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SEED-TIME AND HARVEST

A NOVEL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE "UT MINE STROMTID" OF

FRITZ REUTER.

PHILADELPHIA:
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Seed-Time and Harvest;
OR,
"DURING MY APPRENTICESHIP."

CHAPTER I.

In the year 1829, on St. John's day, a man sat in the deepest melancholy, under an ash-tree arbor, in a neglected garden. The estate, to which the garden belonged, was a lease-hold estate, and lay on the river Peene, between Anclam and Demmin, and the man, who sat in the cool shade of the arbor, was the lease-holder,--that is to say, he had been until now; for now he was ejected, and there was an auction to-day in his homestead, and all his goods and possessions were going to the four winds.

He was a large, broad-shouldered; light-haired man, of four and forty years; and nowhere could you find a better specimen of what labor could make of a man than she had carved from this block. "Labor," said his honest face,--"Labor," said his firm hands which lay quiet in his lap, folded one upon another as if for praying.

Yes, for praying! And in the whole broad country of Pomerania, there might well have been no one with greater need and reason to speak with his Lord God, than this man. 'Tis a hard thing for any one to see his household goods, which he has gathered with labor and pains, piece by piece, go wandering out into the world. 'Tis a hard thing for a farmer to leave the cattle, which he has fed and cared for, through want and trouble, to other hands that know nothing of the difficulties which have oppressed him all his life. But it was not this which lay so heavy on his heart; it was a still deeper grief which caused the weary hands to lie folded together, and the weary eyes to droop so heavily.

Since yesterday he was a widower, his wife lay upon her last couch. His wife! Ten years had he striven for her, ten years had he worked and toiled, and done what human strength could do that they might come together, that he might make room for the deep, powerful love which sung through his whole being, like Pentecost bells over green fields and blossoming fruit-trees.

Four years ago he had made it possible: he had scraped together everything that he had; an acquaintance who had inherited from his parents two estates had leased one of them to him,--at a high rent, very high--no one knew that better than himself,--but love gives courage, cheerful courage, to sustain one through everything. Oh, it would have gone well, quite well, if misfortunes had not come upon them, if his dear little wife had not risen before the daylight and ere the dew was risen, and got such feverish red spots on her cheeks. Oh, all would have gone well, quite well, if his landlord had been not merely an acquaintance but a friend--he was not the latter; to-day he allowed his agent to hold the auction.

Friends? Such a man as the one who sat under the ashen arbor, has he no friends? Ah, he had friends, and their friendship was true; but they could not help him, they had nothing either to give or to lend. Wherever he looked, there seemed a gloomy wall before his eyes, which narrowed around him, and pressed him in, until he must needs call upon the Lord to deliver him out of his distresses. And over him in the ashen twigs sang the finches, and their gay plumage glittered in the sun, and the flowers in the neglected garden gave out their fragrance, all in vain,--and the fairest bridal pair in the world might have sat there, and never have forgotten either the place or the day.

And had he not often sat under these shade trees with a soft hand in his hard one? Had not the birds sung, had not the flowers been fragrant? Had he not under the ash-trees dreamed of their cool shade for his old age? And who was it that had brought to him here a refreshing drink after a hot day's labor? Who was it that had shared in and consoled all his cares and sorrows?

It was gone--all gone!--Here was care and trouble about the auction, and the soft, warm hand was cold and stiff. And so it is much the same to a man as if the birds sang no longer, and the flowers had lost their fragrance, and the blessed sun shone for him no more; and if the poor heart keeps on beating it reaches out, beyond birds and flowers and beyond the golden sun, higher up after a Comforter, in whose presence these earthly joys shall fade and fall, but before whom the human soul shall stand forever.

So sat Habermann before his God, and his hands were folded, and his honest blue eyes bent to the ground, and yet there shone in them a clear light, as from God's sun. Then came a little maiden running to him, and laid a marigold blossom on his lap, and the two hands unfolded themselves and clasped the child,--it was his child,--and he rose up from the bench, and took her on his arm, and from his eyes fell tear after tear, and he kept the marigold flower in his hand, and went with the child along the path through the garden.

He came to a young tree which he had planted himself; the straw-rope with which it was bound to its prop had loosened, and the tree was sagging downwards. He reached up and bound it fast, without thinking what he was doing, for his thoughts were far away, but care and helping were part of his nature.

But when a man's thoughts are in the clouds, were it even in the blue heavens, if his daily duties come before his eyes,--the old accustomed handiwork,--and he does them, he helps himself in so doing, for they call him back from the distance and show him what is near by, and what is in need of help. And it is one of our Lord's mercies that this is so.

He walked up and down the garden, and his eyes saw what was around him, and his thoughts came back to earth; and though the black, gloomy clouds still overspread the heaven of his future, they could not conceal one little patch of blue sky,—that, was the little girl whom he bore on his arm, and whose baby hand played with his hair. He had thought over his situation, steadily and earnestly he had looked the black clouds in the face; he must take care that he and his little one were not overpowered by the storm.

He went from the garden toward the house. Good Heavens, how his courage sank! Indifferent to him, and absorbed in their petty affairs, a crowd of men pressed around the table where the auctioneer was holding the auction. Piece by piece the furniture acquired by his years of industry was knocked down to the highest bidder; piece by piece his household gear had come into the house, with trouble and anxiety; piece by piece it went out to the world, amid jokes and laughter. This sideboard had been his old mother's, this chest of drawers his wife had brought with her, that little work-table he had given her while she was yet a bride. Near by stood his cattle, tied to a rack, and lowing after their pasture; the brown yearling which his poor wife herself had brought up, her special pet, stood among them; he went round to her, and stroked her with his hand.

"Herr," said the bailiff Niemann, "'tis a sad pity"

"Yes, Niemann, 'tis a pity; but there's no help for it," said he, and turned away, and went toward the men who were crowding around the auctioneer's table.

As the people noticed him, they made room for him in a courteous and friendly manner, and he turned to the auctioneer as if he would speak a few words to him.

"Directly, Herr Habermann," said the man, "in a moment. I am just through with the house-inventory, then-- A chest of drawers! Two thalers, four shillings! Six shillings! Two thalers eight shillings! Once! Twice! Two thalers twelve shillings! No more? Once! Twice! and--thrice! Who has it?"

"Brandt, the tailor," was the answer.

Just at this moment, a company of country people came riding up the yard, who apparently wished to look at the cattle, which came next in order in the sale. Foremost rode a stout, red-faced man, upon whose broad features arrogance had plenty of room to display itself. This quality was very strongly marked; but an unusual accompaniment was indicated by the little, crafty eyes, which peered out over the coarse cheeks, as if to say, "You are pretty well off, but we have something to do to look after your interests." The owner of these eyes was the owner also of the estate of which Habermann had held the lease; he rode close up to the cluster of men, and, as he saw his unhappy tenant standing among them, the possibility occurred to him that he might fail of receiving his full rent, and the crafty eyes, which understood so well how to look after their own interests, said to the arrogance which sat upon mouth and mien, "Brother, now is a good time to spread yourself; it will cost you nothing;" and pressing his horse nearer to Habermann he called, so that all the people must hear, "Yes, here is your prudent Mecklenburger, who will teach us how to manage a farm! What has he taught us? To drink wine and shuffle cards he might teach us, but farming--*Bankruptcy*, he can teach us!"

All were silent at these hard words, and looked first at him who had uttered them, and then at him against whom they were directed. Habermann was at first struck, by voice and words together, as if a knife had been plunged into his heart; now he stood still and looked silently before him, letting all go over his head; but among the people broke out a murmuring--"Fie! Fie! For shame! The man is no drinker nor card-player. He has worked his farm like a good fellow!"

"What great donkey is this, who can talk like that?" asked old Farmer Drenkhahn, from Liepen, and pressed nearer with his buckthorn staff.

"That's the fellow, father," called out Stolper the smith, "who lets his people go begging about, for miles around."

"They haven't a coat to their backs," said tailor Brandt, of Jarmen, "and by all their labour they can only earn victuals."

"Yes," laughed the smith, "that's the fellow who is so kind to his people that they all have nice dress-coats to work in, while he does not keep enough to buy himself a smock-frock."

The auctioneer had sprung up and ran towards the landlord, who had heard these remarks with unabashed thick-headedness. "In God's name, Herr Pomuchelskopp, how can you talk so?"

"Yes," said one of his own company, who rode up with him, "these folks are right. You should be ashamed of yourself! The poor man has given up everything that he had a right to keep, and goes out into the world to-morrow, empty-handed, and you go on abusing him."

"Ah, indeed," said the auctioneer, "if that were all! But his wife died only yesterday, and lies on her last couch, and there he is with his poor little child, and what prospect has the poor man for the future?"

The murmur went round among the people of the landlord's company, and it was not long before he had the place to himself; those who came with him had ridden aside. "Did I know that?" said he peevishly, and rode out of the yard; and the little, crafty eyes said to the broad arrogance, "Brother, this time we went rather too far."

The auctioneer turned to Habermann. "Herr Habermann, you had something to say to me?"

"Yes--yes--" replied the farmer, like a man who has been under torture, coming again to his senses. "Yes, I was going to ask you to put up to auction the few things I have a right to keep back,--the bed and the other things."

"Willingly; but the household furniture has sold badly, the people have no money, and if you wish to dispose of anything you would do better at private sale."

"I have not time for that, and I need the money."

"Then if you wish it, I will offer the goods at auction," and the man went back to his business.

"Habermann," said Farmer Grot, who came with the company on horseback, "you are so lonely here, in your misfortunes; come home with me, you and your little girl, and stay awhile with us, my wife will be right glad----"

"I thank you much for the good will; but I cannot go, I have still something to do here."

"Habermann," said farmer Hartmann, "you mean the funeral of your good wife. When do you bury her? We will all come together, to do her this last honor."

"For that I thank you too; but I cannot receive you as would be proper, and by this time I have learned that one must cut his coat according to his cloth."

"Old friend, my dear old neighbor and countryman," said Inspector Wienk, and clapped him on the shoulder, "do not yield to discouragement! things will go better with you yet."

"Discouragement, Wienk?" said Habermann, earnestly, pressing his child closer to himself, and looking steadily at the inspector, with his honest blue eyes. "Is that discouragement, to look one's future steadily in the face, and do one's utmost to avert misfortune? But I cannot stay here; a man avoids the place where he has once made shipwreck. I must go to some house at a distance, and begin again at the beginning. I must work for my bread again, and stretch my feet under a stranger's table. And now good-bye to you all! You have always been good neighbors and friends to me. Adieu! Adieu! Give me your hand. Wienk,--Adieu! and greet them all kindly at your house; my wife----' He had still something to say, but he seemed to be overcome, and turned almost quickly and went his way.

"Niemann," said he to his bailiff, as he came to the other end of the farm-yard, "Tell the other people, to-morrow morning early, at four o'clock, I will bury my wife." With that, he went into the house, into his sleeping-room. It was all cleaned out, his bed and all the furniture which had been left to him; nothing remained but four bare walls. Only in a dark corner stood an old chest, and on it sat a young woman, the wife of a day-laborer, her eyes red with weeping; and in the middle of the room stood a black coffin in which lay a white, still, solemn face, and the woman had a green branch in her hand, and brushed the flies from the still face.

"Stina," said Habermann, "go home now; I will stay here."

"Oh, Herr, let me stay!"

"No, Stina, I shall stay here all night."

"Shall I not take the little one with me?"

"No, leave her, she will sleep well."

The young woman went out: the auctioneer came and handed him the money which he had received for his goods, the people went away from the court-yard; it became as quiet out of doors as in. He put the child down, and reckoned the money on the window-seat. "That pays the cabinet-maker for the coffin; that for the cross at the grave; that for the funeral. Stina shall have this, and with the rest I can go to my sister." The evening came, the young wife of the laborer brought in a lighted candle, and set it on the coffin, and gazed long at the white face, then dried her eyes and said "Goodnight," and Habermann was, again alone with his child.

He raised the window, and looked out into the night. It was dark for that time of year, no stars shone in the sky, all was obscured with black clouds, and a warm, damp air breathed on his face, and sighed in the distance. From over the fields came the note of the quail, and the land-rail uttered its rain-call, and softly fell the first drops on the dusty ground, and his heart rose in thanks for the gift of sweetest savor known to the husbandman, the earth-vapor in which hover all blessings for his cares and labor. How often had it refreshed his soul, chased away his anxieties, and renewed his hope of a good year! Now he was set loose from care, but also from joy; a great joy had gone from him, and had taken with it all lesser ones.

He closed the window, and, as he turned round, there stood his little daughter by the coffin, reaching vainly toward the still face, as if she would stroke it. He raised the child higher so that she could reach, and the little girl stroked and kissed the cold, dead cheek of her silent mother, and looked then at her father with her great eyes, as if she would ask something unspeakable, and said "Mother! Oh!"

"Yes," said Habermann, "mother is cold," and the tears started in his eyes, and he sat down on the chest, took his daughter on his lap, and wept bitterly. The little one began to weep also, and cried herself quietly to sleep. He laid her softly against his breast, and wrapped his coat warmly about her, and so sat he the night through, and held true lyke-wake over his wife and his happiness.

Next morning, punctually, at four o'clock, came the bailiff with the other laborers. The coffin was screwed up; the procession moved slowly toward the church-yard; the only mourners himself and his little girl. The coffin was lowered into the grave. A silent Pater Noster,--a handful of earth,--and the image of her who had for years refreshed and comforted him, rejoiced and enlivened, was concealed from his eyes, and if he would see it again he must turn over his heart like a book, leaf by leaf, until he comes to the closing page, and then,--yes, there will the dear image stand, fair and lovely before his eyes once more.

He went among his people, shook hands with every one, and thanked them for this last service which they had rendered him, and then said "Good-bye" to them, gave to the bailiff the money for the coffin, cross and funeral, and then, absorbed in thought, started on his lonely way out into the gloomy future.

As he came to the last house in the little hamlet, the young laborer's wife stood with a child on her arm before the door. He stepped up to her.

"Stina, you took faithful care of my poor wife in her last sickness,--here, Stina," and would press a couple of dollars into her hand.

"Herr, Herr," cried the young wife, "don't do me that injury! What have you not done for us in good days? Why should we not in hard times make some little return? Ah, Herr, I have one favor to ask; leave the child here with me! I will cherish it as if it were my own. And is it not like my own? I have nursed it at my breast, when your poor wife was so weak. Leave me the child!"

Habermann stood in deep thought. "Herr," said the woman, "you will have to separate from the poor little thing, sooner or later. See, here comes Jochen, he will speak for himself."

The laborer came up, and, as he heard of what they were speaking, said, "Yes, Herr, she shall be cared for like a princess, and we are healthy, and well to do, and what you have done for us, we will richly repay to her."

"No," said Habermann, lifting himself from his thoughts, "that won't go, I can't do it. I may be wrong to take the child with me upon an uncertainty; but I have left so much here, this last thing I cannot give up. No, no! I can't do it," cried he hastily and turned himself to go, "my child must be where I am. Adieu, Stina! Adieu, Rasso!"

"If you will not leave us the child, Herr," said the laborer, "let me at least go with you a little way, and carry her for you."

"No, No!" said Habermann, "she is no burden for me;" but he could not hinder the young woman from stroking and kissing his little daughter, and ever again kissing her, nor that both these honest souls, as he went on his way, should stand long looking after him. She, with tears in her eyes, thought more of the child, he, in serious reflection, more of the man.

"Stina," said he, "we shall never again have such a master."

"The Lord knows that," said she, and both went sadly back to their daily labor.

CHAPTER II.

About eight miles from the place where Habermann had left his wife in her quiet grave, lay in Mecklenburg a farm of less than medium size, which was tenanted by his brother-in-law, Jochen Nüssler. The farm-buildings had never been very substantial, and were now much in need of repair, and moreover things were very disorderly; here a little refuse heap, and there another, and the wagon and farm implements stood here and there, and mingled together, like the people

at a fair, and the cart said to the wagon, "Brother, how came you here?" and the rake laid hold of the harrow and said, "Come, dear, we will have a dance." But the music was lacking, for it was all still in the farm-yard, quite still. This lovely weather, all were in the meadow, haying, and even from the little open windows of the long, low, straw-roofed farm-house came no sound, for it was afternoon; the cook had finished her baking, and the housemaid her cleaning, and both had gone together to the meadow; and even the farmer's wife, who usually had something to say for herself, was nowhere visible, for she also had gone from the farm-yard with a rake in her hand; the hay must all be gathered into great stacks before night-fall.

But there was yet life in the house, though of a little, quiet kind. In the room at the right of the porch, in the living-room, where the blue-painted corner-cupboard stood,--the *schenk*, they called it, and the sofa covered with black glazed linen, which was freshly polished up with boot-blackening every Saturday and the oaken chest of drawers with gilt ornaments, sat two little maidens of three years, with round flaxen heads, and round rosy cheeks, playing in a heap of sand, making cheeses with mother's thimble, and filling the damp sand into two little shilling pots, which they turned upside down, laughing and rejoicing if the lump stood firm.

