Fieka thinks some bad end will come of the business."

"As you please," said Friedrich, "Gee up," and he touched the horses with his whip. "Some listen to men, and some listen to women; for my part I don't hold by women's advice."

"Nor I neither generally," said the Miller.

They drove on silently again till at length Friedrich asked--"Miller, who was that young fellow who came to the mill this morning?"

"That was Joe Voss's son; it's him I have the lawsuit with. Do you like him?"

"I only saw his back. Well--yes he'd make a grenadier."

"He says he wants to come to an understanding," said the Miller.

"Then I like him still better; a lean compromise is better than a fat lawsuit."

"He is going to wait for me till I come back."

"Is he?" said Friedrich, and turned half round again, "Miller, I tell you what, it would be better if he came to an understanding with Fieka."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Miller.

"Oh! nothing," said Friedrich.

Presently he bent down and looked sharply along the road, then gave the reins into the Miller's hand, jumped off the waggon, unfastened the Chasseur's horse and, before Voss knew what was going to happen, was in the great Kolpin dyke, had turned round a corner and bound the horse to a thorn-tree in the dyke, so that he could not be seen.

"What is the matter?" asked the Miller, when he came back.

"What's the matter? Why, two men are coming along on horseback, out yonder by the Stemhagen fields, and just now when the sun came out, I saw a bright flash. Those are Frenchmen, and if they were to catch a Chasseur's horse here with bridle and saddle, they would have something to say to us;--take my word for it."

"True," said the Miller.

When they came to the Stemhagen wood. Friedrich pointed with his whip to the beech-tree where the straw still lay, and said: "That's where I laid him."

"If he were only there now!" sighed the Miller.

"You can't expect it, Miller. For it rained in torrents last night, and a beech-tree is not quite waterproof at this time of year."

"True," said the Miller again.

Whilst they were still talking, the two Frenchmen rode up, and asked the way to the Gielow mill; for several roads met here. Before the Miller could answer, Friedrich pointed to the right, the way to Cumrowsch wood, and on their asking how far it was, he said "a little *lieu*," whereupon they rode off.

"Are you possessed by the devil?" asked the Miller. "If they go on riding that way, they may look at the Gielow mill with their backs all their lives. But what was it for?"

"Those sorts of fellows leave a house cleared out, and I have no wish to eat warmed-up cabbage for the first breakfast every morning."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I only mean--look here, Miller; who knows but what those two, if they had gone to the mill, might have fallen in love with our Stiena. And perhaps they might have followed her into the cowhouse, and the cowhouse might have seemed a little crowded, and they might have led out our two milch-cows; and when they had got them out, it might have come into their heads to drive them away, and then we should have no more boiled milk for breakfast, and the cabbages would have come on in their turn and I can't bear cabbages."

"Yes, that is possible," said the Miller.

"But maybe they weren't after cows at all," Friedrich went on after a short pause. "They were a couple of your mounted Gensdarmes, and they are no doubt looking for something very different. I think it's a mercy we are not at the mill, for--Miller, we must look out--they are after the Frenchman or perhaps after you. Who knows what has happened in Stemhagen. Something may have come out. Perhaps Fieka was right after all. I should be glad myself now, if we had the Frenchman with us."

"That's what I said, that's what I said," cried the Miller.

"Hm," said Friedrich, "he lay here, and he's got up, and he has gone down here, these are his marks in the mud; and look--he has dragged the straw along with him a little way, and he's gone towards Gölzow. Now, I'll bring you back the horse, and then you can drive to the bailiwick and deliver up bag and horse together, and I will go after the Frenchman and stop him."

So the horse was fastened to the waggon once more, and Friedrich started off towards Gölzow, and said to himself:

"Dumouriez! I've brought the Miller into a pretty mess, and our Fieka is, after all, a clever girl. But if the Frenchman is to be found between here and Gripswald, I'll find him."

The Miller drove towards Stemhagen. "Lord of my life!" he said, "If it had not been for my little

Fieka, most likely I should be sitting in irons now. And I'm many miles from safe yet, for the devil's only just beginning his work.--It's raining, too, and pretty heavily!"

The first person he met when he reached the Stenhagen Barns was Witte, the baker, standing before his barn by a waggon of straw:

"Good morning, neighbour," said Witte. "What the thunder! How came you by that French horse?"

"Well, I'll tell you," replied Miller Voss; and he briefly narrated the story.

"That's ugly," said the baker, "for the whole town is filled with French, and you couldn't get the horse through without being seen. I advise you to leave him here in my empty barn."

This was done. Old Baker Witte drew his crooked brass comb through his hair several times, shook his head and said:

"Neighbour, you have let yourself in for a scrape you won't get out of easily, and up at the Schloss things don't seem to be quite right; for this morning the Herr Amtshauptmann sent for the roll he takes with his coffee, at eight o'clock instead of eleven. And Fritz Sahlmann says Mamsell Westphalen has disappeared--not a soul knows where she is to be found--and the watchmaker has been thrown into prison--that I saw with my own eyes; and people are talking about court-martials and executions."

"Lord, save us!" cried the old Miller. "What a swarm of bees I have sat down on! But it can't be helped; I must take the bag up to the Schloss. And, neighbour, I'll drive round the town till I get near the green gate of the Schloss garden, and then I'll fasten up my horse. You follow to take care of him and the cart, and if I am carried off to prison, drive over to the mill and break the news gently to my wife and Fieka; and tell the young man you'll find there to do his uncle the favour of looking after the house and mill, and not to leave the women."

Baker Witte promised, and the Miller drove round, as they had agreed, tied up his horse, and was proceeding on his way on foot, when Farmer Roggenbom's waggoner, Johann Brummer, dashed through the gate, lashing his four greys till they struck out behind and bespattered the Miller with mud.

"Better mud in my face than your lashes across the back," cried the Miller.

"Hmm! It only wanted this. Robbers!" grumbled old Zanner of Gielow, as he drove full gallop with his cream-coloured horses through the gate after Brummer.

"Yes," said Adler of Stenhagen, who had thrown a sack over his shoulders (the only waterproof coats known in those days), giving his black saddle-horse a dig in the ribs; "it would be nice work for us to be drawing cannons, wouldn't it, old fellow? No! I'll take you to the Stenhagen wood, and fasten you to a tree by the sand-pit. It's all one here or there, for there's nothing at home for you to eat--confound it, how it's raining!"

When the Miller entered the garden, he found it all alive--peasants hustling and bustling about, hiding their carts and waggons, some behind the bushes and some behind the ramparts.

"Miller Voss," said the son of the Schult Besserdich of Gielow, "hide your horse. Everyone who is wise is taking advantage of this rain, for the French have all crept under cover."

But the old Miller went steadily on, and took the valise to the Schloss.

CHAPTER VI.

The sight which met Mamsell Westphalen's eyes when she went into her room; and the reason why she let Corlin slap her twice on the back. How Fritz Sahlmann smashed the Herr Amtshauptmann's pipes, and the French Colonel nearly drew his sword.

If you wish to tell a story properly, you must do as the husbandman does when he tills a field: you must keep the furrows straight, clearing everything as you go along, and leaving no stubble standing. But do this as carefully as you may, there will always be some few bits left untouched here and there, and you must go back and finish them off. Even so must I go back a little way in my story to finish off Herr Droi's and Mamsell Westphalen's ends, that I may be able once more to work straight on.

On the same morning that the Miller, with his headache, looked into his boot-tops, Mamsell Westphalen dressed herself, and was just going to put on her cap, when she saw it was rather out of shape; so she went into her room to get a fresh one, but tapped first at the door and asked, "Herr Droï, are you quite dressed?" The watchmaker said he was. She opened the door--merciful heavens, what a sight! Anything like it she had never seen in her life; for in the night she had only been as far as the door, and had not even glanced into the room. The top of the bed was broken in, and right across the door lay one of the Frenchmen rolled up in the white bed-curtains, and smoking a clay pipe, with her beautiful red-and-white-striped pillow under his head; the other was sitting in her easy chair, and had wrapped his feet up in her new gingham gown; Herr Droï sat at the foot of the bed, and from under his bearskin peered a face that spoke only of sorrow and woe. What a sight her poor room was! It had been her pride, her jewel-box; here she had reigned supreme; here she had sat with everything round her clean and in order. She had dusted and polished everything with her own hands. No one else had dared to touch or alter anything--not even her oracle the Frau Meister. "No," she had said, "the Frau Meister is all very well in her way, but since she let my amber earrings fall, I cannot trust her any more."

And now everything was turned upside down, the room was blue with tobacco-smoke, her clothes had been taken out of the closet and were lying beside Herr Droï's gun, and the French Chasseur's helmet; and her bed--her beautiful bed--stood out in the middle of the room. The bed was her own; her godfather, the joiner Reuss (the old Reuss, not the young one) had made it for her from the same block of wood from which he made her coffin; she had spun the yarn for the sacking herself, and the Meister Stahl had woven it "pretty well," she said, "but two inches too small each way, and that was stupid of him, for I am a well-grown woman, and *that* he might have known." The Frau Amtshauptmann had wished to make her a present of the feathers, but she had not accepted the offer, and had paid for them herself; "for, Frau Meister," she said, "it's my pride to earn my earthly and my heavenly rest." And when the bed was so far on, she bought two sets of snow-white curtains, and put them up, and then she drew back a few paces, and, nodding her head complacently, said, "Frau Meister, 'the last touch crowns the work.'" And now the bedding lay scattered about in disorder, and the crown lay levelled in the dust.

At first she stood as if thunderstruck, and looked through the tobacco-smoke like the full moon through the evening mist; then she advanced a couple of paces towards Herr Droï, her face as red as the inside of the great copper washing-kettle in her kitchen, and her cap shaking with anger; but she merely said, "What's this?" Herr Droï stuttered and stammered, and stammered and stuttered; but, looking him sharply in the face, she said, "Lies, Herr Droï. You lied last night, and you are lying again this morning. I gave up my room and my own bed to you out of pity, and this is the thanks I get." So saying, she went to her chest of drawers, and took out a clean cap, and then, without casting another glance at Herr Droï, she sailed out of the room like Innocence going to the block. The two Frenchmen laughed and joked, but she paid no heed to them.

As she passed down the corridor, the Colonel stepped out of the blue room in full uniform, with his adjutant, and made her a polite bow. She was not exactly in the mood for civilities, but if you are asked a question you must give an answer; and, besides, man is a creature that must have his sausages cooked, so she answered him with a low curtsey, "Good morning, Herr Colonel von Toll," and walked on.

But the Colonel stopped her. "I beg your pardon," he said, "but I must speak to the Herr Amtshauptmann. Where shall I be likely to find him?"

Mamsell Westphalen felt as if she should go into a fit. "*What* do you want?" she asked, quite dumbfounded.

The Frenchman repeats his question.

"Is it possible," exclaims she, "that you want to speak to the Herr Amtshauptmann--*our* Herr Amtshauptmann at half-past seven o'clock in the morning?"

Finding he was not to be shaken, she said: "Herr Colonel von Toll, everything was turned topsy-turvy in my room last night. Unfortunately I must put up with it as well as I can, but no one shall ever say of me that I lent a hand to overturn the laws of nature. And, though it's no Christian sleep that the old gentleman takes, still he is a gentleman, and can sleep like a gentleman, and do as he pleases. No king, no emperor--no, *not even our Duke* Friedrich Franz himself shall drag me into a conspiracy against the laws of this house."

"Then I will do it myself," said the colonel, and politely put her on one side and went up-stairs.

"Lord, save us!" said Mamsell; and her hands fell down helplessly by her side. "I do believe he'll do it;" and when she heard him go into the old Herr's room, "He has!" said she.

The adjutant went into her room to Herr Droï. "You long-legged donkey!" thought Mamsell Westphalen, "Must you poke yourself in there too;" and she went into the kitchen and said to the two maids, "Corlin and Hanchen, this God-given day has begun badly; and if it goes on so, Heaven only knows how it will end. We will put the clothes in soak to-morrow--I have my reasons for it; to-day we'll go about our work just as if nothing had happened."

And, so saying, she took the coffee-mill and turned and turned, and the mill rattled and

rattled; but when she came to take the drawer out, there was nothing in it; for she had forgotten to pour any coffee-beans in at the top.

Up stairs, in the old Herr's room, the sound of loud talking was now heard, and that silly boy, Fritz Sahlmann, who was filling the Amtshauptmann's long pipes, must of course want to tell them what was going on, and rushed in at the kitchen-door with the pipes in his hand; but Hanchen had that moment put her ear against the door-post to hear a little of what was being said, and--bang! he went up against her, and--smash! went the pipes as they fell clattering on the floor. Mamsell Westphalen's hand was not raised this time; her hands lay on her lap, and she said meekly:

"It's not to be wondered at! If everything is going to rack and ruin, of course clay pipes will be amongst the first; and 'if the heavens fall the sparrows will all be crushed!' It would not surprise me now if some one were to come in and throw the whole of the crockery out at the window."

The quarrel upstairs became louder; the voices resounded over the house and the Amtshauptmann came down stairs into the hall with the Colonel.

The old Herr said, in short, sharp sentences, that he must allow what he could not prevent. The Frenchman must do as he chose, for the power was in his hands.

The Colonel said he knew that. But before he made use of his power he should inquire into things, for there could be no doubt events had happened which there was an attempt to conceal.

He had nothing to conceal, the old Amtshauptmann said. If there was *anything* to be concealed it was on the part of the French. And was a vagabond like the Chasseur really held in such high esteem and regard by them? For his own part, he knew nothing further than that the fellow had come to him like a robber, had behaved like a pig, and that his servants and the watchmaker Droz had told him the Gielow Miller had taken him away in his waggon.

But where did the watchmaker get his French uniform from, the Colonel asked?

That did not concern him, was the old Herr's reply; the man was not in his district. He had, however, heard it said, that the fellow sometimes put the uniform on for his amusement.

The Colonel said those were merely excuses.

At that the old Herr fired up, and drawing himself to his full height, he looked in his dignified way at the Frenchman, and said--"Excuses are the cousins of lies. You forget my age and rank."

The Colonel became more violent, and said: "In short, the whole story is incredible."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Amtshauptmann, and from under his grey eyebrows there shot a look full of scorn and anger, like a flash of lightning darting from out of a cloud over a peaceful landscape. "You think it is incredible?"--And he half turned his back upon the Colonel.--"Why mayn't a Frenchman wear the French uniform for his pleasure when so many Germans wear it for theirs?" he added, looking over his shoulder at Colonel von Toll.

The Frenchman turned red as fire, then pale as death; he stepped back a couple of paces and clutched at his sword. The ghost of a fearful deed haunted him for a moment and guided his hand; but, overcoming the dark thought, he turned hastily round and went with long strides down the hall, and Hanchen, who saw it all through a chink in the door, said, ever after, that she had never in her life seen anything like it. "He was a handsome man, and had a pleasant face," she would add, "but when he came striding down the hall, I don't know why, but it reminded me of how once, when I was herding geese, on a fine day in the middle of summer, suddenly there came a fierce wind, and in the twinkling of an eye, all the leaves were blown off from the beautiful oak at the back of the Convent garden and were flying about."

The Colonel turned round again, went up to the Amtshauptmann, and said in a quiet cold voice, that they would *discuss* the point at a future time; but his duty required that the matter should be probed to the bottom without delay. "Why had the watchmaker slept at the Schloss last night?"

"He did not sleep here," said the old Herr.

"Yes," said the Colonel, "he did sleep here, he slept in that room," and he pointed to Mamsell Westphalen's room.

"Impossible," cried the old Herr, raising his voice as if to defend Innocence before the whole world, "that's Mamsell Westphalen's room. She has been in my house twenty years, and do you mean to say she would let a man be in her room?"

"Corlin;" said Mamsell Westphalen in the kitchen, "give me a couple of blows in the neck, for I feel as if I were going to faint; and my head swims round."

The Colonel threw open the door, and there stood the watchmaker before them. The adjutant had just been examining him, and he had told the adjutant everything--except the truth.

The old Amtshauptmann was quite aghast when he saw the watchmaker before him. "This is inexplicable!" he cried.

The Colonel laughed scornfully, and said he hoped it would not long remain inexplicable; then he whispered a few words to the adjutant and asked for the keys of the state prison.

"I cannot give them out for this prisoner," said the Amtshauptmann, "for he has no right to the state prison; he is a citizen and must go to the town gaol."

"So much the better," replied the Colonel, "for there will be less opportunity there for connivance."

So Herr Droi was marched off between a couple of soldiers--for gradually the courtyard had got filled with French--and was transported to the Rathhaus.

The Colonel also went; but, when he reached the door, he turned round and said that, strictly according to duty, he ought to have the Herr Amtshauptmann arrested, but because the Herr was an old man, and more especially because of the hard words he had used, he should be left in peace. The Colonel would keep himself clear from the slightest suspicion of having wished to revenge himself for those bitter words; but if the presence of the Amtshauptmann or Mamsell Westphalen were necessary at the examination, they must come before him. The old Herr coldly acquiesced, and the Colonel went, but ordered a couple of gendarmes off to the Gielow Mill, and looked sharply at the Amtshauptmann as he gave the order.

When they were gone, the old Herr went towards the kitchen, and Hanchen started back from her chink in the door, for she thought her master was coming in. But all at once he stood still, turned round and said to himself: "What did the fellow say about 'connivance' and 'keeping himself clear of any appearance of revenge.' What a French Colonel can only talk about, the Amtshauptmann Weber can surely do. I too will keep my name clear. There shall be no appearance of connivance on my part." And he went into his room.

CHAPTER VII.

My uncle Herse, what he was and what he did, and why Fritz Sahlmann had to whistle.

When the watchmaker was led off to prison, Fritz Sahlmann must of necessity go too, merely to see what would happen to the prisoner, and whether he would escape; but, in this last he was disappointed. The procession moved but slowly down to the Rathhaus, for they had to wind their way through all the carts and waggons which had been ordered up from the town and neighbouring villages for the transport of the baggage and cannon, and were now collected in the courtyard and along the road leading to the Schloss. They were surrounded by French soldiers, that they might not escape, for our old peasants had got wonderfully clever at that. The watchmaker marched along with his two guards, through the crowd, as quiet and patient as a lamb; for though at first he had been dreadfully frightened, and though the affair of last night looked decidedly awkward, yet during the interview with the adjutant, he had fallen into a state of apathy, in which he had seemed to say--"Talk away as long as you like; you may go on talking all day for what I care," and his answers had been few and far between. And, though he was not one of those wild spirits that fly at once at everything, he had been too long in the world, and had been in too many scrapes before, to lose heart immediately now. He made up his mind for whatever might come. "What's to be the end of this I wonder?" he thought, as he was pushed in at the Rathhaus door.

"Fritz Sahlmann," said Rathsherr Herse, as the boy was about to return to the Schloss, "what's the meaning of this?"

Fritz now related with immense importance all that had taken place yesterday, how Droz had slept in Mamsell Westphalen's room and turned everything, upside down; and how he himself had smashed the Herr Amtshauptmann's pipes--he couldn't help it, though--it was Hanchen's fault;--and how the Colonel had been going to run the Herr Amtshauptmann through the body with his sword; and how Mamsell Westphalen was sitting in the kitchen, like a picture of woe. But he said nothing about the lump of ice.

Now, my uncle, the Rathsherr Herse, was an ardent patriot, but he kept it a profound secret. And he had his reasons. For, as he whispered to me many years afterwards when Buonaparte had long been dead, he belonged at this time to the secret society of the "Tugendbund." And I can believe it, for when he was in company he was always playing with a long watch-chain made of

light-coloured hair--and Aunt Herse's was black--and he wore a large dangerous-looking iron ring on his finger, with which he once struck Höpner the locksmith's apprentice nearly dead, when he was behaving rudely in court. "Fritz," he said to me later on, "this light hair is that of an heroic virgin who had her head shaven for the Fatherland in the year thirteen, and the iron ring cost me my gold one. But don't talk of it; I don't like it spoken about." He was rightly therefore much given to secrets about the time of this story.

And it is possible, too, that his habit of looking at life from a commanding point of view and seizing everything as a whole without regard to details had something to do with his secret brotherhood, for while my Father had to plague himself day and night with the smallest squabbles and quarrels, in order that the government of the little town might not lose what small amount of life it had, Rathsherr Herse commanded Kutusoff to march to the right and Czeruitcheff to the left, and praised York, and blamed Bülow because he didn't understand his business; for he ought not to have gone to Berlin, he ought to have marched to the right of Stenhausen and fallen on Buonaparte's flank.--In short Uncle Herse was just the man to make a thunderstorm out of a sunshower. In every innocent French corporal he saw the Corsican monster, and if Luth, the Town Messenger, happened to get a blow in a peasants' row on Blue Monday, he made as much fuss as if the Duke of Mecklenburg himself had been struck.

"Hold your tongue, boy," he whispered impressively. "Do you want to scream out your sentence of death in the public market-place! I wouldn't give a groschen for the watchmaker's chance of life, for it is certain that the Miller and his Friedrich have murdered the French Chasseur."

"Not the Miller," interrupted Fritz, "the Miller was made up of brandy and good-nature yesterday."

"Well, then, his Friedrich has. He's a Prussian. Do you know what a Prussian is? Do you know what the meaning of Prussian is? Do you know...? Blockhead! What are you staring at me for? Do you think I'm going to tell you all my secrets? But what I was going to say is--they'll send the old Amtshauptmann to Bayonne in France, where they also sent Graf Ivenacker's white horse, Herodotus; and Mamsell Westphalen--as far as I know the French laws--will simply be strung up, and you, my lad, will get a good flogging for coming down here."

Fritz Sahlmann now saw a sad prospect before him, and made a wry face accordingly.--

"But, Herr Rathsherr, not in a public place?" he asked.

"Wherever they can catch you. Though, if the matter is taken up in the proper quarters, everything may still be made right.--Can you be silent?"

Fritz Sahlmann replied that he could be most modestly silent.

"Well, then, come here, and put both your hands in your trowsers' pockets, and whistle. That's it. And now look quite unconcerned as you do in summer time when you are knocking down the apples from the tree in the Schlossgarden, and you see Mamsell Westphalen coming. Yes that's right. And now, observe every word that I say; go with this face and with this look of child-like innocence through the French and peasants up to the Schloss into the kitchen, and take Mamsell Westphalen aside into a corner and then say to her just these words--'*help is near.*' If she is not satisfied with this you can break to her gently what I have told you about hanging, and, if she's at all frightened at that, say she is to keep up her heart, for I, Rathsherr Herse, have taken the matter in hand. But first of all, she must at once shut and bolt the kitchen-door and the back-door leading to the garden, and she and the two maids and you must each arm yourselves with weapons, and on no account let any Frenchman in, and you must defend yourselves to the last man till I come. I will go at once and will come through the Schlossgarden to the back-door--I'll only get my cloak first for it's raining desperately, and my pass-word will be '*All's well*' and my war-cry '*York.*' But no! She won't understand that. What do you say? It's all the same--it's all the same. Well, my war-cry will be '*Pickled pork.*' She'll understand that. So when some one comes, and calls it out, she is to open the back-door. Have you understood it all?"

"Yes, Herr Rathsherr."

"Well, then, now be off; and don't let anyone,--not even the Herr Amtshauptmann--know a word about it."

Fritz went, and the Rathsherr too.

My uncle Herse had, of course, had the blue Rathsherr uniform with red and gold collar made, as soon as he had become Rathsherr; and, as he was a fine, tall man he was very fond of putting it on, in order to command proper respect, whenever an opportunity presented itself, such as, for example, when the fire-engines were to be tried, or when the cows were first driven to pasture in the spring, or foreign troops were quartered in the town. Then, too, when my father was sitting in his grey coat at the court table writing till his fingers ached, Rathsherr Herse would march up and down in front of the table, keeping up the official pomp and dignity by the splendour of his appearance, and it pleased him mightily when a Frenchman by mistake addressed him as "Monsieur le Maire." My father had nothing to say against this, for there was generally a good deal of disputing to be done, and he gave this over, with the pomp and dignity, to the Rathsherr,

taking the real business upon himself. In this way, they had divided the work fairly between them, and what with Rathsherr Susemihl, who on days when the court was sitting performed the onerous duty of assessor, and what with the zeal of Dohmstreich the Recorder, and the exertions of Luth the Town Messenger, and the firemen who every month took out their engines to try them, and Panner Hirsch, who used to drive the boys out of the peas-fields, I should like to know where you could have found a town or parish in better trim than my native town of Stemhagen. And all because my uncle Herse was fond of wearing his uniform!

When my uncle Herse reached home, he looked in his clothes-closet for his grey cloak,--for it was still pouring with rain,--and he caught sight of his uniform. "Ah," thought he, "now, to-day will be a good opportunity for me to put it on; and, who knows, perhaps it may be of use in this enterprise." So he put it on, and also the fine cocked hat that we boys used afterwards to make a boat of and sail on old Nahmaker's pond. At this time it was in its best days, and, as the Rathsherr stepped out at the door, he drew the cape of his cloak over it so that it should not get wet; and then he looked like a French General when he reconnoitres the enemy's post by night. "Well," he said, "no one will know me now."

He went across the market-place, and then by a little roundabout way across the timber yard, where Farmer Nahmaker was looking after his horses, which the French had taken out of the stable and were now driving away.

"Good morning, Herr Rathsherr," said the farmer, "what times these are!"

"Hush!" said my uncle and went on.

Behind the timber-yard barns, Swerdfeger, the joiner, met him.

"Good morning, Herr Rathsherr."

"Hold your tongue!" said my uncle angrily, and went round outside the Schlossgarden.

"Good morning, Herr Rathsherr," said the son of old Harloff the actor.

Smack! The boy had a blow with the back of the hand on his mouth. "Blockhead! Don't you see that I do not wish to be known?"

So saying, he entered the Schloss-garden and said angrily: "The devil take it! A public position lies on one as heavy as a curse."

CHAPTER VIII.

How my uncle Herse came with pass-word and war-cry; and Mamsell Westphalen refused to hide in the peat bog. How the Herr Rathsherr got into Miller's cart, and how he got out of it again.

In the meanwhile, Fritz Sahlmann had made his way to the Schloss with his hands in his pockets, whistling, with an unconcerned face, as directed by the Rathsherr; but, when he came into the kitchen, he forgot his orders and made a face like Balaam's when his ass began to speak, and he stammered into Mamsell Westphalen's ear,--

"Oh! I'm to say there's help near."

"Boy! Fritz Sahlmann," cried Mamsell Westphalen, "what is this? What do you mean? What do you *mean* I say?"

Fritz now told her what she was to do; that she was to hold out the kitchen to the last man and let no Frenchman in, and that Rathsherr Herse would come with pass-word and war-cry and take the command.

"Heavens! What shall I do?" exclaimed Mamsell Westphalen, "I can't let myself be seen by the Herr Amtshauptmann after what has passed. Well, I suppose I had best trust to the Herr Rathsherr and follow his counsel; it must be right, for else what would be the good of his being a councillor. Hanchen and Corlin, you look after the back-door, Fritz Sahlmann and I will take the front. Now, mind, and be sure you don't miss the war-cry."

The doors were locked; Hanchen armed herself with a broom, Corlin with a poker, Fritz Sahlmann with a long brass ladle; and Mamsell Westphalen took up a pestle; but she quickly let it drop again, exclaiming--

"No, merciful heavens! I have done enough harm already without slaying and killing besides. No, I know what will do better;" and she fetched the box in which the peat-ashes were carried away, and set it down before her on the table--from this point she could command both front and back-doors.--"Now let them come when they like," she said, "but whoever gets a volley in the face from me may rub his eyes for a long time before he'll be able to see again."

It was not long before they heard a voice at the back-door crying: "All's well;" and presently the same voice said half aloud through the keyhole "Pickled pork."

"That's the Rathsherr," said Mamsell Westphalen, "Corlin, open the door just wide enough for a man to pass, and, as soon as he is inside, shut it fast again."

So Corlin opens the door a little way, and the Rathsherr proceeds to squeeze through; but in the process the cape of his cloak falls back, and reveals the cocked hat and the red uniform collar.

"Ah! Ah!"--screamed Corlin, and held the Rathsherr fast in the door. "A Frenchman! The French!"

"Pickled pork," cried Rathsherr Herse. "Don't you hear? Pickled pork."

But it came too late; Hanchen had knocked the hat off his head and the skin off his face with her broom, and Mamsell Westphalen had thrown two hands full of ashes into his eyes.