These were Lining and Mining Nüssler, and they looked, for all the world, like a pair of little twin apples, growing on one stem; and they were so indeed, for they were twins, and one who did not know that Lining was not Mining, and Mining was not Lining, would be puzzled from morning to night, for their names were not written in their faces, and if their mother had not marked them with a colored band on the arm, there would have been grave doubts in the matter, and their father, Jochen Nüssler, was even yet in some uncertainty; Lining was properly Mining, and Mining Lining, they had been as it were shaken up together at the outset of their little lives. At present, there was no occasion for such perplexity, for the mother had tied a blue ribbon in Lining's little flaxen curls, and a red one in Mining's; and if one kept that in mind, and observed them carefully, one would see plainly that Jochen Nüssler was wrong, for Lining was half an hour older than Mining, and, slight as the difference was, the seniority made itself quite evident, for Lining took the lead in everything; but she comforted her little sister also, when she was in trouble.

Besides this little, unmistakable pair of twins, there was yet another pair of twins in the room; but an old, experienced, circumspect couple, who looked down from the chest of drawers on the children, and shook their heads hither and thither, in the light breeze which came in at the open window; these were grandfather's peruke, and grandmother's state-cap, which were paraded on a pair of cap-stocks, and which to-morrow,--Sunday,--would play their part.

"Look, Lining," said Mining, "there is grandfather's puk." She could not get the "r" quite right yet.

"You always say 'puk;' you must say 'p-u-k,'" said Lining, for she also was not quite up to the "r;" but being the eldest she must needs direct her little sister in the right way.

With that the little pair of twins got up and stood before the chest of drawers, and looked at the old pair of twins on the cap-stocks, and Mining, who was still very thoughtless, reached after the peruke stock, and took down grandfather's peruke, turned it over on her head as seemed well to her, and, placing herself before the glass, performed just as grandfather did on Sundays. Now was the time for Lining to exercise her authority, but Lining began to laugh, and catching the joke took down grandmother's cap from the other stock, and imitated grandmother's Sunday performances, and then Mining laughed, and then both laughed, and then took hold of hands and danced "Kringelkranz, Rosendanz," and let go, and laughed again and joined hands again and danced.

But Mining was quite too thoughtless, she had the little pot still in her hand, and as they were in the midst of their fun--crash! she let it fall on the floor, and there was an end of the pot, and an end of the sport also. Now began Mining to cry and lament over her pot, and Lining cried with her, like a little echo; but when that had lasted a while, Lining began to console:--

"See here, Mining, the wheelwright can mend it."

"Yes," said Mining, crying more quietly, "the wheelwright can mend it;" and upon that the two little mourners started out of the door, quite forgetting that they had grandfather's and grandmother's sacred Sunday gear upon their heads.

One may wonder that Lining should go to the wheelwright with such an affair, but anybody who has known a regular wheelwright in that region, will understand that such a man can do everything. If a sheep is sick, they say, "Call the wheelwright!" If a window-pane is broken, the wheelwright must nail on a board to keep out wind and weather; has an old chair dislocated its leg, he is the doctor; if one wishes a plaster spread for a sick cow, he is the apothecary; in short, he can mend everything, and so Lining showed herself a little maiden of good sense in going with her pot to the wheelwright.

As the little girls went through the yard, in at the gate came a little man, with a red face and a right stately red nose, which he carried in the air; on his head he had a three-cornered cap, with a tassel in front of no particular color; he wore a grey linen coat with long skirts, and his short legs, which turned outward as if they had been screwed into his long body the wrong way, were

stuck into short blue-striped trowsers, and long boots with yellow tops. He was not exactly stout, but certainly not lean, and one might see that he was beginning to grow a little pot-bellied.

The little girls must meet him on their way, and as they came near enough for the Herr Inspector--for the man with the little legs held such a post--to perceive their approach, he stood still, and raised his yellow bushy eyebrows so high that they went quite up under the visor of his cap, as if these eyebrows, being the finest of his features, must first of all, under such dangerous circumstances, be placed in security. "God bless us!" cried he, "Where are you going? What sort of doings are these? What! you have the entire Sunday finery of the two old people upon your heads!" The two little girls quite patiently allowed themselves to be despoiled of their finery, and showed the broken pieces of the pot, saying that the wheelwright would mend it. "What!" said the Herr Inspector Bräsig, for that was his name, "Who in the world would have believed in such stupidity? Lining, you are the oldest, I thought you had more sense; and Mining, don't cry any more, you are my little god-child, I will give you a new pot at the next fair. But now, along with you! into the house!"

As he entered the living-room, and found no one there, he said to himself, "To be sure! All are gone after the hay. Yes, I ought to be looking after my hay; but the little madcaps have left these things in such a state, that they would be in sad disgrace if the two old grannies should see them as they are now; I must try to repair damages a little." With that he drew out a little pocket-comb,--which he kept by him because he was growing bald, and must needs comb forward his back hair,--and began to labour at the peruke. That did very well; but now came the cap. "How the mischief, Lining, have you contrived to do it? To make it look decently again is not a possible thing! No, I must try to recollect how the old lady looks of a Sunday afternoon. In front she has a comely bunch of silken curls, and the front part of the old toggery hangs over about three inches, so the thing must be set forward more. On top she has nothing in particular, her bald head always shines through; but behind she always has a puff, which she staffs out with a bunch of tow; that the little girl has quite disarranged; that must be pulled out better;" and with that he stuck his fist in the cap, and widened out the puff.

But in the back part of the puff there was a drawing-string, and as he was doing his work thoroughly the cord broke, and the whole puff flew out. "Now there, stupid!" cried he, and his eyebrows went up again. "How? This isn't fastened worth a snap! With yarn! And one can't tie knots in it. God bless my soul! What do I know about millinery? But hold on! We will fix you yet." And with that he pulled from his pocket a handful of strings--every good inspector must have such on hand--and began to disentangle them. "Pack thread is too coarse; but this here, this will do well enough." and he began to put a nice stiff cord through the hem. But the job was a slow one, and before he was half through, somebody knocked at the door. He threw his handiwork down on the nearest chair, as if ashamed of it, and cried, "Come in!"

The door opened, and Habermann, with his little daughter on his arm, stepped in. Inspector Bräsig started up. "May you--keep the nose on your face," he was going to say, but when anything serious happened to him he had an unfortunate habit of falling into Platt-Deutsch,--"Karl Habermann, where do you come from?"

"Good day, Bräsig," said Habermann, and put the child down.

"Karl Habermann," cried Bräsig again, "where do you come from?"

"From a place, Bräsig, where I have now nothing more to look for," said his friend. "Is my sister not at home?"

"They are all in the hay; but how shall I understand you?"

"That it is all over with me; day before yesterday all my goods were sold at auction; and yesterday morning"--here he turned to the window--"yesterday morning I buried my wife."

"What? what? Oh, dear Lord!" cried the kind-hearted inspector. "Your wife? your dear, good wife?"--and the tears ran over his red face--"Friend, old friend, say, how did that happen?"

"Yes, how did it happen?" said Habermann, and seated himself, and related his misfortunes in few words.

Meanwhile, Lining and Mining went slowly and shyly toward the strange child, saying nothing, but ever drawing a little nearer, till Lining mustered courage, and took hold of the sleeve of her dress, and Mining showed the fragments of her pot: "Look my pot is broken." The little newcomer however looked around shyly with her large eyes, and fixed them at last closely upon her father.

"Yes," Habermann closed his short story, "it has gone hard with me, Bräsig, and you still hold my note for two hundred thalers; but don't press me, if God spares my life, you shall be honourably paid." "Karl Habermann,--Karl Habermann," said Bräsig, and wiped his eyes, and blew his stately nose, "You are--you are a sheep's-head! Yes," said he, and stuffed his handkerchief fiercely into his pocket, and elevated his nose again, "You are just the sheep's-head you always were!" And as if it occurred to him that his old friend should be diverted to other thoughts, he picked up Lining and Mining like a couple of dolls, and set them on Habermann's knee,--"There, you little rogues, that is your uncle!"--exactly as if Lining and Mining were

playthings, and Habermann a little child, who might be comforted by them in his trouble; and he himself took Habermann's little Louise on his arm, and danced with her about the room, and all this time the tears were running down his cheeks, and for a happy ending he put the child down in a chair, and, as it happened, exactly the chair on which he had deposited his half-finished millinery.

By this time the house-people were coming back from the hay-field, and a loud, clear, female voice was heard without, urging the maids to hasten. "Hurry, hurry, come out with your milk-pails, the sun is going down, and this year the pasture is so far off; we shall have to milk to night in the twilight. Girl, where are your trenchers? Quick, run in and fetch them. Go right along; I must look after my little ones first." And into the room came a tall young woman, of seven and twenty years, full of life and energy in face and figure, her cheeks red with health and labor and the heat of the summer day, hair and eyes light, and forehead white as snow, so far as the chip hat had sheltered it from the sun. At the first glance one saw the likeness between her and Habermann, but his features and demeanor seemed reserved, and hers quite fresh and open; her whole appearance showed that she was as active a worker from temperament as he was from honor and duty.

To see her brother, and to fly toward him was all one. "Karl, my brother Karl, my other father!" cried she, and hung about his neck; but, as she looked more closely into his eyes, she held him back from herself: "Tell me what has happened, tell me what dreadful thing has happened! what is it?"

Before he could answer, her husband entered the door, and going up to Habermann gave him his hand, and said slowly, as if with an effort; "Good day, brother-in-law; take a seat."

"Let him tell what has happened to him," cried his wife, impatiently.

"Yes," said Jochen, "sit down, and then tell. Good day to you also, Bräsigg; sit down too, Bräsigg," and with that Jochen Nüssler, or as he was generally called young Jochen, sat down himself in a corner by the stove, which piece of furniture he had bought with his own separate money. He was a long lean man, who carried himself with stooping shoulders, and it seemed as if all his limbs had particular objections to being put to the ordinary use. He was well on toward forty, his face was pale, and as dull as his speech, and his soft sandy hair hung in front and behind of equal length, over his forehead and the collar of his coat, and never had known any fashions of parting or curling; his mother had from his childhood up combed the hair over his face, and so it had stayed, and when it looked rather tangled his mother would say: "Never mind, Joching, the rough foal makes the smartest horse." Whether it was because his eyes must always peer through this long hair, or from his nature, his glance had something shy, as if he could not see things clearly or make up his mind positively, and though he was right-handed, his mouth was askew. This came from tobacco-smoking, for that was the one business which he followed with perseverance, and as he kept the pipe hanging in the left corner of his mouth, it had drawn it down in that direction, and, while looking at him from the right it seemed as if he could not say "zipp," from the left he appeared like an ogre who would devour children.

Now he sat there in his own especial chimney-corner, and smoked out of his peculiar mouth-corner, and while his impulsive wife for sorrow and compassion lamented over Habermann's story as if it had all happened to herself that very day, and now it was her brother, and now his little daughter that she kissed and comforted, he sat and looked over at the chief actors, from the side next Bräsigg, and with the tobacco smoke came now and then a couple of broken words from the left side of his mouth: "Yes, it is all so, as you say. It is all as true as leather. What shall we do about it?"

The Herr Inspector Bräsigg was the exact opposite of young Jochen; now he ran about the room, now he sat down on a chair, and now on a table, and worked his little legs with jumping up and down, like a linen-weaver, and when Frau Nüssler kissed and stroked her brother, he kissed and stroked him also, and when Frau Nüssler took the little child in her arms and patted her, then he took her up afterward, and carried her about the room, and sat her down again in a chair, but always on grandmother's cap.

"God bless me!" cried the house wife suddenly, "have I clean forgotten everything? Bräsigg, you should have thought of it. All this time you have had nothing to eat and drink!" and with that she ran to the cup-board, and brought fair, white, country bread, and fresh butter, and went out and brought in sausages and ham and cheese, and a couple of bottles of the strong beer brewed especially for grandfather, and a pitcher of milk for the little ones; and when all was neatly arranged on the white table-cloth, she drew her brother to the table, and taking up the little girl, chair and all, sat her down to the table also, and cut bread, and served them, and all so nimble with hand and foot, and as nimble with mouth and speech. And so bright were knife and fork, and as bright mien and eye; and so pure and white apron and table-cloth, and as pure and white her good heart!

"You shall have something next," said she to her little twin-apples, and stroked the little flaxen heads. "Little cousin comes first. Bräsigg, sit up to the table. Jochen, you come too."

"Yes, I may as well," said Jochen, took a long, last pull at his pipe, and brought his chair and himself to the table.

"Karl," said Bräsigt, "I can recommend these sausages, your sister has an uncommon knack at them, and I have many a time told my housekeeper she should get the recipe, for the old woman messes all sorts of unnatural things together, which don't harmonize at all; in short there is no suitability or connection, although the ingredients are as good as a swine fed exclusively on peas can furnish."

"Mother, help Bräsigt," said Jochen.

"Thank you, Frau Nüssler; but with your leave I will take my drop of Kümmel. Karl, since the time when you and I and that rascal Pomuchelskopp were serving our apprenticeship under old Knirkstätt, I have accustomed myself to take a little Kümmel with my breakfast, or with my bit of supper, and it suits me well, thank God! But, Karl, how came you to get in with that rascal Pomuchelskopp? I told you long ago the beggar was not to be trusted; he is such an old snake, he is a crafty hound, in short, he is a Jesuit."

"Ah, Bräsigt," said Habermann, "we won't talk about it. It is true he might have treated me differently, but still I was to blame; why did I fall in with his proposal? Something else is in my head now. If I could only have a place again!"

"Of course, you must have a place again. My gracious Herr Count is looking out for a competent inspector for his principal estate; but, Karl, don't take it ill of me, that wouldn't suit you. Do you see, you must be rigged every morning with freshly blacked boots and a tight-fitting coat, and you must talk High-German to him, for he regards Platt-Deutsch as uncultivated, and then you have all the women about your neck, for they rule everything there. And if you could get along with the boots and the dress-coat, and the High-German,--for you used to know it well enough, though you may be a little out of practice now,--yet the women would be too much for you. The gracious Countess looks after you in the cow-stable and in the pig-pen. In short it is a service like--what shall I say? like Sodom and Gomorrah!"

"Look here!" cried the mistress of the house, "it just occurs to me that the Pumpelhagen inspector is going to leave on St. John's day; that will be the place for you, Karl."

"Frau Nüssler is always right," said Bräsigt. "What the Herr Kammerrath von Pumpelhagen is,--for he laid the emphasis in the man's title always upon *rath*, so that it seemed as if he and the Kammerrath had served in the army together, or at least had eaten out of the same spoon and platter,--"what the Herr Kammerrath von Pumpelhagen is, nobody knows better than I. A man who thinks much of his people, and gives a good salary, and is quite a gentleman of the old school. He knew you too, in old times, Karl. That is the right place for you, and to-morrow I will go over there with you. What do you say to it, young Jochen?"

"Yes," said Herr Nüssler, "it is all as true as leather."

"Bless me!" cried the young wife, and an anxious look overspread her handsome face, "how I forget everything to-day! If grandfather and grandmother knew that we were sitting down to supper with company, and they not called, they would never forgive me. Sit a little closer together, children. Jochen, you might have thought of it."

"Yes, what shall I do about it now?" said Jochen, as she was already out of the room.

It was not long before the two old people came back with her, shuffling in with their leathern slippers. Upon both their faces lay that lurking expectation and that vague curiosity which comes from very dull hearing, and which quite too easily passes into an expression of obstinacy and distrust. It has justly been said that married people, who have lived long together, and have thought and cared and worked for the same objects, come at last to look like each other; and even if that is not true of the cut of the features, it holds good for the expression. Both looked like people who never had allowed themselves any pleasure or satisfaction which would be in the least expensive; both looked shabby and dingy in their clothing, as if they must still be sparing and tug at the wheel, and as if even water cost money. No look of comfort in their old age, no pleasure sparkled in their eyes, for they had had but one pleasure in their whole lives,--that was their Jochen and his good success; now they were laid aside and heaviness lay on their natures, and on their only joy, for Jochen was quite too heavy; but for his success they still cared and toiled,--it was the last goal of their lives.

The old man was almost imbecile, but the old woman still kept her faculties, and her eyes glanced furtively into all the corners, like a pair of sharpers watching their opportunity.

Habermann rose and gave his hand to the two old people, and his sister stood by, looking anxiously in their faces to see what they thought of the visit. She had already told them the occasion of her brother's coming, and that might have been the reason why their faces looked sourer than usual; or it might have been on account of the luxurious supper with which the table was spread.

The old folks sat down to the table. The old woman looked sharply at Habermann's little girl. "Is that his?" she asked.

The young woman nodded.

"Going to stay here?" she asked further.

The young woman nodded again.

"So!" said the old woman, and prolonged the word, as if to indicate all the damage which she expected her Jochen to suffer on that account. "Yes, times are hard," she began, as if she must have a fling at the times, "and one has enough to do to carry oneself through the world."

The old man all the time was looking at the beer bottles and Bräsigs glass. "Is that my beer?" asked he.

"Yes," shouted Bräsigs into his ear, "and it is fine beer, which Frau Nüssler has brewed, a good cordial for a thin, weak person."