My uncle Herse now stood in the kitchen, puffing, and blowing, and snorting and groping with his hands out, as if he were playing at "blind man's buff,"--his heart full of rage, and dark night before his eyes. His whole plan had turned out a nest of addled eggs; for what is there in a secret that becomes a kitchen scene! what can an imposing face do when it is battered about by a broom! and what becomes of the splendour of a Rathsherr's uniform when peat-ashes lie on it like blight on a flower!

The first who recovered her senses, and became aware who it was that they had been treating in this fashion, was Hanchen. With one bound she was out of doors in the rain. Corlin followed and said to her--"I'd rather be wet through, than get one of Mamsell Westphalen's scoldings."

"By George! It's the Herr Rathsherr," cried Fritz Sahlmann.

Mamsell Westphalen stood there like Lot's wife--only that she was perhaps stouter--and looked at the Rathsherr as if he were Sodom and Gomorrah.

"Merciful heavens! We are all wandering in the dark," she said in a feeble voice.

"It's very well for *you* to talk of wandering in the dark," sputtered my uncle Herse. "You can see, but I can't open my eyes. Get me some water."

Now began a scene of washing, and rubbing, and pitying, and wondering, and scolding, and consoling; but my uncle was still angry, and said that all the women in the Schloss might be hanged for what he cared, it would be a long time before he was caught entering into secret conspiracies with women again. Mamsell Westphalen held her apron up to her eyes and began to cry:

"Herr Rathsherr," she said, "tell me what I ought to do. I have no father or mother left and, I after last night, I couldn't let myself be seen by the Herr Amtshauptmann. You are the only one I can look to for help now."

My uncle Herse had a heart, a soft heart; my uncle Herse had a soul, a tender soul; and, when he had quite got the ashes out of his eyes, and Mamsell Westphalen had rubbed cold cream on the scratches in his face till it looked like a red and white toadstool, he said kindly:

"Leave off crying. I will help you. You must take to flight."

"Take to flight!" she exclaimed and looked in a puzzled way at her figure from head to foot; "Do you mean *me* to take to flight?"

And she thought of the pigeons up in her pigeon-house; and if the matter had not been too serious for her, she would almost have laughed.

"Yes," said my uncle. "Do you think that with these roads and in this weather you could walk three or four miles at a stretch, for no conveyance is to be had--and besides it would not be secret enough?"

"Herr Rathsherr," she said, and all desire to laugh entirely left her, "look at me for a moment. Is it likely I could? Why, it's hard work for me now to go upstairs."

"Can you ride then?"

"What?"

"I ask, can you ride?"

Mamsell Westphalen now got up, set her arms a-kimbo and said: "What respectable woman ever rides? I have known one female in my life who did; she was a young lady, and the rest of her conduct was of a piece with it."

Rathsherr Herse now also got up, and walked once or twice up and down the kitchen, lost in thought, and at last asked--"Do you think you could sit for twenty-four hours in the town peat-bog?"

"But, Herr Rathsherr," said Mamsell Westphalen, and put her apron up to her eyes again and wiped away the tears, "I'm now over fifty, and I had my great illness last autumn and...."

"Then that won't do either," broke in the Rathsherr. "There are only two ways left, one upstairs, the other down below. Fly you must, either on to the roof or into the cellar."

"Herr Rathsherr," cried Fritz Sahlmann, and he crept from behind the stove, "I know a place."

"What *you* here!" exclaimed Rathsherr Herse.

"Yes," said Fritz quite abashed.

"Well then it's all over again with secrecy, for what three know, the whole world knows."

"I promise faithfully I won't tell, Herr Rathsherr," said Fritz. "And, Mamsell, I know a capital place. There's a plank loose in the garret where you hang your hams and sausages to smoke, and, if you make yourself small, you can squeeze through, and behind there by the chimney there's a little place where you can hide and no one would ever find you."

"You young scoundrel," said Mamsell Westphalen, forgetting all her sorrows and woes, "then it's you who are always stealing the sausages from up there; and, Herr Rathsherr, I have always suspected the innocent rats."

My uncle, having threatened Fritz Sahlmann with a sound thrashing, said it was now high time and they must fly, and it would be the very place. So they all set off up to the garret, and when Fritz Sahlmann had shown them the loose plank and the hiding-place, my uncle Herse said--

"Well, Mamsell, now sit down on the floor. There's no help for it. I will lock the door of the garret; and if you hear anyone coming, creep softly into the hole, and mind you don't sneeze or cough."

"You may well say that, Herr Rathsherr--in this smoke," she replied.

"Oh, we will soon manage that," said he, and opened the dormer window.

They were going away when she said, "Fritz, my lad, don't forsake me; and bring me word how things are going on."

"Under no circumstances must he come up here," said the Rathsherr, "he might be seen, and then everything would be discovered."

"Leave it to me, Mamsell," said Fritz, and made her a side wink, "I'll manage it."

They went; and Mamsell Westphalen sat alone in her sadness under her fitches of bacon and hams and sausages.

"Of what use are all these blessings," she said to herself, "when a person of my years has to take to flight."

After seeing Mamsell Westphalen into her place of safety, my uncle Herse went down again to the kitchen and cautioned Fritz Sahlmann once more against letting out anything, impressing his warning well on Fritz by a box on the ears. He then pulled the cape of his grey cloak over his cocked-hat and embroidered uniform collar, and crept cautiously out at the back-door like a cat out of a pigeon-house.

Scarcely had he put his head out of doors, when a screeching and yelling arose; and Hanchen and Corlin, who were going back into the kitchen, thinking that the coast was once more clear, flew asunder like two white doves when a hawk pounces down upon them.

"Hold your tongues! I am not going to do anything to you," cried my uncle Herse.

But what was the use of his saying that? The peasants, who had remained in the garden with their horses, looked round at the noise; and, seeing the disguised French officer, that is my uncle Herse, they all made for the green gate, and in a few moments not a man nor a hoof to draw the cannon was to be seen.

The Rathsherr now struck into a little side-path among the bushes, and whom should he meet but old Miller Voss with the valise under his arm.

"Good morning, Herr Rathsherr."

"The devil take you!" exclaimed Rathsherr Herse. "Don't you see, Miller Voss, that I don't wish to be known?"

"Well, that's my case too," said the Miller. "But, Herr Rathsherr, you would do me a great favour if you would see my horse and cart into a place of safety. I have fastened it up near the green gate. I'll do you a good turn in exchange. As soon as the perch in the mill-pond begin to bite, I'll let you know."

"I will see to it," said the Rathsherr.

He went on to the green gate, and when he had found the Miller's cart and unfastened it, he got into it, and was just driving off, when up came a party of French soldiers, and at their head the colonel of artillery by whose command all the horses and waggons had been sent for from the surrounding villages.

My uncle Herse was now forthwith arrested, and pulled down off the cart; and, what with his uniform and his keeping on crying out that he was "*conseiller d'état*"--for he could not at the moment find any better word for a Stemhagen Rathsherr--the French thought they must have made a good catch, and that they had now got the head of the conspiracy to rob them of their waggons and teams.

The colonel of artillery cursed and swore in the most unchristian French; he would make an example of the Rathsherr; four men should take him between them.

And so my uncle Herse, who had come in the greatest secrecy, to do a good work to others, was led back into the town a public spectacle, to suffer martyrdom for his good intentions.

When this happened, Witte the baker was standing close by, behind the great chestnut-tree; for he, too, had come to take the Miller's cart into a place of safety.

"That can't hurt the Herr Rathsherr," he said to himself; "he buys his white bread of Guhlen, why doesn't he buy it of me? Well, he must judge for himself, and he can do it too, he's clever enough; but the unreasoning cattle can't, and so one of us must look after them." And, so saying, he got into the cart, and, following the French at a distance, drove slowly towards his barns, and put the horse in his stable.

CHAPTER IX.

Why the Herr Amtshauptmann had to read Marcus Aurelius, and was not allowed to wash his face; and why he did not think the Miller's Fieka was, like other girls, always fretting and crying.

The Amtshauptmann walked round and round his room, and fumed inwardly, for, though not naturally of a hasty temper, still he was an old man, and accustomed to command and have his own way; and was he now to be ordered about by others? He had been obliged to get up at eight o'clock in the morning--a thing which went against all his feelings--and he had not got his coffee; and when he had wanted to smoke a pipe, to comfort himself a little, no pipes were there. He rang the bell once--no Fritz Sahlmann; he rang twice--no Hanchen; he pulled his snuff-box out of his pocket and took a pinch slowly and thoughtfully, as people do when they want to prepare themselves for all the possible evils that may come; then he drew out his eyeglass and looked at the weather. Outside, it was raining in torrents, and the crows sat still and hunched-up in the high bare branches of the elm-trees with their wings drooping--looking as if they were stuck together, and dripping like old peasant Kugler, when he had been soused one evening up to the brim of his hat in the village pond.

"No comfort out there either," said the old Herr to himself; "but where is there comfort in Germany now? It's a very strange thing is the government of this world. The Almighty lets a miserable hound like that Buonaparte bring ruin on the whole earth. It's difficult for Christian people to understand. The high ducal cabinet often issues orders and decrees that no Christian or official can make out; but the high ducal cabinet ministers are, after all, only poor sinners, and stupidity is one of their high qualities, and we know that, and make up our minds to it, though not perhaps without just a little anger and vexation. But to Christians who believe in God's Providence, to see the use of the base cur Buonaparte, is--is--" and he took off the nightcap, which he always wore until his hair was dressed, and held it about three inches above his head. "May God forgive me my sins! I have borne hatred to no one, and have had enmity with no one--not even with the high ducal cabinet and its confounded admonitions; but I have a hatred now!--"

and he threw his nightcap on the ground and stamped upon it, "I have a hatred now, and I will keep it."

Probably he said these last words rather loud, for his wife came in, looking anxious.

"Weber! Weber! what is the matter with you? Has Fritz Sahlmann or Hanchen...?"

"No, Neiting;" he broke in, and picked up his nightcap. "It's not that. It's Buonaparte."

"Gracious heavens!" she cried, "at *him* again. Why must you keep plaguing yourself about him?" And she walked up to the Amtshauptmann's bookcase, and took out a book. "There, Weber, read your book."

Now this was Marcus Aurelius, of which the Herr Amtshauptmann used to read a chapter when he was out of humour; or, if he was angry, two. He took the book, therefore, and read; and his wife tied the white napkin round his neck, and combed his grey hair, and twisted it into the funny little pigtail, and shook the powder lightly and gently over his head. Marcus Aurelius did its share too, and all the angry wrinkles were gone from the fine open forehead by the time the Frau Amtshauptmann had scraped the powder off his face with her little silver knife. "For she must always scrape it off," said Hanchen, in talking about it; "and he mustn't wash his face after, or else the flour would paste his eyes together."

"Neiting," said the Herr Amtshauptmann, when his head was finished, "just give a look, if you don't mind, to the household down-stairs. I can't make it out; Hanchen doesn't come, and Fritz Sahlmann doesn't come. The dam--, I mean to say, the godless Frenchmen have turned the whole house upside down. What say you, eh?"

The Frau Amtshauptmann was a good little woman; and, though rather delicate in health, she was not irritable, and was always ready to bear with the old gentleman's eccentricities. Their only son, Joe, was abroad, and so the two old people were thrown together quite alone in the great old castle, and faithfully and honestly they shared their griefs and joys together; and if ever time began to seem long, it always so chanced that the Herr Amtshauptmann would, at the right time, take up some wonderful new whim, and the yawning would be changed into a sun-shower which freshened up their love again; for it is with love as with a tree--the more the wind blows in its top and branches, the faster it throws out roots.

Now, what the Herr Amtshauptmann asked from his wife that morning, namely that she should look to the household, cannot exactly be called a whim, and therefore his wife made no objection; though many a well brought-up wife in these days would have done so.

She had just gone on her way when old Miller Voss entered the room with the valise.

"Good morning, Herr Amtshauptmann," said the Miller, and made his bow; "if you'll allow me," and he laid the valise on the table; "here it is."

"What is it?" asked the old Herr.

"How should I know, Herr? But I do know this much--it's stolen goods."

"How do you come by stolen goods. Miller Voss?"

"How does the hound get into the leash, Herr Amtshauptmann?--All I know is, this is the chasseur's leather bag, and the devil put him into my waggon last night, and afterwards Friedrich threw him out again." And then the Miller told the whole story.

While he was telling it, the Amtshauptmann paced up and down the room, and muttered every now and then in his beard something about "bad business." Then he stopped in front of the Miller, and looked him sharply in the face; and when the Miller had done, he said:

"Well, Miller Voss, then it is certain, is it, that the Frenchman is still alive?"

"How can I tell, Herr Amtshauptmann? You see, I make my reckoning in this way. The night could hardly be called cold for this time of year, but it rained right through the night; and if we two, Herr Amtshauptmann, you or I, had spent the night there, maybe we should have been cold and stiff this morning. But then again I reckon, those sorts of fellows are more used to lying about on the ground than we are, and if it didn't do anything to him in Russia, maybe it won't hurt him here. And he went away afterwards, that's certain. Friedrich has gone to look for him; but if anything has happened to him since, it's not our fault."

"Miller," said the old Herr--and he shook his head--"this is a bad business. If your Friedrich doesn't catch the Frenchman again, it may cost you your head."

"Lord, save us!" cried the Miller; "Into what scrapes am I coming in my old age! Herr Amtshauptmann, I am innocent; and I haven't kept this leather bag either, and the horse is in Baker Witte's barn."

"Yes, lucky for you, Miller; that's very lucky for you, I give you my word. And you say there is nothing but gold and silver in the valise?"

"No," said the Miller; "nothing but gold and silver--Prussian money, Mecklenburg money, lousid'ors, and silver spoons;" and so saying he unbuckled the valise, and disclosed its contents.

The Herr Amtshauptmann opened his eyes. "Heavens!" he cried, "why, that's a treasure!"

"Yes, you may well say that, Herr Amtshauptmann. My wife never says *much*; but, when she saw this, she clasped her hands together, and couldn't get out a single word."

"This is all stolen. Miller. Here's the Wertzen crest on the silver things. I know their arms. The wretch has stolen these spoons somewhere in the neighbourhood. But this won't make your case better."

The Miller stood there as if petrified. The Herr Amtshauptmann walked down the room again, and scratched his head; at last, he went up to the Miller, and laid his hand on his shoulder. "Miller Voss," said he, "I have always held you to be an honest man; but such honesty--in such circumstances! Why, you can hardly live from one day to another, and yet, from pure conscience, you give up a sum of money like that, coming nobody could have told from where!"

The old Miller turned as red as fire, and looked at the toes of his boots.

"Yes, Miller," the Amtshauptmann went on, "this conduct of yours is very strange, for you could not know what has happened here; but thank God for it;--it is possible this has saved your life."

The danger in which he thought he must be, the undeserved praise which sorely pricked his conscience; the sight of a small loophole by which, through God's help, he might yet escape out of this bad business, and the feeling that he had not deserved all this, came hard upon the Miller. He stood there with his eyes cast down, and moved about uneasily,--twirling his hat round more and more fiercely till at last it quite lost its shape.

"The devil take the whole business and me into the bargain, Herr Amtshauptmann!" he cried. "But the Lord is merciful to me and will help me in this trouble, and I won't have anything wrong on my conscience. No, what is true, is true. And if it hadn't been for my little Fieka, the cursed Frenchman's money would be lying at home in my cupboard at this moment, and I should be swinging on the gallows."

And now he told all about it.

"Miller," said the Amtshauptmann when the story was finished, "I'm not fond of girls myself; boys are better; girls fret and cry too much for me. But your Fieka is quite different. Miller, it is very much to the credit of you and your wife that you have brought up such a child. And, Miller, when you come again, bring your Fieka with you; don't forget; I--that is my wife--will be very glad to see her. What say you, Eh! And now take the valise and carry it down to the Rathhaus; the French are holding a court of justice there--fine justice it will be!--and ask for the Burmeister, he is a kind man and can talk French too; and I shall be there in a short time, and will do everything in my power for you."

"Thank you, sir. I'm a good bit lighter now about the heart. And about that other business, the bankruptcy? You think--"

"That you're an old fool to get into any more scrapes at your age."

"Thank you, Herr Amtshauptmann. Well, then, good day."

And the Miller departed.

CHAPTER X.

How Fritz Sahlmann sat in an apple-tree in the rain without any umbrella, and stuffed a roll of papers in under the back of his waistcoat; and how Mamsell Westphalen declared herself to be a miserable sinner.

After a little while, the Frau Amtshauptmann came back into the room and said, "Weber, what can be the meaning of this? Fritz Sahlmann is not there; and Mamsell Westphalen is not there, and her room looks as if Turks and Infidels had been holding high holiday in it; and the maids say all they know about it is, that the Rathsherr Herse had slipped in at the back-door, and Hanchen had pushed her broom in his face by accident, and Mamsell Westphalen had thrown a lot of peat-ashes in his eyes, also by accident, and afterwards Mamsell Westphalen and Fritz Sahlmann had

gone away; and they don't know where they are."

"This is a very strange thing," said the old Herr. "What has the Rathsherr Herse to do in the kitchen? I like the man well enough, Neiting, he's a pleasant fellow; but he must poke his nose into every hole, and I never heard of anything sensible coming of it. Tell me, Neiting, which of the maids do you consider the most sensible?"

"Weber, what are you talking about? As if you could expect *sense* from that class."

"Well then, the quickest, the sharpest?"

"Oh, then certainly Hanchen Besserdich, for her eyes take in everything at once, and her tongue goes even faster than her eyes."

"Call her to me," said the Herr.

It was done, and Hanchen came. Hanchen Besserdich was a smart little damsel, as sharp and wide-awake as only a Gülzow Schults's^[2] daughter can be,—at that time it was the custom for the daughters of the village Schults to go into service.—But now she stood before the Herr Amtshauptmann, and played with her apron-strings, with her eyes cast down, for she felt as if she were in a court of justice.

"You are now before me to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," said her master. "Hanchen Besserdich, what do you know of Mamsell Westphalen? Begin by yesterday evening."

Hanchen told him what she knew, and what we know.

"So she slept with you, and not in her own room?" said the old Herr.

"Weber, what can you mean by asking such questions?" broke in the Frau Amtshauptmann.

"Neiting, every circumstance is of importance, if innocence is to be brought to light. And you don't think," he went on, turning to Hanchen, "that she has run away with the Herr Rathsherr Herse?"

"No, Herr; I think she has run away, but not with the Rathsherr; for I met him alone at the back-door when I came back from seeing my brother who was in the garden, Herr Amtshauptmann, with our horse to draw the French cannons; but—" and here she raised her eyes from the ground, and there was a roguish look in her fresh round face,—"but, Herr Amtshauptmann, he has got away from the French."

"Indeed!" said the old Herr. "Your brother has got away, has he?"

"Yes," said Hanchen, smiling again roguishly, "and he was the first to begin the running-away, and he showed the others the little green gate."

"That was a foolish prank of his; and if the French catch him, they'll make him smart for it. You Besserdichs are a saucy lot.—Neiting, remind me of that young rascal, Fritz Besserdich, another time.—And, Hanchen, where is Fritz Sahlmann?"

Hanchen was cowed again, and what followed, came only by fits and starts. "Why, Herr Amtshauptmann, he smashed all your pipes to pieces this morning and then said I had done it. And, indeed, it wasn't my fault; for I only just wanted to look round the corner when the French Colonel was raging about, and then he ran at me with the pipes in his hand, and now the pieces are strewn all over the kitchen."

"And since then you have seen *nothing* of him this morning?"

"Yes, Herr, when the watchmaker was *transpired*, he ran along with him, and then, when he came back again, he went talking High German to Mamsell Westphalen and then they both whispered together."

"High German? Fritz Sahlmann talking High German? What does the rascal want to be talking High German for? What did he say?"

"He said; '*help is near*.'"

"Oh! and then the Rathsherr came?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann, and I shoved my broom in his face; but I couldn't help it."

"This is a very strange thing!" said the old Herr, and walked up and down, and stroked his chin, and looked up at the ceiling, and looked down on the floor. At last he stood still and said, "Neiting, I see clearly what it is. That old fool, Westphalen, has taken fright, and the Rathsherr has been meddling, and has put her up to some folly. She has hidden herself—you'll see."

"Well then, let her, Weber."

"No, Neiting, that won't do. She must come to the town and bear witness for the watchmaker and the Miller, or both their necks may be in danger. If I only knew where that monkey, Fritz Sahlmann, was! He'll know all about it. And you don't know where he is, Hanchen?"

"No, Herr."

"Well, then, you may go."

As Hanchen turned round to go, her eyes fell on the end-window, but, being naturally very clear and wide-awake they took in, not only the window, but what was passing outside it. She turned quickly round again, and said--

"Now I know where he is, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Well, then, where?"

"Out there, sir."

"Where?" answered the old Herr, and he put up his eye-glasses, and looked everywhere except where Fritz Sahlmann was.

"There, Herr Amtshauptmann, there, in the old apple-tree that stands at the corner of the kitchen wall."

"So he is! Well, this *is* a strange thing!--In the winter too! Now, if it had been autumn when the apples are on the tree, I could have understood it; but in the winter!"

"Oh! Weber," said his wife, "he is no doubt practising now."

"Hanchen Besserdich, you have good eyes, what is he doing there?" asked the old Herr fumbling with his eye-glass.

"Why, he has got a long pole, but what he means to do with it I don't see. He's pointing it towards the smoking-garret."

"Towards our smoking-garret! What can he want there, Neiting?"

"I don't know, Weber; but I should not be at all surprised if some more sausages were missing tomorrow."

"Bravo, bravo! Why, that is a capital tree for my Fritz. Apples in summer, and sausages in winter!" And he opened the window and cried: "Fritz Sahlmann! Fritz, my lad, come down from that tree; you might catch cold out in the rain."

There is said to be an animal, called the sloth, that takes a week to get into a tree and a week to get out of it again. Now, Fritz Sahlmann did not take quite as long as that to come down out of the apple-tree; but still he was long enough, and it could hardly be for the sake of his trowsers that he climbed down so cautiously, and when he was down at the bottom of the tree, it was apparent that he was meditating deeply whether he should come or make off. But Fritz Sahlmann was an obedient boy, he came, only every now and then he stopped for a moment.

"Hanchen, what is he doing there behind that gooseberry-bush?" asked the old Herr.

"He has thrown something down behind it."

"That's it, is it?--Well, Fritz, you can come in at the back-door.--And, Hanchen, you go down, and take care that he does not make his escape through the front-door."

Hanchen went, and Fritz came--slowly as Christmas, but he came.

"Fritz Sahlmann, my lad, you must have enough intelligence to see that it can't be good for your health to be sitting out there in this rain without any umbrella; another time take one with you when you want to sit out in the rain. And you must also have sufficient intelligence to understand that it is not good for your trowsers to be climbing about trees in the rain; choose a fine day for such work in future. Now, tell me; what were you doing in the tree?"

"Oh, nothing, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Hm, hm," said the old Herr; "but what I wanted to ask was: Have you seen anything of Mamsell Westphalen?"

Fritz Sahlmann who had expected quite a different sort of question, seemed at once to brighten up and said quite boldly: "No, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"Well, my lad, you could not be expected to know a thing that nobody knows. But now just do me the favour to look straight at me."

Fritz Sahlmann did him the favour; but his look was like bad money, and the old Herr cannot have taken it to be worth much, for he said--"Fritz Sahlmann, here is a knife, go down and cut me

a stick from one of the hazel-bushes--you know where they are;--let it be as thick as--as--well, about as thick as your middle-finger; and, my lad, you have lost something behind the gooseberry-bush, call Hanchen to help you to look for it. But Hanchen is to go with you, do you hear?"

Fritz Sahlmann now saw a sad prospect opening before him; but he trusted in two things in which people generally trust in their difficulties, namely, in Providence,--that it would at the right time put some stone in the way of the old Herr's plans; and then, secondly, in his good luck in former difficulties; and besides these he had another help in need which ordinary mortals know nothing of; viz: a little bundle of papers which, in serious cases, he used to stuff up under the back of his waistcoat; and this he did not forget to-day.

He now went into the garden, tolerably quieted, with the secret hope that Hanchen would miss the right gooseberry-bush; but while he was busied looking for the right-sized stick, he saw, with inward quaking, that the girl had gone to the right bush, and picked up something that, in the distance, appeared to him to be very much like a sausage. He must try, therefore, to help himself in some other way. So he first of all cut a couple of imperceptible notches in the stick, which did not exactly add to its firmness, and then he tried to get the find from Hanchen. But this did not succeed, for Hanchen had no wish to undergo a second examination before the Herr Amtshauptmann; and, besides, it occurred to her that perhaps it had been Fritz Sahlmann, who had one night, about a week before, strewn her bed with hog's bristles.

So Fritz and Hanchen made their appearance once more before the Herr Amtshauptmann, the former with the stick, and the latter with a nice little pork sausage.

"Hanchen," said the Herr Amtshauptmann, taking the sausage from her; "you can go now. Neiting," he said, turning to his wife and holding up the sausage before her eyes, "this is what we call a *corpus delicti*."

"It may be, Weber, that it is called so in Latin, but we call it a 'pork sausage.'"

"Good, Neiting. But, tell me, can you swear that this is one of our sausages?"

"Yes, Weber, I know it by the string."

"Fritz Sahlmann, how did you come by this sausage?"

Now, this was a terrible question for Fritz; Providence was clearly not interfering on his behalf; his luck was deserting him; the Amtshauptmann stood before him, in one hand the sausage, in the other the stick, and the stick was hardly two feet from his back; he was therefore wholly thrown upon the little bundle of papers for help, and that too was only so-so, for the Amtshauptmann might discover it by the noise. So he gave himself up for lost, began to cry and said--"It was given me."

"That's a story," broke in the Frau Amtshauptmann, "you have stolen it with the long pole."

"Be quiet, Neiting! No leading questions. Fritz, who gave you this sausage?"

"Mamsell Westphalen."

"When, Fritz."

"When I was sitting in the tree."

"Was she sitting by your side?"

"No, she was sitting in the smoking-garret, and then she fixed the sausage on the pole; I had stuck a nail into the end of it."

"But you said just now, you did not know where Mamsell Westphalen was. Fritz Sahlmann, you have told me a lie."

"Don't beat me, don't beat me, Herr Amtshauptmann. I couldn't help it, I couldn't really. The Rathsherr Herse made me take a solemn oath not to tell anybody, not even you, where Mamsell Westphalen was."

"Are you in the Rathsherr Herse's service or in mine? You have told me a falsehood, Fritz, and when you tell lies you are to be whipped; those are the terms of our contract."

And, so saying, the Herr Amtshauptmann took Fritz by the collar, and raised the stick in the air; and, if Providence was to come to his help, it was now the highest time, and--Providence did come. A knock was heard at the door, and in walked the Town Messenger--Luth.

"The Herr Burmeister's respects, and things are going hard against the watchmaker and the Miller, and would the Herr Amtshauptmann be so good as to come down at once and not fail to bring Mamsell Westphalen with him, for her evidence was of the greatest importance."

"I will come at once, Luth. Neiting, the matter is pressing. Fritz Sahlmann, get my coat, and,

Neiting, you go up to that old bird of misfortune and bring her down."

It may be guessed how quickly Fritz Sahlmann fetched the coat, and how glad he was to get out of sight of the Herr Amtshauptmann!

"Frau Amtshauptmann," said Fritz, "I must come with you, for she won't open the door for you alone; and she's not really in the garret itself, but sitting in a place quite near, that nobody knows but me."

So he ran on in front, and the Frau Amtshauptmann followed him softly. Fritz tapped at the door.

"Mamsell, it's me; open the door." No answer.

"Mamsell, all's well! Pickled pork!" Still no answer.

"Mamsell, the French are all gone." Thereupon, something began to move, and a piteous voice was heard to say--

"Fritz Sahlmann, you are a story-teller. Don't tempt me to come out."

Presently the Frau Amtshauptmann also cried out: "Open the door, Westphalen. It is I--your mistress."

"I cannot let myself be seen," cried the voice, "I am a sinner, a miserable sinner."

"Only open the door. It will all come right again."

After long preliminaries, Mamsell Westphalen at length opened the door; and now stood there, red in the face, and the tears running down her cheeks. But, to this day, nobody knows whether it was from emotion or whether it was from the smoke; enough, the tears ran down, and, if it can properly be said of a stout elderly female, she looked like a broken reed.

"Frau Amtshauptmann," said she, "I cannot appear before you; I have sunk too low. For more than twenty years I have lived in your house, and in all that time I have never taken the smallest thing that did not belong to me; and now, in an evil hour, I have taken what was yours."

"Come, come, Westphalen, never mind. Only come down now."

"Not a step, Frau Amtshauptmann, till I have made a clean breast of it.--Look here, you must know I am in hiding; Rathsherr Herse and this imp, Fritz Sahlmann, helped me to hide. And while I was sitting here in sorrow and anguish thinking about Herr Droï and his fate and all the rest, and expecting this urchin would bring me word how things were going, I heard a cough outside and then my name was called, and when I stole to the window to see who it was I thought I was going to have a fit; for, just think, Frau Amtshauptmann, there was that wicked boy had climbed up into the old apple-tree and slid along one of the branches and was hanging like a crow over the abyss.--'Boy,' I said, 'do you want to tumble out of the tree?' But he only grinned at me. 'Boy,' I cried, 'I can't bear to see you in such danger.' And, do you know, Frau Amtshauptmann, the boy actually laughed at me and said, 'I only came to bring you news that the watchmaker has been hanged, and that the French have seized the Rathsherr Herse, and he is lying in chains; and a whole battalion has been sent to find you out!' That was not comforting news, Frau Amtshauptmann, and I was terribly alarmed; but I assure you I was more alarmed about the boy. 'Fritz,' I cried again, 'get down out of the tree.' Then he grinned at me, like an ape at a camel, and said: 'Yes, if you'll give me a sausage!' And then he began playing all sorts of tricks, and jumping about in the branches like a rabbit in a cabbage-garden, till everything before my eyes seemed green and yellow. Then, Frau Amtshauptmann, then I thought--What is a pork sausage? And what is a human life? And in my terror, I took your property. He pushed in the pole, and I stuck a sausage on it.--Then he was called in by the Herr Amtshauptmann, and, as he clambered down, he said just loud enough for me to hear, that he had been chaffing me, and that it was all untrue. So I say he's a liar, Frau Amtshauptmann, and that's my last word."

"Never mind now, Westphalen, my husband has a rod in pickle for him. He won't escape punishment."

It was with great difficulty that the Frau Amtshauptmann succeeded in getting the old dame downstairs, and when they reached the hall, the Herr Amtshauptmann was pacing up and down with his stately tread, quite ready and waiting for them.

It was hard work now to get Mamsell Westphalen to consent to go with the old Herr to the Rathhaus "into the Lion's jaws," as she said. She would bear what she had brought on herself by her ignorance, although she had acted honestly and with good intentions; but to stand before all the foreigners and to defend herself about Herr Droï, that was beyond her strength as a respectable woman, and, if the Herr Amtshauptmann insisted upon it, Hanchen and Corlin must go too, for they must bear witness that she had passed the night with them. On this point the Amtshauptmann had to give way, and while Mamsell Westphalen was gone to her room to get her cap and shawl, he walked up and down with long strides lost in thought and waving about his Jena stick, without which he never went out. At length he said--

"Neiting, she is right; the maids can do no harm. But, Neiting," and here he sniffed about in the air a little, "there's a smell here of smoked eels. Has old Neils of Gülzow been here with his eels?"

"What are you talking about, Weber? Why, it's from Mamsell Westphalen, she has been sitting, you know, in the smoking-garret for the last hour or so."

"That's another thing," said the old Herr.

His wife then called the two maids. As soon as Mamsell Westphalen came back and they were all together, they set off, after Mamsell Westphalen had taken an eternal farewell of the Frau Amtshauptmann.

No one spoke a word, only, when they reached the Schloss-gate, Mamsell Westphalen looked back and said--"Hanchen, when we get to the market-place, run over to Doctor Lukow, and let him be present at my misery. Something may happen to me--I may faint."

CHAPTER XI.

How Witte the baker was drawn into the conspiracy through his meerschaum pipe; why Mamsell Westphalen regarded the Herr Amtshauptmann as a white dove and Hanchen Besserdich as an angel; and what she thought of the French Judge.

If there was confusion up at the Schloss, there was still greater confusion down in the town. To be sure one cannot expect the quiet of a churchyard when a troop of soldiers is quartered in a little town, and the peasants of the neighbourhood and the townspeople are called together, by roll of drum, to help with hand and horse; when misery and woe cry aloud and complain on the one hand, and insolence struts about unpunished on the other.

But, in 1806, when Murat, Bernadotte and Davoust were pursuing old Blücher--and he showed them his teeth at Speck and Waaren--when that famous proclamation: "Order is every citizen's first duty," came from Berlin, it was certainly quieter than now; for it was then only a question of command and obedience. At that time "Messieurs les Français" levied contributions and plundered to their heart's content; and the people crouched down, one behind another; and meanness and baseness were seen on every side, for every one thought of himself and of his own interest; like Meister Kähler of Malchin who said to his wife and children: "I must save myself. You can stay here. If the French come----" and he ran off to the brink of the Eller and hid himself among the reeds.--Everything was foul and reeking from top to bottom.

The times changed. Distress teaches men to pray, but it also teaches them to defend themselves. Schill and the Duke of Brunswick started forth; the whole of Low Germany began to stir; no one knew where the movement came from; no one knew where it would lead to.

Schill marched straight through Mecklenburg to Stralsund. By Buonaparte's command the Mecklenburgers resisted his passage at Damgoren and Tribsees. They were beaten, for they fought wretchedly. A whole company of tall Mecklenburg grenadiers were taken prisoners by one of Schill's Hussars. "Boys," he cried to them, "are you already prisoners." "No," said their brave corporal, "no one has said anything to us." "Well then, come along with me." And they went along with him. Was it cowardice? Was it fear? Whoever saw my fellow-countrymen in 1813 and in 1814; whoever has heard anything of the Strelitz regiment of Hussars, will judge otherwise. No, it was not cowardice; it was unwillingness to fight against that which, in their secret hearts, they hoped and longed for. A movement was beginning in Mecklenburg; and when Prussia broke forth, Mecklenburg was the first state in Germany that followed its example. Thus it was and thus it must ever be.

And times changed again. Providence had stripped the French of their shining snake-skin during their winter in Russia, He, who before had gone about like a master, now came back like a beggar, and implored pity from the Germans; and this noble gift of God's, pity, was stronger than our bitter hatred. No one would raise his hand against him whom God had stricken--pity made us forget his offences. Hardly however was the stiff and frozen snake thawed again in his warm German bed, than his sting once more appeared, and oppression began anew. But the spectre in Germany had become a shadow, and the shadow had got flesh and bone, and had got a name, and the name was shouted out in the streets. "Down with the man-butcher!"--that was the war-cry.

But the war-cry was no passing cry. Not a pack of ragged young fellows--not the orators of the streets first took it up. No! the best and wisest met together; not for conspiracy with knife and

poison, but for confederacy with hand and deed against committed wrong; the elders spoke, the young ones got the weapons. Not in the open street did the first fire shoot up to heaven--we Low Germans suffer no bonfires to be lit in our streets; but each one lighted a fire at his own hearth, and neighbour came to neighbour and warmed himself at its glow. Not from a fire made of fir-wood and straw, that leaves behind it only a heap of ashes, did the smoke rise towards the sky--we Low Germans are a hard wood that burns slowly, but that gives out heat; and in those days the whole of Low Germany was one huge charcoal furnace, that smouldered and glowed--quiet and silent--till the charcoal was one red-hot mass; and, when it was free from smoke and flame, we threw our iron into the glowing embers, and forged our weapons by its heat. And hatred of the French was the whetstone on which we sharpened them. What followed is known to every child; or, if there is one to whom it is not known, it is the duty of his father to impress it upon him, so that he may never forget it.

In our parts, too, the charcoal-furnace smouldered and smoked, and the French scented it in the air; they felt, at every step, that the ground on which they marched shook beneath their feet like a quicksand. They had to learn that the officials and magistrates, formerly so humble, were beginning to oppose and assert themselves; they saw that the townspeople and peasants were becoming refractory, and they laid their hands still more heavily on the country. This was not the best way to soothe the rebellious spirit; the people became more and more fractious, the commands of the French were purposely misunderstood, and where things had gone smoothly before, there was now a mere mockery of obedience. The people defended themselves by all manner of devices, and the French, who must assuredly have felt that their rule was soon coming to an end, carried off all they could get. The soldier knew that his officer was doing no better.

But when their rule actually ended, they were far from expecting an open revolt. If, however, they could have read what was written on all faces--for example, on the face of Witte the baker, who, after putting the Miller's horse and cart into his barn, was now leaning over his half-door smoking his tobacco-pipe, and spitting, and looking, with his teeth set, in the direction of the French--they would have taken care not to bend the bow too far. At any rate, the Frenchman who at that moment passed by the baker and snatched the silver-topped meerschaum pipe out of his mouth, and, in his insolence, walked on quietly smoking it as if nothing had happened; at any rate he would have made off a little faster. For the baker had scarcely felt it snatched from his mouth, when he rushed out at the door, picked up a stone as big as his fist, and hurled it with such force at the Frenchman, that, striking him at the back of the neck, it levelled him with the ground.

And, when the Herr Amtshauptmann arrived with his troop of women at the market-place, a fight was going on between the baker's assistants and the French, and the French and the neighbours, with weapons both sharp and blunt, which was not stopped till an officer came and separated them.

The baker was dragged off to the Rathhaus with a broken head, for having dared to raise his hand against "la grande nation;" and whatever he might say as to the "grande nation's" having raised its hand against his pipe, it was of no use--they dragged him along all the same.

At the Rathhaus the French judge was sitting hearing Miller Voss's case about the lost Frenchman; the valise with the money was lying on the table; the colonel, von Toll, and my father as Burmeister, were present. My father had told the story as far as he knew it quite truthfully, only he had been silent as to the watchmaker having frightened the French chasseurs away at his command; for he thought, "Why should I mention it? The watchmaker will tell it himself, or, if he does not, it will come out in Mamsell Westphalen's evidence." But with the Miller things were going badly; he, of all those who were concerned, was the last who had seen the Frenchman; he had wanted to take the Frenchman to the mill with him, and the fellow was no longer to be found. What spoke well for him was, that he had been very drunk at the time, that he had delivered up the money of his own accord, and that he had at once said that the chasseur's horse was in the baker's stable. When he had done this, and guessed from my father's questions that the fact of his having been drunk might be of use to him, he made the very most of it, and to all questions he only replied that he knew nothing further, for he had been dead drunk; but if they chose to ask Friedrich, he would know all about it.

So stood the matter, when the fight with Witte the baker began out in the market-place. My father was just rushing out at the door to set things to rights, when Witte was dragged in. He still exchanged occasional blows with his guards, mingling "*bougres*" and "*sacrés*" with "rogues and vagabonds." His entrance into the court did not increase its stillness; he cursed, he swore, and my father had enough to do, only to get him a little quieter.

"My pipe, Herr Burmeister! It was a legacy from my father. And to have it snatched out of my mouth before my very eyes! Am I a Stemhagen burgher or not?"

The French chattered and jabbered away together; Colonel von Toll had gone out, and the judge commanded that the baker should be bound, thrown into a waggon and taken along with the army. What more should be done with him would easily be determined; he had raised his hand against the French, that was quite enough.

Then my father stepped up to the Judge and explained that the baker was a well-conducted man, that he had always borne his share of the burden of the war-taxes and levies, and that he had not attacked the French power but had only attacked a thief; or did the French regard a

silver-topped pipe as contribution of war?

This exasperated the Frenchman; he snorted at my father, and gave him to understand that he himself was not by any means too safe.

My father was a brave man, and, when he once saw that a thing was right, he was as obstinate as only a real Mecklenburger can be. He knew, he said, that no honest man was now safe in his own country; but, for his part, he held it to be his duty to stand by his fellow-citizens in a just cause, and he would do so even if there were so many French in the country that one could feed the pigs with them.

The judge foamed with rage, and sputtered out the command to arrest my father at once and lead him out of the room.

As this command was about to be carried out, old Witte sprang towards the judge shouting, "thieves and villains;" and Miller Voss too was ready in a moment to aid with fist and tongue. At this moment Colonel von Toll came back again; and, when he had learned what was the meaning of the tumult, he said that the baker was in the right about the pipe; he had himself inquired into the matter, but that it was quite a secondary affair. This baker was the same man who had got the chasseur's horse standing in his stable, and it seemed to him that there had been a conspiracy to commit a murder,--and, as he said that, he looked very sharply at my father--and the truth must come out, he would pledge his life; and, if it could not be got out here, he knew a place where it could--and that place was Stettin.

My father, Miller Voss, and the baker were now told to go out, and were placed under guard in another room, and the Herr Amtshauptmann was called up. The old Herr came in at the door, with his stick in his hand, as upright and stately as befits a chief magistrate and a good conscience. One of the French wanted to shut the door after him, but that would not do--Mamsell Westphalen forced her way in, and, in her broad wake, followed Hanchen and Corlin; for, as they said, they "did not want to stay outside to be stared at by those horrid Frenchmen;" and Mamsell Westphalen said as she squeezed through, "Pardong Monsoo Frenchmen, where Herr Amtshauptmann is, I must be too; he is my protector." When the old Herr entered, the colonel turned round and looked out of the window.

The judge now asked the Herr Amtshauptmann, through the interpreter, who he was and what was his name.

"I am chief magistrate here in the bailiwick of Stemhagen, and my name is Joseph Weber;" and he laid his hat and stick on a chair.

At the name of Joseph Weber, the French colonel turned half round, and looked at the Amtshauptmann as if he were going to ask him some question; but he seemed to give it up again, and looked out at the window once more. It was now signified to the Herr Amtshauptmann that he should take a seat.

"I thank you," he said, "but I did not come here to take my ease, and I am not enough accustomed to giving evidence to be able to do so sitting." He then, on being questioned, related how the chasseur had first come to him, and everything that he knew about it. And he ended his speech by saying that, if it was to be reckoned as a sin that the Miller had drunk down the chasseur, he himself must bear the blame of it, for it was at his request that the Miller had done it, and the Miller was his subordinate.

At this the judge began to laugh scornfully; the idea that the Burmeister should interfere on behalf of his baker, and the Amtshauptmann on behalf of his miller, seemed too ludicrous.

"And you laugh at that?" said the old Herr calmly, as if he were dealing with Fritz Sahlmann. "Is not that the custom in France? Are officials in your country appointed only to fleece people? Don't you stand by them when they are in difficulties and in the right? And is it not right for one to rid oneself of a rogue and vagabond by a few bottles of wine?"

Well, here was another hard hit for the French judge. "Rogue and vagabond" and a French chasseur were things that could in no way be coupled together, or rather should not be. The judge burst out in a torrent of invective.

The Herr Amtshauptmann remained unmoved, but went to the table and drew out of the Frenchman's valise one of the silver spoons. This he held up to the judge and said,--"Do you see this crest? I know it, and I know the people to whom it belongs. They are not people who would sell their silver spoons; and besides, according to my ideas, an honest soldier has something else to do than to be bargaining for silver spoons."

There was not much to be said against this, so the judge cleverly shifted his ground, and asked the Amtshauptmann how the watchmaker had come to be wearing a French uniform, and what he had been doing up at the Schloss at night?

"There you ask me too much," said the Herr Amtshauptmann; "I did not tell him to come, I only just saw him for a moment when the Miller was taking the chasseur away with him; and his spending the night at the Schloss was against my knowledge and against my will."

The judge soon saw that he could not make much of the Herr Amtshauptmann; he broke off the interview and told the old gentleman he could go, but that he must not leave the Rathhaus.

"Very well," said he, and he turned to leave. "Good day, then, till the matter is settled."

As the Amtshauptmann was about to take his hat and stick, he found the French colonel, who had left the window and was standing close by him, intently engaged in scanning the names which had been cut in the stick in Weber's student days. He looked as eager and as curious as if he were seeking his number in the newspaper advertisements to see whether he had drawn the great lottery prize.

The Herr Amtshauptmann looked at him for one moment, then made him a deep bow,—"By your leave, Herr Colonel, my stick."

The Colonel started and looked rather confused, then handed him the stick, and, as the old Herr went out of the room, he followed him.

Mamsell Westphalen also wanted to follow, and Hanchen and Corlin were preparing to go too, when "Halte, halte!" cried the Judge;—and they who did not get out, were the three women.

Many a time afterwards did Mamsell Westphalen relate this trial and what she had felt during it, but she always began in the same way,—that it had been as if she were standing in the Stemhagen belfry, and all the bells, great and small, were ringing in her ears, and, when the Herr Amtshauptmann went away from her, it was as if a white dove had flown away from the belfry and she must follow him to life or death; but the fellow whom they nick-named a judge had held her fast by the skirt of her gown. "And, Frau Meister," she would then add, "I have seen many a dozen of judges in my life, and they were all bad enough, but such a gallows-bird as this French Judge I never did see. For, look you Frau Meister, he had on a yellow livery and 'gallows' was plainly written in his face."

It was with Mamsell Westphalen as with many honest souls who have a great terror of danger that threatens in the distance, but who are no sooner in the middle of it than they play with it; being like gnats, which cannot bear smoke but are attracted by fire. When she saw that the bridge behind her was broken away, and that she was going to be put on oath, she set her arms a-kinbo, walked forward and stood on the same place on which the Amtshauptmann had stood. "For," she said afterwards, "I had seen that he had stood proudly there, and his spirit came over me."

The Judge now asked what she knew of the watchmaker.

"I know nothing about him except that he speaks broken German, that, for bread, he says '*doo pang*' and for wine, '*doo vang*;' that's all I know."

How was it that he was in a French uniform?

"I don't know how he gets into it and I don't know how he gets out of it again. I suppose he does like all other men."

Why had he come up to the Schloss last night?

"A great many people come to the Schloss—all honest people, except those whom the gendarmes bring,—and if I am to bother myself with what they all want, the duke had better make me Amtshauptmann, and the Herr Amtshauptmann can then look after the kitchen."

Why had not the watchmaker gone home?

"Because the weather was so bad that one could not have had the heart to drive a dog out of the house, much less a Christian. I hold the man for a Christian, though he's not too good a one, for, as I have heard say, he goes hunting hares by night—and why doesn't he go in the daytime like other folk?—and then he uses a stool with one leg, which he straps on to himself behind, and every other Christian sits on a stool with three legs; and he wanted to mislead our Corlin into this outlandish mode for milking, but she told him plainly that if that was the fashion in his country, he might run about with the stool tied to him if he liked, but she was not going to make herself the laughing-stock of the place."

But why had she hidden the watchmaker with her in her room?

At this Mamsell Westphalen was silent, the blood rushed into her face at the impertinence of the French fellow; that was the very question that had driven her into flight up in the garret. But while in her distress she was seeking for an answer, help came. Hanchen Besserdich and Corlin pressed forward to her side and burst out "Those are lies; those are foul lies!" They would take their oath of it. Their Mamsell had slept with them; and they should tell the Herr Amtshauptmann.

The noise became dreadful, and scarcely had the Judge succeeded in restoring quiet, when they broke out again, and at last the Judge ordered them all three to be turned out.

"Frau Meister," said Mamsell Westphalen afterwards to the weaver's wife, "you know I've

always been against Hanchen Besserdich's sharp tongue, but no angel could have helped me better at that moment than she with her chatter. Frau Meister, Man must not despise what, at times, is disagreeable to him; who knows of what use it may not be. And a sharp tongue is one of those things. That's what I say and that's what I hold to. And I shan't forget the girl."

CHAPTER XII.

Tells how the Amtshauptmann and the French Colonel nearly embraced each other; how my Mother pulled the Amtshauptmann by the tail of his coat; and how the Corsican dragon carried off my Father and my uncle Herse.

When the Herr Amtshauptmann left the Court of Justice, he went straight across to the other side of the hall to a place where he had often been before and often came afterwards, namely my mother's room--for we lived in the Rathhaus.

My mother sat knitting, and we children were playing about her; for what do children know of cares? But she was sad and anxious; she sat there silent and perhaps did not even hear the noise which we were making round her. She probably still knew nothing of the difficulty in which my father was, for it was not his custom to tell all his little troubles; but there is a curious fact about women--a man may see at once which way the wind blows, but a woman will have known a long time before that a change was at hand.--Well, the old Herr came into my mother's room and said,-

"Good morning, my dear friend. How are you? Much troubled with all these Frenchmen? What say you, eh?"

My mother held out her hand to him. She was very fond of the fine old man who used to come and sit by her side for many an hour, pouring out, in his simple and open-hearted way, the experience of his grey hairs. Not but what he was merry and lively enough when he related the exploits of his Jena student-days, and what he and his brother, Adolph Diedrich,--"The Professor *juris utriusque* at Rostock, my friend--" had done in their students-society, the "amici." My mother held out her hand to him, for she could not get up; she had become lame during a severe illness, and I never saw her otherwise than,--when she was at her best,--sitting on a chair knitting away as industriously as if her poor, weak hands were strong and well; or,--at her weaker times,--lying in bed, in pain, reading her books. What the books were which she read, I know no longer; but novels they were not; I only remember this much, that the Herr Amtshauptmann's Marcus Aurelius was sometimes amongst them, for I had to carry it backwards and forwards.

It was not the Amtshauptmann's habit needlessly to alarm women, and so instead of talking about the troubles in the Court of Justice, he began about the bad weather, and he was just giving a short description of the pools in the Stenhagen market-place--for it was not paved in those days,--when the door opened and the French colonel came in. He made my mother a stiff bow, and advanced towards the Amtshauptmann.

We children left our playthings and crept, in a little knot, into the corner behind the tile-stove, like chickens when a kite is overhead, and wondered what this meant. Probably my mother also wondered, for she gazed anxiously at the old Herr in whose face there was a cold, haughty look that she had never seen before.

But the Colonel did not take it ill, and there was a friendly politeness in his tone as he said to the old gentleman, "I beg your pardon. I heard just now in the court the name of 'Weber.' Is your name 'Weber?'"

"Joseph Heinrich Weber," replied the Amtshauptmann shortly and stood as erect as a pillar.

"Have you not a brother named 'Adolph Diedrich?'"

"Adolph Diedrich, professor at Rostock," answered the old Herr without moving a limb.

"Herr Amtshauptmann," said the French officer and stretched out both hands towards him, "let what passed between us this morning be forgotten. You are dearer to me than you think. I have read a name on your stick that is engraved deeply in my heart. Look here 'Renatus von Toll!'"

"And you know that man?" asked the old Herr, and it was as if the sun had risen over his face.

"How should I not?" said the Colonel, "why, he is my father."

"What!" exclaimed the Amtshauptmann. "What say you, eh? What say you, eh?" And he held the colonel out at arm's length and looked into his eyes. "You the son of Renatus von Toll?"

"Yes, and he has often spoken to me of his two best friends, 'the Webers,' 'the tall Mecklenburgers.'"

"My friend," cried the old Herr, turning to my mother, "of whom have I talked to you oftenest? What say you, eh? Of the fine Westphalian, Renatus?"

My mother nodded her head; she could not speak, for there was something in the old gentleman's delight that brought the tears into her eyes; and we silly youngsters came out from behind the stove and grew bolder, and it all seemed to us as happy as if one of our cousins had come.

"My boy, my boy!" cried the Amtshauptmann, "I ought to have known you, if the damned French uniform.... No, no, I did not mean to say that," he added quickly as he saw the blood rush into the Colonel's face. "Tell me, my boy, has your father still the clear brown eyes? What say you, eh? Has he still the curly brown hair?--Such a splendid man he was, my friend!" said he to my mother, "God has written the word 'man' on his forehead."

The Colonel now said that the brown eyes were still there, but that the hair had turned white.

"True, true," said the Amtshauptmann, "of course. It must be so; Adolph Diedrich's is quite grey too. But now, friend, you must come up to the Schloss with me and stop there awhile. God knows, this is the first time that I ever invited a French officer to stay with me. But you are not properly a French officer, you are a German.--The son of Renatus von Toll can only be an honest German, my friend," he said turning to my mother. "What say you, eh?"

My mother had seen that the Colonel turned hot and cold alternately during this speech of the Amtshauptmann's, and she had made all manner of signs to him, but in vain; and, on his coming nearer to her, as he asked the last question, she plucked him gently by his coat-tail as a sign to him to be quiet. At this, the old Herr turned sharply round and asked--

"Why are you pulling me?"

It was now my mother's turn to be red. But, in the meanwhile, the colonel had recovered himself; he made a sort of half-bow to my mother, and said firmly and earnestly to the old Herr,--"I must refuse your invitation, Herr Amtshauptmann, for we march in half an hour. And, as concerns this uniform which does not please you,--and cannot please you, I grant it--I cannot dishonour it by taking it off in the hour of danger. You say that I am a German, my father's son must be a German--you are right--but, if you regard it as a crime that I am on the other side, you must lay the blame on my sovereign and not on me. When I became a soldier, the Elector of Cologne was in league with the Emperor; and when I went to Spain four years ago the whole of Germany and all her princes lay at his feet. I returned from Spain three weeks ago, and I find Germany quite changed. What I have felt concerns myself alone, and if there is any human soul to whom I can speak of it, it can only be my father. For my father's oldest friend this must be enough; it is more than I have said to any other human being."

The old Herr had been standing at the beginning of this speech, looking the Colonel straight in the face, and every now and then giving a shake of his head; but, as he became aware that there was a sad earnestness in the young man's face, his eyes sought another place to rest on, and when the Colonel had ended, he said, "That's quite another matter;" and he leant towards my mother and said, "My friend, what say you, eh? He is right, is he not? Renatus von Toll's son is right. Pity, that he *is* right!" and he took the Colonel by the hand: "My dear young friend,--and so you cannot stay here?" And, on the colonel's assuring him that it was not possible, he cried out to me, "Fritz, boy, you can run an errand for me; run to Neiting--to the Frau Amtshauptmann,--and tell her to come down here, something joyful has happened. Do you hear? Say something *joyful*. She might else be anxious, my friend," he added to my mother.

Well, away I ran as fast as I could up to the Schloss, and it was not long before the Frau Amtshauptmann was walking along by my side slowly and quietly as was her wont, and I hopped round about her like a little water-wagtail, so that she had enough to do to keep me from under the waggons and from the horses' feet.

As we crossed the market-place the French were fast getting ready to march. The guns stood there with the horses fastened to them; the battalion was formed into line; and one could see that they were on the point of starting.

The Frau Amtshauptmann went into the Rathhaus, but she did not get far, for she was seized upon in the hall by Mamsell Westphalen and the two maids; and, before she knew where she was going, she was in the midst of complaints, about "murder and killing," from Witte the baker, and Droz, and Miller Voss, each one telling her his story; and round them and their complaints, gathered Herr Droi's wife and children, crying and entreating; and the Frau Meister Stahl caught Mamsell Westphalen by the skirt of her gown, as if Mamsell were going to spring into the water, and she must save her from suicide. Witte still every now and then fired off a "robbers," but there was not more than half a charge of powder left in him, and, when he saw the grief of the watchmaker's wife, he thought of his own family, and called to me;--

"Fritz, will you run over to my house, my boy? You shall have a bun for it,--and call to my son Johann and my daughter Strüwingken, and tell them they are to come over here, for the rascally French are going to take me to their God-forgotten country as they have already done my brown five-year-old."

I gave the message, and when I came back again with Strüwingken and Johann and the bun, there were Miller Voss's cousin Heinrich and the Miller's wife and Fieka in Heinrich's cart before the Rathhaus; for, after all, the mounted Gensdarmes had found their way to the Gielow Mill at last and had cleared out the nest. Now the sobbing and crying began again, and the only one who remained quiet was Fieka. She asked her father softly,--

"Have you given up the money?"

The Miller pointed towards the court of justice, and said, "It lies there."

"Then be of good heart, father; God will not forsake us."

During the whole of this time, my father had been walking up and down the hall wrapped in his own thoughts. He cannot have been easy in his mind, for he constantly stopped for a moment and passed his hand through his hair when he heard the wailing of the women, and once he went up to Herr Droï and told him he need not be alarmed as things did not look badly for him.

Herr Droï nodded his head and said, "Bon!" became a whole inch taller, planted one leg out in front of the other, and put one arm confidently akimbo.

It seemed now as if everything was ready for marching, for the Adjutant called the colonel out of my mother's room. When the colonel came out his face had become pleasant again, and he went, with the Amtshauptmann, towards the prisoners and ordered that Mamsell Westphalen and the two maids should be set free; and Mamsell Westphalen ducked three times by way of curtseying and said--"I thank you, Herr Colonel von Toll."