"Too extravagant! Too extravagant!" muttered the old man to himself. The old woman ate, but kept looking away, over the table, toward the chest of drawers.

The young wife, who must have studied attentively the old woman's behavior, looked in the same direction, and perceived with horror that the cap was missing from the stand. "Good heavens! what had become of the cap?" She had herself that very morning plaited it and hung it up on the stand.

"Where is my cap for to-morrow?" asked the old woman, at last.

"Never mind now, mother," said the young woman, bending toward her, "I will get it for you by and by."

"Is it all plaited?"

The young woman nodded, and thought surely now grandmother would be satisfied; but the old woman glanced her eyes sideways about the room, as, fifty years ago, she had been used to look at young men. The Herr Inspector Bräsigs called his sins to mind, as they began to talk about the cap, and tried, in a couple of hasty glances, to ascertain what had become of the affair; but he had not much time, for there shot over the old woman's face such a bitter-sweet, venomous grin, that she reminded one of the dry bread steeped in poisonous syrup with which one catches flies.

"Are you sure you plaited it?" said she, and pointed to Habermann's little Louise.

"Good heavens, what is that!" cried the young woman, and sprang up and perceived an end of the cap-string hanging out under the child's little dress. She lifted the child, and would have taken the head-gear, but the old woman was quicker. Hastily she seized her disordered finery, and, as she perceived the burst-out puff and Bräsigs half-inserted drawing-string, the venom broke out, and, holding up the cap, "Mischievous child!" cried she, and made a motion as if she would box the child's ears with it.

But Bräsigs caught her arm, and cried, "The child knows nothing about it;" and to himself he muttered, "The old dragon!" And behind grandmother's chair began a great crying, and Mining sobbed, "Won't do it again! Won't do it again!" and Lining sobbed also, "Won't do it again! Won't do it again!"

"Bless my soul!" cried the young woman, "our own children have done the mischief. Mother, it was our own children!" But the old woman had all her life understood too well what was for her own advantage, not to know in her old age how to profit by her grievances; what she would not hear, she did not hear, and she would not hear this. She called and beckoned to the old man: "Come!"

"Mother, mother," begged the young woman, "give me the cap, I will make it all right again."

"Who is up in the pasture?" asked the old woman, and went with old Jochen out of the door.

Young Jochen lighted his pipe. "God bless me!" said the young woman, "she is right, I must go to the pasture. Grandmother will not think well of me for the next four weeks."

"Gruff was an old dog," said Bräsigs, "but Gruff had to give in at last."

"Don't cry any longer, you poor little things," said the mother, drying her children's tears. "You didn't mean any harm, but you are too heedless. And now behave well, and play with little cousin. I must go. Jochen, look after the children a little," and with that she put on her chip hat and went to the pasture.

"Mothers-in-law are the devil's claw!" said Bräsigs. "But you, young Jochen," turning to the man, who sat there as if his mother and his wife were no concern of his, "you should be ashamed of yourself to let your wife be so abused by the old woman."

"Yes? what shall I do about it, being her son?" said young Jochen.

"You cannot beat her, to be sure, since they are unfortunately your parents; but you might give a filial admonition, now and then, like a dutiful son, that the devil in her must be cast out, if

she will not keep peace in the family. And you, Karl Habermann, don't take this little quarrel too much to heart; for your dear sister has a good temper and a joyous heart. She soon gets over it, and the old termagant must give in at last, for they can do nothing without her. The young woman is the mainspring of the house. But"--here he drew out from his pocket an immense double-cased watch, such a thing as one calls a warming-pan--"really, it is close upon seven! I must hurry, for my people need looking after."

"Hold on," said Habermann, "I will go part way with you. Good-bye for so long, Jochen."

"Good-bye, also, brother-in-law," said Jochen, and remained sitting in his corner.

As they came out of doors, Habermann said, "But, Bräsigg, how can you speak so of the old people, in their son's presence?"

"He is used to it, Karl. No devil could endure those two old dogs-in-the-manger. They have embroiled themselves with the whole neighborhood, and as for the servants, they run miles to get out of their way."

"Good heavens," said Habermann, "my poor sister! She was such a joyous child, and now in such a house, and with such a lout of a man!"

"There you are right, Karl, he is an old lout (Nüss), and Nüssler is his name; but he does not treat your sister badly, and, although he is an old blockhead and has no sort of smartness about him, he is not yet so dull that he cannot see how your sister manages the whole concern."

"The poor girl! On my account, that she might not be a burden on me, as she said, and that our old mother might see one of her children settled before her death, she took the man."

"I know all about it, Karl, I know it from my own experience. Don't you remember? It was in rye-harvest, and you said to me, 'Zachary,' said you, 'your activity is a disadvantage to you, you are carrying in your rye still damp.' And I said, 'How so?' For on Sunday we had already had Streichelbier, and your sister was there also, and with such weather why shouldn't I get in my rye? And then I told you, unless I am mistaken, that of my three partners I would marry no other than your sister. Then you laughed again, so mischievously, and said, she was still too young. 'What has her youth to do with it?' said I. Then you said again my other two partners had the first chance, and laughed, not believing I was in earnest; and so the matter dawdled along for awhile, for my gracious Herr Count would not give his consent, and allowed no married inspectors. And next thing it was too late, for young Jochen had spoken for her, and your mother was on his side. No, it was not to be," said the honest old fellow, looking pensively along his nose, "but when I see her little rogues of twins, and think to myself that they ought rightly to be mine, listen to me, Karl, then I feel as if I could trample the old woman and old Jochen and young Jochen into the ground together. But it is a real blessing to the old Jesuits that your sister has come into the house, with her kind heart and cheerful disposition; for if they had had a daughter-in-law of a different sort, they would long since have been dead and buried."

With these words, they had come out of the hamlet, and as they turned by the farm-garden Habermann exclaimed, "Good heavens, can it be that the two old people are standing on that hill?"

"Yes," said Bräsigg, with a scornful laugh, "there is the old pack of Jesuits again at their place of retirement."

"Retirement!" exclaimed Habermann. "On a hill-top!"

"It is even so, Karl. The old reptile trusts nobody, not her own children, and if she has something to say which her ordinary gestures and pantomime will not suffice for, then they always come here to this steep hill, where they can see all around if any one is within hearing, and then they shout their secrets in each other's ears. Yes, now they are in full conclave, the old woman has laid a dragon's egg, and they are setting on it together."

"She is so hasty and passionate," said Habermann. "Just see how the old woman gesticulates! What would she have?"

"I know right well what they are deliberating and ruminating upon. I can understand a hundred paces off, for I know her of old. And Karl," he added, after a little thought, raising his eyebrows, "it is best you should know all, that you may hold yourself ready; they are talking of you and your little one."

"Of me, and my little girl?" asked Habermann, in astonishment.

"Yes, Karl. You see if you had come with a great bag of money, they would have welcomed you with open arms, for money is the one thing which they hold in respect; but in your temporary embarrassment they look upon you and your little girl as nothing better than a couple of intruders, who will take the bread from their mouths, and from their old blockhead of a Jochen."

"God bless me!" cried Habermann, "why didn't I leave the child with the Rassows? What shall I do with the poor little thing? Do you know any expedient? I cannot leave her here, not even with

my own sister can I leave her here."

"But naturally, you wish to have her near you. Now I will tell you, Karl, tonight you must stay with the Nüssler's; tomorrow we will go to the Herr Kammerrath at Pumpelshagen. If that goes well, then we can find a place for the child here in the neighbourhood; if not, we will ride to the city, and there we must find some opening,--if not otherwise, with the merchant Kurz. And now good-bye, Karl! Don't take the matter too much to heart,--things will improve, Karl!" whereupon he departed.

"Yes, if all were like you," said Habermann, as he went back to his sister's house, "then I should get over the steep mountain; but get over it I must, and will," and the cheerful courage, which had been nurtured by labor and his feeling of duty, broke through the gloom, like the sun through a mist. "My sister shall suffer no inconvenience on my account, and I will take care of my child myself."

In the evening, when the milk had been cared for, Habermann walked with his sister along the garden-path, and she spoke of his, and he of her, troubles.

"Eh, Karl," said she, "don't fret about me! I am used to it all now. Yes, it is true, the old folks are very selfish and irritable; but if they sulk at me for a week, I forget it all the next hour, and as for Jochen, I must own that he lays nothing in my way, and has never given me a hard word. If he were only a little more active and ready,--but that is not to be looked for in him. I have enough to do in my house-keeping, but I have to concern myself with the out-of-door work, too, which is not a woman's business, and there Bräsig is a real comfort to me, for he has an eye to the fields and the farm-yard, and starts Jochen up a little."

"Does the farming go well on the whole, and do you come out right at the year's end?" asked the brother.

"It does not go as well as it ought. We are too sparing for that, and the old folks will not allow us to make any changes or improvements. We come out right, and the rent is always paid promptly, but there are Jochen's two old brothers-in-law, the merchant Kurz, and the Rector Baldrian--they made quite a stir about it, and set the old people and us by the ears because they wanted their share of the property. The Rector doesn't really need it, but he is such an old miser; but Kurz could use his money, for he is a merchant, and will yet have a large business. But the two old people wish to give almost everything to Jochen, and with that which they have kept back for themselves they cannot part, and the old woman has an old rhyme, which she always quotes, if one touches on the subject:--

'Who to his children gives his bread,
Himself shall suffer need instead,
And with a club be stricken dead.'

But it is wrong, all wrong, and no blessing can come of it, for one child is as good as another, and at first I said that right out to the old people. Oh, what an uproar there was! They had earned it, and what had I brought into the family? Upon my knees I ought to thank God and them, that they would make a man of Jochen. But I have persuaded Jochen, so that to Kurz at least he has from time to time given upwards of fifteen hundred thalers. The old woman has noticed it, to be sure, and has reckoned it all up, but she does not know yet the truth of the matter; because, since Jochen is rather slow, and is not used to reckoning, I keep the purse myself, and there I positively will not allow grandmother to interfere. No, grandmother, I am not so stupid as that! If I have a house of my own, I will have my own purse. And that is their great grievance, that they can no longer play the guardian over Jochen; but Jochen is almost forty, and if he will not rule himself, then I will rule him, for I am his wife, and the nearest to him, as our Frau Pastorin says. Now, tell me, Karl, am I right or am I wrong?"

"You are right, Dürten," said Habermann.

With that they said good-night, and went to bed.

CHAPTER III.

The next morning came Bräsig in good season, to go with Habermann to Pumpelshagen. The young wife sat in the living-room, and was paying off the work-people; Jochen sat close by her, and smoked tobacco,--he attended to that business. The old people were not yet visible, for

grandmother had said to her daughter-in-law, she at least could not go out to-day, since she had nothing to put on her head; and grandfather had said that merry-making would go on better without him.

"It is really considerate of the old people," said Bräsigt, "not to spoil our dinner; for, Madam Nüssler, I am going to stay here to dinner to-day, with Karl. But, Karl, we must go. Good-bye, little rogues!"

As they went through the farm-yard, Bräsigt all of a sudden stood still. "Just see, Karl, doesn't it look like the desert of Sahara? Here a dung-heap and there a dung-heap! And yet, see, old Jochen has had these ditches opened, so that all the dirty water can run off, in a body, to the village pond. And then the roofs!" said he, walking on. "They have straw enough for new roofs,--it is merely that the old folks grudge the expense of repairing them. I come here properly only from two motives,--one relates to my health, the other to my heart; for I find that it agrees with me, when I have eaten too hearty a dinner, to get comfortably angry, and, on account of my heart, I go for the sake of your sister and the little rogues, since I can be of some assistance to her. For young Jochen behaves usually quite too much like a wheel on a baggage-wagon, in the winter, between here and Rostock. If I could but once have him before a cart, with three or four on top of the load, and then lay on the whip!"

"See," said Habermann, as they went through a field, "they have some fine-looking wheat there."

"Oh, yes, it has a good color; but what do you think they sow here? Rye! And why so? Because old Jochen, for twenty-five years, has always had rye in the winter field."

"Does this field extend over the hill yonder?"

"No, Karl, the old lynx is not so fat as that; fry lard in butter, and eat it with a spoon! No, Karl, that field over the hill happens to be mine."

"Eh, how one can forget, in a couple of years! So your land comes thus far?"

"Yes, Karl, for Warnitz stretches out finely in length; on this side it comes to this point, and on the other it turns round toward Haunerwiem. But see here, from this rising-ground I can show you the whole region. Where we stand belongs to your brother-in-law, and his land goes on the right up to my wheat, and on the left to that little clump of firs, for Rexow is quite small. He has also a small field on the other side of the hamlet. The land to the right, behind my wheat field, also belongs to Warnitz, and before us, where the ploughed ground begins, lies Pumpelhagen; and here on the left, behind the fir-trees, is Gurlitz."

"Warnitz is then the largest?"

"No, Karl, not so either. Pumpelhagen has eight lasts more, and is a first-class estate also in value,--two-and-forty lasts natural wheat land. Yes, if the rest were all of a piece! No, the Kammerrath is a good man, and a good countryman; but you see, there he sits in Schwerin, and cannot trouble himself about Pumpelhagen, where he has often had *such* inspectors! And he bought the property in dear times, and a crowd of leeches stand ready to drain the last drop from his veins; and then his lady, the Kammerräthin, rides grandly in her carriage visiting and entertaining. But he is the right sort of man, and is good to his people, and although the von Rambows are of old descent,--for my gracious Herr Count often invites him to dinner, and he thinks a great deal of ancestry,--yet he carries himself quite pleasantly and without any formality."

Habermann had listened attentively to this information, for these things might by a fortunate chance have some connection with his future; but, interested as he was, his thoughts still recurred to his present difficulty. "Bräsigt," said he, "have you any idea in your head about my little girl?"

"What wouldn't I do for her, Karl! But--the devil knows! I believe we must after all go to the city to Kurz, the merchant. She, Frau Kurz, is a good sort of woman, and he--well, he is in the vocative, like all shop-keepers. Just think, last summer the rascal sold me a piece of stuff for breeches, for Sunday wear; it was a kind of chocolate-colour. And, think, when I went one morning in the dew, through my clover, they turned up to the knee, like a mess of crabs, pure scarlet! And he sent me some Kümmel, the Prussian kind, the old sweet-meats, tinkered up with all sorts of drops. But I sent it back to him again, with a good scolding; the breeches, however, he would not take back, and sent me word he didn't wear breeches. No, did the rascal think I was going to wear red ones! And Karl, see, here at the left is Gurlitz."

"Is that the Gurlitz church-tower?" asked Habermann.

"Yes, Karl,--and Bräsigt stood still, turned up his nose, sent his eyebrows up under his cocked hat,--for he wore a hat on Sundays,--opened his mouth wide, and stared at Habermann with a pair of eyes which seemed to look him through and through, and then lose themselves in the distance."

"Karl!" he cried finally, "since you speak of the church-tower,--God bless you! the Gurlitz pastor must take your little girl."

"Pastor Behrens?" asked Habermann.

"Yes, Pastor Behrens, who was our private instructor at old Knirkstädt's."

"Ah, Bräsig, I will confess I have thought of it almost the whole night, whether that would be possible, if I should remain in the neighbourhood."

"Possible? He must! He would like nothing better than to have a little child growing up near him, since he himself has no children; and he has rented his farm, and now has nothing to do but to read and study his books, which it would make another man turn green and yellow merely to look at from a distance. That is what he enjoys! And she, the Frau Pastorin, is so fond of children, that all the girls in the village tag after her; and she is an excellent, kind-hearted woman, and always cheerful, and the best of friends with your sister."

"Ah, if that might be!" exclaimed Habermann. "You and I owe everything to that man, Zachary! Do you remember, when he was still a candidate, at old Knirkstädt's, how he gave us private lessons in the winter evenings, and taught us writing and arithmetic, and what a friend he was to us two stupid youngsters?"

"Yes, Karl, and how Zamel Pomuchelskopp used to lie and snore of an evening, till the beams shook, while we were in the pursuit of learning. Do you remember, in the arithmetic, when we came to the Rule of Three,--you seek the fourth unknown quantity, and first get the ratio, and then it goes! In quickness I was your superior, but you were mine in accuracy, and also in orthography. But in letter-writing and in High-German, then I was better again; and these last I have ever since studied diligently, for every man has his favorite pursuit. And when I go to see the Pastor, I always thank him for his assistance in my education; and then he laughs, and says he is more indebted to me, because I have rented his farm for him, and he is now sure of a good contract. He thinks something of me, and if you stay here, we will go over to him, and you shall see he will do it."

By this time they had arrived at Pumpelhagen, and Bräsig quite impressed Habermann by his distinguished manners, as he sailed up to the old servant, and inquired if the Herr Kammerrath was at home, and could be spoken with.

He would announce the gentlemen the man said; wasn't it the Herr Inspector, Bräsig?

"Yes," said Bräsig. "Do you see, Karl he knows me, and the Herr Kammerrath knows me too. And, did you notice? regularly announcing us! The nobility don't do things meanly. My gracious Herr Count always has people announced to him by three servants; that is, one announces to the other, until the valet finally announces to him, and by this custom we sometimes have amusing occurrences,--as, the other day, with the kammerjäger. The first announced to the second, instead of kammerjäger, oberjäger, and the second added a meister, and the third announced to the Herr Count an oberjägermeister; and, as my gracious Herr Count prepared to receive the strange gentleman with proper ceremony, it was the old rat-catcher Tibaul."

The servant came back, and led them into a spacious room, which was very comfortably but not splendidly furnished. In the centre stood a large, plain table, covered with papers and accounts. Behind the table stood, as they entered, a rather tall, thin man, who had on his face a thoughtful expression, and in his whole appearance an air of quiet reflection; and in his dress, although it was quite suited to his circumstances, there was the same simplicity as in the furnishing of the room. He might have been about fifty, and his sandy hair was thickly sprinkled with gray; also he was evidently quite shortsighted, for, as he came around the table to receive the two guests, he reached after an eye-glass, which, however, he did not use, but went up close to his visitors. "Ah, Herr Inspector Bräsig," said he quietly. "What can I do for you?"

Uncle Bräsig was so put out in his elaborate address, that he could not collect himself of a sudden; not to hurry him, the Herr Kammerrath looked quite closely at Habermann. "You want--- But," he interrupted himself, "I ought to know you. Wait a moment,--were you not for ten or twelve years in service with my brother?"

"Yes, Herr Kammerrath, and my name is Habermann."

"Right, right! And to what do I owe the pleasure of seeing you here?"

"I have understood that the Herr Kammerrath was looking for an inspector; and as I am in search of such a place----"

"But you have a farm in Pomerania, as I think I have heard," interrupted the proprietor.

But now it was high time for Bräsig, if he had anything of importance to say, to charge into the midst. "That he had, Herr Kammerrath von Rambow, he *had* it, but the Jews will give nothing for it now. He, like many another farmer, got into difficulties, and the pitiful meanness and baseness of his landlord have ruined him. What do you say to that, Herr Kammerrath?"

Behind the old fellow's back at these words sounded a hearty laugh, and as he looked around he saw the bright face of a ten or twelve years' old boy, which seemed to say, "Wait a bit, there is more coming." The Kammerrath also turned his face away to laugh a little; but happily for uncle

Bräsig, it never occurred to him that the laughing was from any other cause than natural pleasure at his well-chosen language. He concluded therefore, quite seriously. "And so he has gone head over heels."

"I am heartily sorry," said the Kammerrath; "Yes," he added with a sigh, "these are hard times for the countrymen; but we must hope that they will improve. As regards your wish,--Axel, go out and see if breakfast is ready,--your supposition is correct. I have just dismissed my late inspector,--I will tell you, because of carelessness in his accounts,--and I am looking for a suitable man to fill his place. But," said he, as his son appeared at the door, and announced that breakfast was ready, "if you have not yet breakfasted, we can arrange the matter best at the breakfast-table."

With that, he went to the door, but stood there, and made a motion with his hand for them to pass out first. "Karl," whispered Bräsig, "didn't I tell you? Just like one of us!" But as Habermann quietly passed on, accepting the invitation, he threw up his eyebrows, and stretched out his hand as if he would draw his friend back by the coat-tails, then stood with his little twisted legs turned out, and bowed like a clasp-knife.

"Eh, how could I! I beseech you! Herr Kammerrath should always have precedence!" And his waiting was not of a bad order, for he had a long body and short legs, and they belong properly to waiters.

The Herr Kammerrath had to take himself out of the way of his compliments, that the old fellow might not dislocate his spine. At the breakfast-table the business was discussed and decided; Habermann was engaged on a good, sufficient salary, which was to be increased every five years; and the only condition which the Kammerrath insisted upon was that he should occupy the place at once.

The new inspector agreed to this, and the day was set for his entering on his duties, so that the Kammerrath before his departure could go with him about the place and tell him what he wanted done; and Bräsig having concluded a brief sketch of the troubled life-career of the fifteen years' old full-blooded Wallach, which he had cared for in his business at the farm,--how he had "had the honor to know the old carrion ever since it was born;" how the creature in its younger years had been "such a colt as you read of in books," but afterward "with shying and spavin and all manner of devilish tricks had so disgraced himself that he was now punished by being harnessed to the dung-cart,"--the two inspectors took their leave.

"Bräsig," said Habermann, when they were outside, "a stone, has been taken from my heart. Thank God, I shall be employed again! And that brings me to other thoughts. Now for Gurlitz! Ah, if we may only be as fortunate there!"

"Yes, Karl, you may well say fortunate; for--don't take it ill of me--you don't understand the way of life and the fine etiquette of noble society. How could you do such a thing! How could you go through the door before the Herr Kammerrath?"

"Bräsig, when he invited me I was his guest, and he was not yet my master; now, I should not do it, and, rely upon it, he would not do it either."

"No, Karl, so I think; but at the Pastor's leave the business to me; there some finesse will be needed."

"Yes, Zachary, gladly. Were, it not for my poor little girl, I should not have the courage to ask so great a favor of any man. If you will undertake it for me, I shall consider it a real piece of friendship."

As they came toward the Gurlitz church, they knew by the singing that the service was not yet over; and, as they went into the Pastor's house, and into the living-room, they were met by a little, quick, round woman, upwards of forty years of age. Everything about her was round,--arms and hands and fingers, head and cheeks and lips; and the eyes looked so round and bright out of her soft round face, as if the eyelids had never been pressed down with trouble and sorrow, and such a cheery life over flowed from her mien and motions, that one believed he could almost see how the fresh, red blood throbbled through the warm heart.

"Good-day, Herr Bräsig, sit down! Sit down, also! Yes, that is right, my Pastor is still in church; he would scold well if you had gone away. Pray sit down, Herr--what shall I call you? Yes, I would gladly have gone to church to-day, but just think, last Sunday the Pastor's pew was broken in halves. Bless me, how every body crowded around, and we couldn't say 'No.' And our old cabinetmaker Prüssshawer was going to mend it, and he is sick with a fever."

The round little mouth rolled out the words as if they were round, smooth, white billiard balls, which a playful child shoots here and there over the green cloth.

Bräsig now introduced Habermann as the brother of Frau Nüssler.

"You are her brother? Her brother Karl? Now sit down, sit down! How glad my Pastor will be! When Frau Nüssler is here, we always talk about you; something good you may be sure,--the Herr Inspector knows. Bless you, Bräsig, what are you doing with my hymn-book? Let me put the book

away! you don't want to read it, you are an old heathen. Those are funeral-hymns, and what have you to do with funeral-hymns? You will live forever! You are no better than the Wandering Jew! But, dear heart! one must think sometimes about dying, and so, since our church-pew is broken, and the old cabinet-maker has a fever, I have been reading a couple of hymns 'On preparation for death.'" And with that she flew round like quicksilver, and laid the books on one side, and whisked off a little dust here and there, where none was visible, and rubbed and polished about in the room, which was as neat as a dressing-box. All at once she stood still, listened toward the kitchen and cried, "Just so, I must go and look after the soup!" and was gone.

"Didn't I tell you, Karl?" said Bräsig. "There's a temperament for you! And what splendid health! Now leave me alone; I will manage it all," and he went out after the Frau Pastorin.

Habermann looked around him in the room. How neat and comfortable every thing was, so homelike and so full of peace. There hung, above the sofa, a beautiful head of Christ, and around and beneath it were the portraits of the parents of the Herr Pastor and the Frau Pastorin, and their relations, some in colors, some in crayon, some large, others small; and the Lord Jesus had his hands raised in blessing, and the Frau Pastorin had arranged under their shadow all her relations, putting them the nearest, that they might have the best of the blessing.

Her own picture, painted in early years, and that of her Pastor, she had in humility hung by the window, a little further off; but the sun, which looked in through the snow-white curtains, and gilded the other portraits, touched these two pictures first. There was a small book-case full of religious and secular books, a little mixed together, but still making a fine appearance, for they were arranged more with reference to their bindings than their contents. And if any one supposed, because she talked Platt-Deutsch, that she had no appreciation or enjoyment of High-German literature, he needed merely to open a book, where a mark lay, and he would find that the marked places had been read with heart and feeling,—that is to say, if he had as much heart and feeling as the Frau Pastorin; and, had he opened the cookbook, he would have seen that the Frau Pastorin was as good a student as the Herr Pastor, for she had just like him her notes written on the margin, and where nothing was written one might understand that those were the Herr Pastor's favorite recipes,—"And by those," said she, "I don't need to make any marks, for I know them by heart."

And here in this peaceful abode, in this pretty, comfortable nest, shall Habermann, if God in mercy grant it, leave his child to pass her early years. These hands of the Saviour shall be stretched out in blessing over her, this blessed sun shall shine upon her, and the noble thoughts, which great and good men have written in books for the world, shall awaken her young soul out of childhood's dreams, and give it life and joy.

He was getting very soft-hearted. But, as he still sat between hope and fear, the Frau Pastorin came in at the door, her eyes red with weeping. "Don't say a word, Herr Habermann, don't say a word! Bräsig has told me everything, and Bräsig is an old heathen, but he is a good man, and a true friend of yours,—and my Pastor thinks just as I do, that I know, for we are always one,—and that dear little thing! God bless you, yes! The old Nüsslers are a hard-hearted set," and she tapped the floor briskly with her foot.

"The old woman," said Bräsig, who was by this time close beside them, "the old woman is a real horse-leech."

"Right, Bräsig, she is that, but my Pastor shall talk the old people into reason; not on account of the little girl, she shall come here, or I don't know my old Pastor!"

While Habermann was expressing his heart-felt thanks, her Pastor came in,—she always called him "her" Pastor, because he was truly hers, body and soul, and her "Pastor," on account of his own dignity, and because the title belonged to him from his office. He came bare-headed across the church-yard and parsonage-yard, for these high soft-hats, which make our good Protestant ministers look like Russian priests, were not then in fashion, at least not in the country; and, instead of the great ruff, as broad as the white china platter on which the daughter of Herodias presents the head of John-Baptist to her step-father, he had a pair of little innocent bands, which his dear wife Regina had, with all Christian reverence, stitched, stiffened, pressed and tied around his neck with her own hands. She held correctly that these little simple things were the distinctive ministerial uniform, and not the little four-cornered cape which was worn over the coat-collar. "For," said she, "my dear Frau Nüssler, our sexton wears just such a little cape, but he dare not wear bands; and when I see my Pastor, with the ornaments of his office, standing in the chancel, I don't know, they seem to me, the two little things, as they rise and fall with his words, now one, now the other, like a pair of angel-wings, on which one might rise directly to Heaven,—only my Pastor has his wings in front, and the angels have theirs behind."

No, he wasn't an angel, this good Pastor of hers, and he was the last person to set himself up for one. But with all the sincerity that shone from his face, and seemed to know no dissimulation, there was such a friendly forbearance, such a quiet, kindly expression, that one must hold him at the first glance for a brave man, and although his whole life had been given up to self-denying labor, yet he could—naturally after the Frau Pastorin had taken off his cape and bands—show in his eyes his joyous heart, and utter innocent jests with his lips; and, when he put off the ecclesiastic, he stood forth as a man who, in worldly matters also, could give sensible counsel, and reach forth a helping hand.

As he stepped into the room, he recognized Habermann immediately, and went right up to him. "My dear friend, do I see you once more! How are you? Good-day, Herr Inspector!" And as Habermann returned the greeting, and Bräsigt began to tell the reason of their visit, the Frau Pastorin sprang between them, and seized her Pastor by his ministerial gown, and cried, "Not a word, Herr Habermann; Bräsigt, will you be so good? You shall know it all from me," said she to her husband, "for, though the story is a sad one,--yes, Herr Habermann, quite too sad,--yet there will be a pleasure for you. Come, come!" and with that she drew him into his study. "For I am the nearest to him," she called back from the door, in apology.

After a while the Pastor came back with his wife into the room, and went, with a determined step and resolved expression on his face, up to Habermann. "Yes, dear Habermann, yes! We will do it, and, so far as in us lies, do it gladly,"--and he pressed his hand--"but," he added, "we have no experience in the care of children, yet we can learn. Isn't it so, Regina, we can learn?" as if with this little joke he would help Habermann over the deep emotion which struggled in his face and in his whole being.

"Herr Pastor," he broke out, finally, "You have long ago done a great deal for me, but this--" And the little Frau Pastorin reached after her means of consolation and implement of all work, which she took in hand at every surprise of joy or sorrow,--after her duster,--and dusted here and there, and would have wiped away Habermann's tears with it, if he had not turned aside, and she called out at the door after Frederica: "Now, Rika, run quickly over to the weaver's wife, and ask her to lend me her cradle,--she doesn't use it," she added, to Bräsigt.

And Bräsigt, as if it devolved on him to sustain the honor of the Habermann family, said to her impressively: "Frau Pastorin, what are you thinking of? The little girl is quite hearty!"

And the Frau Pastorin ran again to the door, and called back the maiden. "Rika, Rika, not the cradle,--ask her to lend me a little crib, and then go to the sexton's daughter, and see if she can come this afternoon,--God bless me, to-day is Sunday! But if your ass has fallen into a pit, and so forth,--yes, ask her whether she can help me stuff a couple of little beds. For it is not heathenish, Bräsigt, it is a work of necessity, and quite another thing from your Herr Count having his wheat brought in Sunday afternoon. And, my dear Herr Habermann, the little girl must come to us to-day, for Franz," said she to her husband, "the old Nüsslers would not give the poor little thing even her dinner if they could help it, and, Bräsigt, bread which is not freely given----" here she was a little out of breath and Bräsigt went on: "Yes, Frau Pastorin, one may grow fat on grudging bread, but the devil take such fatness!"

"You old heathen, how can you swear so, in a Christian Pastor's house?" cried the Frau Pastorin. "But the long and the short of the matter is, the little girl must come here to-day."

"Yes, Frau Pastorin," said Habermann, only too happy, "I will bring her to-day. My poor sister will be sorry, but it is better for her, and for the peace of her family, and also for my child."

He went up to the two worthy people, and thanked them so warmly, from the depths of his grateful heart; and when they had taken leave, and were outside, he drew a long breath, and said to Bräsigt, "How gloomy the world looked this morning, but now the sun shines in my heart again! I have yet a disagreeable business to attend to; but it is a lucky day, and that may go well also."

"What have you got to do now?" asked Bräsigt.

"I must go to Rahnstadt, to old Moses. I gave him, six months ago, my note for six hundred dollars; I have not heard from him since my bankruptcy, and I must try to make some arrangement with him."

"That you must, Karl; and I would do it at once, for old Moses isn't the worst man in the world, by a long way. Now I will tell you what shall be our order of battle for to-day: we will both go back to Rexow, and eat our dinner; after dinner young Jochen must lend you his horses, and you can take your little one to Gurlitz; go from there to the city, and come back in the evening to me, at Warnitz, and stay over night; and to-morrow you can go over to Pumpelhagen, since the Herr Kammerrath depends on your speedy coming.

"Right," said Habermann, "it shall be so."

They arrived, the dinner was eaten, and Bräsigt asked of young Jochen the loan of his wagon and horses. "Of course," cried Frau Nüssler,--"Yes, of course," said Jochen, and went out himself immediately, to order the horses harnessed.

"Karl," said the sister, "my dear brother, how glad, how heartily glad, I should be, if---- But you know the reason; Bräsigt has told you. But, dear heart, if one could only keep peace in the family! Don't believe that Jochen thinks differently from me, only he hasn't the energy to stand up for his rights. But I will look after your child as if she were my own, though it will not be needful at the Parsonage."

The wagon drove up. "What the devil!" cried Bräsigt, "young Jochen, you have got out your state-equipage, the old yellow coach!"

"Yes, Herr," said Christian, who sat up in front. "May we only get safe home again with the old

thing, for it is fearfully crazy in the box, and the wheels clatter as if one were spinning flax."

"Christian," said Bräsig, "you must first drive a little way through the village pond, and then through the Gurlitz brook; and then, before you get to Rahnstadt, though the frog-pond. That will tighten the wheels."

"Eh!" said Christian; "one might as well go a sea-voyage!"

As Habermann had taken leave, and put his little girl in the wagon, young Jochen pressed out through the company in such haste that all made way for him, and his wife cried out, "What is the matter now?" "There," said he and placed in the hand of the little Louise a pound of Fleigen Markur, for he smoked no other tobacco; but it was only in outward appearance, for, as Habermann looked closer, he found a great piece of white bread, which young Jochen had merely wrapped up in tobacco-paper, because he had nothing else at hand.

The equipage started. Christian took the pond and the brook on his way, as Bräsig had recommended; the little one was given up at Gurlitz, and I will not try to describe how the pretty little dear was handed from one to the other, with kisses and petting, and seemed in her uncomprehending innocence to find herself at home with the good people. Habermann drove on Rahnstadt, to see Moses.