The Herr Amtshauptmann caught sight of his wife in the crowd, and set her also free and, scarcely had he introduced her to the Colonel and told her what had happened, when the Adjutant gave the commands to march and Miller Voss, Witte the baker and Herr Droz to bring out.

Fieka had taken her father's arm, and would not let it go. They forced her away from him, but she remained quite quiet and said, "Father, I shall stay by you wherever they may take you."

For the baker it was easier work; he spat three times, let off at random a few "rogues and vagabonds," told Johann shortly what he was to do, and went out. But, with the watchmaker the case was very sad: his wife and children hung about him, and cried, in French and German, till it would have moved the very stones to pity.

My father could now stand it no longer; he stepped forward, and asked upon what ground the watchmaker was to be led away prisoner. The man was a naturalised citizen, and had never in his life committed any crime. No one could reckon it as a crime that he had slept up at the Schloss, for the Herr Colonel and the Herr Adjutant had also slept up there. As to his having on the uniform, why that was natural, seeing that he had served under the French, and his still putting it on now and then could not be taken ill by them, for the man showed by doing so that he still thought with pleasure of the time when he had worn it in their ranks.

"He has abused the uniform!" shouted the Adjutant.

My father cried back that it was not true; that it was no abuse, when anyone got rid of a pack of thieves and rascals by an innocent trick; and the proof that they had had to deal with fellows of that sort was to be found in the Chasseur's valise.

The Adjutant looked at my father savagely and spitefully, as if he would have liked to run him through the body, the colonel stepped up with a face in which a thunderstorm was gathering, and made a sign with his hand to lead away the watchmaker; but my father sprang forward and cried,--"Stop! The man is innocent, and if any one here is guilty, it is I, for it was at my command that he acted. If anyone is to be arrested for it, you must arrest me."

"Be it so," said the colonel coldly, "let that man free, and take this one here."

"My friend," cried the Herr Amtshauptmann, "what are you doing?"

"My duty, Herr Amtshauptmann," said the Colonel and gave him his hand. "Farewell, Herr Amtshauptmann, my time is up," and so saying, he went out of the house.

The whole thing was done so quickly that the greater number of those who were there did not know what the question was. I least of all, for I was still but a little mite then; but I understood enough to see that my father had got himself into danger. Naturally, I now began to cry, and just as the little Droï's were drying their tears, mine were running down my cheeks. I followed close on my father's heels as he was pushed out into the street; the Amtshauptmann also followed.

"Herr Amtshauptmann," said my father, "comfort my poor wife. And you Fritz," he said to me,

"go and fetch my hat."

I ran in, and got the hat, and when I brought it to him, he lifted me up and kissed me and whispered in my ear, "Tell your mother I shall soon be back again."

The procession now set off, two men in front and two behind and, in the middle, Miller Voss, Witte the baker, and my father. As they passed by the engine-house, the door opened, and who should come out, but my uncle, the Rathsherr Herse, also with two men; for the colonel of artillery had had him locked up there on account of the escape of the peasants with their teams.

"Why, Herr Rathsherr, what has happened to you?" said my father.

"It's for the Fatherland, Herr Burmeister," cried my uncle Herse, "I entered into a conspiracy with Mamsell Westphalen; and now the Corsican dragon has got me in his claws; but it really is because of Miller Voss's horse and cart and the stupid old peasants."

They now briefly told each other their stories, and my uncle Herse marched down the street, with his cocked hat and red collar, so majestically that he looked almost as if he were commanding the whole. My uncle Herse was no coward; he was not afraid; he regarded this as a day of the greatest glory to him and, looking as if he had grown a couple of inches taller from the rain during the night, he walked along the Brandenburg road, greeting right and left, Christians and Jews. He winked to the Captain of the Fire Brigade not to betray what he knew; and put his finger to his lips as he passed by Solomon the Jew as a sign that he was to be silent. And scarcely was he outside the gate when old Stahl, the weaver, began telling everybody that the French had taken the Herr Rathsherr with them; they were going to make him a general,--but the others would all be hanged.

CHAPTER XIII.

Why Fritz Sahlmann fell in the mud; why Bank, the shoemaker, got a blow with the butt-end of a musket; why Rathsherr Herse wished to set fire to all the mills in the country; and why the King of Prussia always kept a place at his table for the Rathsherr.

When our prisoners got outside the Brandenburg gate, they marched with their two men in front and two behind, across the bridge, along the Brandenburg lane,--for, though called a road it was only a lane, there being in those days no high roads in Mecklenburg,--and when they came to the narrow pass leading up to the Windmill hill to which the Stemhagen folk have given the names of, "Killhorse" and "Break-neck," the guard commanded "Halt," for they could go no further.

The whole of the artillery lay in the pass, and had sunk so deep in the mud that, if all the horses of the neighbourhood had been at hand--which they were not--they could not have pulled this heap of misfortune out of it. There lay the French now, and cursed and swore. Labourers were fetched from the town with spades and shovels, and fresh horses were sent for from Jürnsdorf and Klaukow, and all the while it rained so heavily that no one could keep a dry thread on his back.

"Neighbour Voss," said baker Witte "what do you say to this rain?"

"Fine weather for late barley," replied the Miller, "if folks have sown any."

"My shirt is wringing wet," said the baker!

"And my boots are filling with water," said the Miller.

"Herr Burmeister, come behind me; my cloak will give you some shelter," said my uncle Herse, and he made himself a little bit broader than nature had already made him. "I am only glad that these 'slaves of the tyrant' will get a wetting through and through."

My father got under the cloak, but said nothing, for something had caught his eye.

Above, on the edge of the narrow pass a group of people were standing: labourers, servants and Stemhagen burghers, who had followed the procession in spite of the rain and bad weather, partly from curiosity and partly from sympathy, and amongst these people Fritz Sahlmann was slipping in and out, telling the whole story first to one and then to another of those who did not yet know it. When my father first caught sight of him, he was standing close by Inspector Bräsig of Jürnsdorf, who had come on horseback, and had to ride alongside of the French army, lest he

should never see his team-horses again.

The Inspector was an old friend of my father's, and my father could clearly see that old Bräsig nodded to him and whispered something in Fritz Sahlmann's ear, when the boy told him of the scrape. Fritz Sahlmann now stuck his hands in his trousers' pockets, and began whistling; whistled himself along the edge; whistled himself down the bank; when nearly at the bottom cleverly caught his foot in the root of an old willow; stumbled quite naturally towards the prisoners; and, when close to my father, fell in the mud as if he could not help it in the least.

My father bent down and raised him up.

"Watch the horse," whispered Fritz.

He could say no more for he was at once driven off by the French, and he climbed up the bank again.

If, before, my father had paid attention to the movements of the Inspector and the lad, he now did so doubly. He watched old Bräsig get down from his horse, crack his riding-whip and give it into Fritz Sahlmann's hand; the boy now began to lead the horse up and down, but always a little lower on the bank, till at last he stood still under a willow-tree as if he were seeking shelter there from the rain. From this place he made a sign to my father, and my father, who stood under the cover of my uncle Herse's broad back, waved his hat three times as if he were shaking the rain from it.

Presently, a coach-and-four came round the corner where the Brandenburg Lane meets the Ivenack Lane and, in it, sat a general who had been quartered on the Graf of Ivenack the night before. It, too, drove up the pass and, when it came to the place where the transport had stuck fast, some confusion arose amongst the soldiers in getting out of the way, and no sooner did my father observe this, than he flew, as if shot out of a pistol, from behind the Herr Rathsherr's cloak, up the bank on the other side of the coach, to the willow-tree, snatched whip and bridle out of Fritz Sahlmann's hands, jumped on to the horse, and--quick as lightning--was down the hill.

"*Feu, feu!*" shouted the French; "click, click," went the hammers, but no response came from the old firelocks, for the powder was as wet--as Stahl the weaver's coffee grounds.

For one short instant, it seemed as if the Stemhagen burghers, when they saw their Burmeister riding over hedge and ditch, were going to give him three cheers; and Bank the shoemaker was just beginning "Our Burmeister viv ..." when the butt-end of a French musket applied between his shoulders clearly hinted to him that he had better be off. His example was followed by the others and, in a twinkling, the place was clear of everybody except Inspector Bräsig, who had stationed himself against a tree and was smoking a pipe with the greatest calmness.

Now, whether no one had observed that he had come on horseback, or whether the French had distinctly seen that he had had nothing to do with my father's escape, he having stood a long way off from his horse--whatever it was, nothing was said to him.

The other three prisoners, however, got a double guard, and were brought away out of the pass into an open field, and thence, to the old windmill from which the hill took its name, as it was a little drier there. Here they sat back to back on a millstone and talked together.

"It's a good thing for the Burmeister," said old Witte, as he combed his wet hair with his brass comb, "that he has got away, but it's bad for us. We are now like a swarm of bees without a queen. He would have been sure to have got us all off sooner or later."

"Well, neighbour, it can't be helped," said Miller Voss, and he nodded his head to Inspector Bräsig who had also taken shelter in the mill.

"Hm! Meister Witte," broke in my uncle Herse, "he is well up in town matters, I don't deny it; but as to war-matters--to what concerns military affairs--why he has never in his life given the least attention to them, and he knows about as much of them as ... as ..."

"As you or I, Herr Rathsherr," said the Miller innocently.

"Miller Voss," said the Rathsherr and he drew himself up, making himself an inch taller, "speak for yourself, if you please, and not for others. What you know of such matters has all been learned since yesterday afternoon; for you and the Amtshauptmann and the Burmeister have brought us into this mess, and, if I had not come to the rescue, Mamsell Westphalen would be sitting here too, with her teeth chattering. What I know, I will soon give you a proof of. Do you know Jahn?"

"Do you mean old Jahn of Peenhäuser, who mends pots for my wife?"

"Bah! I mean 'Gymnast-Jahn,' who is now in Berlin, the brother-in-law of Kolloffen of Lukow."

"No, I don't know the man."

"Well then, listen. One day this 'Gymnast-Jahn' was walking along the streets of Berlin with a

student when they came to the Brandenburg Gate--for the Berliners have got a Brandenburg Gate just as much as the Stemhageners,--and he pointed to the place where the Goddess of Victory, which the French had carried off, had formerly stood; and he asked the student what thought came into his head at the sight.--'None.'--Smack! he gave him a sound box on the ear."

"That was cool," said the Miller.

"Yes, Herr Rathsherr," said old Witte, "my hand is pretty ready, but ..."

"Let me finish first, will you?" said my uncle Herse. "'Master Good-for-nothing,' said Gymnast-Jahn, seeing the student's astonishment, 'that will teach you to think in future. You should have thought on seeing that place that we must get the Goddess of Victory back again from Paris.'"

"Yes but ..." said Witte.

"That's all very well but ..." said the Miller.

The Herr Rathsherr however did not let them get possession of the field, but turned to the Miller and said,--"Now I ask you, Miller Voss, when you see this mill, what idea comes into your head?"

"Herr Rathsherr," said the Miller, and he got up and stood a little distance off, "I hope you don't mean to treat me in that manner?"

"I only ask you, Miller Voss, what idea comes into your head?"

"Well," said the Miller, "what idea ought to come? I think it's a rusty old thing, and that, in Spring, it ought to have new sails; and that, if the stones above are no better than these down here, the Stemhagen folk must get a devilish lot of sand along with their flour."

"And you're right there, neighbour," said the baker.

"And he's wrong there!" cried my uncle Herse. "If he had answered properly he would have said that it must be set fire to. And it will be set fire to; all the mills in the whole country must be set fire to." And he stood up and walked, with long strides round about the mill-stones.

"Lord save us!" said Miller Voss. "Who is to do this wickedness?"

"I," said my uncle Herse, and he slapped himself on the breast and went nearer to the two, who wondered what could be coming next, and said, in a low voice: "When the Landsturm^[3] rises, we must set fire to all the mills as a signal;--that's called a beacon, and the best proof you know nothing about war-matters is, that you don't even know what a beacon means."

"Herr Rathsherr," said Miller Voss, "it's all the same to me whether it's a beacon or a deacon, but, whoever sets fire to my water-mill, had better look out."

"Watermill? Windmills I mean. Miller Voss; who ever said anything about watermills? Watermills lie in the ground and don't burn. And now, I ask you, has the Burmeister as much knowledge and courage to act in time of war as I have?"

"He's never said he would set mills on fire," said the baker, and looked at the Herr Rathsherr rather doubtfully as if he did not quite know whether he was in fun or earnest.

"My dear Witte, you look at me like a cow at a new gate. You are, no doubt astonished and thinking what does a Stemhagen Rathsherr like me, know of war and stratagems? My dear Witte, you knead your dough with your hands, in the baking-trough; I knead mine in my head by thought. If I were where I ought to be, I should be in the presence of the King of Prussia, talking with the man. 'Your Majesty,' I should say, 'you are rather in difficulties, I think?' 'That I am, Herr Rathsherr,' he would say, 'money is devilish scarce just now.'--'Nothing else?' I say. 'That's a mere trifle. Only give me full power to do what I like'--*licentia poetica* that is called in Latin, Miller Voss,--'and a regiment of Grenadier Guards.'--'You shall have them, my dear Rathsherr,' says the King; and I have all the Jews from the whole of Prussia assembled in the palace-yard at Berlin. I surround the palace with my grenadiers, place myself at the head of a company and march with them into the palace-yard. 'Are you all there?' I ask the Jews. 'Yes,' say they. 'Now, are you willing,' I say to them, 'to sacrifice the half of your possessions on the altar of the Fatherland?'--'We can't do that,' says one, 'for we should be ruined.'--'Will you, or will you not?' I ask. I give the word of command 'Attention.'--'Herr Rathsherr,' says another, 'take a quarter.'--'Not a groschen less than half,' say I; 'Make ready!'--'We will!' scream the Jews--'Good,' say I, 'then let each one go singly up to the Presence Chamber where his Majesty is sitting on the Throne, and let each one lay his money on the steps at his feet.' When they have all been up, I go. 'Well,' I say, 'how is it now your Majesty.'--'Capital, my dear Herr Rathsherr,' says he, 'would that the other business were going as well.'--'We'll soon manage it,' say I; 'only give me twenty regiments or so of infantry, ten of cavalry and as much artillery as you have by you.'--'You shall have them,' says the King.--'Good,' say I, and march off with my soldiers away through field and flood, my flanks always covered. I throw myself upon Hamburg, and surprise the Prince of Eckmühl; he is brought before me. 'Build a good high gallows,' say I.--'Mercy,' says he.--'No mercy,' say I; 'this is for trying to become Duke of Mecklenburg.'"

"In Heaven's name, Herr Rathsherr," said Miller Voss, "don't talk like that; just think if those fellows were to understand you."

"That would be the very Devil!" said my uncle Herse, and he looked at the Frenchmen one after another, but, when he saw that they were paying no heed to him, he said, "You're an old coward. Miller Voss, the fellows cannot understand Platt-Deutsch;--Well, so I have him hanged, and march, to the left, into Hanover, and fall on the rear of the Corsican--you know whom I mean.--You must always fall upon the enemy's rear, that is the chief thing, everything else is rubbish. A tremendous battle! Fifteen thousand prisoners! He sends me a trumpeter: 'A truce.'--'No good,' say I, 'we have not come here to play.'--'Peace,' he sends me word.--'Good,' say I; 'Rheinland and Westphalia, the whole of Alsatia and three-fourths of Lothringen;--'I can't,' says he, 'my brother must live.' Forward then again! I march to the right and quiet Belgium and Holland; all at once I wheel to the left.--'The Devil take it!' says he. 'Here's that confounded Rathsherr again in my rear.'--'First regiment of Grenadiers, charge!' I command; the battery is taken. 'Second regiment of Hussars to the front!--He ventures too far forward with his staff. Swoop, the Hussars come down upon him.--'Here is my sword,' says he.--'Good,' say I, 'now come along with me. And you, my boys, can now go home again, the war is at an end.' I now lead him in chains to the foot of the Throne.--'Your Majesty of Prussia, here he is.'--'Herr Rathsherr,' says the King, 'ask some favour.'--'Your Majesty,' say I, 'I have no children, but, if you wish to do something for me, give my wife a little pension when I leave this life. Otherwise, I wish for nothing but to retire to my former position of Stemhagen Rathsherr.'--'As you like,' says the King; 'but remember that whenever you may happen to come to Berlin, a place will be kept for you at my table.'--I make my bow, say 'Good day,' and go back again to Stemhagen."

"That's fine of you," said baker Witte. "But what is the good to us of all this grand military art? This time the thing has begun at the wrong end; you haven't got him, he has got you--and us into the bargain; and, if anyone is to be brought bound to the foot of the throne, it will be us. After all, the Burmeister was the cleverest of us, for he's now on the other side of the hill, and sitting in a dry place, and our teeth are chattering with cold like nuts in a bag."

"Pooh, pooh!" said my uncle Herse, "what art is there in running away before everyone's eyes? No, my advice is that we should do it more delicately with a stratagem of war. Let us each think of one, and then we can choose the best."

The Miller had not spoken a word all this time. He was looking, as well as the rain would let him, down the hill-side to the road. "Good God!" he said at last. "Why it's sheer impossible; why it's my Fieka and Joe Voss's Heinrich, who are coming along in that waggon!"

And so it was.

CHAPTER XIV.

How the Herr Amtshauptmann stood beside my Mother with an empty bowl in his hand; what Fieka and Heinrich had come for; and how Fritz Sahlmann lost his chance of glory.

This was the saddest day that I can remember in all my childhood. What a scene it was in my mother's room!

My mother had, for some time past, seen clearly that things were going on which should not be; but, though she had a very excitable mind and a lively imagination, which brought everything in a strong light before her eyes, pain and illness had accustomed her to restrain her feelings and to bear with resignation whatever might come. But uncertainty at a time like that was hard to bear, and what made it still harder was, that it was impossible to procure certainty. When she heard my father's raised voice in the hall, and the violent tone of the adjutant, and the colonel's short, sharp commands, she guessed what was happening without being able to understand what was said. She became alarmed; and not a soul was near her, not a soul attended to her bell. Her helpless state, and the bitter sense that she could be of no use, that she did not stand there where she ought to stand,--at my father's side,--overcame her; and when the Amtshauptmann came back into her room she had fainted, and was lying as if dead in her armchair.

He had entered with the most consoling passage he could think of from Marcus Aurelius on his lips; but, as soon as he saw the state my mother was in, he forgot everything he had meant to say, and began to cry out--"Why, what is the matter, my friend? What is the matter? What say you, eh?"

The old man, who did not usually lose his presence of mind, was altogether confused and

bewildered, and had retained only an indistinct feeling that something must be done; and when I rushed in, with the tears streaming down my cheeks, he was standing before my mother with a bowl in his hand with no water in it, and saying--"This is a very strange thing!"

At last my screams brought the Frau Amtshauptmann and Mamsell Westphalen to the rescue. I had thrown myself on my mother's neck, and cried over and over again, "Mother, dearest mother, he will come back; he told me to tell you he should soon be back again." At last, at last her consciousness returned; and, if we had been anxious before, we were miserable now.

To console is the easiest thing in the world for those who are satisfied with offering the stereotyped phrases of politeness to one in sorrow; but for anyone whose heart is overflowing with love, which he longs to pour into another's sorrowing heart, and who at the same time feels that all the love he can give is insufficient to awaken fresh hopes in this poor heart, it is most difficult, and becomes indeed impossible if he does not believe in the words of comfort which he utters. Heaven be praised! This was not the case here. The most faithful of friends stood by us, and the old Herr and his wife by degrees succeeded in quieting my mother's grief; and when she was recovered enough to understand his reasons, there was no lack of them, for if there was anyone in the world who had reasons to give for everything, it was the Amtshauptmann, and he did not spare them to-day.

Reasons were of little use to me; but, all the same, I was comforted before my mother was. Mamsell Westphalen had taken me on her lap, and, while the tears were rolling down my face, she gave me delightful descriptions of the apples I should have, and this did its work. A child's heart is soon consoled; the tree requires heavy rain, but a drop of dew refreshes the blade of grass.

The first burst of grief was over, when Luth, the town-messenger, came in, and told the Herr Amtshauptmann that Miller Voss's Fieka was outside, and wished to speak a few words to him.

"My friend," said the old Herr, "she is a good girl, I know it for certain; and she is no doubt anxious about her father. We may as well have her here, I think, and see what she wants. What says Horace? '*Est solamen miseris socios habuisse malorum.*' I will translate that to you by-and-bye. Luth, go and fetch the girl."

Fieka came in. She was a slender little damsel, but her fresh round cheeks were health itself, and though just now her eyes looked sad, yet you could see that they would be able to laugh merrily enough at other times. Her whole appearance showed that she was a resolute girl, who would not be easily turned aside from her purpose; and her true simple face plainly told that she would engage in no undertaking which she did not feel to be right. She had tied a coloured handkerchief over her cap to keep it safe from the rain, and looked so neat in her red and green striped woollen petticoat as she stood there before the old Herr, that he could not help turning to his wife and saying half aloud, "Eh, Neiting, what say you?"

When Fieka had made her curtsy to the Amtshauptmann, she went round towards the Frau Amtshauptmann and my mother and Mamsell Westphalen, and made a curtsy to each of them, and shook hands with them, according to the fashion of those good old times.

"Herr Amtshauptmann," said Fieka, "my father and the neighbours have told me so much good of you that I have made bold to come to you in my trouble."

"What have you got on your mind, then, my daughter?" asked the old Herr kindly, and he laid his hand on her head. "What say you, eh?"

"My father is innocent," she replied, looking up in his face with perfect trust.

"That he is innocent I know, my child," said he, and he nodded his head.

"And so I've no fear but he'll be set free soon," continued Fieka.

"Hm? Yes. That's to say it would be no more than right. But, in these days, might counts as right; and if it's difficult, in quiet times and with the best intentions, to pick out the innocent from the guilty, it is harder still in war-time, especially if the good intentions are lacking."

"I am not at all afraid," said Fieka quickly, "he must be set free, and that soon. But my father is an old man, something might happen to him, and there would be nobody about him then; so I want to go and be near him."

"My daughter," said the old Herr, shaking his head, "you are young, and soldiers are rough hosts. It would be no comfort to your father to know you were in their company."

"I am not going alone, Herr; my cousin Heinrich, Joe Voss's son, is going with me; and we thought if you would give us some writing, as a sort of pass, nothing would happen to us."

"A pass?" said the Amtshauptmann, shaking his head still more seriously. "Much those fellows will heed a pass from a Stemhagen Amtshauptmann! And yet, my friend," he added, turning to my mother, "if I were to give her a letter to Colonel von Toll--what say you, eh? He could not be the son of Renuus von Toll if he were to leave this girl without protection. And you say," he added,

turning to Fieka, "that your cousin Heinrich is going with you?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann; he is waiting in the hall outside."

"Call him in to me."

Heinrich came in. He was a fine fellow, broad in the shoulders and narrow across the hips, with blue eyes and light hair; one of those men whom you may see any day in harvest from six o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock in the evening handling the scythe as lightly as if it were a feather.

"I hear, my son," said the old Herr, "that you wish to go with Fieka?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"And you will protect her, and will not leave her?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann; and I have got my horse and waggon here, and I thought if the French had nothing against it, the prisoners might drive along with Fieka, and I could walk by the side."

"Herr Amtshauptmann!" cried my mother. "Help him to do what he proposes; perhaps it will be the only opportunity I shall have of sending anything to my husband. He was carried off just as he was--and in this weather too!"

"True, true, my friend. Yes, Fieka, I will give you a letter. And, Neiting, the old Miller was also carried off unprovided for; get something for him. My cloak, Mamsell Westphalen, and a nightcap, for I know he wears one. And, my friend," and here he turned once more to my mother, "anyone who is used to wearing a nightcap would very much miss it if he hadn't one."

"Fritz," said the Frau Amtshauptmann to me, "run over to Baker Witte's and see if his daughter would not like to send something to him."

Now began the packing. In a few minutes it was done; and, just as everything was in the cart, Strüwingken appeared, carrying an immense basket of milk-rolls and sausages. Fieka had now taken her seat in the waggon, and the Herr Amtshauptmann had finished his letter; as he gave it to Fieka he called Heinrich aside, and said to him--"So you are Joe Voss's son, who has been so long at law with the Miller?"

"Yes, Herr, but do not take it ill. My father was somewhat obstinate and had set his heart upon it; but it's about that I came over here. I have already spoken of it to the Miller and to Fieka, and if I have my way it will all be settled soon."

"My son," said the Amtshauptmann, and shook him by the hand, "I will tell you something;--you please me. But I will tell you something else;--you have taken upon yourself to protect the Miller's Fieka. If you let a hair of her head be touched, never dare to appear before my eyes again." So saying he turned round, and went into my mother's room again, and said to her--"A splendid girl that, my friend!"

"What did the Herr Amtshauptmann say to you?" asked Fieka after Heinrich had seated himself, and they had set off.

"Oh, nothing particular," said Heinrich. "But you will catch cold," he added wrapping her up in the old Herr's cloak, and then driving rapidly down the street.

They had not gone far, when they were met by the Stenhagen folks who had been following the French and the prisoners. Fritz Sahlmann, of course, was foremost of all. What a picture he looked! Just as if he had been working all day long in brick-maker's clay.

"The Burmeister has escaped," he shouted out to them down the street. "The Burmeister has made off across the country on old Bräsigs brown mare. I gave him the signal and off he went."

"What are you talking about, boy?" said the shoemaker's wife, who was looking out over her half door watching for her husband.

"Yes, neighbour," said Tröpner the captain of the fire-brigade who now approached; "the Burmeister's off, but they have given your husband something to remember. You had better make him a poultice of saffron and rye-flour, and lay it between his shoulders where the Frenchman tickled him with the butt of his musket."

The news ran through the town like wildfire: "The Burmeister has got out of the hands of the French on Bräsigs brown mare;" and Luth burst into my mother's room looking as if Easter and Whitsuntide had fallen on the same day, and he had been ordered to have the pleasure that the Stenhagen folk allowed themselves at these seasons all at once.

"Frau Burmeister," he cried, "don't be alarmed--Good news, Herr Amtshauptmann;--good news

Frau Amtshauptmann! Our Herr Burmeister has escaped from the French--"

Heavens! what an uproar followed. My mother trembled from head to foot, the Herr Amtshauptmann forgot his age and position, and seized Luth by the collar and shook him with all his might. "Luth, man, recollect yourself! We are not in a mood for jesting here."

The Frau Amtshauptmann went up anxiously to my mother. Mamsell Westphalen sat upright and stiffly in her chair and said--"If you will let me say so, Herr Amtshauptmann, he is a clown."

"Herr Amtshauptmann, Herr Amtshauptmann," said Luth letting himself be shaken; "you may believe me; Fritz Sahlmann saw it all and told me about it."

"Fritz Sahlmann? My Fritz Sahlmann?" asked the old Herr, and let Luth go.

"It looks like our Fritz Sahlmann, Herr Amtshauptmann," said Mamsell Westphalen, quietly; "Fritz Sahlmann and truth are as far asunder as the cuckoo and the Seven Stars."

"Where is the boy?" asked the Amtshauptmann.

"He is standing outside in the Hall," said Luth.

The old Herr strode with long steps to the door and called out,--"Fritz, Fritz Sahlmann, come in here."

Fritz Sahlmann came. Two forces were struggling in his breast, the desire to recount his valorous deeds and the fear of a sound rating on account of his appearance; the one drew him forward and the other held him back; and, at the same time perhaps, one pulled him to the left, and the other to the right, for he came in at the door askew, with his good side first. But he had reckoned without his host, for he had not taken into account that coming in, in this way, his natural centre of gravity, on which he had sat down in the mud, would at once catch the eyes of the Frau Amtshauptmann and Mamsell Westphalen.

"Fritz Sahlmann," asked the old Herr, "what is the meaning of all this?"

Fritz Sahlmann who had marched in with a sort of pride, now let his head drop and looked down at his clothes:

"Oh, nothing, Herr Amtshauptmann. It's only a little mud."

"Heaven preserve us," cried the Frau Amtshauptmann; "what does the boy look like? Who is ever to get him clean again?"

"Hanchen and Corlin must go all over him with the kitchen brooms," said Mamsell Westphalen.

"Boy!" cried the Herr Amtshauptmann; "now tell me at once the pure truth. Has the Burmeister escaped or not?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann," said Fritz, and looked up again; "he's scuttled."