Moses was a man of about fifty. He had large, wise-looking eyes, under strong, black eyebrows, although his head was nearly white; heavy eyelids and dark lashes gave him an aspect of mildness; he was of middle size and of comfortable fulness; his left shoulder was a little higher than his right, and that was in consequence of his grip. When he got up from his stool, he stuck his left hand in his left coat pocket, and took hold of his breeches on the left side, which was always slipping down; for he wore but one suspender, and that was on the right side. "What's the use?" said he to his Blümchen, when she would persuade him to wear a second suspender. "When I was young and poor and had no money, I managed my business with one suspender, and courted my Blümchen with one suspender; and now that I am old and rich, and have money, and have Blümchen, why do I need two suspenders?" And then he would pat his Blümchen, give a grip at the left coat-pocket, and go back to his business.

As Habermann entered he sprang up. "O heavens! it is Habermann. Haven't I always told you," turning to his son, "Habermann is good, Habermann is an honest man?"

"Yes, Moses," said Habermann, "honest truly,--but----"

"Stand up, David, give the seat to Herr Habermann; sit here by me. Herr Habermann has something to say to me, and I have something to say to Herr Habermann. Do you see?" he added to his son, "David, what did you say? 'I should declare myself before the Prussian Justice.' What did I say? 'I will not declare myself before the Prussian Justice; Herr Habermann is an honorable man.' I declared myself once, it was in a business with a Prussian candidate. I had reminded the fellow of his debt, and he wrote me a letter, saying I should read a verse out of the Christian hymn-book,--David, what was it?"

"It was an infamous verse," said David.

"Moses cannot accuse me.
My conscience knows no fears,
For He who has pronounced me free
Will pay all my arrears."

"Yes," cried Moses, "that was what he said. And when I showed the letter, the Prussian Justice laughed, and when I showed my note, he shrugged his shoulders and laughed again. 'Ha, Ha! I said, you mean the paper is good, but the fellow is good for nothing.' Then they said I had the right on my side. I could have him locked up, but it would cost something. 'Do you take me for a fool? should I pay the fees and costs and summons, and the whole lawsuit, merely to give that swine his fodder? Let him run!' said I. No, Herr Habermann is better for me than the Prussian Justice."

"Yes, that is all very good, Moses," said Habermann, anxiously, "but I can't pay you, at least not at present."

"No?" said Moses, and looked at him in a questioning way. "You must have kept something over?"

"Not a red shilling," said the farmer with emotion.

"Thou just Heaven!" cried Moses, "not a red shilling!" and he sprang up and began ordering his son about. "David, what are you standing there for? What are you looking at? Why are you listening? Go and bring my book!" With that he began to walk restlessly up and down the room.

"Moses," said Habermann, "only give me time, and you shall have principal and interest to the last farthing."

Moses stood still, and listened with deep attention. "Habermann," said he at last, in Platt-Deutsch,--for these old-fashioned Jews, when anything goes to the heart, talk Platt-Deutsch, just like Christians,--"Habermann, you are an honorable man." And as David came back with the book, the old man said, "David, what do we want of the book? Take the book away. Now, what is it?" turning to Habermann. "I began with nothing, you also began with nothing, I had my business, you had yours, I had good luck, you had bad luck. I was industrious, you were industrious too, and you understood your business. What we can't do to-day may be done to-morrow; to-morrow you may again have a situation, and then you can pay me, for you are an honest man."

"A situation?" said Habermann, with a much lighter heart, "I have that already, and a good one, too."

"Where?" asked Moses.

"With the Kammerrath, at Pumpelhagen."

"Good, Habermann, good! He is a good man. Though he has had some experience of the hard times, he is yet a good man; he does no business with me, but he is a good man, for all that. Blümchen!" he cried at the door, "Herr Habermann is here. Bring in two cups of coffee!" and as Habermann would have declined the coffee, he added, "Allow me, Herr Habermann, allow me! When I was young, and went about the country with my pack, and it was cold weather, your mother has often given me a hot cup of coffee; when you were inspector you have given me many a ride for nothing. No, we are all human beings. Drink! Herr Habermann, drink!"

So this business also came out right, and as Habermann went back to Bräsig that evening his heart was lighter, much lighter; and, as he that evening in bed thought over the events of the day, the thought came to him whether a beloved voice had not prayed for him, up above, and whether a beloved hand had not smoothed out the tangled skein of his future, that it might run henceforth with a clear thread.

The next morning he reported himself at Pumpelhagen; and when the Kammerrath and his little son rode away, two days after, he found himself already acquainted with his new duties, and in full activity. And so he remained in quiet content for many years. Grief had withdrawn, and the joy he had was of the kind that a man does not enjoy alone, which he must share with his fellow-men.

CHAPTER IV.

In the field by the mill there was wheat again this year, as in the year in which Habermann took charge of the estate. The property was divided into eleven fields; and eleven years had passed since that time. The inspector came out of the church, for it was Sunday, and he had been to hear the Pastor's sermon, and to visit his little daughter. He went on foot along the path from the church, for the way was short, and the day was fine, the finest of midsummer weather; he went through his wheat-field, and one of the purest joys came over him, this, that one sees the visible blessing of God on what in human hope, but also in human uncertainty, his hands have sown. He was not enriched by the blessing,--that belonged to his master; but the joy was his, and it made his heart light and his mind clear, and in the clear mind, joyous thoughts darted, like fish in a limpid brook. He whistled a merry tune to himself, and almost laughed when he heard his own whistling, for such an outburst of mirth rarely happened to him.

"So," said he, "this is the eleventh year I have been over that field, and the worst is over; yet once more! then the overseeing shall be done by other eyes."

He took the way through the garden, which lay on high ground, and joined a little grove of oaks and beeches, where the drive and foot-path had been freshly cleared and raked out, for the Kammerrath and his family were coming to-day, and had sent word that they might be expected by the middle of the afternoon. As he came up the ascent he stood still and looked back over the wheat-field, and laughed to himself. "Yes, it doesn't look much as it did eleven years ago, when I let them mow it. This is something like! This time we have had a better year. What will the old Herr say? Between now and harvest, there is some time yet, but the rape is now as good as sure. If he only hasn't sold it all beforehand, again!" sighed he. "The cuckoo knows!" and he recalled the sums which had been borrowed during these eleven long years. "The old Herr will go no farther, and will go no farther; but, God bless him, there are his five daughters, and two sons-in-law who drain him, and then the gracious lady, who believes because money is round that it must run away, and then the son--it must be very expensive in the Prussian cuirassiers! Yes, the times are better than they were in my day; but if a man once gets into a tight place--it is hard, and he looks too old altogether."

He had time to spare. To-day they were waiting dinner for the Herr Kammerrath, although he had not given orders to that effect. "It was proper to do so," Habermann had said. "Yes," said he once more, and seated himself in the cool shade, "he will rejoice over the wheat, and it will be a help to him, for it is worth something, and times are better than they were."

Yes, the times were tight again, for what are "the times," for the North German people, and for all mankind, but long, long threads stretched far out over England and America and all the world, and knotted at the ends, and so managed that they lie sometimes quite slack, and whatever is fastened to them--and that is for our people almost the whole country--cannot move itself; and then again they are stretched tight, so that everything dances merrily back and forth, and all are shifted about, even in the remotest corners.

In this little corner of the world also, the thread was stretched tight, and young Jochen's porcelain pipe-bowl, and leaden tinder box, and his blue-painted corner-cupboard, and the waxed sofa, were all cleared out of the house, and the old crazy yellow coach out of the carriage-house; and in their place he had a meerschaum pipe adorned with silver, and a mahogany secretary, and an immense creature of a divan, in the living-room, and in the carriage-house there was a vehicle which Bräsig always called the "phantom," because in looking at the bill he had taken an "e" for an "n," and an "n" for an "m:" and he was not far wrong, for the thing was almost of the kind one sees in a dream.

And the same thread had also guided the hand of Bräsig's Herr Count, so that finally, after almost twenty years, he had given him in writing the desired permission to marry, and also a bond promising "a suitable pension for his old age."

And upon this thread, when it was slack, the little Frau Pastorin had caught herself, like a top which the boys rig up, and now that it was stretched she buzzed about her Pastor, and hummed daily in his ears; when the minister's meadow should be rented again, it would bring as good as double. And as Moses, at the close of the last year, added up his sum-total, and wrote underneath a little one and four great ciphers, the thread caught him by the arm, and the four ciphers changed to six. "David, lay the book away," said he, "it balances."

But while these threads, as to how far apart the knots are, and how lightly they are stretched, are governed a good deal by human instrumentality,--even although the Lord is above, and superintends the whole, so that the slack-lying and the tight-stretching happen in moderation, and mankind are not left to lie still on a hillock and stick there, or get tangled and run wildly together, as when a sack full of peas is shaken about,--a single human being has as much volition on these threads as the chafer has on his, when the children play with it; it can buzz about, here and there. Another thread, however, governs the world: it reaches from the highest to the lowest, and God himself has fastened the ends; no chafers buzz on it, nor is it in any sense a game. This thread was twisted a little, and Zachary Bräsig got a touch of the gout. It was stretched a little tighter, and the two old Nüsslers lay on their last couch; and then the knots at their end of the thread were cut, and they were buried.

Zachary Bräsig, indeed, scolded and fretted terribly when he felt the twitching, and in his ignorance did not understand, but blamed the new fashion of sewed dress-boots, and the damp, cold spring, for what he should have laid to the account of his hearty dinners and his usual little drop of Kümmel. He was snappish as a horse-fly, and Habermann would rally him, whenever he visited him in such a temper, about the writing in his possession which he had received from the Herr Count, granting him permission to marry and a pension, and then Bräsig would be angry, terribly angry, and would say, "Now just think, brother, in what an outrageous dilemma that paper of the gracious Count places me! If I want to marry, then says my gracious Count I am too young to need a pension, and if I ask for the pension, then I must say to myself, I am too old to marry! Oh! my gracious Count is not much better after all than a regular Jesuit; he says the words and you see them under your eyes, but virtually he has put all sorts of mocking paragraphs in the paper, that a man who for eight and twenty years has worn out his bones in his service cannot request a pension without depreciating himself personally, or that a man who could have had three brides twenty years ago, now that he is fifty years old cannot marry one. Oh, I laugh at the gracious paragraphs and at the gracious Count!"

One man's owl is another man's nightingale. Bräsig was spiteful over the twitching of the thread; but in young Jochen's house, after the knots were cut a guest entered, whom the young wife indeed had many times invited at the door, but who had never before crossed the threshold, and that was Peace. Now he had established himself comfortably on the new divan, and ruled over the whole establishment. The young woman cared for him, as if her nearest relative had come to the house, and the two little twin-apples did everything to please him, and young Jochen himself invited the guest in, and said it was all as true as leather, and did his duty as the head of the family. He continued to be monosyllabic, to be sure, and desired no other tobacco than Fleigen Markur, and did not trouble himself about the oversight of the farm. For, after the death of the old people, Habermann and Bräsig had taken the charge of out-door affairs quite out of his hands, and had changed the crops, and had introduced improvements, and because the old people had stowed away under the pillows, and in the stocking-box, and about the stove, and here and there in other places, many a bag of gold which they had forgotten to take with them, the business went very quickly and without much ceremony; and as it was all dispatched young Jochen said, "Yes, what shall I do about it?" and let things take their course.

But the comfort and prosperity which surrounded him roused him up a good deal, and his natural kind-heartedness, which had so long been repressed by the avarice of the old people, became evident; and, if he was a little rough about the head, it was no matter,--as the schoolmaster with the red vest said at the funeral: "It is no matter, Herr Pastor, since the heart is not bad!"

And how was it now with the Frau Pastorin and her Pastor? There the Lord had touched the thread very lightly; he had done like young Jochen, he had said: "What shall I do about it; let things take their course!" And if the Pastor now and then perceived a little light touch on his arm, and looked around, it was only his little friendly wife who stood behind him, always with her dusting cloth, and polished away at his arm-chair, and asked whether he would have the perch fried or boiled; and if his sermon happened to be about Peter's wonderful draught of fishes, or the evangelist's story of the meal of fish on the shore, then all sorts of foolish, unchristian thoughts would dart across his mind, of fried fish, and horse-radish, and butter to eat on it, so that he had some trouble in going on with his sermon, and sustaining the dignity of his office. But what were these little troubles, to which his Regina had accustomed him from the first, in comparison with his great joy?

God bless me! I have just received from my friend the gardener, Juhlke, of Erfurt, a beautiful lily-bulb; and now in the March sun the first leaves are sprouting, and my first thought in the morning is to see how much the leaves have sprouted during the night; and I give it a little pull to find out how the roots are striking, and I move it away from the cool window to the warm stove, and back from the dark stove to the light window, in the blessed sunshine, and it is as yet only a green shoot springing out of the earth, with no sign of a flower-bud, and it is but a plant, and not a human life, and yet how I rejoice over its sprouting and growth and greenness! And the pastor had received also a beautiful lily-bulb from his friend the Gardener, the Lord in heaven, and he and his little wife had tended and watched it, and now a flower-bud was growing, a human flower-bud, and the warm May sun shone upon it, and the Frau Pastorin ran to her darling the first thing in the morning, and buzzed about her at noon, and rejoiced over her healthy appetite, and heaped another spoonful on her plate; "For," said she, "life must have something to live on." And at evening, under the lindens before the door, she wrapped the little maiden under the same sheltering mantle with herself, on the side toward the warmth; and when it was bedtime, then she gave her a good-night kiss: "God bless you, my daughter; to-morrow morning early, at five o'clock, you must be up again!"

And the Pastor's first thought was also of her; and he watched and waited as leaf after leaf was growing green, and gave her a prop at her side, and bound her to it that she might grow right up toward heaven, and kept away all weeds and noxious insects. And when he went to bed at night he would say, as full of hope as a child, "Regina, she must blossom soon."

And so it came about, without the consciousness of the dear old people, or of the child herself, that she became the angel of the household, about whom everything turned, turned joyfully, without grumbling or snarling, without clashing or force. As she in her simple dress, with a little silk handkerchief tied around her neck, her fresh cheeks, and unbound, floating hair, went dancing up and down in her glee, she was a living spring of joy to the whole house; and when she sat still beside her foster-father, and learned, and looked at him with her great eyes, as if there must be something still more beautiful to come, and at last with a deep sigh closed the book, as if it were a pity that it was all done, and yet at the same time good that it was all done, because the little heart could hold no more,--then the Frau Pastorin stole up behind her, in stocking feet, with her dusting-cloth under her apron, and her slippers lying at the door. "For," said she, "teaching children is a different thing from making sermons; the old people are only affected now and then when one hits them right hard with hell-torments; but a child's soul,--one must touch that merely with a tulip-stalk, and not with a fence-pole!"

Habermann's little daughter was always fair, but she looked the fairest when, a step in advance, she held her father by the hand, and brought him into the parsonage yard, where the good people sat under the great lindens; then shone out all the virtues which usually sleep quietly in the human heart, and only now and then come to the light of day,--love and gratitude, joy and pride,--from her sprightly face; and, if Habermann walked beside her silent and half-sad that he could do so little for his child, one could read in her eyes a sort of festal joy, as if she thought to discharge all the debt of gratitude which she owed her good foster-parents, by bringing to them her father. She was just entering her thirteenth year and her young heart took no reckoning of her feelings and actions, never in her life had she asked herself why her father was so dear to her. It was otherwise with the Pastor and his wife, there she was daily conscious how kind and good were their intentions toward her, and she had daily opportunities of repaying their love by little acts of duty and friendliness. But here--she knew merely it was her father; he spoke often to her words that must come from his heart, and he looked at her with such quiet, sad looks, that must go to her heart. Reckoning up all they had done, these good people had deserved more from her; but yet--the Lord must have knit these human threads very closely together, up above, they run into each other so, and cannot be separated.

To-day, as Habermann sat in the cool shade, it had been again a festival day for his child, and it was one for him also. He overlooked the whole region. The spring was over, the summer sun shone warm through the light, fleecy clouds; a light breeze cooled the air, and lifted the green corn into the sunlight, as if the earth were waving a green, silken banner before her commander, the sun. The regimental music, from the band of a thousand birds, had ceased with the spring,

and only the cuckoo's cry and the call of the quail still echoed, as if a puff of wind bore with it out of the distance the sound of drums and cymbals. But instead of music and singing the wind brought over the fields a sweet odor which came indeed from a field of slaughter, where thousands and thousands of slain lay in rows and heaps, who knew nothing of bloody misery, however, and were a pleasure to mankind: the hay-harvest had begun, and Habermann sat on the hill in the cool arbor, and overlooked the fields, far and near. How beautiful is such a region, where the fields in a thousand green and yellow stripes and bands stretch to the summits of the hills, and shine far around like a many-colored garment which industry has woven for the earth! But it seems restless and anxious, when we tear the turf and the soil with digging and scratching, and every one has his own task, and troubles himself solely about the miserable profits he is to dig from his own little piece of earth,—and all these green and yellow bands and stripes only bear witness to our poverty. I know well it is not so, but it seems so. Here it is otherwise: far out to the blue forest extend the fields of one kind of grain; the rape fields stretch themselves out like a great sea in the golden morning sunlight; broad pastures and slopes harbor the bright-colored cattle, and over the green meadows stretch in an oblique direction the long rows of mowers in white shirt-sleeves; everything is of a piece, all works together; and wherever one casts his eyes, he sees rest and security as the result of riches. I know right well it is not so, but yet it seems so. But that is an afterthought. The eye sees merely the riches and the rest, and these, in the cool shade, with the humming of bees and the playing of butterflies, sink softly into the heart.

So was it to-day with Habermann; he was in such a quiet, happy mood, and thankfully he thought over the last eleven years. All was good and growing better. He had paid his debts to Bräsig and Moses, with his employer he stood on the best footing. His intercourse with him was almost confidential, for, although the Kammerrath was not at all in the habit of discussing his private affairs with every body, Habermann's behavior was so perfectly sure, he knew so exactly how to keep himself in his place, that the Kammerrath often talked over matters with him, which pertained more to himself than to the farm; of his family affairs, however, he had never spoken. It was to happen otherwise to-day.

When the inspector had been sitting a little while, he heard a couple of carriages drive up before the door. "Good heavens, they are coming!" he cried, and sprang up to go and receive the company.

The Kammerrath came with his wife and three daughters and his son; they were to stay six weeks on the estate, and enjoy the country air. "Dear Herr Habermann," said he, "we have come upon you a little sooner than you expected, but my business at Rostock was dispatched more quickly than I believed possible. How is it here? Is everything prepared for the ladies?"

"All is in readiness," said Habermann, "but I fear the dinner may be a little late."

"No misfortune! The ladies can be making their toilet meantime, and you can show me our wheat. And," turning to his son who stood at his side, a stately young man, in handsome uniform, "you can take your mother and sisters into the garden, by and by, for in matters of domestic economy," here he made a sickly attempt to laugh a little, "you take no interest."

"Dear father, I----" said the son, rather uneasily.

"No, let it go, my son," said the father, in a friendly tone. "Come, Herr Habermann, the wheat stands close behind the garden."

Habermann went with him. How old the man had become in so short a time! And it was not age merely which seemed to weigh upon him, he seemed oppressed by some other burden. As he caught sight of his wheat, he became a little enlivened, and cried, "Beautiful, beautiful! I never thought to have seen such wheat in Pumpelhagen."

That pleased Habermann, but, as is the way with these old inspectors, he did not let it be noticed, and because he was laughing inwardly, he scratched his head and said, "If we can make sure of this on the hill, and it will be worth a good deal, and that down there by the meadow, the devil may have his game with the rest."

"We cannot prevent what may still happen," said the Kammerrath. "It is a real pleasure that you have given me to-day, dear Herr Inspector. Ah," added he, after a little while, "why didn't we know each other twenty years ago? It would have been better for you and for me!"

Habermann no longer scratched his head; the trace of humor, which sometimes lightened his serious disposition, was gone, and he looked anxiously at his master. They had come to the boundary of Gurlitz. "The wheat over there doesn't look so well as ours," said the Kammerrath.

"No," said Habermann. "The soil is quite as good as ours, however; that is the Gurlitz Pastor's field, but he has not received his due for it."

"Apropos," went on the Kammerrath, "do you know that Gurlitz is sold? A few days ago it was sold in Rostock for 173,000 thalers. Farms are rising, isn't it so, Habermann, farms are rising considerably. If Gurlitz is worth 173,000 thalers, Pumpelhagen would be a good bargain at 240,000 thalers;" and with that, he looked impressively at Habermann.

"That it would, Herr Kammerrath; but the sale of Gurlitz means something else for you; by

contract, the Pastor's field falls out of the estate, upon its sale, and it runs like a wedge into our land,--you must rent the Pastor's field!"

"Ah, dear Habermann, don't talk of my renting!" cried the Kammerrath, and turned about, and went slowly back, as if he might not look at the beautiful piece of land, "I have already too much on my shoulders. I have no desire for new trouble."

"You should have no trouble about it. If you will give me authority, I will arrange the matter with the Herr Pastor."

"No, no, Habermann, it won't do! The expenditure, the advance of rent, the increased inventory! I have besides so many expenditures, my hair stands on end!" and with that the man moved so wearily up the ascent, and stumbled so at every stone, that Habermann sprang toward him, and offered him his arm; close by the garden the Kammerrath had an attack of dizziness, so that Habermann was obliged to hold him up, and could scarcely get him into the arbor. Here, in the cool shade, he soon recovered from his attack; but his appearance was so altered that the inspector in this weak-spirited, broken man could hardly recognize his tranquil, decided friend of former years. The man became talkative, it seemed as if he must unburden his heart. "Dear Habermann," said he, and grasped his hand, "I have a favor to ask; my nephew Franz,--you used to know him,--has finished his studies, and is going to undertake the care of his two estates. He will follow my advice,--my deceased brother appointed me his guardian,--he means to become a practical farmer, and I have recommended you to him as his instructor. You must take the young man here, he is an intelligent youth,--he is a good fellow."

"Yes," said Habermann. That he would do gladly, and so far as in him lay it should not fail; he had known the young man from a child, he was always a dutiful boy.

"Ah," cried the Kammerrath, "if my own boy had gone the same way! Why was I weak enough to yield to my wife against my better judgment? Nothing would do but he must be a soldier. But now it comes, now it comes, my old friend, we have got into debt, deeper than I can tell, for I see by his oppressed and shy manner, that he has not confessed all to me. If he would only do so, then I could know where I stood, and I could save him out of the hands of usurers. And if I myself should fall into those hands!" he added gloomily, after a little, in a weak voice.

Habermann was frightened by the words and the tone, but still more by the appearance of his master. "It will not be so bad as that," he said, for he must say something, "and then the Herr will yet have the receipts from about fifteen hundred bushels of rape; for so I reckon the crop."

"And for seventeen hundred bushels, which I have sold, I have already received the money, and it is already paid out; but that is not the worst, we could get over that. Ah, what a torment!" cried he, as if he must shoulder his burden again. "My business at Rostock is not all wound up, as I said to you before my family; I have taken a debt for one of my sons-in-law, of seven thousand thalers, and cannot raise the money in Rostock, and in three days it must be paid. The money is promised to the purchaser of Gurlitz, and he is to pay the purchase money day after to-morrow. Give me your advice, old friend! You have been in similar circumstances, you know how you helped yourself--don't take it ill of me! you were always an honest man. But I cannot bear not to feel sure in my possessions or in my honourable name."

Yes, Habermann had been in such a condition, and he had failed for a couple of hundred thalers; and this was seven thousand.

"Have you spoken with the purchaser of Gurlitz?" he asked, after some thought.

"Yes," was the reply, "and I told him the plain truth about my difficulties."

"And what was the answer?" said Habermann. "But I can imagine, he was in pressing need of money himself."

"It was not that, as it seemed to me; but the man seemed to have a spite against me, he was too short and abrupt, and when he noticed my embarrassment his offers were too crafty, so that I broke off the negotiation, because I still hoped to procure the money elsewhere. But that is at an end, and I find myself more embarrassed than ever."

"I know of but one immediate resource," said Habermann, "you must go and see Moses, at Rahnstadt."

"The Jew money-lender?" asked the Kammerrath. "Never in the world!" cried he. "I could not bear to feel myself in such hands. No, I will rather bear the insolence of Herr Pomuchelskopp."

"Who?" shouted Habermann, as if a wasp had stung him.

"Why, the purchaser of Gurlitz, of whom we were speaking," said the Kammerrath, and stared at him as if he could not interpret his behavior.

"And he is a Pomeranian, from the region on the Peene, short and stout, with a full face?"

"Yes," said the Kammerrath.

"And he is going to be our neighbor? And you would enter into business relations with him? No, no, Herr Kammerrath, I beg, I implore you, don't allow yourself to get involved with that man! you must bear me witness that I have never made mention, for good or for evil, of the man who has ruined me; but now that you are in danger, now I hold it my duty,--this man is the cause of my misfortunes," and with that he had sprung up, and from his usually tranquil, friendly eyes shot such a flash of hatred, that even the Kammerrath, absorbed as he was in his own affairs, was terrified.

"Yes," cried the inspector, "yes! that man has driven me out of house and home, that man has heaped all sorts of tormenting anxieties upon me and my poor wife, and she has gone to her grave in consequence! No, no! Have nothing to do with that man!"

The warning was too impressive to be disregarded by the Kammerrath. "But who will help me?" asked he.

"Moses," said Habermann, quickly and decidedly. The Kammerrath would make objections, but Habermann placed himself before him, and said still more impressively, "Herr Kammerrath, Moses. After dinner we will ride over there, and if I know him, you will have no reason to repent."

The Kammerrath stood up, and took Habermann's arm; he leaned not merely upon that--no, evidently he was also sustained by the resolute advice of the inspector. For a quiet man, when he is once aroused from his repose, exercises a great influence upon another human being, even if he be not so ill and in such perplexity as the Kammerrath; and difference in rank goes down at the double-quick, in such an emergency, before personal merit.

The conversation at dinner was but feebly sustained,--every one was occupied with his own affairs; Habermann thought of his new, suspicious neighbor, the Kammerrath of his money affairs, and the lieutenant of cuirassiers looked as if he had lost himself in a calculation of compound interest, and could not find the way out; and if the gracious mama had not mounted her high horse a little, and talked of the visits she must make to people of rank in the neighborhood, and the young ladies had not revelled in the prospect of country delights and unlimited grass and flowers, it would have been as silent as a funeral.

After dinner the Kammerrath drove with his inspector to Rahnstadt. As they stopped at the door of Moses' house, the Kammerrath felt in much the same mood as if he had dropped a louis-d'or in the filth, and must stoop to pick it out with his clean hands. A musty odor met them, at the entrance, for a "produce business" does not smell like otto of roses, and the wool, when it has just left the mother-sheep's back, has quite a different smell from that which it has after it has been about the world a little, and got aired, and lies as a bright-colored carpet on a fine lady's parlor, sprinkled with perfume.

And how disorderly it was in the passage and in the room! For Blümchen was a very good wife, to be sure, but she did not understand how to ornament an entry and a counter with a cow's head and a heap of mutton-bones; for Moses said shortly, that belonged to the business, and David was constantly bringing in new treasures and turned the house into a real rat's paradise, for those pleasant little beasts run after the smell of a regular produce business, like doves after anise-seed oil.

In the room, the Kammerrath did not find himself more agreeably disposed, for Moses was orthodox, and on the Christian Sabbath, unless his business demanded the contrary, he wore his greasiest coat, in order to keep himself quite opposed to the customs of the dressed-up Gentiles; and as he now, with his grip at his left coat-pocket, sprang up and ran toward the Kammerrath,--"O heavens! the Herr Kammerrath! the honor!" and shouted to David, who was improving the Sunday-afternoon quiet in the "produce business" by napping a little on the sofa, "David, where are you sitting? Where are you lying? What are you lounging there for? Stand up! Let the Herr Kammerrath sit down," and as he now endeavoured to force the Kammerrath into the place already warmed by David, then would the Kammerrath gladly have left the louis-d'or lying in the dirt; but--he needed it quite too pressingly.

Habermann threw himself into the breach, and set a chair for the Kammerrath by the open window, and undertook the first introduction of the business; and as Moses observed what the talk was to be about, he hunted David about till he got him out of the room,--for although he let him do a good deal in the produce business, he did not consider him quite ripe, at six and thirty years, for the money business,--and when the air was free,--that is to say, of David,--he exclaimed once and again, what a great honor it was for him to have dealings with the Herr Kammerrath. "What have I always said, Herr Habermann? 'The Herr Kammerrath is a good man, the Herr Kammerrath is good.' What have I always said, Herr Kammerrath? 'The Herr Habermann is an honest man; he has toiled and moiled to pay me the last penny.'"

But as he perceived of what a sum they were speaking, he was startled, and held back, and made objections, and if he had not held Habermann in such high esteem, and read plainly in his looks that he seriously advised him to the business, then indeed nothing might have come of it. And who knows but the matter might still have fallen through, if it had not been mentioned casually that the money was to go for the purchase of Gurlitz, and that otherwise the Kammerrath must enter into negotiations with Pomuchelskopp. But as this name was uttered, Moses made a face, as if one had laid a piece of tainted meat on his plate, and he cried out, "With

Pomuffelskopp!" for he pronounced the name in that way, "Do you know what sort of fellow he is? He is like that!" and with that he made a motion as if he would throw the bit of tainted meat over his shoulder. "'David,' said I, 'don't have anything to do with Pomuffelskopp!' But these young people,--David bought some wool of him. 'Well!' said I; 'you will see,' I told him. And what had he done? There he had smuggled in with the washed wool the tangles, the wool from dead animals, he had smuggled in dirty wool from slaughtered sheep, he had smuggled in two great field-stones. *Two great field-stones* had he smuggled in for me! When he came to get his money--'Good!' said I--I paid him in Prussian treasury notes, and I made little packets of a hundred thalers, and in the middle of each packet I smuggled in some that were no longer in circulation, or counterfeit, and in the last packet I laid in two played-out lottery-tickets--'Those are the two great field-stones,' said I. Oh, but didn't he make an uproar? When he came with the Notary Slusuhr,--he is such an one to look at,--here he again threw the bit of tainted meat over his shoulder,--"like one of David's rats,--his ears stand out, and he lives so well, he lives just like the rats, feeds on rubbish and filth, and gnaws open other people's honest leather. Oh, but they made a disturbance, they would bring a lawsuit against me! 'What is a lawsuit?' said I; 'I don't have lawsuits. As the ware is, so is the money.' And do you know, gentlemen, what else I said? 'The Herr Notary, and the Herr Pomuffelskopp and I are three Jews, but four might be made of us if the two gentlemen could count for three.' Oh, they made an uproar! They abused me all over the city. But the Herr Burgomeister said to me, 'Moses, you do a great business, but you have never yet had a law-suit, let them work!' Herr Kammerrath, you shall have the money to-day, at your offer, of commission and interest, for you are a good man, and you treat your people well, and you have a good name in the land, and you shall not have to deal with Pomuffelskopp."

To borrow money is a hard piece of work, and he who writes this knows it by many years' experience, and can speak of it accordingly; but it makes a difference whether one appeals to the kindness of an old friend, or turns to a man who makes a business of this business. The Kammerrath had debts on his estate, quite a number of debts; but they were not significant bills of exchange, and his money affairs had usually been arranged by writing, or through the medium of lawyers or merchants; he was now for the first time not in a situation to raise money easily, in the old way, he had been obliged to go himself to a money-Jew--for so he called this sort of people; the repulsion which he felt for this course, the very different place, and manner, and disposition which he found here, the anxiety caused by the objections of Moses at the outset, and now at last the speedy help which relieved him from his pressing emergency, had overpowered the sick man; he turned pale and sank back in his chair, and Habermann called for a glass of water.

"Herr Kammerrath," cried Moses, "perhaps a little drop of wine, I can have half a pint brought from the merchant, in a moment."

"No, water! water!" cried Habermann, and Moses ran out of the door, and nearly upset David,--for David had been listening a little to the money business, in order that he might finally become ripe,--"David what are you doing, why don't you bring some water?"

And David came, and the Kammerrath drank water, and recovered himself, and Moses told out the louis-d'ors on the table, and the Kammerrath picked them out of the dirt, and looked at his hands, and they seemed quite as clean as before; and as he got into the carriage, and looked back from it into Moses' entry, it seemed to him as if among Moses' pelts and mutton bones, there was a great bundle, and that was his own trouble. And Moses stood in the door, and bowed and bowed, and looked round at his neighbors to find whether they saw that the Herr Kammerrath had been to him.

But for all the great honor, he did not sink under it. He held up his head, and got Habermann aside, and said, "Herr Inspector, you are an honest man; when I agreed to this business, I did not know the man was so sick. You must promise me that the money shall be secured on the estate. It is a matter of life and death. What am I doing with a sick man and a note!"

The Kammerrath was relieved from his embarrassment; his agitation subsided, his health improved, he looked at the world with quite different eyes; and as Habermann, a few days later, again mentioned the renting of the Pastor's field, he listened, and gave Habermann permission to talk with Pastor Behrens. He did so, and during the interview the little Frau Pastorin bustled about in the room, and it sounded in the ears of the Pastor and Habermann continually,--"A higher sum! A higher sum!"

"Yes," said Habermann, "that is understood. Frau Pastorin, the rent must be raised; times are better, but there will be no difficulty in the matter,--the advantage lies on both sides."

"Regina," said her Pastor, "it occurs to me that the flowers at the end of the garden have not been watered."

"Ah, my dear life!" cried the Pastorin, and bustled out of the door, "the flowers!"

"So," said the Pastor, "now we can soon settle it. I must confess to you, that I prefer to have a renter from outside, rather than one belonging to the place; there are so many little differences which spring from such immediate neighborhood, and make such a relation so doubtful and annoying, as it ought not to be between landlords and ministers. And the Kammerrath is personally much dearer to me than the new owner,--I have known him so many years. And you

think I may demand a higher rent?"

"Yes, indeed, Herr Pastor, and I am authorized to offer you the half more. If I wished to rent the land myself, I could offer you still more; but----"

"We understand each other, dear Habermann," said the Pastor, "we are agreed in the matter."