"That's a lie," burst out Mamsell Westphalen; "how can pure truth come from an unclean vessel?"

"Proceed, Fritz," said the old Herr. And Fritz proceeded.

It often happens in this world that in seeking to carry off an undue share of honour, people lose even that amount which they really deserve. This happened to Fritz. When he came to his own share in the story he made it so full of details, described the naturalness of his fall so minutely, and made so much of everything, in order to place his deeds in a conspicuous light, that he was still a long way from the end, when Luth came in with the Captain of the Fire-Brigade; and the Herr Amtshauptmann turned to the latter, and said in High German--"Tröpner, my man, what do you know of the matter." Tröpner felt, from this question being put in High German, that the Herr Amtshauptmann looked upon him as an educated man, and so he determined to behave like one, and replied in as good High German as he could muster, "I saw it from beginning to end." He now began the whole story over again, entirely left out Fritz Sahlmann's part and concluded with these words: "And thereupon the Herr Burmeister sprang from behind the Herr Rathsherr's cloak, dashed right round the *eclipse*, scrambled on all fours up the bank to the hollow willow-tree, snatched the bridle out of Fritz's hands by main force, swung himself into the saddle, and no sooner did he feel the brown mare under him, than off he went like a bolt straight towards the Pribbenow fir-wood."

"And the French?" asked the Amtshauptmann.

"Oh, Herr Amtshauptmann, they were half-frozen and, when they wanted to fire, their guns would not go off because of the wet, and so they threw themselves in their rage upon us, who were innocently looking on; and gave Bank the shoemaker who lives in the Brandenburg road, a touch of the butt-end of a musket between the shoulders, and then all of us made off and ran down the hill."

"My friend," cried the Amtshauptmann, "this Burmeister of ours *is* a fellow; he is as quick as a gun."

But she for whom this speech was meant could not hear it. My mother lay back in her chair, crying bitterly. At the talk of shooting she had pressed the arm of the good Frau Amtshauptmann tightly, as if she were holding to it as a safeguard against the giddiness that came over her; but when at last it was certain that my father had got off safe and sound, the tears started from her eyes, she covered her face, and gave way to silent tears.

Were they tears of joy?--Who can tell?--Who can say where joy begins and sorrow ends? They are so wonderfully interwoven in the human heart; they are the warp and the woof, and happy is he who weaves them into a firm web. The tear which is born of sorrow has as much its woof of hope as the tear of joy its woof of fear. The past anguish about my father and the fear as to his future wove themselves into my mother's joyful feeling of thankfulness, and the tears which fell were not tears of pure joy. Does any tear of pure joy ever fall on this earth?

It had become quite quiet; an angel flew through the room--; for a short time only: angels do not stay long here below; I know it for I stood with my head against our tall brown clock and cried and listened to the ticking of the pendulum--a short time! I looked up: the old Amtshauptmann was looking out of the uppermost window at the grey heavens, my mother and the Frau Amtshauptmann were crying, Mamsell Westphalen too; she had taken Fritz Sahlmann by the hand, and at the last stroke of the angel's wing she said;--

"Go up to the Schloss, Fritz, and put on dry clothes; Hanchen can give you your Sunday suit."

"I will be off to Gülzow, Herr Amtshauptmann," said Luth, "and Tröpner can go round to Pribbenow, and then we can't both miss the Herr Burmeister."

The Amtshauptmann nodded his head, walked up to my mother, against whose knees I had laid myself, and said,--"You and the boy, here, have good cause to thank God to-day, my friend."

CHAPTER XV.

How the Colonel was obliged to turn away at Fieka's words, and Fieka at Heinrich's. Why the Herr Rathsherr cursed all thin people; and the Miller wished he were a crow.

When Fieka and Heinrich arrived at the Windmill-hill, she looked round on all sides, and, in a few moments, caught sight of her father as he sat with his companions under the mill-shed.

"There's my father," said she to Heinrich.

"Well, then," he replied, "we'll turn up here to the right of the pass, towards the ploughed field. It will be hard work; but there's no getting through 'Breakneck.' We shall get to the mill this way, and you can speak to your father then."

"Stop," cried Fieka, "don't turn up to the right towards the mill; turn down to the left, away from it; I don't want to speak to him.--Look there now! He has seen us; he's making signs to us!"

"Fieka," said Heinrich, doing as she told him, "what are you doing this for? Why do you want to get out of your father's way?"

"Because I can't help him till I have given the Colonel the letter. Who knows, how the French might take it, if I spoke to him? There might be some dispute, and if we were taken before the Colonel so, it's not likely he would look on us with much favour. And then too, why should I be holding out hopes to my old father, when they are so far off? It's enough for the moment that he knows we are near him."

The cannon were now gradually got out of their bed of mud, and the procession began to move on once more. The prisoners were led along one side of the pass; and Heinrich drove along the other--as well as he could over old Nahmaker's ploughed field. Fieka looked out for the Colonel.

"I shall know him again when I see him," she said to Heinrich. "He has a kind face for all that it looked hard when he commanded them to take the Burmeister."

Thus talking, they passed by the cannon and many a knot of French plodding heavily through the deep mud. At last, close to the sign of the "Bremsenkranz" they saw the Colonel on horseback slowly making his way onwards, side by side with some of his officers.--

"Drive on a little way past them, Heinrich," said Fieka, "and stop at the edge of the bank, and I will get down."

This was done. As the Colonel approached, Fieka stood in the foot-path in his way, advanced a couple of steps towards him and said--"Herr, I have a letter for you."

The Colonel stopped, took the letter, and looked at Fieka, rather astonished: "From whom is it, my child?"

"From our Herr Amtshauptmann Weber."

The Colonel broke the seal and read; his face gradually softened with pity; but when he had finished reading, he silently shook his head. Fieka had watched him with the greatest anxiety; she read the answer to the letter in his face; and when he so sorrowfully shook his head, the tears started to her eyes: "Sir, it is my old father, and I am his only child," she cried.

She might have said anything in the world,--the finest speech or the most beautiful text from the Bible,--nothing would have made so deep an impression upon the strong man as these few words in the Platt-Deutsch tongue. He too had an old father and was his only child. His father lived in a high castle in Westphalia; but in loneliness,--discontented with his countrymen and his country. Time and the world had rolled many a stone between father and son, until a broad wall had grown up between them, above which it was only with difficulty that they could understand one another. Discord and dissension had arisen, and where *they* are, conscience makes its voice heard in quiet hours. How often had this inner voice said to him: "It is your old father, and you are his only child!" Happiness and misery, the thunder of the cannon and the roar of battle had, indeed, at times been able to overpower it; but the wound in his heart always opened afresh like the indelible blood-stain reappearing on a room-floor. Now, for the first time, did he hear these words uttered by stranger lips,--for the first time in the language of his childhood. It seemed to him as if there were no longer any reproach contained in them; they were spoken so gently, they sounded as softly in his ears as if they were words of forgiveness; and, when he saw the poor girl standing there before him with her pale, anxious face, it was too much for him,--he was obliged to turn away, and it was some time before he could speak to her again. At last he recovered himself, and said to her with all the warmth of manner which such a moment calls forth: "My dear child, it is not in my power to set your father free; but he will be soon. You and your love to him shall not, however, have appealed to me in vain; you shall stay near him, and he can go in the waggon with you. And when we get to Brandenburg, come and speak to me again."

Thereupon he gave the necessary orders, and rode on with the other officers.

Heinrich now approached a little nearer with his waggon, jumped down, and asked: "How has it gone, Fieka?--But I need not ask you that. You look as if your heart were on your tongue; he has set your father free, has he not?" And he put his arm round her: "Come, Fieka, get up into the waggon, here's a lot of Frenchmen coming,--we must get out of their way."

"They won't hurt us," said Fieka, mounting higher up the bank and looking along the road. "He hasn't set him free, but he's promised that he will. I am to stay near father, and all the prisoners are to come in our waggon; and, Heinrich; you can go home now to the mill and help mother."

Heinrich made the reins fast to a willow-tree, and bent down to buckle some strap in the harness, and then patted and stroked the smooth glossy neck of the near side-horse.--

"You are right, Heinrich," said Fieka, "you do not like to leave your horses and waggon behind you; but old Inspector Bräsig will take them back for you,--he will willingly do us that favour."

"Fieka, I was not thinking about the horses and waggon," said Heinrich, "I was thinking about you and what the old Herr Amtshauptmann said to me."

"What was that?" she asked.

"If I let a hair of your head be touched, I was never to dare appear before his eyes again. And, Fieka, I promised him I would stay by you at all times, and when I made him that promise," and he went up to her and took her hand in his, and looked earnestly into her eyes--"there were two present listening, though no one knew it, but I alone; Fieka, they were--God, and my own heart."

Fieka blushed red as a rose, but when he put his arm round her, she gently freed herself from his embrace and said--

"Not here, Heinrich!--Not to-day, Heinrich!--Good heavens, why there is my old father!"

So saying, she left him, and went to meet her father; and Heinrich stood there like a tree in the winter-time when the green leaves have all fallen off, and the birds no longer sing of love and joy in its branches. But when she turned round; came back to him again, cried: "Heinrich, Heinrich," and the tears welled up into her eyes; and then hastily set off again towards her father, leaf after leaf burst forth, and songs of joy and love sounded in the air, and spring arose in his heart, the Spring of Love,--the only Spring which can, through a whole lifetime, survive summer's heat, and autumn's storms and winter's cold;--can survive, if the Spring be real; the life true.

"Why, Fieka," cried old Miller Voss, "where do you come from?" And when Fieka threw herself on his neck, and told him all about it, with the tears standing in her eyes, the old man scolded her, and said that Heinrich could have come alone quite well, and these were affairs with which women should not meddle. But Rathsherr Herse declared that the Miller understood nothing whatever about such matters, and that Fieka's idea about the waggon was so good, he could not have thought of a better one himself; for his patent-leather boots had been made by Bank the shoemaker expressly for the Council-Chamber, and not for four miles of the Mecklenburg roads at this time of year. And when baker Witte heard of the basket of sausages and milk-rolls, he patted himself on the stomach and said that Fieka was his "dear god-child," and that though he was one of those people who carry a good provision-chest inside them, yet circumstances alter a case, and in weather like this "the best oven must sometimes have extra fuel."

The French sergeant had now brought the Colonel's orders to the guard, and the company mounted into the waggon, and made themselves as warm and comfortable as they could. My uncle Herse appropriated to himself the wraps intended for my father, because as his colleague he had the next best right to them; and he swore at lean-bodied people in general, and my father in particular. About height, he said, he would say nothing, for that was a thing which no one could give or take away from himself, but every reasonable man could in time obtain the proper amount of breadth.

"Look here, Meister Witte, this is supposed to be a coat for a full and well-grown man!" And so saying, he held up my Father's coat in the air, as a public spectacle.

"Herr Rathsherr," said baker Witte, "put your arms through the sleeves with the coat hind part before, so that the Burmeister's back-piece comes upon your breast; and here is another coat, which I'll hang over your back for you, and so we shall make one good coat out of two little ones; 'necessity is the mother of invention!'"

Well, this was done, and my uncle Herse looked like a fine fat oyster, sent on a long journey; behind and before he had a firm shell, but at the sides it gaped open from time to time. Baker Witte had got a silk cloak that had belonged to his late wife, and he put it on with the rabbit-skin lining outside, because he said the rain would spoil the silk, but it could not hurt the skin, for as far as he knew, rabbits always ran about with the furry side of their skin turned outwards.

The dressing-up of these two went on pretty quickly; but with the Miller it was a long affair, for when he heard that the great-coat with the seven capes which was intended for him, belonged to the Herr Amtshauptmann, he was first of all overwhelmed with respect and made bow after bow to it, as if the old gentleman were standing before him and wished him to enter first; and then he was overcome with feeling at the idea of the Amtshauptmann having thought of him in his trouble, and said he was not worthy of it; and when Fieka had got one sleeve on, the thought struck him that he might be taken for some one of high rank.

"And, neighbour," he turned to Witte, "supposing I were to begin to speak now, and the ass's ears were to show above the seven capes!"

"Yes, neighbour," replied the baker, "you're right there; you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; but you *can* hold your tongue;--or else speak High German. You can, you know."

"Yes, I can--after a fashion," said the Miller, and seated himself on the foremost sack.

They were now all seated except Heinrich.

"Why, Heinrich," said Miller Voss, "there's surely room for you on your own waggon! Come a little nearer, Fieka, and make room for your cousin."

But Heinrich would not have it so; he put the horse-cloth round Fieka's feet, and said he would walk on in front. This he did, now jumping over a ditch and then back again, and always keeping where he could watch Fieka's face.

"Herr Rathsherr," said the Miller, "that's my cousin, Joe Voss's son, he's a fine fellow, isn't he?"

And Rathsherr Herse said: "That he is, Miller, he's a handsome young fellow."

And baker Witte said: "He's a jolly fellow."

Fieka said nothing, but she thought to herself: "He's a good and faithful fellow," and she might perhaps have gone on thinking about him; but all at once Heinrich was at her side, looking at her lovingly, and asking whether she were not cold. Thinking was of course at an end now, and she gave him her hand: "Just feel how warm I am."

Witte now dived into the sausage-and-roll basket, and gave everyone his share; and, on hearing the Herr Rathsherr praise the milk-rolls, the old baker said to himself: "Now look at the fellow! And yet he goes and buys his bread of Guhle; but an owl is a bird, when you have got no other."

The Herr Rathsherr leant over towards the baker and whispered in his ear: "Look, Meister

Witte, there is the 'Bremsenkranz' Inn just before us; and if the minions of the Corsican monster have a trace of human feeling left in them, they won't mind our getting a drop to wash down our rolls with." But while saying this, he had neglected his bread, and had let it and the sausage dangle a little over the side of the waggon. All at once he felt a slight tug at his fingers, and on his looking round he beheld one of the Corsican's "minions" quietly biting into his sausage and roll, and as he was about to lift his voice up against such a manifest act of pillage, another of the Frenchmen put his arm over the back of the waggon and seized the whole basket.

"Confound it!" cried my uncle Herse, "I did not think that things had come to such a pass as this."

Old Witte burst out afresh with a "cursed thieves;" and the Miller, who was driving, so thoroughly forgot his position, wrapped up as he was in the Amtshauptmann's warm overcoat, that he raised his whip, and was just going to lay it about the Frenchmen's shoulders, when Fieka caught him by the arm:

"For God's sake, father, what are you doing?"

"Hm--yes--" said the Miller, recollecting himself, "you are right again, Fieka," and he turned to the Frenchmen: "Don't take it ill, I did not mean anything."

Well, they evidently were not going to take it ill at all, for they ate away at the rolls and sausages with such apparent relish, that the Herr Rathsherr was filled with spleen and gall. And now the whole party became once more conscious of their position, which they had for a time forgotten in the warmth and comfort of the waggon. They drove thus towards Brandenburg far into the grey evening, and where the basket of rolls had stood, were now only sorrow and care and thought, which whispered into their ears all manner of dreadful stories; and once, when a flight of crows passed over them, my uncle Herse said:

"Yes, *you* can laugh--you have no cares."

And the baker said: "No, and they pay no taxes and no duties." And the Miller sighed and said: "I wish *I* were a crow."

But in two hearts care found no place; love had entered into them with its princely company of Secret Wishes and Hope and Trust; and the Secret Wishes flew through the whole household of the heart and into all its recesses, like active bridesmaids,--pushed aside all that stood in the way, and wiped the dust from table and chair, and cleaned the windows, so that one could see far out into the beautiful country called Life; and they spread the table in the bright room, and made the bed in the quiet room, and hung fresh garlands of flowers and evergreens over windows and door, and beautiful pictures on the walls. And Hope lit her thousand wax-lights, and then sat down quietly in a corner as if it had not been at all she who had done this, but her step-sister, Reality. And Trust stood at the door and let no one in who had not on a wedding-garment; and she said to Care, when she asked after Fieka: "Begone, the old Miller will dance at her wedding;" and to Doubt, when she asked after Heinrich: "Go thy way, it is all right."

CHAPTER XVI.

Why I send the Miller's Friedrich and not a princess through the Gölzow Wood; why Friedrich called the Bailiff Besserdich, "Father-in-law;" how he "decoyed the dog from behind the stove;" and how Luth, the messenger, could not help laughing at his own Burmeister.

If any little Miss who reads this book should feel angry with me for beginning this chapter with a miller's man and not with a princess, she must remember that there could be no princesses at all, if there were no millers' men, and that sometimes a miller's man is of more value than a princess--for example, to me at this moment. For, if I want to catch the French chasseur, I must not send a princess, with a crinoline and satin shoes, through the Gölzow Wood in such weather and along such roads,--but a miller's man. And, best of all, the Miller's Friedrich.

"Dumouriez!" said Friedrich, as he followed the chasseur's track, "if the Frenchman is to be found between here and Gripswold, I'll have him."

Friedrich traced the chasseur through the Stemhagen Wood, and through the Gölzow Wood, and at last reached the Gölzow road; but there he came to a standstill--an owl would have been puzzled; there was nothing to serve as a guide. Had the fellow turned to the right or to the left?

For a while Friedrich stood there--like Matz Fots of Dresden; but soon a bright thought flashed

across him, and he said to himself,--"If the rascal has taken the road to Stenhagen, it must have been through sheer stupidity. No, the fellow has gone towards Gülzow." And he went that way accordingly.

At Gülzow, Freier, an old peasant, was standing by his hedge, throwing stones, as big round as the brim of your hat, into the holes in the road. In some places in Mecklenburg this is what they call "mending the roads."

"Good morning, Freier; have you seen a Frenchman pass by here this morning?" said Friedrich.

"A Frenchman?" asked Freier.

"Yes," said Friedrich; "a French chasseur."

"A chasseur?" asked Freier.

"Yes, in a green uniform," said Friedrich.

"On horseback?" asked Freier.

"No, on foot," said Friedrich.

"What does he want?" asked Freier?

"What does he want?" asked Friedrich. "*He* doesn't want anything; but *I* want to speak to him."

"What have you got to speak about to a Frenchman?"

"Dumouriez!" said Friedrich. "What business is that of yours, you blockhead? I only ask you if you have seen such a fellow?"

"In a green uniform?" asked Freier.

"Yes," said Friedrich.

"With a shako?"

"No, with his head bare."

"With his head bare! And this morning in the rain?"

"Yes, you hear, I tell you so," cried Friedrich, angrily. "Just answer me simply: have you seen the fellow or have you not?"

"Wait a moment. Isn't to-day Thursday?"

"Yes," said Friedrich.

"Well, then it was not to-day; it was last Monday, and there were a lot of them, but in blue uniforms, and on horseback; and my boy, Zamel, has gone to-day to Stenhagen with our team for them."

"Freier," said Friedrich, "you should not have sent your team to Stenhagen; you can make a better use of it yourself, especially when you've got to give answers to people."

"How so?" asked Freier.

"And Freier," pursued Friedrich; "I know what would be a good employment for you--driving crabs to Berlin; a fellow like you would get on well at that."

"What do you mean?" asked Freier, more and more mystified.

"Oh, nothing," said Friedrich. "And now, good-morning, Freier. And if the Frenchman I am looking for should come by, just tell him, that I said, that you said, that your great grandmother had told you, when he said what he said, that you should say, that I had said he was not to call you an ass. And now good-bye, Freier."

"What?" said Freier, following him with his eyes as he went along the village, and turning round in his hands a stone of some thirty pounds weight; "What? *He* said, that *I* said, that *you* said, that *I* should say, he should not call me an ass? The cursed Prussian rascal! That's the way he always does." And he took the stone and threw it, with all his might--amongst the rest.

Friedrich goes further. Bailiff Besserdich looks out at his doorway. "Bailiff, have you seen a Frenchman pass by here this morning?"

"A Frenchman?" asked the bailiff. "Well, they are not so rare just now as all that; but this morning, do you say?"

"What, are *you* going to begin asking questions now?" said Friedrich. "I would rather tell you the story at once; it's the quickest plan." So he told him the story. "And," he concluded, "I must have him."

"That you must, Friedrich," said the bailiff. "And I will go with you; in fact it's what I'm appointed for; and our Herr Amtshauptmann said to me lately--'Besserdich,' said he, 'on you depends everything in Gülzow,' and he gave me a bundle of papers, and said, 'the matter is *pressing*.' Well, I got the summoner to read them to me, and when he had done, he said: 'The matter requires the greatest speed, bailiff.' 'No,' said I, 'I know better; the Herr Amtshauptmann told me the matter was *pressing*, and whenever he's said that to me before, I have always waited a full month first, and been ready in good time all the same!' And so I was that time. But, Friedrich, your business is not *pressing*, it 'requires the greatest speed.' I will just fetch my hat and then we will go."

This done, they set off. As they came out on the road at the other end of the village, the bailiff said--

"Friedrich, my Hans--you know the boy; he's now in his sixteenth year, but I thought I would have him at home for a year or so longer--he's keeping the sheep here in the rye-field; for, you see, I thought to myself my fodder has run short, and at this time of year they can get a meal for themselves in the fields, so I'll turn them out here;--he has perhaps seen the fellow."

They now asked Hans. Yes, the boy had seen him; he had gone to Pinnow. At Pinnow they passed the schoolmaster's, and asked whether he had seen a Frenchman.

The schoolmaster's name was "Sparrow," but he was always called "Bullfinch;" some said, because he could sing so well; others, because he hopped about and poked his nose everywhere, and was always chaffing. The Bullfinch found it easy to lead the bailiff by the nose, but Friedrich soon saw what was going on; and, when he saw that the Bullfinch made a sign to his wife to row in the same boat with him, he thought to himself--"Wait a moment, I'll make you look blue presently;" and he got up, and said he wished to go and light his pipe at the kitchen fire.

The Bullfinch now began to overwhelm the bailiff with all sorts of stories; and when Besserdich succeeded in getting in a word, and asked whether they had not seen the Frenchman, the Bullfinch said no, and his wife also said, no.

Whilst they were going on in this way. Friedrich came in again, and said: "Something must have happened to your chimney, for the stick with the sausages has fallen down on to the ground."

The wife jumped up, ran out to the kitchen, and then came back with the stick in her hand--"Look there now! This is the thanks we get! That shameless fellow has stolen one of our sausages."

"What fellow?" asked Friedrich.

"Why, the French fellow you were asking about."

"Oh! so he has been here then, has he?" said Friedrich.

"I should think so! And Sparrow gave him some brandy and some bread-and-butter, and showed him the way to Demzin!"

"Well, good-bye, then," said Friedrich. "Come along, bailiff; we know all we want now."

"Bailiff," said Friedrich, when they were some way from Pinnow and the Bullfinch, "you are a sort of man of law, and must needs know this--what is the punishment for stealing a sausage?"

"Well, Friedrich," replied the bailiff, "I don't know about sausages, but I know very well the punishment for stealing a flitch of bacon; for when the lame shoemaker took one of mine out of the smoke, the Herr Amtshauptmann gave him a fortnight in prison and a dozen on his jacket into the bargain."

"Well, that's not dangerous," said Friedrich; "and, if you reckon according to that, it would be precious little for one sausage."

"How do you make that out?"

"Well now, bailiff, tell me; when you kill seven pigs, how many flitches of bacon do you get?"

"Fourteen," said the bailiff.

"That's not true," said Friedrich; "you only get thirteen. One is taken for the sausages."

"Yes, you're right," said the bailiff.

"Well then, how many sausages does your wife make out of seven pigs? About thirty, doesn't she? Then one flitch makes thirty sausages; and so, for one sausage, there would be, at most, half

a day and half a blow; and that I consider is a righteous and merciful punishment; you may at once give me the half-blow on my back, and the half-day I will spend next Sunday afternoon in your house, in the corner behind the stove. For, look here--I took the Bullfinch's sausage."

"What Devil tempted you to do that?"

"No Devil, only hunger," said Friedrich, and he drew the sausage out of his pocket, and cut off a piece. "Here Bailiff! The sausage is good, you can eat it without bread."

"No," said the Bailiff, "I'll have nothing to do with stolen goods."

"How, Stolen?" asked Friedrich. "This is merely 'forage' as we used to say under the Duke of Brunswick. And, Bailiff, surely you have climbed up into the priest's apple-tree often enough before now."

"The Devil only knows what is the matter with you this morning!" said Besserdich. "Yes, I have when I was a silly youngster; but now I have grown-up children, and must set them a good example."

"That's true," said Friedrich; "what one may do, another mayn't.--Bailiff," he added, after a while, "how old is your daughter Hanchen?"

"Well, Friedrich," said the Bailiff, and his eyes began to twinkle, "she's not old, she is only just eighteen; but I tell you, she's as sharp as a needle."

"I know that," said Friedrich; "I sat by her side yesterday evening up at the Stenhagen Schloss, and I can fully say she pleased me so well that I should be ready to change my state to please her."

"Come, come, you are going too fast," said the Bailiff, and he looked at Friedrich from top to toe.

"Yes," said Friedrich, "and I thought you might find some other farm for your Fritz; and, as you are getting old you might lay yourself on the shelf, and could give us your land; and then Hanchen and I should have a nice home, and you would have a deal of pleasure in us."

"By Heaven!" cried the Bailiff, "are you really in earnest?"

"Why not?" said Friedrich; "do I look as if I were joking?"

"What?" cried Besserdich; "An old beggar like you want to marry a Bailiff's daughter! *My* daughter! A young girl of eighteen!"

"Mind what you're saying. Bailiff," said Fritz. "Old, say you? Just look at me, I am in my prime,-between twenty and fifty. A beggar, say you? I have never asked you for so much as a pipe of tobacco. It's true your Hanchen is, on the whole, younger than I am, but I don't object to that. I'll take her all the same, for she is clever, and knows that a fellow like me who has seen the world, is worth more than one of your young peasants with red cheeks and flaxen hair, who makes a bow like a clasp-knife and spits about in folk's rooms."

"Have you been putting these notions in the girl's head?" shouted the Bailiff, raising his stick against him.

"Put down your stick, Bailiff," said Friedrich; "what would people say if they heard that I had been fighting with my father-in-law, in the open country, before the wedding?"

The Bailiff let his stick drop.

"No, I could take a sausage from a fellow like the Bullfinch," Friedrich went on; "but I could not cheat a pretty, young thing like that of her happiness; I put no notions into your Hanchen's head."

The Bailiff looked at him out of the corner of his eye as if he would say, "The Devil may trust you!" but he said nothing. They now went on again,--but the egg was broken.

When they arrived at Demzin, Friedrich went up to a young clerk who was standing near them and said: "I beg your pardon, have you seen a Frenchman pass by?" And so on, and so on. The young man said yes; that rather less than an hour before, such a fellow had passed.

They walked through the village, and, at the other end an old woman had also seen the Chasseur. "We shall soon have him now," said Friedrich.

But a little further on they met, in the fields, an old man who was cutting willows near the path and he knew nothing of any Frenchman, and said the fellow had not passed since six o'clock in the morning.

What was to be done now? Follow the road straight on? That would be a regular wild-geese chase. But the fellow had certainly gone out of the village; where had he stopped?

The Bailiff scratched his head; Friedrich looked all round and surveyed the country. At last he said;--"We can go no further, Bailiff; the trace is at an end here; so we must think the matter over. But the wind is cold, let us go and sit down by that oven yonder."^[4]

Well, they did so. "What a fool I was," said the Bailiff, "to go running after a Frenchman in this weather!"

"Father-in-law, leave the Frenchman alone," said Friedrich; "we shall get him yet."

"Are you going to begin again with your 'fathers-in-law,' you Prussian knave?"

"What you are not, you may become. Bailiff.--I have known many people who have given their daughters and plenty of money into the bargain, for that name."

"Yes, but then they got rather different sons-in-law."

"Now, just look at me, Bailiff," said Friedrich, and he placed himself before the Bailiff as erect as he could make himself; "I'm not a lawyer, nor yet a doctor, but I have sound bones, and my hands speak of work. And if you don't trust your own eyes you can ask my Miller."

"Yes, and do you know what he'll say? He'll say you are steady enough and understand a thing or two, but that your sayings are not the sort to 'tice a dog away from a warm stove (oven)."

"I'll soon show you whether they are. But now, Bailiff, will you give me your Hanchen?"

"Damnation!" cried the Bailiff. "I thought at first it was only a joke. But now I do believe you're in earnest."

"I *was* joking about the farm and your laying yourself on the shelf, Bailiff," said Friedrich, "for your Fritz must of course have the farm. But I am in earnest about Hanchen, and I shall easily get a farm."