And when the Frau Pastorin again bustled in with the little Louise, and cried out, "It was not necessary! Louise had already attended to the matter!" then was her Pastor's business all settled, and the dear little Louise hung around her father's neck: "Ah, father, father, that is so good!" Why should she hang about her father's neck? What had she to do with rent-contracts? Much, much! Her father would now be a little nearer to the Pastor's garden, ploughing and harvesting, and she should see him the oftener.

As Habermann went back through the church-yard, he met Zachary Bräsig, who had passed happily, out of his dreadfully unphilosophical stage of the gout, into the philosophical, as generally happened when his troubles were over. "Good-day, Karl," said he, "I have been in your quarters a while waiting for you. But the time seemed long, so I made my compliments, meanwhile, to the Herr Kammerrath. He was very glad to see me, and treated me with the greatest kindness; but how the man looks!"

Yes, said Habermann, his master had--God bless him--grown very old and weak, and he for his part feared he was soon to lose the friend he esteemed so highly.

"Yes," nodded Bräsig, "but what is life, Karl? What is human life? See here, Karl, turn it over and over, like a leather money-bag, and not a shilling falls out."

"Bräsig," said Habermann, "I don't know what other people think about it, but it seems to me as if life and labor were one and the same."

"Ho, ho, Karl! now I hear you run on; you got that sentence from Pastor Behrens. He has sometimes talked with me on this subject, and he has given me a description of human life, as if here below it was merely the manuring time, and the Christian belief was the sun and the rain, which made the seed grow, and there above, in the upper regions, came the harvest; but man must work, and take pains and do his part. But Karl, it don't agree, it goes against the Bible. The Bible tells about the lilies of the field; they toil not, and they spin not, and yet our Heavenly Father cares for them. And if our Lord takes care of them, then they live, and they don't labor, and when I have this infamous gout and do nothing,--nothing at all but hunt away the cursed, tormenting flies from my face,--is that labor? and yet I live under the good-for-nothing torture. And Karl," said he, and pointed to the right across the field, "see those two lilies, that are picking their way over here, your gracious Herr Lieutenant, and the youngest Fräulein, have you ever heard that the lieutenant of cuirassiers troubled himself with labor, or that the gracious Fräulein did any spinning? And yet they are both coming, with living bodies, over your rape-stubble."

"Will you wait a moment, Zachary?" said Habermann; "they are coming in this direction, possibly they wish to speak to us."

"For all me!" said Bräsig. "But just look at the Fräulein, how she wades through the rape-stubble with her long skirts and her thin shoes! No, Karl, life is trouble! And it begins always with the extremities, with the legs, and you may observe that with me from my confounded gout, and in the case of the Fräulein by the rape-stubble and her thin shoes. But what I was going to say, Karl--you have had your best time here, for when the Herr Kammerrath is dead, there look out! You will be astonished at the gracious lady, and the three unmarried daughters, and the Herr Lieutenant. Karl," he began again, after a little thought, "I would hold to the crown-prince."

"Eh, what! Bräsig, what are you talking about?" said Habermann, hastily, "I shall go right on my way."

"Yes, Karl, so should I, and so would every body who was not a Jesuit. But look at the gracious Fräulein once more! She goes right on her way too, but through the rape-stubble. Karl----" But the young people were too near, he could say no more; only in an aside he added, "A Jesuit? No! But he is a vocative."

"I thank you, Herr Habermann, that you have waited here for me," said Axel von Rambow, as they came up. "My sister and I are bound on two different expeditions; she is seeking corn-flowers, and I colts; she has found no corn-flowers, and I no colts."

"Gracious lady," said Bräsig, "if you mean by corn-flowers our common field blossoms,--but," he interrupted himself, "how this infamous stubble has ruined your pretty dress, all the flounces torn off!" and with that he bent down as if he would render the young lady the service of a maid.

"No matter!" cried the Fräulein, drawing back a little, "it is an old dress. But where are the corn-flowers?"

"I will show you,--it is a real pleasure,--here close by, near Gurlitz, corn-flowers, and scarlet-runners, and white-thorn, and thistle-blows,--in short, a whole plantation."

"That will do nicely, dear Fidelia," said the lieutenant. "You go with the Herr Inspector Bräsigg for the corn-flowers, and I beg Herr Habermann to accompany me to see the colts. For, do you know," said he to Habermann, "my good old papa was in such a good humor this morning, that he has given me permission to select the best of the four-year-old colts for my own use."

"I will show you the animals with pleasure," said Habermann, "there are some fine fellows, among them."

So the two companies separated, and Habermann only heard further how Bräsigg said to the Fräulein Fidelia he was very glad to make her acquaintance, because he had once had a dog which was also named, "Fidèle," and she was a famous rat-catcher!

Habermann went with the Herr Lieutenant toward the colt-paddock. They talked together, naturally about farming matters,—the lieutenant was a lively young fellow, and Habermann had known him from childhood,—but the man had learned nothing about them, all his views were too far beyond, and none of his questions were to the point, so that Habermann said to himself, "He is good natured, very good-natured, but he knows nothing, and yet—God bless him—when the old Herr is gone, he must take the estate, and make his living off it!"

As they were come to the paddock, and had mustered the colts, the lieutenant placed himself before Habermann, and asked, "Now, what do you say? which shall I take?"

"The brown," said Habermann.

"I would rather choose the black. Look at the beautiful neck, the fine head!"

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann, "you don't ride on head and neck, you ride on back and legs; you want a horse for use, and the brown is worth three of the black."

"There seems to be English blood in the black."

"That is true, he is descended from Wildfire; but there is old Mecklenburg blood in the brown, and it is a shame that one should let that go,—that one should not value the good which the fatherland offers, and exchange them for English racers."

"That may be true," said Axel, "but in our regiment my comrades have only black horses,—I decide for the black."

That was a reason which Habermann did not rightly understand, so he was silent, and as they went back, the conversation was a little one-sided; but as they were near the house—right before the door, as if he had spared himself to the last moment—the lieutenant held back the inspector, and with a deep sigh, as if he would shake off a burden from his heart, he said, "Habermann, I have long wished to speak to you privately. Habermann, I have debts,—you must help me! It is nine hundred dollars that I must pay, I must have it."

That was a hard request for Habermann, but in truly serious business, age makes itself respected; he looked the young man of three-and-twenty full in the face, and said shortly, "Herr von Rambow, I cannot do it."

"Habermann, dear Habermann, I have such pressing need of the money."

"Then you must tell your father."

"My father? No, no! He has already paid debts for me, and now he is sick, it would vex him too much."

"Still you must tell him. Such business must not be done with strange people, it should be settled between father and son."

"Strange people?" asked Axel, and looked him so beseechingly and affectionately in the eye, "Habermann, am I then so strange to you?"

"No, Herr von Rambow, no!" cried Habermann, and grasped after the young man's hand, but did not reach it. "You are not strange to me. Anything that I *could* do for you, I would do quickly. The matter itself is a little thing, and if I could not do it alone, my friend Bräsigg would help me out; but dear Herr von Rambow, your father is your natural helper, this step ought not to be delayed."

"I cannot tell my father," said Axel, plucking at a willow-bush.

"You *must* tell him," said Habermann as impressively as he could. "He suspects that you have concealed debts from him, and it troubles him."

"Has he spoken to you about it?"

"Yes, but only in consequence of his own great embarrassment, which is known to you."

"I know," said Axel, "and I know also the spring at which he has pumped. Well, what my father

does, I can do also," added he coldly and shortly, and went in at the court-yard gate.

"Herr von Rambow," cried Habermann, and followed him hastily, "I beseech you, for heaven's sake, not to take this course; it will be in vain, or it will only plunge you into greater difficulty."

Axel did not listen.

A couple of hours later, the Lieutenant von Rambow stood with Moses among the wooolsacks and the hides in the entry of the Jew's house,--where David had his pleasure among the mutton-bones, like a bug in a rug,--and was making apparently a last, despairing attack upon Moses' cautious money-bags; but Moses held firmly to the decision: "Really and truly, Herr Baron, I can not. Now, why not, then? Why should I not? I can still serve you, I can still serve you well in the business. See, Herr Baron, there stands David. David where are you, what are you staring at? Come here, David. You see, Herr Baron, there he stands,--he stands before you and he stands before me. I will not wink, I will not blink, I will go into the other room; now you may ask David." And with that, he shoved himself with his right suspender-shoulder, back into the room.

The poor lieutenant's business must stand a bad chance if he had to settle it with David, for if he looked in his shining uniform as if he were riding before the king's carriage, David's outside looked as shabby as if he had been in the marl and dirt-cart. But this business depended less on a stately outside, than on who could best get the cart out of the mud, and at that David was terribly expert. He had three things in and about himself which stood him in good stead; in the first place he had a particularly gorgeous Jew-lubber face, and as he stood there before the lieutenant, and chewed cinnamon-bark, which he stole out of his mother's pantry, on account of the evil odor of the business, and with his head askew, and his hands in his pockets, stared at him, he looked as impudent as if the spirits of all the dead and gone rats, through the long years of the produce business, had entered into him; and then, in the second place, his feelings were tough, much tougher than his father's, and they were not softened by his daily intercourse with the toughest business in the world, with wool, and hides, and flax; and, thirdly, he could make himself as repulsive as he pleased to any one, thanks to this same business.

With such a happily gifted being, the lieutenant could not pull at the same rope. He went very shortly, with a heavy heart, out of the door; and David was so rejoiced over his own style and manners, that he became really compassionate, and he gave him on his way the Christian advice that he should go to the Notary Slusuhr. "He has it," said he, "and he can do it."

Scarcely was the young man out of the door, when Moses sprang out of the room; "David, have you a conscience? I will tell you some news; you have none! How could you send that young man among those cut-throats?"

"I have only sent him to his own people," said David, churlishly; "if he is a soldier, he is a cut-throat himself. If the notary cuts his throat, what do you care? And if he cuts the notary's throat, what do I care?"

"David," said the old man, and shook his head, "I say, you have no conscience."

"What is a conscience?" muttered David to himself; "when you are doing business, you drive me away; when you won't do business, you call me in."

"David," said the old man, "you are still too young!" and went into the room.

"If I am too young now," said David spitefully, "I shall always be too young; but I know a place where I am not too young."

With that, he put on another coat, and went the same way that the lieutenant had gone, to the Notary Slusuhr's.

What he had to do there, and what else was done there, I know not. I know merely that the young Herr von Rambow, the same evening at Pumpelhagen, wrote a number of letters, and sealed up money in them; and that when he had finished, he sighed deeply, as if he had thrown off a burden. The first necessity was met; but he had done like the old woman in the story, he had heated water in the kneading-trough.

CHAPTER V.

A couple of days later, the sun looked down in the morning right out of a rain-cloud, over the landlord's garden at Gurlitz. Her daughter, the Earth, had been having a great washing, and now

she would help her dear child a little with the drying. It was, as it is always, a great pleasure to see the old mother settle herself to the task, and with her broad, friendly face peer out, now here, now there, from the white cloud-curtain, and again grasp the sprinkler, to dampen the bleached clothes a little more. On such an occasion she was always very sportive; she had the drollest fancies, and played as many tricks in her old age as the youngest girl, when she is beloved for the first time,--now she was sad enough to cry, and again she laughed heartily.

To-day, moreover, the old woman had reason to laugh, as she looked down into the Gurlitz garden. "Now, just look there!" cried she, and smiled right goldenly over the meadow and the green corn, "how strangely things go on in this crazy world! For long years I have always seen down there that pretty, white fellow standing, and holding out a staff to me, that the poor hungry creatures of the human race might be able to know when it was mid-day, and time for their dinners; and now there stands in his place a stout, malicious-looking beast, with green breeches, smoking tobacco. Nowhere do things go on so strangely as in the world!" And with that the old woman laughed from the bottom of her heart over the landlord Herr Pomuchelskopp, who stood in his yellow nankeen coat and green plaid trowsers, by the sun-dial, in the very place where the handsome heathen god, Apollo, had stood, only instead of a lyre he had a short pipe in his hand; and yet a shadow often passed over her face when her eyes fell on her handsome, friendly secretary, who had for so many years recorded her doings with his pencil, and now lay among burdocks and nettles in the grass. But she had to laugh again, for all that.

Pomuchelskopp laughed also; there were no indications of mirth in his face, but, whenever, from the height which his short stature allowed, he looked around him, he laughed in his heart: "All mine! All mine!" The sunbeam which brightened the world was not noticed by him, it touched neither his face nor his heart; the sunbeam which shone for him was properly a sum in arithmetic, which warmed his heart, but there were no signs of it in his face; there must be a joke, an actual joke, to make him laugh outwardly, and that was not wanting at the present moment.

His two youngest children, Nanting and Philippping, had come out, and Philippping had made a rod of burdocks and nettle stalks tied together, and was flogging the poor, white heathen god, so that Father Pomuchelskopp laughed heartily; and Nanting ran into the kitchen and brought a coal, to give him a pair of moustaches, but his father would not allow this. "Nanting," said he, "let that go, it might disfigure him, and we may possibly be able to sell him yet. But you may beat him,"--and they did beat him, and Father Pomuchelskopp laughed as if he would shake himself out of his green trowsers.

Meanwhile the "Madam" also walked out, the dryer half of Pomuchelskopp. She was of an extremely tall figure, and as dry as the seven lean kine of King Pharaoh. Her eyebrows were always puckered up into wrinkles, as if the cares of the whole world weighed o'er her mind, or her forehead was drawn into peevish lines above her nose, as if all the crockery broken by the maid-servants in this world, during a whole year, had belonged to her; and her mouth looked as sour as if she had drank vinegar and fed on sorrel all her days. She wore in the morning at this warm season of the year, a black merino over-sack, which she had once bought in a time of mourning and still wore; and through the day, cotton garments dyed olive-green with alder-bark, and to make up for the extravagance of Pomuchelskopp's new blue dress-coat with bright buttons, she bundled up her head with old bandages and caps, out of which her anxious face peered like a half-starved mouse out of a bunch of tow; and about the rest of her body she heaped one old thing above another, till her poor little legs looked like a couple of pins lost in a bundle of rags. However, I would advise every servant to keep out of her way, for even when her poor bones flew around frivolously on velvet and silken wings, her troubled soul was anxiously reckoning the expense and the wearing out.

She was such a mother as one reads of in books,--she planned day and night how she might make over Malchen's coat into an under-jacket for Philippping; she loved her children according to the Scriptures, and chastened them in like manner, and Nanting could often show for one spot on his jacket two on his back, and for every one on his trousers two on the flesh they covered. Yes, she was strong against herself and against her own flesh and blood, but she could rejoice also, according to the scriptures, with moderation; and, as she came out to-day, and saw the joyous activity of her youngest offspring, there flew over her face such a hopeful light as when the February sun looks down on the fast-frozen soil, and says, "Patience! there will be a good crop of potatoes here this year."

And she was also such a wife as one reads of in books; no neighbor could charge her with neglecting her duties a hair's breadth in thought, word or deed, all her days, although Pomuchelskopp was in her opinion quite light-minded, because often when joking was going on he would laugh right out loud, which she thought unbecoming in the father of a family, and she feared he would at length ruin his fortunes and bring herself and her children to beggary. She did another thing, which the minister had not inculcated at her betrothal,--she condemned his failings, and gave him daily of her own vinegar to drink and of her sorrel to eat. She tutored him--that is to say when they were alone--as she did her youngest child, her Philippping, and as if Pomuchelskopp still wore his green plaid trowsers fastened behind; in short, she drove him just as she pleased. She did not beat him--God forbid! all was with dignity. Merely by her manner of speaking, she knew how to express her opinion of him: if he was unusually frivolous, she called him sharply and shortly by the last syllable of his name, just "Kopp!" ordinarily she called him by the middle syllable, "Muchel," and when he was quite after her own heart, and sat sulkily in the

sofa-corner striking at the flies, she called him by the first syllable, and in an affectionate tone, "Pöking."

She did not call him "Pöking" to-day. "Kopp!" said she, on account of his light-minded behavior with the children, "Kopp, why do you stand there smoking like a chimney? I think we should call at the Pastor's."

"My Klücking," said Pomuchelskopp, reluctantly taking the pipe from his mouth, "we can go. I will put on my dress-coat directly."

"Dress-coat! Why so? Do you think I shall dress up in black silk? It is only our Pastor." She emphasized the "our," as if she had spoken of her shepherd, and as if she considered the Pastor merely their hired servant.

"Just as you please, my Häuhning," said Pomuchelskopp, "I can put on my brown overcoat. Philippping, let the beating go; Mama doesn't like it."

"Kopp! let the children alone, attend to yourself. You can keep on your nankeen coat, it is clean and good."

"My Klücking," said Pomuchelskopp, "always noble, my dear Klücking! If we owe nothing to the Pastor's family, we owe something to ourselves. And, if Malcheh and Salchen are going too, they must dress themselves up, and then we will set out."