"You boaster!" said the Bailiff; "there now, that's one of your sayings, which, as I said, will 'tice no dog away from a stove."

"I will show you if they can or not," said Friedrich.

"You braggart!" said the Bailiff, getting up; "I shall go home, and you can go and catch your Frenchman by yourself."

"I have got him," said Friedrich.

"You sack of lies!" again cried the Bailiff.

"Bailiff," said Friedrich; "if the Frenchman stands before you in three minutes, and so my sayings entice a dog away from an oven, will you give me your Hanchen?" And he held his hand out to him.--"Shake hands upon it."

"There's my hand," cried the Bailiff; "just to show you that you are nothing but a boasting braggart."

And they shook hands on it. Friedrich gave a broad grin and stooped down to the mouth of the oven:

"Mossoo, allong ici--allong ici."--And what should creep out into the light but the Frenchman!

"Eh! Damn...!" cried the Bailiff.

"*Pardon, Monsieur,*" said the Frenchman.

"Who has won the bet now, Bailiff?" asked Friedrich. "Here is the Frenchman and the dog too. Who is to have your Hanchen now?"

"Prussian vagabond," cried the Bailiff, and raised his stick again, "Do you think you can fool me into this? *You* have my Hanchen...! I would rather ..."

"Put down your stick, Bailiff, you frighten the Frenchman. Better come over here and help me to secure him; we can talk about the bet afterwards."

"*Pardon,*" threw in the Chasseur.

"Pardong here, and pardong there," cried Friedrich; "what do you mean by running away from the beech-tree where I had laid you comfortably. This time I'll treat you in my fashion; Mamsell Westphalen is not here now," and, so saying, he cut the buttons off the Frenchman's trowsers: "And now, allong, avang!"--And in this way, they set off back through Demzin towards Pinnow.

The Bailiff walked by their side in the heavy rain, silent--and angry, though chiefly with himself; for whenever he tried to throw the blame on Friedrich's shoulders, he could not help saying to himself: "He is a rascal,--but he's a devilish clever fellow too. How could he know, I

wonder, that the Frenchman was lying in the oven. And then his cutting off the buttons, what could he mean by that? I must make a note of the trick."

When they came to Gülzow, Friedrich said:--"Why, Bailiff, who is that coming hunting along over your field? What is he riding like that for? He cannot ride faster than the rain."

"Heavens!" said the Bailiff; "why that is Inspector Bräsig's brown mare, and the man on it is the Stemhagen Burmeister."

My father approached, and when he saw the Frenchman and Friedrich he said: "Now it's *all* right."--"But," he added, "first to your house, Bailiff, for my soul is freezing in my body, and I am wet to the skin."

"I see you are, sir; and we are pretty much in the same state."

Arrived at the Bailiff's house, all sorts of clothes were brought to light by the Bailiff's goodwoman, but it was hard work to provide for all three, for the bad times had made sad havoc in the Bailiff's wardrobe, and they were glad enough to find anything that would even half fit them. The Bailiff could get no other covering for himself than his own trowsers, Friedrich made himself look very fine in Fritz's Sunday coat, and my father, as the smallest, had to content himself with Hans's jacket, which of course the Bailiff did not wish, and made all sorts of excuses for. But when a person finds himself in safety after being in an unpleasant predicament, and in a dry place after being out in the rain, mirth readily gets the upper hand, and my father, on seeing himself in his costume, laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"But," said he, suddenly checking himself, and becoming quite grave, "here are we laughing when there is a fellow-being amongst us, shivering, not only with cold but with fear; and we ought to do what we can for him. Dame, you must help the Frenchman to some dry things."

But that was not so easy, and when they had hunted up everything else, they had to make up with the Bailiff's wife's old grey skirt.

"Eat heartily, comrade," said Friedrich, as they sat round the table eating the afternoon meal, and he pushed a piece of salt meat of some three pounds weight towards the Frenchman,--"Eat, comrade, for as long as you eat, you will live."

My father took pity on the fellow, and spoke a few words to him in French in a comforting tone, and the poor sinner answered so humbly and dejectedly that it quite moved the Bailiff, though he understood not a word of what was said, and he leant over to my father: "Shall we let the fellow go, Herr Burmeister?"

My father said, no; that would not do. The Miller and the Baker were in trouble, and had done no wrong; the Frenchman was also in trouble, but he had done wrong; and right was right and what was fair to one was fair to another.

The Bailiff's Fritz just then came riding into the yard with the team, and came into the room.

"Good evening, father," said he; "I have got off from the French," and he shook hands with the Bailiff, and then went up to my father, whose back was turned to him, and gave him a stout cuff: "Good evening, Hans, can't you speak to your brother?"

My father started and turned round; Fritz stood fixed to the spot like Lot's wife.

"Lord save us!" cried the Bailiff. "He comes in here and goes and strikes the Stemhagen Burmeister under my own roof. And the rascal is to be a bailiff some day!"

"Never mind," said my father. "However, as a punishment he shall have no rest yet; he shall drive us over to Stemhagen this very night."

"Through the whole world, if you like, Herr Burmeister," said Fritz.

"But how is it you are so late home?" asked the Bailiff.

"Why, father, I thought it might be ugly if they were to catch me and so I led the horses into the Wood, and stood on the watch; and I meant to stay there till evening, but while I was waiting, Luth came along and told me the French had been gone a long time, and that the Burmeister had escaped from them and that he was looking for him.

"Where is Luth, now, then?" asked my father.

"He'll be here directly," said Fritz, "he only stopped to make inquiries at the schoolmaster's."

Luth came in presently, and when he asked for my father and saw him in the short jacket, he lost all control over himself, forgot everything that he had meant to say, and burst out laughing.

My father got angry at this, for he was not thinking of the jacket now, but of my Mother and all at home, and he caught Luth by the collar:--"Luth, are you gone mad?" he cried; "What are my wife and children doing?"

"They are quite well, Herr Burmeister--ha, ha, ha! And the Herr Amtshauptmann is reading out of a book to the Frau Burmeister, and Mamsell Westphalen is stuffing Fritz with buns and apples; but, ha, ha, ha!--don't take it ill, Herr Burmeister; I can't help laughing."

Friedrich also began to laugh, and the Bailiff, and Fritz; and the Bailiff's wife said: "The Herr Burmeister does look very funny!--My father's heart was light again now, so he could join in the laugh."

"You may laugh now, Luth," he said, "but make haste, for I have some pressing business for you. The French took away the valise with the gold and silver, did they not?"

"Yes, I saw it when they were dragging it off."

"Be quick then. You will find Inspector Bräsigg's brown mare in the stable; take it and ride as fast as you can to Kittendorf to the Herr Landrath von Uertzen--for it was there the Chasseurs came from yesterday, and they no doubt got the silver spoons there;--and then tell the Herr Landrath how things stand in Stemhagen, and ask him to send a trusty man back with you who can swear to the spoons. By that means he may, perhaps, be able to recover his property. And now, away with you. And, Fritz, put the horses to, quickly."

They were all seated in the waggon in no time, except indeed the Bailiff, for his wife would not let him go: "You have nothing to do there; you can stop at home," she said.

"Wife" said the Bailiff, placing one foot on the wheel and the other on the shaft, and looking down at her, "that's against our agreement; you are mistress in the house and I am master in my bailiff's duties; and to take charge of a prisoner is a bailiff's duty."

And so saying he squeezed himself in between Friedrich and the Frenchman on one sack.

"Now Fritz," he cried, "off with you."

CHAPTER XVII.

Proves that Friedrich was not really a thief; and relates how the Emperor Napoleon would have nothing to do with the Rathsherr; and how the Colonel had secrets with the Rathsherr.

Before the Stemhagen Rathhaus, the waggon drew up, and, at one bound, my Father was down from his sack, and telling the others to stay in the waggon till he called them.

As he came into the Hall, he was met by Marie Wienken with a light, for it had gradually got dark. Marie, who was our housemaid, on seeing my Father in Hans's jacket was very near letting the light fall, and was just going to scream, when he pushed her quickly into his room, and said "Hold your tongue, Marie! You are generally a sensible girl."

Marie was really stupid; but nothing brightens stupid people more than to hear themselves called clever.

"Is the Herr Amtshauptmann still here?" asked my Father.

"Yes, Herr."

"Then set down your light, and go into the room--don't let my wife suspect anything--and say to the Herr Amtshauptmann that there is some one outside who wishes to speak to him; and then bring him in here."

She did so and the old Herr came in.

"Good evening, my son, what is it you want, and what are you doing here in the Burmeister's room?"

"Herr Amtshauptmann, what are my wife and children doing?"

"What do I know of your wife and children, my lad?--You're young to have a wife and children."

"A thousand devils!" cried my father; "don't you know me then? Why I'm the Burmeister."

"What say you, eh?" cried the old Herr; "that's quite another thing. That's a very strange thing!--*Consul Stavenhageniensis* in a boy's jacket! But what says Horace? *Nil admirari*--above all

in these times, my friend."

"My wife, Herr Amtshauptmann?"

"She knows you are free and will be delighted to see you back."

"But?"----

"Well, it won't do her any harm if she does see you in a short jacket. Come along!"

All sudden surprises, even pleasant ones, are painful. When joy sounds in our ears, as if, all at once two dozen trumpets had been blown close behind us, we feel as if our head and heart were split, and the most beautiful music becomes mere pain. No! I love joy when it comes like a singing bird in a cool wood, coming nearer and nearer from twig to twig, till at last it sings its song full in my ears from the nearest bush.

Joy had come to my mother rather too hastily at first; but she had got over the shock. Now it came to her from twig to twig; and, as my father entered the room, it sang its song full in her ears; the bird had come to her at last in a short jacket, and it seemed as if it were making all manner of bobbings to her out of the bush; she laughed with all her heart. The memory of this day was preserved amongst us down to the latest times, and whenever my father happened to return home from his work and cares in a particularly happy mood, we used to say: "father has got his short jacket on to-day."

When the first burst of happiness was somewhat over, the old Herr began: "And so you have brought the French Chasseur along with you, my friend?"

"Not I," said my father; "the Miller's Friedrich has done the greater part of the business; the Gülzow Bailiff helped him."

"This Friedrich must be a clever determined fellow," said the Amtshauptmann. "Eh, what say you? Let us have him in."

Friedrich came and the Bailiff too.

"Was it you, Friedrich, who threw the Frenchman out of the waggon?"

Friedrich thought to himself--"What? Is another court of justice going to be held?" And since he must needs answer the Amtshauptmann's question with a "yes," he planted himself firmly, with one leg advanced, and stood ready prepared for whatever might come: "Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann," said he.

"And are you aware that you have brought the Miller into great trouble?"

"Trouble? He's pretty well used to troubles, and one more won't hurt him."

"Was it you who took the valise from the Frenchman's horse?"

"Yes, Herr."

"And did you not take eight groschen of the Frenchman's property?"

"I only paid myself back eight groschen of my own," said Friedrich and he told them the story.

"You took them contrary to law and right, and what is he called who does that?"

Friedrich looked boldly at the old Herr, but said not a word.

"Bailiff Besserdich, what is such a man called?"

"By your leave, Herr Amtshauptmann, a thief!" the Bailiff broke out. "And he is one. Herr, it was only to-day he stole one of Bullfinch's sausages off the smoking-stick,--and the fellow wants to marry my Hanchen!"

"What does he want to do?"

"My Hanchen, Herr, who is in your service, he wants to marry her."

"Oh! ho!" said the Herr Amtshauptmann, and he looked at Friedrich from top to toe; "that's quite another thing.--You can go out now, my son, but I shall remember you."

Friedrich went, inwardly cursing the Bailiff and the Herr Amtshauptmann: "What does he want to remember me for?" he said to himself as he stood in the Hall.

But if he had known what those words meant in the mouth of the old Herr, he would not have been angry; for it was not the custom of the Amtshauptmann to remember what was bad; evil passed over his head without touching him, but if ever a means of doing good came in his way, he was only afraid lest he should lose the opportunity, and then it was always "Neiting,--Fritz Sahlmann,--Westphalen,--or children,--help me remember."

When Friedrich was gone, the old Herr turned round and said, laughing: "You have lost Fritz Sahlmann's sausage of this morning, Neiting; the Pinnow Bullfinch must have it, for, if this rascal of a Friedrich is to marry the Bailiff's Hanchen, we must first make him an honest man again."

"Yes," cried my father, and laid down an eight groschen piece on the table; "and here is the money which he took from the Frenchman."

"Well, and now, Bailiff, when is the wedding to be?" laughed the old Herr.

The Bailiff pulled a long face, and looked as if some one behind him, had suddenly clapped a pair of leather spectacles over his eyes, so as to prevent his seeing what was passing around him.--"But, Herr Amtshauptmann, the fellow is a beggar," he said at last.

"Things may change," said the Amtshauptmann. "In these troubled times several farms in this parish have become vacant, and who knows what the High Ducal Cabinet may think of Friedrich's services."

"Yes, but he is a thief as well, sir."

"Do not let me hear you say that again, Bailiff. When he took the eight groschen out of the valise this morning, could he not have kept the whole? Who would have known anything about it? And if he had carried it off across the Prussian frontier, what dog would have barked, or what cock would have crowed after him? What say you, eh?"

"Well, sir, but the eight groschen and the sausage?"

"The one he looked upon, in his ignorance, as his right, and the other as a joke."

"Well, Herr," said the Bailiff again, and he scratched his head, "even if it is so,--still my Hanchen is too young for the old lubber."

"I beg your pardon, Herr Amtshauptmann, for talking, in among law matters and farm business," Mamsell Westphalen here broke in, "but, Bailiff Besserdich, that's all stuff and nonsense, for it's right that a silly young girl like your Hanchen should have an experienced husband. And, Herr Amtshauptmann, if I may make so bold as to say so, he is a determined fellow and useful in times like these; and last night,--I won't say anything against Herr Droi, for he must know when it is the proper time to go at a man with sword and gun,--but last night Friedrich went at the Frenchman all alone by himself; and though his sayings are not quite proper for your room nor yet for my ears, still I could not help saying to myself, 'That's the man to do a deed!' And, Bailiff, the two would do well for one another, for what he is for deeds she is for words; and, Herr Amtshauptmann, she can keep a man at arm's length, for she has a blessed sharp tongue of her own, and that I can speak to."

The Bailiff looked at Mamsell Westphalen and then at the Herr Amtshauptmann;--he was quite dumb. All the objections which he had made were explained away; he sought for fresh ones but found none, till, at length, there flashed across him the thought which always did come to his aid at last, and he scratched his head, and said--"Well, Herr Amtshauptmann, I must hear first what my wife has got to say to it."

"Right, Bailiff. But, above all you must hear first what Hanchen says to it. For my part I have only wished to make it clear to you that Friedrich is no thief."

And so the matter was put off to St. Nobody's day, as we say in Mecklenburg.

The Frau Amtshauptmann had gone back to the Schloss with Mamsell Westphalen, and the other part of the company were getting tired, when Luth came back from his ride to Kittendorf, and said from the Herr Landrath--his compliments to the Herr Amtshauptmann, and he had sent his own valet-de-chambre about the silver.

Everything was now ready: The Herr Amtshauptmann had only to write a letter to the French Colonel. My father told Luth exactly what he was to do and say. Friedrich and Luth took the Chasseur between them in the waggon. The valet and Fritz Besserdich took their seats in front, and off they went through the dark night and muddy lanes towards Brandenburg.

"Yes," said the Bailiff, as he walked home alone in the dark towards Gülzow, "it's all very well for you to talk. The Amtshauptmann and Burmeister and Mamsell up at the Schloss are grand folks, and have nobody over them, but everybody commands a poor bailiff like me. Yes, if it were not for my wife,--and the fellow were not a thief,--and he were some ten years younger--and he had a farm of his own,--and Hanchen would have him, yes, then--then--no; then he would still not get the girl, for her mother would not have it...."

Now, no one can take it ill, if in telling an amusing tale I have no wish to mix up horrible stories with it, and so I shall not say more than necessary touching the French Chasseur. I shall say nothing about how he felt when he got to Brandenburg, or how he was brought before the Court-martial, and nothing about how the anguish of death came nearer and nearer, until he met the fate his evil deeds had brought upon him. And I could not do so, even if I wished; for I only write of what I know and *this* I don't know. I have never in my life hardened myself so far as to be

able to look on a poor sinner led out for the last time, and to see how one sinner, by warrant of a human court, sends another sinner, before his time to the Tribunal of the Almighty. But let me say shortly that it happened; it was so.--And when his bleeding body lay on the sand, probably no one thought that the bullets would strike much deeper in another heart, far away in France. I mean his old mother's.

I will therefore only say that, through the Frenchman's being given up safe and sound, the Miller and the Baker were acquitted of the murder; and that, through his confession and through the evidence of Inspector Bräsig and the valet-de-chambre, the Landrath von Uertzen came to his own again; and the Colonel von Toll, when the Judge was going to keep back the money, as unclaimed property, got up, and said severely, that his regiment should not be branded with robbing and thieving. And so saying he took the valise and said to Luth:--

"You seem a sensible man; take this sealed valise and give it to the Herr Amtshauptmann Weber; he is to do with it what is right according to the practice of the country." Luth received a paper with it, and thus the matter was settled.

But now there arose a difficulty which no one had thought of before:--what was to be done with my uncle Herse. When the Miller and the baker and all the others had gone out of the court and away from him, my uncle remained there, like a fine old oak which the forester has left in a clearing, alone in its grandeur.

The Colonel looked at him and asked: "Why are you still here?"

My uncle Herse stirred his branches as it were, and from the look in his dusky-red face, it was clear that a storm of wind was beginning to agitate the head of the old tree: "That's what I was going to ask you," was his answer.

If a stranger had entered the room at that moment, he would hardly have been able to say which was the Rathsherr and which the colonel. Both had imposing uniforms on, both had proud aristocratic faces, and both had these from the habit of command; if the Colonel was a couple of inches taller, my uncle Herse was half a foot broader; and if the Colonel had hair on his upper lip, my uncle had it all over his face, for he had not been shaved for the last two days: old Metz the barber had forgotten to shave him the day before yesterday, and the day before yesterday's, yesterday's and to-day's growth, weighed fully as much as the French officer's moustache.

"Who are you?" asked the Colonel.

"I am a Rathsherr, a Stemhagen Rathsherr," replied my uncle.

This seemed to take the Colonel by surprise. He walked up and down and at last stood still before my uncle and said: "I do not see any advantage for the Emperor Napoleon in my dragging you about the country any longer. You can go."

Now this was not the sort of thing my uncle was used to.--"Sir!" he cried: "this treatment...."

"I am truly sorry," interrupted the Colonel, "that you should have been put to such inconvenience. You must have been taken up entirely by mistake."

This was a little too strong for my uncle. All along the road and through the wintry night, he had comforted himself with the reflection that he was the chosen victim of the "Corsican dragon," and now it was all said to be a pure mistake. He had, in his innocence, reckoned at the very least on a public apology before a whole French regiment, and here was he being, as it were, kicked out and told--"he might go!"

"To take up a man like *me* by mistake!" cried he.

"You may think yourself fortunate," said the Colonel, tapping him on the shoulder and smiling pleasantly, "worse things than that often happen in war; many a one gets shot by mistake. Look upon this as a trial sent by God."

"If this is to be called a trial," said my uncle, "it's a very stupid one."

The Colonel laughed and passed his arm under the Rathsherr's: "Come with me, Herr Rathsherr. I am right glad the matter has ended thus and that I have been able to do what the Herr Amtshauptmann asked. And I have a few words to say to you in secret."

'In secret,' those were two words that my uncle Herse could not resist, so he went with him.

"Herr Rathsherr," said the Colonel, when they were out in the market-place, and stood before the door of the "Golden Button," which was the Colonel's head quarters; "Herr Rathsherr, tell the good old Herr Amtshauptmann, with my kindest regards, that I have fortunately been able to comply with his request; and beg him in return to comply with mine,--which is that, if it can be done with justice, he should give the money that finds no owner to the young girl who brought me his letter yesterday on the road, here. And you will yourself see, Herr Rathsherr, that this must be kept secret, as else the Herr Amtshauptmann might be suspected."

My uncle Herse was now, once more, in his element:-- "You mean Fieka?" he asked eagerly;

"Miller Voss's Fieka who is standing out there?" and he pointed to Fieka, who was standing a little way off with her father,--her arm round his neck and crying for joy.

"Yes, I mean her," said the Colonel and he went up to the two.

Fieka drew her arm from round her father's neck, but she could not prevent the tears from flowing, and as the Colonel came nearer, she felt as if she must cry all the more; when he gave her his hand she curtsied silently, for she could not bring out a word. As long as anxiety, like a dark night, had lain upon her, she had gone steadily on her way without looking either to right or left,--trust in God her sole guiding-star; but now that the sun had risen, she stood still; her heart opened like a beautiful rose to the light; as the fresh morning's breeze plays in its leaves, so her thoughts could now wander hither and thither, to the right and to the left, behind her and before her, and her tears fell like the morning dew.

The old Miller, too, stood silent before the Colonel; but when he was asked if he was the father of the young girl, the words came out in a torrent.

"Yes, sir," said he. "And though it's true what our Herr Amtshauptmann says, that boys are better than girls, girls are always crying--for they *are* that, sir, as you can see in Fieka"--and, as he spoke, he wiped the tears from his own eyes--"still I don't know what better I can wish you, for your goodness to us, than that God may some day send you a little daughter like my Fieka."

The Colonel no doubt thought so too, though he did not say so. He turned quickly towards Fieka, and asked: "Can you write?"

"Yes, Herr," said Fieka, and made a curtsy.

"She can do everything," said the Miller; "She can write and read writing like a schoolmaster, for she has to do all my writing."

"Well, then, my little one," said the Colonel, "write your name and the place where you were born, in here; but in Platt-deutsch, mind."

And Fieka wrote in the Colonel's pocket-book, "Fieka Voss, born at the Gielow Mill in the parish of Stemhagen." The Colonel read it, shut up his pocket-book, gave her and her father his hand, and went away with the words: "Good-bye! We may perhaps meet again some day."

CHAPTER XVIII.

How Witte's pint-pot was always running over; why the Town of Stemhagen had raised a fir-plantation; why neighbour Rickert rang the alarm-bell; and why the portrait of Julius Caesar always reminds me of my uncle Herse.

Rather less than half an hour afterwards, two waggons drove out of the Treptow Gate of Brandenburg towards Stemhagen. In the first were the elders, the Herr Rathsherr and the baker and the Miller, and, as a mark of respect, the valet-de-chambre; in the second sat, on the foremost sack, Fritz Besserdich and Luth, and on the hind sack, Fieka and Heinrich. Friedrich lay behind in the straw. After they had gone along some way, my uncle Herse began to talk:

"So we are out of his claws at last," said he.

"Yes, Herr Rathsherr," answered the Baker, "and we have to thank the Herr Amtshauptmann and our Burmeister and, above all, the Miller's Friedrich for it."

"That's according as you look at it, Witte," said my uncle. "For my part I have nothing to say against those three, and there is no doubt the Chasseur's being brought there did us good service, but it by no means set us free. Did you not notice how the French Colonel talked to me aside before the door of the Inn?"

"Yes, Herr Rathsherr."

"Well, then, let me tell you, that, if he had not employed me to take a secret message for him, we might have left Brandenburg by a very different gate from this."

"The Devil we might!" cried the old Baker, and he looked at the Rathsherr out of the corner of his eye.

My uncle said nothing; he only opened and shut his eyes importantly, and then turned away,

and looked over the cornfields, as if he meant to let his words have due effect on the Baker. But this did not succeed. Old Baker Witte's head was like the pint measure in which he sold milk; when it was full to the brim, it would hold no more, and whatever more was poured in, ran over into the room. And, just now, his head was brimming full of all he had gone through, so that the Rathsherr's words made it run over, and he said nothing.

"I wish I was in Stemhagen," said the Rathsherr, after a while.

These drops went into the baker's pint measure, he said, therefore: "So do I, for it will be a precious long time before we get there."

"I don't mean that," said the Herr Rathsherr. "I mean as to our reception."

The baker's pint measure was running over again: "What?" he asked.

"Our reception with a triumphal arch."

The contents of the pint measure were now running over very fast:--"Reception! Triumphal arch! What? Is our Duke coming then?"

"No, Witte, *he* is not coming, but *we* are coming."

It was now just as if some one had given Witte's arm a jerk, while he was pouring the milk into the measure, so that half of it went on to the floor. This was lucky, for now there was room for the Herr Rathsherr's explanation.

"I say, Witte, that *we* are coming. Ought not the burghers of a town like ours to erect a triumphal arch for their fellow-burghers and officers of state, who have suffered for the Fatherland, just as much as for a Duke?--But who is to do it? The old Amtshauptmann? The Burmeister? They won't be thinking of such a thing. Or do you think the old Rector, because he once made a thing of a '*transparency*'? That was a fine thing!--Or old Metz? There's as much sense in his talk, baker Witte, as in a squirrel's tail.--Or old Zoch? He can blow his horn on the watch tower, nothing else.--Ah! if *I* were there!"

"But, at this time of year, Herr Rathsherr," said the Baker, "where could you get flowers and evergreens from?"

"Flowers? What do old Heimann Kasper, and Leip, and the other Jews, sell red and yellow ribbons for? Evergreens! For what purpose has the town of Stemhagen raised a fir plantation in the State Forest?"

"That's true," said old Witte, for the pint measure was now full again.

"What do you say, Miller Voss?" asked the Herr Rathsherr.

"I say nothing, Herr Rathsherr," said the Miller, turning towards him a face so full of wrinkles that it looked like a puckered tobacco-pouch rising above his shoulder, "I say nothing; I only think: yesterday when I was driving towards Brandenburg I didn't feel exactly comfortable, and now to-day, when I am driving away from it, I feel as if I had got a stomach-ache in my head."

"How's that?" asked my uncle Herse; and the Miller told him his difficulties with Itzig.--"Hm!" said my uncle, and he passed his hand slowly down his face as far as his chin where it remained fast caught in the stubbly beard. With his chin in his hand and his mouth wide open, he gazed fixedly for a while into vacancy. He tried the same thing over again once or twice, but his hand never got over his beard. Now, though my uncle Herse had a bristly beard, he had a tender soul; and if his mouth opened wide, his heart opened wider still; and, as he was taking a last look into the grey sky, his eyes fell on a blue place, and a ray from the blue sky passed through his eyes into his open heart. He must do a good work.

"Baker Witte," said he, "let the Miller come and sit here, and you take his place on the front seat,--I have something to say to him."

This was done, and Baker Witte talked on the front seat to the valet-de-chambre in a very loud voice, and the Herr Rathsherr talked on the hind seat with the Miller in a very low one.

"Miller Voss," said my uncle, "I will help you out of the bog. I will send for Itzig to-morrow--and then observe how servile he will be, for I know something about him,--a secret!--that does not concern anybody else;--but it's nothing very good you may be sure.--The fellow shall give you time till Easter, and I will be surety for you; and I'll come out to-morrow, and look through all your papers and take the matter into my own hands. For, look here," and as he spoke he drew out the seal at the end of his watch-chain, "I am appointed to do such things. Here it stands. Perhaps you can't easily read Latin backwards?" The Miller said he could not read it either backwards or forwards.--"Well, it does not matter. Here it stands: *Not. Pub. Im. Cæs.*, that's to say, I'm Notarius Publicus, and *Im. Cæs.* means--I can be consulted in every lawsuit. So, Miller, I'll help you.--But upon one condition only: that you tell no one of my being surety for you, or of our agreement,--above all not the Herr Amtshauptmann. The affair must remain a profound secret."

The Miller promised.

In one way things were going on in the second waggon in the same manner as in the first. On the front sack the voices were very loud, and on the hind sack, on which Heinrich and Fieka were sitting, they were very low. I need not tell what they were saying to each other, for Friedrich, you know, was lying close behind them in the straw, and heard every word they said, and he will come out with it in good time.

About three hours after this, that young rascal Fritz Sahlmann was running through the streets of the good town of Stemhagen, shouting--"They are coming! They are coming!"--He had been watching for a couple of hours on the Windmill-hill, and, during that time, the Herr Amtshauptmann had rung his bell seven times for him, and had, at last, come down to my mother out of sheer vexation.

"They are coming!" cried the young wretch.

"Is it true, boy?" asked old Rickert the bell-ringer.

"Yes, neighbour Rickert, they are just at the bridge."

And old Rickert said to himself: "It can't be helped: I must do my duty;" went to the bell-tower, and as he could not manage the whole peal, rang the alarm bell. At that sound all were on foot, and at their house-doors. "They are coming!"--"Who is coming?"--"The Rathsherr, and baker Witte, and the Miller, and all the others."

"Hurrah!" shouted Shoemaker Bank waving his arm in the air,--forgetting he had got a boot on it.

"Hurrah!" cried Locksmith Tröpner, rushing into the street with his leathern apron on. "But let us have everything quiet and orderly, good people"--and he knocked the jug out of Frau Stahl's hand, which she was carrying down from the Schloss.

"Hurrah!" cried Herr Droï, running out into the street with his bearskin on, but otherwise in plain clothes; and behind him trooped his little French children and shouted "Vive l'Empereur!" as the Rathsherr passed through the crowd in the first waggon.

He sat bolt upright on his sack, and held his hand to his hat all along the street, and turned his dignified face to right and left; and with his dignity was mixed some emotion, as he whispered to the Miller: "Voss, this makes me forget the triumphal arch."

"Yes, and me Itzig," said the old Miller, who, on seeing what the Rathsherr did, began to do the same. The valet-de-chambre kept on bowing away at his side of the waggon, treating his hat most cruelly and from the other side old Witte kept up a fire of: "Good day neighbour. Good day Bank, how's your back. Good day Johann. Good day Strüwingken--Is all right? How are the pigs?"

When they came to the market-place, they saw Aunt Herse waving the bottom half of one of the white curtains out at the window, and such a storm-wind arose in my uncle Herse's heart that his feelings rolled in great waves and sent the water up to his eyes:--"Aunt," he said half aloud to himself, "Aunt,"--for he always called his wife "Aunt" and she called him "Uncle" in return,--"Aunt, I cannot obey your signal, for both these last days have concerned me in my public, and not in my private capacity--have concerned me as Rathsherr and not as Uncle, and they must end in the same way as they have begun.--To the Rathhaus, baker Witte!" he cried, and as he said it, he pulled his cocked hat down over his eyes. The Rathsherr had won the victory over the "Uncle" and father of a family.

O, what a merry evening it was at the Rathhaus! Everything in kitchen and cellar that had been hidden away from the French was brought out, and whatever was wanting was fetched from the Schloss. Marie Wienken laid the cloth on a long, long table, and to the table added leaf after leaf, and, when there were no more leaves, she joined on small tables, and when there were not enough of them, the chairs were spread for us children. Mamsell Westphalen stood at the corner-cupboard, and squeezed lemons on to sugar, and poured the contents of all sorts of bottles over it; and the kettles went backwards and forwards, from the kitchen into the room, and from the room into the kitchen; and the Herr Amtshauptmann stood by, and kept tasting and shaking his head, and then pouring in something himself; and at last he nodded and said: "Now Mamsell Westphalen it's right; this is quite another thing;" and he turned round to my mother, and said:--"You must let me have my way in one thing, my friend, I will make the punch." My father managed the corkscrew, Luth the pouring out, and the valet-de-chambre stood by the stove, and shook his head at all these arrangements; and he showed Luth how he ought to wait; and, as Luth tried to imitate him, he spilled a glass of punch into Mamsell Westphalen's lap.--Yes, it was a merry evening!

Friedrich stood at the door, upright as a grenadier, and not moving or stirring a limb except to drink; Fritz Besserdich stood at his side, not moving or stirring either, except, too, when he drank. And Fieka Voss sat next to my Mother, and my Mother pressed her hand, and stroked her soft cheek, and when I came up to her side, she stroked mine too and said: "Shall you love me as much as Fieka loves her father?"

The Herr Amtshauptmann called Heinrich Voss into a corner, and talked to him aside. What had the Herr Amtshauptmann got to say in secret to Heinrich Voss, and why did he keep patting

him on the shoulder? Old Miller Voss asked himself this, and when he had made out that it must be about the lawsuit, he said to Witte:--

"Well, I have finished with the lawsuit now, the Jew's the only thing remaining, and I'll drown him to-night in punch."

"By the way that reminds me ..." said the baker going out.

After a time he came back again, holding a basket in one hand and Strüwingken by the other:-- "By your leave, Herr Burmeister, perhaps I may bring something towards the feast; here are a few sweet cakes; and here, Frau Burmeister, is my daughter Strüwingken; pardon the liberty, but she wished so much to see the company."

But what was all this to the splendour and pomp which surrounded my uncle Herse. He had taken off his cloak, and now stood there in full uniform; and everyone came round him, and thanked him; my father because he had taken him under the shelter of his cloak; My mother because he had thereby helped my father to escape; Mamsell Westphalen curtsyed three times, and said she should never forget what he had done for her; and Miller Voss said that, strictly speaking, they had only been set free at Brandenburg owing to the Herr Rathsherr; and when old Witte confirmed this, Strüwingken secretly promised herself that she would send the Rathsherr an immense tea-cake. His fine, full face beamed with pleasure and delight, and he bent down to my Mother and said:--"I can't at all make out why 'Aunt' does not come."

At the Miller's words, he suddenly recollected the French Colonel's message and turned to the Herr Amtshauptmann:--"I have two words to say to you, Herr Amtshauptmann, on a very secret matter," and so saying he drew him into a corner. We know what it is he is going to say, but if the corner could speak, and were to tell us what the Rathsherr had said there, we should be obliged to pretend that we had known nothing about it.

My father was obliged at length to free the old Amtshauptmann. He took my uncle and placed him in the post of honour at the head of the table, and never was anyone put in the right place more at the right time; for, hardly was he seated, when the door opened and in came Aunt Herse in a black silk dress, and behind this dress stood old Metz the father of the present old Metz, and the present rich Joseph Kasper who was then a little Jew boy. Aunt Herse had a wreath of green laurel in her hand picked from old Metz's laurel-tree, from which he generally picked the leaves only when his wife cooked bream; and the wreath was bound with a long red ribbon; Joseph Kasper had furnished this, and so Aunt Herse had brought him with her. She went up to uncle Herse, gave him a kiss, placed the wreath on his head with the ends of ribbon hanging down his back, and made a pretty little speech which nobody heard, for baker Witte broke out the same moment with: "Hurrah!" and the Miller with "Long live!" and every one joined in and clinked glasses.

Yes, it *was* a delightful evening! And a long time afterwards, when I saw a picture of Julius Cæsar it put me in mind of my uncle Herse, for he looked exactly like it in his laurel wreath, only my uncle was a good deal stouter and more genial than the crabbed dried-up Roman. And a long time afterwards whenever I had specially nice cakes before me I thought of Baker Witte's. And I can still praise them; for you may eat a great many, and yet not be made ill.

CHAPTER XIX.

Why the Miller again looked into the tops of his boots; how a pint became a bushel; why Heinrich said good-bye, and why Friedrich considered that women were getting cheap.

The next morning, when the Miller had got out of bed, he again sat resting his head on his hands and looking thoughtfully into the tops of his boots.

"Mother," asked he at last, "did I quarrel with Heinrich last night, or did I dream it?"

"Why, father," replied his wife, "you kept embracing him and calling him your dear son, and you promised Friedrich he should have plenty of money when you became a rich man, and said it would not be so very long either before that time came."

"Then, mother, I was a fool."

"That's what I told you last night, but you would not believe it."

"Lord save me!" cried the Miller; "there is no end to these stupid tricks of mine!"

Friedrich came in.--"Good morning, Miller; good morning, Dame. I only came in to tell you, Miller, I had thought over the matter. I will let the money which you promised me yesterday evening stay with you at interest for some time longer, till I want it."

"Hm!" said the old Miller, moving uneasily on his chair.

"Yes," said Friedrich; "but there was another thing I wanted to ask you: will you let me leave at Easter? I know it's rather before my time."

"Why? What do you want to do?"

"I want to get married."

"What? You marry?"

"Yes, Miller, I am going to marry Bailiff Besserdich's Hanchen, who is now in service at the Schloss; and I thought if Heinrich Voss marries our Fieka, and our fathers-in-law have nothing against it, we could be married on the same day."

This was too much for the Miller: "You rascal...!" He jumped up and seized one of his boots.

"Stay, Miller;" said Friedrich, drawing himself up, "that word's neither fit for you nor fit for me. How things stand with me, I have known for three days, and how they stand with Heinrich and our Fieka I came to know yesterday afternoon; I was lying behind them in the waggon and heard everything they said."

"It would be a good thing, father," said the Miller's wife.

"You don't understand anything about it," cried the Miller, and strode about the room savagely.

"Well, Miller," said Friedrich, and he went to the door, "think the matter over; *my* father-in-law has been going about thinking of it ever since the day before yesterday."

"I will give you your character at once," cried the Miller after him, "but you are not to leave before midsummer."

Why was the old Miller so angry? He liked Heinrich very well; he had himself often thought during the last few days, that Heinrich and Fieka might do for one another; and he had called him his "dear son" only last night. But that was just it. Last night the punch had made him a rich man, and this morning he was looking into the tops of his boots--a beggar; even if Itzig would be put off till Easter, it would be but a short reprieve.

"Father," said his wife, "this is the best thing that could happen to us and to our Fieka."

"I tell you, mother," cried the Miller, and it was fortunate he had not got his boot on or he would have stamped on the floor with rage, "I tell you, you don't understand anything about it. What? I am to give my child to Joe Voss's son, who is at law with me, and who travels about the country with a great bag of money,--my best, my dearest child--and I am to say to him: 'there she is, but I can give you nothing with her for I am a beggar?' No, wife, no! Why, I should have to borrow the very clothes in which my only child,--my little Fieka,--was married.--No, no! I must get right again first."

It often happens so in the world. Some piece of good fortune hangs close before our eyes, and when we stretch out our hand to seize it, our arm is held by a chain, forged, without our having been aware of it, in times long past, the ends of which are fastened far behind us, so that we cannot get it off. The Miller's chain was his law-suit and his bad management in former years, and now when he tried to seize the good fortune which seemed within his reach, it held him back; and he fretted and fumed in vain. He might perhaps cut the chain in two, but then he would be obliged to drag about one end of it all his life like a runaway convict, and his honour would not suffer this. One cannot help pitying the old man. He avoided everybody, and worked alone in the mill and the stable, as hard as if he thought he could, in this one day, make good all the neglects of past years.

At last he was freed from his toil. My uncle Herse arrived,--but in the dress of a plain burgher to-day: "Good day, Voss; well, our affairs are all right."

But the Miller was not to be so easily satisfied to-day, and he said shortly: "Yes, for whoever thinks so, Herr Rathsherr."

"When I say it, Miller Voss," said the Herr Rathsherr, as he fetched a packet of papers from his carriage, and went with the Miller into his room, "when I say it, you may believe it, for I am here to-day as a Notary Public."

"Mother," said the Miller, "leave us by ourselves; but give us a light first, Fieka."

Now, there was no exact necessity for this, seeing, that it was broad daylight; but the Miller had noticed that, when a court of justice was being held, the Herr Amtshauptmann always had a

wax-light burning by him, and so he determined to have a light, thinking it was safer, because it made everything more complete. And he went to his cupboard and fetched out a pair of spectacles and put them on, which was also unnecessary, for he could not read writing; but he thought he should be able to pay better attention in spectacles. Finally, he drew a table into the middle of the room, and brought forward a couple of chairs.

When they were alone and seated before the table and the light, the Herr Rathsherr read aloud, in a clear voice, a paper in which the Jew promised to wait till Easter, the Herr Rathsherr being bail for the Miller. And, when he had read it, he laid the paper by his side and looked at the Miller with a face which seemed to say, "What do you think of *that*?"

The Miller hummed and hawed, and scratched his head.

"Miller Voss," said my uncle angrily "what do you mean with your 'hms' and 'haws'? There is my seal underneath. Do you see, it's a stalk of *hirse*. because my name is 'Herse'; I could also have a portcullis on it, if I liked, because in French that's 'herse'--but I am not fond of the French. And here, round it, is my authority: 'Not:Pub:Im:Cæs.', and here is the Jew's signature 'Itzig', and what is written is written."

"That's what the Herr Amtshauptmann says," said the Miller and he looked a great deal more cheerful, "what's written is written."

"It's of no consequence to me what *he* says. It is I, Miller Voss, *I*, who am, through my office appointed to make written writing fast and secure by my seal. And this paper frees you from all difficulties till Easter."

"Yes, Herr Rathsherr, and I thank you for it;--but then?"

It was now my uncle's turn to hum and haw: "Hm, what *then*?--Well--Yes--Well, Miller," and his good old face threw its official look out of window and put on human kindness for spectacles, and looked benevolently at the Miller and the whole world: "Well, Miller Voss, I have procured you breathing-time till Easter, and, maybe, I can give you further help; I have come on purpose to set matters right. But, in order for me to do so, you must tell me exactly how you stand, and show me all your papers."

So the Miller told and told, and went on till any other head than my uncle Herse's would have been quite lost in the maze; and he brought out so many papers that anyone else would have been alarmed; but my uncle was very thorough in business matters and was fond of solving riddles and mysteries. He listened to, and read, everything with patience, though not with much profit to his undertaking.

"Is this all, Miller Voss?" he asked at last.

"Yes," said the Miller, and he looked as down as a potatoe-field when the night frost has gone over it; "and this is my contract with the bailiwick of Stemhagen."

My uncle took the contract, and read it through, looking, in his turn, like a parsnip-field that has been cut up by the hail. But, all at once he jumped up:--"Why, what is this? Miller, your difficulties are at an end. In a couple of years you will be a *millionaire*. The whole town and bailiwick of Stemhagen is bound to have its corn ground at your mill; here it is in paragraph four. And what says paragraph five? 'For every bushel that the Miller grinds he has a right to take one bushel as payment.'"

"A pint, Herr Rathsherr," cried the Miller; and he, too, jumped up now. "For every bushel one pint."

"No, a bushel. Here it is: for every bushel one bushel as payment; and what is written is written, and here is the Amtshauptmann's seal."

"Herr Rathsherr, my head is swimming. Herr, that is only a mistake."

"Mistake or no mistake, what is written is written; the old Amtshauptmann said so himself."

"That he did," said the Miller; "yes, that he did, I can swear to it."

And now the Miller saw before him a prospect of deliverance from the Jew's clutches, and of many, many bushels of corn and of many, many bright thalers; for was not the whole bailiwick obliged to bring corn to his mill?

"This is a good thing, Herr Rathsherr," he cried; "but---but---"

"What do you mean with your buts, Voss?" cried my uncle indignantly. "The thing is plain and clear."

"Yes, Herr Rathsherr, I only mean, what is to be done with the sacks?"

"With the sacks?--What sacks?"

"Why, the sacks in which the corn is brought to me. I get all the corn, but who gets the sacks?"

"Hm," said my uncle, "that's a difficult question in law, Miller. I did not think of it, and there's nothing about it in the contract, but, if you'll follow my advice, you'll keep them yourself for the present, for what says the Lubeck law: '*beati possidentes*,' that is in German, 'what a man has, that he's got.' Now, Miller, I have helped you out of everything. But one thing I insist upon: silence!--Not a soul must be spoken to about this matter. Do you hear?--not a soul. I will speak to Itzig. He must take corn, instead of money, and by Easter the debt will all be cleared off, and then, Miller Voss...."

"And then, Herr Rathsherr?..."

"Then--it will all be overplus--But, Miller, the affair remains a secret."

The Miller promised, and the Herr Rathsherr set off home again, and Heinrich and Fieka saw him nod from his carriage to the Miller, and lay his finger on his lips.

"Keeping secrets is not one of my gifts, Fieka," said Heinrich: "I shall go to your father and speak to him."

"Do so," said Fieka. But if she had known the state the Miller was in, she would certainly have told him to wait.

The old Miller was in a strange mood. That morning he had been a beggar, and had been unwilling to give his child away, because he had no dower for her. Now he was a rich man, and his only daughter had no need to take the first who came; she might become a fine lady as well as anybody else. The change had come too quickly, he did not rightly know what had happened to him; and there now arose, too, a secret fear in him, lest all might not be as it ought to be, and great anxiety lest what he was going to do might not be right. "But," said he to himself, "the Amtshauptmann himself said 'what is written is written;' and the Rathsherr must know better than me what is right."--If it was difficult for him, in ordinary times, to come to a decision, it was quite impossible at a moment like this.

When Heinrich made his offer therefore, the Miller began to talk about the lawsuit, and said Heinrich was not at all to suppose that he was a ruined man. Many had tried to drown him, but he still swam at the top.

Heinrich then said that he had no evil intentions, that he had thought to himself that the Miller would give him his Fieka, and would sell him his lease, and that his father and mother-in-law might live with him in peace and quietness for the rest of their lives.

But at this the old Miller fired up: yes, Heinrich would like that; he could readily believe it. But nobody should cry "Fish" before they had caught any; he was not going to let himself be taken in by anyone, let alone a young man like Heinrich. His lease, indeed! His lease! he would keep it himself, though a king should come and court his Fieka!

For such a speech Heinrich was not at all prepared after what had already passed. The blood mounted into *his* face also, and he said sharply, that the Miller must say "yes" or "no," would he give him his daughter or not.

The Miller turned round abruptly and looked out of window, and said "No."

Heinrich also turned round, and went out of the room, and half an hour afterwards Friedrich drove into the yard with Heinrich's waggon; and, at his call, Heinrich and Fieka came out of the garden. Fieka looked very pale but also quite firm, and said: "Heinrich, what I have said I will keep to, and you too will keep to it."--He nodded his head, and pressed her hand, stepped up to the Miller's wife who was standing at the door, said a few parting words to her, got into the waggon, and drove slowly away.

When he was some little distance from the Mill, he heard some one calling after him, and on turning round to look, he saw Friedrich coming towards him across the corner of a rye-field: "Where are you driving to, Heinrich?"

"To Stemhagen."

"Shall you stop the night there?"

"Yes, I thought I would stay for the night at Baker Witte's, for I have something to speak to the Herr Amtshauptmann about."

"I must say, that's a good idea of yours, Heinrich, and I have something to do at the Schloss this evening too; and, maybe, I shall have something to say to you, so don't drive off from Witte's till I come. I shall not be there till late, however, when everything is quiet here."

Heinrich promised he would wait for him, and drove on again towards Stemhagen. On the road he met Baker Witte who was driving with corn to the Mill and said:--"Well, Heinrich, put up at my house, I shall be at home again by evening, and then we can have a bit of a chat together."

Evening had long since set in, and the baker had been some time at home, but Heinrich was still up at the Schloss with the old Herr. Friedrich, too, had arrived and had gone up to the Schloss, and old Witte said to Strüwingken, "Something has happened at the Mill, you'll see. I don't think much of the Miller's wife sitting crying, for her tears run easily, but I don't at all like to see Fieka going about so quiet and saying nothing to all the fooleries and scoldings of the old Miller; and he has got one of those queer fits upon him this morning which you can make nothing of. When I asked him how soon I should come for the flour, he said he must first look at his lease; and when I said I wanted it next week, he said it was all the same to him, he should act according to his lease; and when I was driving away, he called out after me that, if anything strange should happen to the flour, I was only to go to Rathsherr Herse, and he would explain the matter to me,--that is if he thought proper."

"Why he must be mad," said Strüwingken.

At that moment Heinrich came in, looking calm and indifferent; and on the baker beginning to talk about the flour, and of the queer reception he had met with, Heinrich abruptly broke in with: "Will you do me a favour, Witte?"

"Why not?" said the baker.

"Look here, many people come to your place; and you have room in your stable. I want to sell my horse and waggon, will you help me with it."

"Why not?" said Witte again; "but, Heinrich," added he after a while, and you could almost imagine you saw how he was collecting his thoughts together inside his brain, and weaving them into a long chain so as to spin out the conversation. "But, Heinrich, there's no hurry about it.--Horses--horses--you see they are cheap now. Why?--Well--what do I know?--Why, because no one feels sure that the French won't take them out of the stables overnight. But, you'll see, they'll get dear; for, you'll see in a few weeks we shall all be marching against the French."

"I have just heard the same from a man who must know much more about it than you or I. But it's just for that reason I want to be rid of them."

"Yes," said Friedrich, who had come into the room during the Miller's speech; "horses will get dear and women cheap. There will be a great call for horses when the war begins, and little for women; and when it's over, and half the young men are killed, there'll be still less. And it's going to begin. Yesterday, at Brandenburg, a fellow took me aside, who looked as if he had tried the blue beans, [\[5\]](#) and he said to me that from my appearance I must have carried a musket, and, if I liked, he knew of a place for me. I said I would think about it; but to-day is not yesterday, and today I don't need to think about it. I deserted from the Prussians, but only because I had to rock the cradle for my Captain's children; and yesterday I only wanted to think it over, because I expected I should soon have to rock children; of my own. But to-day I need think no more; I shall enlist against the French. And, Witte, I have no one in the world to look after my things, so when you hear that I have left the Mill, will you see about my box? And now, good-bye. I must go back to the Mill this evening." So saying he departed.

Heinrich followed him: "Friedrich, what does this mean?"

"What does it mean?" said Friedrich. "I will tell you. 'What the one looks the other feels.' The same thing has happened to us both, only your Fieka cries and my Hanchen laughs. I am not young enough for her. Well, it doesn't much matter; I was not too old for that fellow at Brandenburg, but what is one man's owl is another's nightingale."

"Don't speak so loud, Friedrich," said Heinrich in a low voice. "You are going to turn soldier and so am I."

"What! You?"

"Hush! Yes, I. I have no friends or relations far and wide, and stand alone in the world. I have spoken to the Herr Amtshauptmann, and he has promised to keep an eye on my property. I can let my Mill at Parchen any day, and I am going to sell my horse and waggon."

"Hurrah!" cried Friedrich, "your hand, comrade! Dumouriez! The very first morning, I said you had the making of a soldier in you."

"Yes, that's all very well," replied Heinrich. "I have got the will, but how about carrying it out?"

"When anyone has it in his mind to do something wrong, comrade," said Friedrich, "the Devil is always at hand to show him the way. And the Almighty will not do less. He will show us the right way, now, for this is for our country. Look,--I can't, I must stay till Easter--but do you drive over at once to Brandenburg, and ask at the Inn, where we were, for a tall man with a grey moustache and a scar across the right cheek, you will be sure to find him. Present yourself to him and report me as 'Friedrich Schult;' say that I have served, but you need not say that I deserted once from rocking children. And, when all is settled, let me know, and then I'll come."

"So let it be!" cried Heinrich. "And, Friedrich, greet Fieka from me, and tell her she's not to be

surprised at what I may do. I will keep to what I said."

"I'll give your message. And now, goodnight."

"Good-night." And as Heinrich still stood there listening to Friedrich's footsteps, he heard round the corner "Dumouriez! Accursed patriots!"

CHAPTER XX.

How everything went head over heels--in the world, in Stemhagen, and in the Miller's house; why the Miller and Friedrich drove to Stemhagen; and why Fieka followed them.

The French came no more into our part of the country; but, all the same, it did not get any quieter. The Landsturm (levy en masse) was called out; the Herr Amtshauptmann commanded in chief, and, under him, Captain Grischow; but their men had only pikes,--except the Schoolmaster who had had a halbert made for himself by the locksmith, Tröpner. My uncle Herse raised a corps of sharpshooters of one-and-twenty fowling pieces, and the young peasants sat on horseback with their long swords at their sides.

It is a thing to laugh at, say the would-be wise. I say, it is a thing to weep at that such a time comes so seldom in Germany, and that such a time should have had no other result than that which the last forty years have to show.

A single French regiment would have driven the whole pack like chaff before the wind, say the would-be wise. It may be so, say I, but they would not have driven away the spirit; one may laugh at the individual signs; no one then, not even Buonaparte himself, laughed at the whole. On one and the same day the cry went through the whole of Lower Germany from the Vistula to the Elbe, from the Baltic to Berlin "The French are coming!" They say now that this cry was raised on purpose to see what Lower Germany would do. If that is true, then they had their wish: Lower Germany stood the test. Everywhere, far and wide, the alarm-bell sounded, not a village remained at home; everywhere there was marching hither and thither, and the "single French regiment" must have had long legs to crush the movement in all places at once.

The Stemhagen folk marched on Ankershagen; the French were said to be in Ankershagen. The Malchin folk marched on Stemhagen; the French were said to be in Stemhagen. Yes, it was a queer medley. In the market-place at Stemhagen the pike-men were divided into companies; Droz and the Miller's Friedrich were to manage them because they were the only ones who understood anything about war; but the burghers would not obey their commands, because the one was a Frenchman and the other a Miller's man. Nobody would stand in the rear rank. Deichert, the shoemaker, objected because Bank stood in the front; Groth, the taxgatherer, because Stahl the weaver, who was in the front, always sent the reverse end of the pike into his ribs in levelling bayonets, and he could not put up with it.

My uncle Herse drilled his one-and-twenty fowling pieces in the horse-pound, always making them fire off all together. His chief command was "At 'em! At 'em!" They were then all to fire off at once, first with blank cartridges, and afterwards with "ball," that is to say, shot; but as, at the first volley, Dr. Lukow's white cow was wounded, this shooting with "ball" had to be given up. They all said afterwards that the tailor, Zachow, had done it, but it was never proved. At last, they were all beautifully in rank and file, and when Captain Grischow commanded "left wheel," out they came into the Brandenburg road, and marched on in a splendid heap of confusion; and when they were outside the town-gates, every one looked for a dry path for himself, and they marched one behind the other, like geese among the barley. A halt was made at the Owl Hill to wait for their commander, the Herr Amtshauptmann. The Herr Amtshauptmann was too old to walk, and he could not ride, so he drove to battle; stately he sat in his long basket-carriage with his sword lying by his side. When he arrived, he received a "Vivat" from his troops; and then he made them a speech and said: "My children! We are not soldiers, and we shall make plenty of blunders, but that will do no harm. Whoever likes to laugh, may do so. But we will do our duty, and our duty is to show the French that we are at our post. It's a pity that I know nothing about the art of war, but I will look out in good time for a man who does--Herr Droz, come up here by my side, and when the enemy comes, tell me what I am to do. I will not forsake you, my children. And now forward, for the Fatherland!"

"Hurrah!" cried his people, and away they went against the enemy. The Pribbnow peasants and the labourers of Jürnsdorf and Kittendorf came, with pitchforks and such things, and joined them.

"Hanning Heinz," said my uncle Herse to his adjutant, "these are our Irregulars. At times, these sorts of troops are of great use,--as we have seen in the Cossacks; but they easily bring the regular troops into disorder; so keep yourselves well in a mass together, and when the attack begins, then 'At 'em!'"

The cavalry was sent out to reconnoitre, and rode in front, and Inspector Bräsig and the Ivenack town clerk had pistols; these they fired off every now and then,--probably to frighten the French; and in this way they reached Ankershagen;--but they did not meet the French. When this was reported to the Herr Amtshauptmann, he said:

"Children, it seems to me that we have done enough for to-day, and if we go back at once, we shall be home again by daylight. What say you, eh?"

The idea was good. Captain Grischow commanded "Right about face," and they all went home except half a company of pikes, and two fowling-pieces who fell upon the Kittendorf public house and there did wonders.

As they were marching back, Stahl came up to the Amtshauptmann and asked: "By your leave, Herr Amtshauptmann, may I lay my pike in your carriage for a little while?"

"Certainly."

And Deichert came, and Zachow came, and many came, and at last all came, with the same request; and by the time the Herr Amtshauptmann drove into the town, his innocent basket-carriage looked like an engine of war, like some scythe-chariot out of the Persian and Roman times.

Rathsherr Herse just let them fire "At 'em" three times more in the market-place, and then everyone went home quite satisfied. My uncle alone was dissatisfied: "Hanning Heinz," said he again to his adjutant; "there's no good in all this. Why does not the old Amtshauptmann let me set fire to the windmills first?"

If things went head-over-heels in the great world, they did not go differently at the Gielow Mill. People brought corn, and got no flour; the Mill stood still, and the corn was poured out on to the floor. Itzig came and received sack after sack, and every time that he drove away from the Mill, the Miller said: "Heaven be praised! There's another thirty--or forty--thalers paid," according to the quantity. But, all the time, he was not cheerful; he rather got despondent, and it was only after Rathsherr Herse had been with him, and had given him fresh courage, that he could ride his high horse, and talk about the great Christopher. When his wife sat and cried, and he felt Fieka near him with her quiet, calm face, he would get uneasy again, and he was obliged to talk in a loud voice to keep off fear; and when Fieka, as often happened, took his hand, or fell upon his neck, and said earnestly, with the tears in her eyes: "What is it, father? Tell me what you are doing this for?" he would answer according to the mood he was in. If it was his rich mood, he would kiss his child and tell her she had only to wait, things would come all right for her; but if he was despondent, he would push her away from him and say, coldly and harshly, that his affairs were not women's affairs, and he must know best what he had to do.

On all sides, there was secret torment and secret fear. However the whole thing could not but come out at last, when Baker Witte insisted on having his flour. He had sent for it, he had written for it, he now came for it himself, and there was noise and wrangling; and as the Baker drove away he shouted out "You thief!" and threatened the Miller with the arm of the law.

Fresh troubles came every day. Easter was at hand: large quantities of corn came from the neighbouring farms and villages to be ground for the feast-day; the Miller's corn flourished, but there was much, much weed with it. The Sheriff's officer came to the Mill to inquire into the matter. The Miller droned out unintelligible stuff about his lease and his right.

The day before Easter Itzig fetched the last load of corn, and the Miller came in to dinner to his wife and Fieka, and said: "At last we are rid of him. He has got his money!"

His wife and Fieka were silent, and the Miller did not pass a joyful Easter; for, do what he would, no happy belief in a sure future would rise within him.

And the next day the Sheriff's officer came again, and ordered the Miller to appear the following day before the Amtshauptmann. He asked for Friedrich, and when he came, told him he was also to appear.

"If I like," said Friedrich, and he turned on his heel, for he remembered that the Amtshauptmann had said to him: "I will not forget you."

"If you do *not* come," said the officer, "it will be at your peril."

"You gentlemen always imagine," laughed Friedrich, "that when your plums are ripe, one of us is to pick them. However, I shall be going to Stemhagen to-morrow in any case, for my time with the Miller is up."

"Nothing of the kind!" growled the Miller. "I have hired you till Midsummer."

The next day, the Miller drove with Friedrich to Stemhagen. Neither spoke a word; when they reached the market-place, Friedrich wanted to turn down to baker Witte's.

"Stop," cried the Miller; "I am not going there, I shall put up at Gruhle's."

"Then, Miller," said Friedrich, and he jumped down off the waggon, and threw the reins to him, "you can drive yourself there, I shall stay at Witte's." And with these words he went off.

In better days, the Miller would not have put up with this, but would have taught his man a lesson, even though that man were Friedrich. But now he said nothing. He was no longer the same Miller. He sighed heavily, drove up before Guhle's door without going in, and went to the Herr Rathsherr's over the way.

Scarcely had the waggon left the Mill, when Fieka came down, dressed in her best, to her mother, who was sitting by the stove crying.

"Mother," she said, "do what I can, I cannot get rid of the thought that everything depends on to-day; to-day will show whether we are to remain at the Mill or not. Father has done something and what it is...."

"It's stupid of him to have done it," interrupted the Miller's wife.

"And so I want to follow him," Fieka went on. "I will ask the Herr Amtshauptmann or the Frau Amtshauptmann or some one else--I don't know whom exactly yet.--God will show me the way, and put the words in my mouth."

"Go, Fieka," said her mother.

Fieka went. She could still see the waggon in the distance. She reached Stemhagen, and went, as usual, to Witte's house: she asked for the baker, he was at the Schloss; she went into the room,--there was Friedrich sitting talking to a soldier who had on a red jacket, and had got his back turned to her.

Friedrich jumped up: "Dumouriez! Fieka! How did you come here?"

The soldier also jumped up. Good heavens! What is this? Can that be Heinrich!--Yes it was. He threw his arm round her.

"Fieka, my darling little Fieka," he cried, "don't you know me again?"

Alas! she knew him well enough. She screamed out loud: "What, Heinrich? Heinrich, you turned soldier?"

"Well," said Friedrich, "and what should a brave fellow turn now but a soldier?"

Fieka paid no heed to the question, she had enough to do with her own thoughts, and they broke out from her lips:--"O, God! and this, too, is my old father's fault. What can be the matter with him?"

"He need not reproach himself about me, Fieka," said Heinrich. "Although at first when I wanted to go away, it was all the same to me where I went to, it is different now. Now, for the first time I know what I have turned soldier for, and for what cause we go to battle. Now, I know what it means when comrade stands by comrade, and a whole regiment enters the field with heart and soul for the Fatherland. You know how I love you; and yet if you would give me your hand to-day, I could not take it. I must go, but I take your heart with me."

"Spoken like a man!" cried Friedrich.

"You are right, Heinrich," said Fieka. "Go. But, when you come back, you must not expect to find us here any longer. Misfortunes are coming over our heads, and who knows how long the Mill may shelter us."

"Eh, what, Fieka?" said Friedrich, "the Miller has got somewhat into a pickle, he has got up to his neck in water; but, for all that, the waves need not close over his head. He has still got good friends who can stretch out a hand to him."

"Who can help him?" said Fieka, and sat down and let her hands fall in her lap. "Nobody knows what he has got into his head."

"O, Heinrich knows something about it," said Friedrich. "He heard a little bird sing this morning.--Make him tell you what it said, for I must now be off to the Schloss."

CHAPTER XXI.

How the Miller holds to it that 'what is written is written'; why the Amtshauptmann pulls Fritz Sahlmann by the ear, and my uncle Herse loses all command over himself. How too this story comes to a happy end.

He went; and Heinrich and Fieka remained alone.--Up at the Schloss the old Amtshauptmann sat on his chair with the white napkin round his neck. He was peevish.

"Neiting," he said, "the string is cutting me."

"Why, Weber, how can it cut you?"

"It cuts me, Neiting; and I'm not a Turkish Pasha, trying how it feels when you strangle yourself with a silk cord."

"Well, is it right now?"

"Hm! Yes;--but it's a very troublesome thing."

"What is, Weber?"

"About the old Gielow Miller. The old man has gone quite mad; at least I try to think so, though his conduct savours strongly of knavery."

"What has he done?"

"Why, he has kept all the corn which people have brought him to grind, and he's said to have sold it afterwards to Itzig.--What are you looking at, Neiting?"

"O, I just caught sight of him coming up with Rathsherr Herse."

"With Rathsherr Herse?" cried the old Herr, also getting up and looking out at the window. "What does Rathsherr Herse want, Neiting?"

"Why, he's talking with the Miller."

"And most busily, too, he is talking, Neiting," said the old Herr, and his face looked bright, and a merry smile spread over it. "Thank God! I must acquit the Miller of all knavery now; it will turn out to be some folly, for the Rathsherr is mixed up in it."

"But surely the Rathsherr is a good honourable man?"

"He is, Neiting, but he plays pranks--sad pranks!" So saying the Herr Amtshauptmann went into the justice-room.

At the door of the room stood Farmer Roggenbom, and Baker Witte, and Schult Besserdich, and a dozen more, all of whom had accused the Miller. And now when he came in amongst them with the Rathsherr, and saw his best friends against him, his heart sank into his boots; and when they all shrank from him, and he read his dishonour in their faces, his courage broke down; he was obliged to hold by the Herr Rathsherr's arm, and said in a low voice: "Herr Rathsherr, I feel very uncomfortable."

A feeling like this is catching. My uncle Herse also began to feel uncomfortable; for the first time in the whole course of the affair a faint misgiving, a dim foreboding, arose in him that he had perhaps sat down in a bed of nettles. Everything that he had meant to say for the Miller became blurred and confused, and when Voss was called into the Justice-room, and he went with him, everything had vanished except his dignified appearance, and that, too, began to totter terribly when the old Herr came upon him with a grave: "To what do I owe this honour, Herr Rathsherr?"

My uncle Herse was very good at answers--if one gave him time. He had always to make a great round before he came to the point. This question was too direct for him, and the old Herr's face too stern, and he could only stammer out something about "Notary Public" and "legal assistance for the Miller."

"Assistance?" said the old Herr, and a curious light flickered over his face. "Good, Herr Rathsherr, be pleased to seat yourself and listen."

So my uncle Herse sat down, and this was a piece of good luck for him; for he could recover himself and think better when sitting. And accordingly he recovered himself and reflected.

"Miller Voss," asked the old Herr, "have you had corn to grind from him, and him? What say you, eh?"

"Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann."

"What have you done with it?"

"I've sold it to Itzig; but the sacks are lying at the Mill. I will deliver them up to justice."

"Indeed! that is very kind of you; but do you also know that you have been doing very wrong, and that it looks very much like cheating?"

"I've only done what I've a right to do, Herr Amtshauptmann," said the Miller, and he wiped the sweat of care from his forehead, with the back of his hand.

"Yes," said my uncle Herse, and he got up, "we are...."

"Herr Rathsherr," said the Amtshauptmann, "I have my own ways of going on in my justice-room. I beg you will sit down and listen."

But why had my uncle got up at all? Now he was out of countenance again and must sit down and collect himself afresh.

"What do you mean by talking about your right, Miller Voss?"

"Why, Herr, you've told me yourself: 'What is written is written,' and in my new lease of last year it stands, that for every bushel I grind I am to have a bushel in payment."

"Where's your lease!"

"Here," answered the Miller, giving it to him. The old Herr read it, and shook his head: "Hm! hm! This is a very strange thing!" he took up his bell and rang: "Fritz Sahlmann is to come down to me."

Fritz came.

"Come here, Fritz,--nearer!"

Fritz came nearer.

The Herr Amtshauptmann took him by the ear and led him to the table where the lease was lying open.

"Fritz, what have I often told you? That you would do some terrible mischief one day with your flightiness! And now it's come to pass. You have led two old people into follies that would have cost them dear, if I did not know that they were nothing more than follies. Take your pen and strike out 'bushel' here and write 'pint' above."

Fritz did so. The Herr Amtshauptmann took the lease and gave it back to the Miller: "There, Miller Voss, it's all right now."

"But, Herr Amtshauptmann...." cried the Miller.

"I will speak to your creditors," said the old Herr, "that they may give you a week's respite; but you must get the corn or the money in that time, else it will go ill with you."

"But, Herr Amtshauptmann...." cried my uncle Herse, getting up. The Herr Amtshauptmann looked at him. My uncle had clearly lost command over himself.

"Seat yourself, Herr Rathsherr, and listen to me," said the old Herr very earnestly. "You have no children and you have got enough to live upon. Give up your Notary Publicship, or, if you cannot, then do not exercise it within my district. No good will ever come of your doing so." So saying, he turned his back upon the Rathsherr, rang his bell, and said: "Let the Miller's man, Friedrich Schult, come in."

The old Miller had gone towards the door quite broken down and humbled. My uncle had followed him; and anyone could see that all was whirring and buzzing inside his head. At the door, he stopped and stretched out both arms, but said nothing. But now Friedrich came in and pushed him a little on one side and out of the door; he threw one hasty glance at Friedrich; the old beadle, Ferge, shut the door; and that was the last look my uncle ever gave into law matters, for after that he hung the Notaryship on a nail.

"Come a little nearer, my son," said the Herr Amtshauptmann to Friedrich, "come a little nearer.--It is you who want to marry my Hanchen, is it not?"

"No," said Friedrich.

"Eh!" said the old Herr, looking more sharply at him, "are not you in the Miller's service then?"

"No," said Friedrich, without moving.

"What! Are not you the Miller's man, Friedrich Schult, whom I once said I would remember? What say you, eh?"

"I am Friedrich Schult, Herr; but I'm no longer in the Miller's service. I've left him, and I don't wish for the girl any longer, for she let me go. And I'm not a Miller's man any more. I enlisted about half an hour ago."

"Well, you've chosen the right thing, I think. But, my son, I have a rod in pickle for you. Was it not you who first took the valise from the chasseur's horse?"

"Yes."

"And you opened it and took money out of it, and knew therefore that there was money in it?"

"Yes, I did," said Friedrich boldly. "I don't deny it."

"Well, then, listen attentively to what I am going to say to you. The money is now ownerless property, for the French have given it up. But there is a fellow whom they call 'Exchequer.' He's a rapacious fellow. He swallows everything he can lay hold of, and he's especially hard on 'treasure-trove,' and he has got all this, so to speak, in his jaws. But sometimes he has also kind fits, when he sees a rare piece of honesty and somebody brings it clearly before his eyes. I have done this last with all my might, and this Mr. Exchequer has given up his claim to the money, in your favour. And here is the rod I had in pickle for you." And he threw back a cloth, and the Frenchman's valise appeared. "Friedrich Schult, the valise and the money are yours!"

Friedrich stood still and looked at the Herr Amtshauptmann and at the valise and then again at the valise and the Herr Amtshauptmann, and at last began to scratch his head in a determined way, behind the ears.

"Well!" said the Amtshauptmann, and he laid his hand on Friedrich's shoulder. "What say you, Friedrich, eh?"

"Hm! Yes, Herr Amtshauptmann, I thank you very much, but it doesn't exactly suit me."

"What! The money does not suit you!"

"O, yes, the money suits me well enough, but not just now. The girl won't have me, and I've enlisted, and I can't take it with me."

"Hm!" said the old Herr, and he paced up and down the room with long strides, "this is a very strange thing!" At last he stood still in front of Friedrich, and looked at him with a peculiar look in his eyes: "Money is very scarce just now, and I know where there is a father of a family wringing the very skin off his fingers, and his wife and child sit in tears."

Friedrich looked up. He looked into the Amtshauptmann's face, and it seemed to him as if a beam of light came from it and fell warmly upon his heart.

"Dumouriez!" he cried and he snatched up the valise and put it under his arm.--"I know what to do with it," he said, "Good-day, Herr."

He was going. The old Herr followed him to the door--"My son," and he took his hand, "when you come back again from the war let me see you, and hear how things have gone with you."

The Justice-room was empty. The Herr Amtshauptmann was sitting with his wife in her room.

"Neiting, when this Friedrich, this Miller's man, comes back again I think I shall be better pleased than if a Princess were to come and see us."

As the Miller and my uncle Herse went down the Schloss Hill, they did not speak a word; but for opposite reasons: the Miller was silent because he was wrapped up in himself, my uncle because he was quite *out* of himself. At last my uncle broke out:--

"And so that's what they call a court of justice! That's what they call a verdict? The rude old fellow won't let a man bring in a single word. We'll go further, Miller Voss; we'll go to a higher court."

"I'll go no further, Herr Rathsherr," said the old Miller, feebly, "I have gone far enough already!"

"Neighbour," said old Baker Witte, who had followed them and had heard what the Miller said, "don't let that worry you too much, things may get better. And now come home with me; your Fieka is there."

"My Fieka!----"

But the Baker would not let him say anything more, and the old Miller followed him into his house like a helpless child. Poverty not shame pressed him down.

My uncle Herse did not go in with them. He walked up and down before the door and all sorts of thoughts came into his head. My uncle had always plenty of ideas and generally they trotted about in his brain like pretty little blue-eyed children, and though they would often run about and

tumble over each other in play at blind-man's-buff, and do all sorts of perverse things, yet they were always dressed in their Sunday best, and nice and neat for him to look at; but the thoughts which came to him at Witte's door were a parcel of ragged beggar children who would not be driven away, but stretched out their hands as it were, and cried with one voice: "Herr Rathsherr, Herr Rathsherr Herse, help the Miller. You brought him into this scrape--now get him out of it again."--"Leave me, leave me, for God's sake, leave me," cried my uncle. "I will help him, I will mortgage my house; but who will take it! Where is the money to come from?" And the little beggar children drove him so hard into a corner, that he was obliged to take refuge inside Witte's stable to get out of their way.

Heinrich was standing there, saddling and bridling his two horses, which were not yet sold, and, just as my uncle had found out who it was in the red jacket and with "war" on his upper lip, Friedrich came in and threw the valise into the crib so that it rang again.

"Heinrich," cried he, "the first step is always the hardest, as the Devil said when he began to carry millstones, but----" here he became aware of the presence of the Rathsherr and broke off--"Good morning, Herr Rathsherr; excuse my asking you, but you could do me a great favour. You see, the Miller hired me till Midsummer, and, by rights, I ought to stay; but I terribly want to go; so will you tell him that if he'll let me go, I'll lend him the Frenchman's money till I come back. For they gave it me to-day up at the Schloss, and it's lying here in the crib."

Away were all the little beggar boys, and back came the nicely arrayed little children into my uncle Herse's brain-box, and jumped about and threw somersets, and he himself nearly threw a somerset over a halter as he sprang towards Friedrich: "Friedrich, you are a-a-you are an angel."

"Yes, a fine old angel," said Friedrich.

"We'll put it on paper at once, Friedrich" cried my uncle

"No, Herr Rathsherr," said he, "we will not do that, there might be another slip of the pen, and then there would be fresh misery; what is spoken from mouth to mouth--that counts. Heinrich," he went on, turning to the latter, "have you settled your affairs, and everything with Fieka?"

Heinrich was standing behind one of the horses, looking over it, with both his arms across the saddle; he nodded his head, for he could not speak.

"Well, then, let us be off," cried Friedrich, and he took hold of the bridle of the lame horse.

Heinrich snatched it from him, sprang into the saddle, and threw him the bridle of the beautiful brown gelding: "The best one is not good enough for you, comrade," he said.

"But the Miller and Fieka," cried my uncle "won't you say good-bye then and----"

"It's all right," cried Friedrich. "Good-bye, Herr Rathsherr." And off they rode out at the Brandenburg Gate.

We children stood at the gate and watched them. "Those are no Frenchmen," said Hans Bank.

"They are our people," said Fritz Risch, and it seemed as if a pride in ourselves had suddenly sprung up.

"God grant they may come back again!" said old Father Richart.

* * *

They did come back again. In a year and a day, and again a year and a day, a spring had burst forth for Germany. Battles had been fought, blood had flowed on hill and dale; but the rain had washed it away, and the sun had dried it up and the earth had let grass grow over it, and the wounds of the human heart were bound up by Hope with a balm called "Freedom." Many of the wounds broke open afterwards. It was perhaps not the real Heaven-sent balm. But, in this beautiful springtime, nobody was thinking of that future, and in my little native-town the gardens and fields were green and blooming, and men's anxious hearts heaved with the breath of relief, for over the world lay peace.

My uncle Herse's corps of sharp shooters had laid their twenty-one fowling pieces on the shelf, and he had turned them into a corps of musicians, and his having taught them in time of war all to fire off at once, came to be of great use now, for they struck up with their fiddles and flutes, and clarionettes exactly together quite naturally. In the evenings, they used to serenade us, and I can hum the tune to this day, for they always played the same piece, and my uncle told me afterwards that it was variations upon the beautiful air: "Cousin Michael was here last night."

When the battle of Leipzig was won, bonfires were lighted on the Owl Hill and the Windmill Hill, and the town was lighted up. There was no firing, it is true; for we had no cannon, but we had as much noise as if we had had a whole battery, for the Rathsherr Herse's adjutant, Hanning Heinz, and old Metz hit upon a splendid idea; they laid some hundred-weights of stone on a cart, and shot them with all their might against gouty old Kasper's gateway, so that they got a thunder

as of real cannon, and the gateway lay in pieces.

And what joy and delight it was, when one mother could tell another: "Neighbour, my Joe was there too, and he's written that he got off safe."

Heinrich had written, and Friedrich had sent greetings to everyone, and when this was known in Stemhagen, it passed from mouth to mouth: "Ay, our old Friedrich! Just think of it! He's a brave fellow." Everybody talked about Friedrich, and so it happened that the story gradually got about in Stemhagen that the corporal, Friedrich Schult, had really won the battle of Leipzig: he had told his Colonel, Warburg, how the thing ought to be done, and the Colonel had told it to old Blücher's Adjutant, and old Blücher's Adjutant had told it to old Blücher, and old Blücher had said "Friedrich Schult is right."

But this time, full of jubilee, full of doubt, full of fear, and full of hope, had passed away, and the beautiful spring which I have before mentioned had come, when, one day, a handsome coach drove up to the Schloss. People said there were grand doings there, and one day Fritz Sahlmann came down, and told us that it would soon be all over with Mamsell Westphalen, for, if things went on at the present rate for a week longer, she would be nothing but skin and bone; and the guests, he said, were going to stop another week. The next day he came down again, and told us that the Herr Amtshauptmann had got up as the clock struck nine, and had opened his window, and had sung--had sung with his own, natural voice!--and the Frau Amtshauptmann had stood behind him, and had clapped her hands over her head, and he, Fritz Sahlmann, was to present their compliments to my father and my mother, and would they come, if possible, to dinner. The third day, I was nicely dressed and sent up to the Schloss; my father's and mother's compliments to the Herr Amtshauptmann and to the Frau Amtshauptmann and the strange lady and gentlemen, and would they come to tea and supper, and Mamsell Westphalen too; and my mother duly impressed upon me that I was always to say to the lady--"Your Ladyship."

When I got there and delivered my message, the Herr Amtshauptmann was sitting on the sofa, and, by him, an old gentleman who looked very grave; and the Amtshauptmann said to him: "This, my friend, is my little godson, the Burmeister's Fritz. What say you, eh?"

The strange gentleman looked more friendly, and I had to "shake hands with him," and then he asked me about this and that. And while I was still standing talking to him, the door opened and in came--the Herr Colonel Von Toll, and on his arm a beautiful young lady--that was her Ladyship.

I looked at the Colonel, and it seemed to me that I had seen him before. Now, people, when in doubt do not make the most sensible faces in the world, and it is probable that mine looked rather puzzled, for they both laughed, and when I had stammered out my message from my father and mother, they said they would come, and the strange lady patted me on the head, and said I had stubborn hair, I must have a stubborn character, and the Herr Amtshauptmann said: "You are right there, my friend; he has; and what his hard head is guilty of, his back has to suffer for."

That evening was a merry one at the Rathhaus, though not so merry as the one when my uncle Herse was Julius Cæsar; there was no punch this time, but Marie Wienken had to bring out the Langkork, which was then considered the best wine; for, in those days no one had heard of Château Margaux and Champagne. The men talked about the late war, and the women about the wedding which was to take place the next day at the Gielow Mill; and when the guests were going away, the Colonel turned to my father and said: "But, Herr Burmeister, everybody must be at the wedding who took part in the 'conspiracy.'"

My father promised. The next day the wheels of the Amtshauptmann's scythe-chariot were greased, and he and his old friend, Renatus Von Toll, set off in it, and went out at the Malchin Gate.--"There they both sat in the chaise, Frau Meister, looking as good and innocent as a pair of new-born twins," said Mamsell Westphalen, afterwards: "And in the foreign glass-coach her ladyship Von Toll, and the Frau Amtshauptmann, and the Frau Burmeister, and I, had the honour to ride, and the Frau Burmeister had taken her boy, Fritz, with her, and the young rascal sat on my knee the whole time, and gave me pins and needles in my feet, and if it had not been for the corporal of Hussars, Friedrich Schult, I should have fallen off the step in getting out. That comes from having children, and I say it."

And baker Witte and Strüwingken, and Luth, and Hanchen, and Fritz Sahlmann, and Droz went to the wedding in a large hay-cart, and at the back lay a heap of arms and legs that, on inspection, proved to be Herr Droi's little French children. My Father and the Colonel rode on horseback.

"But where's the Rathsherr?" asked the Colonel.

"He's coming," said my father, "but how and when Heaven only knows, for, when he promised me he would come, he winked and put on a look of his I well know, and that I call his 'secret' look."

When the Herr Amtshauptmann arrived, the Miller stood at the door with a black velvet cap on his head, and his wife stood by his side in a new black dress, and he bowed and she curtsied, and the Herr Amtshauptmann said: "Well, Miller Voss, how are you to-day?"

"Quite well, thank you, Herr," said the Miller, letting the step down.

The old Herr leant over to his friend and said: "The Miller is all right again; he has grown wiser, and has resigned the management of his affairs, and given it into Fieka's hands."

Now came the coach. The ladies got out, and Friedrich carried my mother into the room: he had often to carry her afterwards.

The hay-cart pulled up. Everybody jumped down and entered, I amongst them; but the little Droi's ran into the garden first, and fell at once upon the unripe gooseberries.

The minister was in the room waiting to perform the marriage ceremony, and close to him stood Heinrich and Fieka. How pretty Fieka was! How pretty a bride looks! The minister read the service, and his best address; he knew three, each one better than the other, and the price was arranged accordingly. The "Crown" address was the finest and the dearest, it cost one thaler sixteen groschen; then came the "Ivy Wreath," it cost one thaler; and lastly the "Periwinkle Wreath," which was for the poor, and cost only eight groschen. To-day he read the "Crown" address, for the Miller would have it so. "My Fieka," he had said, "wishes to have a quiet wedding and she shall have her way; but we must have everything of the best that is proper for a wedding." And so it was. And when the address was over, the beautiful lady went up to Fieka, and gave her a kiss, and threw a gold chain round her neck with a locket hanging from it, and on the locket was engraved the day when Fieka had begged the Colonel to set her father free.

The Colonel had gone up to Heinrich, and when he pressed the bridegroom's hand, his father's eyes rested upon him so affectionately that the Herr Amtshauptmann took his old friend's hand and said: "Eh, my friend, what say you?" He probably knew more of what had happened than we did.

The feast now began. Strüwingken helped the soup, and Luth the roasts; Hanchen and the Miller's two maid-servants waited. Scarcely had the Miller swallowed his first plate of chicken broth, when he got up, and made an impressive speech to the company, but looking all the time only at the Herr Amtshauptmann. "He had, he said, asked the company in a homely way to a wedding without music; his Fieka had wished it so, and he hoped the ladies and gentlemen would not take it amiss, but although they had not got any music----"

Here his speech was suddenly brought to an end for all at once there burst forth outside "Cousin Michael was here last night, was here last night, was here last night"--and when the door was opened, there stood uncle Herse with his band; he had got the Miller's walking stick, and was beating time with it on a sack of flour, so that they all looked like a band of angels fiddling and piping and trumpeting behind a beautiful white summer cloud.

The Colonel jumped up and greeted my uncle, and made him sit by his side, and the Herr Amtshauptmann whispered in his friend Renatus's ear, loud enough for the whole table to hear: "That's the Rathsherr, of whom I told you that story about the lease this morning; he's otherwise a good pleasant fellow."

The Miller brought the whole band into the room, and St. Cecilia was put in the corner, and was relieved by chicken broth; and then Cousin Michael came again, and was relieved by roast meat, and so it went on alternately. And, when evening came, my uncle Herse had got another secret. He and his Adjutant, Hanning Heinz, worked and busied themselves in the garden in the dark, and at last we were all told to come out--a firework was going off. It might have been very beautiful--but alas! alas!--Something was too weak, they must blow at it; that was too strong; it flew into the air, and it was a mercy Friedrich happened to be in the barnyard, when it began to burn, or it might have been serious.

But my uncle Herse was bent on carrying the plan through, and he had got a fresh firework nearly ready, when the Amtshauptmann went up to him, and said there had been enough now, and it had been very fine, and he thanked him very much for it. The next day however the old Herr sent a sheriff's officer through the whole district of Stemhagen to say that whoever ventured to let off fireworks there would be punished.

Thus ended the day, and thus, too, ends my story. The day was merry, and everyone was pleased. May my story be equally fortunate.

EPILOGUE.

But where are they all now, all the merry simple-hearted people who have played in this story? They are all dead! All dead! They have all said Farewell; they sleep the long sleep. Baker Witte was the first, and Luth was the last.--And who have remained? Well, we two boys, Fritz Sahlmann and I, and Hanchen Besserdich. Hanchen married Freier's flaxen-headed boy, and is now well off. She lives at Gülzow, in the first house on your left hand. Fritz Sahlmann has grown a fine fellow, and we have always been very good friends, and, should he take it ill that I have told all these tales about him, I will hold out my hand to him and say: "My friend, what is written is written. It cannot be undone now. But you won't be angry with me for it? What say you, eh?"

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1](#): The Burmeister is the chief magistrate or mayor of a town, while the Amtshauptmann is the chief magistrate of a bailiwick or whole district.

[Footnote 2](#): The Schult (Bailiff) is in a village what the Burmeister, or Mayor, is in a town.

[Footnote 3](#): Levy en masse.

[Footnote 4](#): In Mecklenburg there are no bakers in the villages; but each village has one or two ovens where the whole community can do their baking. These ovens stand by themselves out in the open fields, and look at a little distance like small hillocks. They are covered with grass, and are lined inside with large stones. They are so large that a man can get in at the mouth with ease, and lie there in hiding. As there is no chimney, the heat naturally remains in them a long while.--*Translator*.

[Footnote 5](#): Been under fire.--*Transl.*

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