This argument gained Pomuchelskopp the permission to array himself in his brown overcoat. He was so rejoiced at having carried his point, a thing which did not often happen, that in his gratitude he desired to confer some pleasure upon his Klücking, and make her a sharer in his own satisfaction; for no one must do Pomuchelskopp the injustice to suppose that he was overbearing in his own house,—no! there he was rather humble and depressed. He pointed, therefore, across the fields and said, "Just look, that is all ours!"

"Muchel, you point too far," said the lady shortly; "all that over yonder belongs to Pumpelhagen."

"You are right, that is all Pumpelhagen. But"—he added, and the little eyes looked greedily towards Pumpelhagen, "who knows? If God spares my life, and I sell my property in Pomerania at a good bargain, and times continue good, and the old Kammerrath dies, and his son gets into debt----"

"Yes, Muchel," interrupted his wife, and across her face flitted that derisive gleam, which was the only approach to a smile ever seen on it, "yes, just as old Strohpapel said: 'If I were ten years younger, and hadn't this lame leg, and hadn't a wife—you should see what a fellow I would be!'"

"Häuhning," said Pomuchelskopp, making a face as if he were grieved to the heart, "how can you talk so? As if I wished to be rid of you! Without the thirty thousand dollars, which your father left you, I never could have bought Gurlitz. And what a fine estate Gurlitz is! See! this is all Gurlitz!" and he pointed again over the fields.

"Yes, Kopp," said his wife, in a hard tone, "all but the Pastor's field, which you have let slip out of your fingers."

"Ah, Klücking," said Pomuchelskopp, as they left the garden, "always the Pastor's field! what can I do? See, I am an honest, straight-forward man; what can I do against such a pair of sly old fellows as Habermann and the Pastor? But the day is not over yet, Monsieur Habermann! We shall have something to say to each other yet, Herr Pastor!"

At the Pastor's house, this morning, three pretty little girls were sitting in the Frau Pastorin's neat parlor, busy as bees, their fingers sewing and their tongues chatting at the same time, and looking, amid the white linen, as fresh and red as ripe strawberries on a white plate; these were Louise Habermann and the little twins, Mining and Lining Nüssler.

"Children," said the little, round Frau Pastorin, as she now and then looked in from the kitchen, "you cannot think what a pleasure it is to one in my old age, when I put away my clean linen in the linen-trunk, and think with every piece when it was spun and when it was sewed! And how prudent it makes one, to know for oneself how much pains it has cost! Mining, Mining, your seam is crooked! Good heavens, Louise! I believe you are looking off half the time, yet you sew right along, and get no knots in your thread. But now I must go and take up the potatoes, for my Pastor will be here soon," and with that she ran out of the door, looking back, however, to say, "Mining and Lining, you must stay here to dinner to-day!" And so she flew from the kitchen to the parlor, and from the parlor back to the kitchen, like the pendulum of a clock, and kept everything in running order.

But how came Lining and Mining Nüssler to be in the Frau Pastorin's sewing-school? It happened in this way.

When the little twins had got so far that they could speak the "r" plainly, and no longer played in the sand, and ran after Frau Nüssler all day long, saying, "Mother, what shall we do now?"

then Frau Nüssler said to young Jochen that it was high time the children went to school; they must have a governess. Jochen had no objections, and his brother-in-law, the Rector Baldrian, undertook the task of procuring one. When she had been six months at Rexow, Frau Nüssler said she was a cross old thing, she scolded the little girls from morning to night and made them so skittish that they did not know how to behave; she must go. Thereupon Kaufman Kurz looked up another; and one day, when nobody in Rexow dreamed of impending evil, a sort of grenadier walked in at the door, with heavy black eyebrows, and sallow complexion, and with spectacles on her nose, and announced herself as the new "governess." She began to talk French to the little twins, and as she observed that the poor little creatures were so ignorant that they could not understand her in the least, she turned, in the same language, to young Jochen. Such a thing had never happened to young Jochen in his life; he let his pipe fall from his mouth, and as they were drinking coffee he said, in order to say something, "Mother, ask the new school-ma'am to take another cup."

This one was a "governess" over the whole house, and Frau Nüssler stood it bravely for a while; but finally she said, "Stop! This won't do; if anybody is to command here it is I, for I am the nearest, as Frau Pastorin says;" and she gave the grenadier her marching orders. Then uncle Bräsig offered his assistance, and engaged a teacher,—"A smart one," he said, "always in good spirits, and she can play you dead on the harpsichord." He was right; one evening in the winter, there arrived at Rexow a little blue-cheeked, hump-backed body, who, after the first ten minutes, attacked the new piano, which Jochen had bought at auction, and belaboured it as if she were threshing wheat. When she had gone to bed, young Jochen opened the piano, and when he saw that three strings were broken, he shut it up again, and said, "Yes, what shall we do about it?"

There were lively times in the house now; the girl-governess ran and romped with the little girls, until Frau Nüssler came to the conclusion that her oldest, Lining, had really more sense than the mamselle. She wished to inform herself how the mamselle managed the children in school-hours; she requested, therefore, to be shown a plan of their studies, and the next day Lining brought her a great sheet of paper with all the "branches" marked out. There was German and French, Orthography and Geography, and Religion, and Biblical History, and other History, and also Biblical Natural History, and then to conclude with, music, and music, and music.

"Eh!" said Frau Nüssler to Jochen, "she may teach them all the music she wants to, for all me, if the religion is only of the right sort. What do you say, Jochen?"

"Yes," said Jochen, "it is all as true as leather!"

Well, she might have stayed, if Lining had not let out, accidentally, that mamselle played jack-stones with them in the Biblical History; and as Frau Nüssler heard one day, during the "Religion" hour, such a romping in the school-room that she opened the door suddenly, to see what kind of religion was going on, behold! Mamselle was playing "Cuckoo" with the children. Madam Nüssler could not approve of this lively sort of religion, so Mamselle "Hop-on-the-hill" hopped after the grenadier.

It was very inconvenient, because it was now the middle of the fourth quarter, and if Frau Nüssler complained that the children were running wild, Jochen only said; "Yes, what shall I do about it?" But he began to study the Rostock "Times" with uncommon interest; and one day he laid aside the "Times," and ordered Christian to get out the "phantom." His good wife was considerably astonished, for she had no idea what he was thinking of; but as she looked at the pipe side of his face, and noticed that his mouth was stretched wider than usual, which represented a friendly smile, she gave herself no more anxiety, and said, "Let him go! He has something good in his head."

After three days Jochen returned with an elderly, almost transparent-looking lady, and it went through the whole region like a running fire: "Only think! young Jochen has got a governess himself."

Bräsig came the next Sunday to see her; he was tolerably contented with her, "But," said he, finally, "look out, young Jochen, she has nerves."

Bräsig was not only a good judge of horses, but a judge of human nature; he was right,—Mamselle was nervous, very nervous indeed. The poor little twins went about on tiptoe, Mamselle took away Lining's ball, because she had accidentally thrown it at the window, and locked up the piano, so that Lining could no longer play, "Our cat has nine kittens," the only piece which she had learned from Mamselle "Hop-on-the-hill." Before long Mamselle added cramps to her nerves, and Madam Nüssler must run with sundry bottles of "drops," and both Fika and Corlin must sit up with her nights, because either one alone would be afraid. "Send her away," said uncle Bräsig; but Frau Nüssler was too good for that, she sent rather for the doctor. Dr. Strump was summoned from Rahnstadt, and after examining the patient, he pronounced it a very interesting case, the more so that he had lately been studying "the night-side of Nature."

Young Jochen and his wife thought nothing worse from that than that the doctor had lately been a good deal out of his bed o' nights, but he meant something quite different.

One day, when the doctor was with the mamselle, Corlin called from the stairs:--

"Frau, Frau! there is mischief going on. The doctor has been stroking her over her face, and now she is asleep, and talking in her sleep. She told me I had a lover."

"God bless me!" cried Bräsigg, who happened to be there, "what sort of business is the woman carrying on?" and he went up-stairs with Frau Nüssler. After a while he came down, and asked, "Now, what do you say to, it young Jochen?"

Jochen reflected awhile, and then said, "Yes, that doesn't help the matter, Bräsigg."

"Jochen," said Bräsigg, going up and down the room with great strides, "I said to you before, 'send her away;' now I say, don't send her away. I asked her if it would rain to-morrow, and she said to me, in her somnambolic state, that it would rain torrents. If it rains torrents to-morrow, then take down your barometer from the wall,--barometers are of no use, and yours has stood there two years, always at fair weather,--and hang her up there; you can benefit yourself and the whole region."

Young Jochen said nothing, but when next morning it rained torrents, he was silent indeed, and his astonishment kept him dumb for three days.

The rumor spread in the neighborhood, that young Jochen had a fortune-teller at his house, and that she had prophesied the great rain on Saturday, and also that Corlin Kräuger and Inspector Bräsigg would be married within a year. Dr. Strump naturally did his share toward setting this interesting case in a clear light, and it was not long before Frau Nüssler's quiet house became a kind of pilgrim's shrine, to which resorted all who were curious, or scientific, or interested in physical science; and, because Frau Nüssler would have nothing to do with it, and Jochen was incapable, Zachary Bräsigg undertook the business, when the doctor was not there, and ushered troops of visitors into the mamselle's room, and explained her somnambolic condition; and before the bed, by the mamselle, sat Christian the coachman, who was not afraid of the devil himself, for Corlin and Fika would no longer watch by her, even in the day time, having taken it into their heads that she was not respectable; because they translated Bräsigg's expression, "sonnenbuhlerisch" (somnambolic), into Platt-Deutsch, and said the mamselle was "sünnenbuhlerisch" (no better than she should be).

Among the visitors, who came to see this wonder, was the young Baron von Mallerjahn of Gräunenmur, who came daily to investigate the physical sciences and thought no harm of going into mamselle's room without Bräsigg. Frau Nüssler was disturbed by the impropriety of the thing, and requested Jochen to put a stop to the nuisance, upon which Jochen replied that they might put Christian up there; but when Christian came down one day, and said the Herr Baron had sent him away, because he smelled too strong of the stable, then Frau Nüssler's annoyance broke out in a flood of tears, and, if Bräsigg had not arrived just then, she would herself have treated the Herr Baron to a scolding; but Bräsigg, like a true knight, took the business upon himself.

He went up-stairs, and said very courteously and decidedly, "Gracious Herr Baron, will you have the kindness to step the other side of the door for a moment."

It was possibly too fine for the Herr Baron's comprehension, he laughed rather confusedly, and said he stood for the moment in magnetic *rapport* with the mamselle.

"Monetic apport!" said Bräsigg. "We need none of your money here, and none of your apporters either; Christian was put here on purpose to prevent such doings."

Bräsigg himself stood in magnetic *rapport*, without being conscious of it, for when Frau Nüssler wept he fell into a passion, and in great wrath he cried to the baron, "Herr, be off with you, out of the house!"

The baron was naturally astonished at this speech, and inquired rather haughtily whether Bräsigg was aware that he was growing rude.

"Do you call that rudeness?" cried Bräsigg, taking the baron by the arm. "Then I will show you something else!"

But the disturbance awoke the mamselle out of her sleep; she sprang from the sofa and grasped the baron by the other arm: she wouldn't stay here, nobody here understood her, he alone understood her, she would go with him.

"The best thing you can do," said Bräsigg. "Don't let us detain you! Two birds with one stone!" and he assisted her down stairs.

The carriage of the Herr Baron was all ready, and drove up to the door; the Herr Baron himself was in great perplexity, but the mamselle held fast.

"Yes, there's no help for it," said young Jochen, as he watched their departure.

"Young Jochen," said Bräsigg, as the equipage left the yard, "she is like leather, she is tough. And you, madam," said he to Frau Nüssler, "let the man go, now he can see as much as he likes of his monetic treasure."

Habermann had been absent a good deal of late, on business for his master, and, when he came home for a day or two, he had so much to attend to on the estate that he could not trouble himself about other people's affairs. He had been at his sister's however, and had comforted her about the mamselle, that it was merely sickness and would pass over; but as he came home this time, the report was all over the neighborhood that young Jochen's sleeping mamselle had gone off with the Baron von Mallerjahn, but that she had previously infected Bräsig with prophesying, and Christian with sleeping. Bräsig prophesied wherever he went, and Christian fell asleep even on his feet.

Habermann went to Pastor Behrens, and inquired what he knew of the story, and asked him to go with him to his sister's.

"Willingly, dear Habermann," said the Pastor; "but I have not troubled myself much about this matter, for good reasons. I know very well that in our good fatherland many of my brethren in Christ have occupied themselves in healing the possessed, and casting out devils; but I think such cases belong rather to the department of the physician, or"--with a rather peculiar laugh--"to that of the police."

When they came to Rexow, the cheerful, active Frau Nüssler, who could usually shake off easily the worst misfortune, or the most annoying vexation, seemed quite another person.

"Herr Pastor," said she, "Brother Karl, that crazy woman has gone, and I had trouble enough about her, and so have they all gone, that I have had; but that is no matter, I shall get over that. What troubles me is my poor little girls, who know nothing and learn nothing. And when I think how the poor little dears will seem among their elders and equals like a couple of fools, knowing nothing that is talked about, and not even knowing how to write a letter--no, Herr Pastor, you, who have learned so much, you cannot know how one feels, but I know, and, Karl, you can understand it too. No, Herr Pastor, even though my heart should break, and I should go about alone with Jochen in this great house, like one in a dream, I will give up my little girls to go away to school, rather than have them remain stupid all their lives. You see, when Louise comes here, she is intelligent; one can talk with her, and she can read the newspaper to Jochen. Min can read too, but if she comes to a strange word, she begins to stammer. For instance the other day Louise read 'Burdoh,' and the place is called so,--and Min read 'Bo-ur-de-aux.' What is the good of 'Bo-ur-de-aux,' when the city is called 'Burdoh?'"

The Pastor had risen during this speech, and walked thoughtfully about the room; at last he came to a stand before Frau Nüssler, looked at her observantly and said, "My dear neighbor, I will make you a proposition. Louise is a little more advanced, to be sure, but that makes no difference; you shall not be separated from your little ones,--let me instruct them."

Frau Nüssler had never thought of such an offer, and it seemed to her like drawing the great prize in the lottery, or as if she had stepped out of shadow into sunshine. She stared at the Pastor with her wide-open, blue eyes; "Herr Pastor!" she cried, springing up from her chair, "Jochen, Jochen, did you hear? The Herr Pastor offers to teach the children himself."

Jochen had heard, and was also on his feet, trying to say something; he said nothing, however, only fumbled and grappled for the Herr Pastor's hand, until he grasped it, then pressed it warmly, and drew him to the sofa, behind the supper table, which was spread; and when Frau Nüssler and Habermann had fully expressed their pleasure, he also had become capable of expression, and said, "Mother, pour out a cup for the Herr Pastor."

So Mining and Lining were now daily guests at the Gurlitz parsonage. They were as clearly a pair of twins as ever; only that Lining as the eldest was perhaps half an inch taller than Mining, and Mining was a good half inch larger round the waist, and--if one looked very closely--Mining's nose was a trifle shorter than Lining's.

And so on the day when Pomuchelskopp set out to make his first call at the parsonage, the twins were in the Frau Pastorin's sewing-school, for the Frau Pastorin also meant to do her duty by the children, when the Pastor was occupied with the business of his calling.

"God bless me!" exclaimed the Frau Pastorin, running into the room, "children put your work aside; take it all into the bedroom, Louise; Mining, pick up the threads and scraps; Lining, you put the chairs in order! Here come our new landlord with his wife and daughters, across the church-yard, right up to the house,--and, bless his heart! my Pastor has gone to Warnitz to a christening!" And she grasped unconsciously her duster, but had to lay it aside directly, for there was a knock at the door, and upon her "Come in!" Pomuchelskopp with his wife and his two daughters, Malchen and Salchen, entered the room.

"They did themselves the honor," said Pomuchelskopp, endeavoring to make a graceful bow, which on account of his peculiar build was rather a failure, "to wait upon the Herr Pastor, and the Frau Pastorin--acquaintance--neighborhood---"

Frau Pomuchelskopp stood by, as stiff and stately as if she had that morning been plated with iron, and Malchen and Salchen, in their gay silk dresses, stared at the three little maidens in their clean cotton garments, like a goldfinch at a hedge-sparrow.

The Frau Pastorin was the most cordial person in the world, to her friends; but when she met

strangers, and her Pastor was not present to speak for himself, she took his dignity also upon her shoulders. She drew herself up to her full height, looking as round and full as a goose on the spit, and with every word that she spoke the cap ribbons under her little double chin wagged back and forth with a dignified air, as if they would say, "Nobody shall take precedence of me!"

"The honor is quite on our side," said she. "Unfortunately my Pastor is not at home. Won't you sit down?" and with that she seated the two old Pomuchelskopps on the sofa, under the picture-gallery.

Meanwhile, as the older people were discussing indifferent topics with an appearance of interest, as the custom is, and now one and now another advancing opinions to which the rest could not assent, Louise went, in a friendly way, as was proper, to the two young ladies, and shook hands with them, and the little twins followed her example, as was also proper.

Now Malchen and Salchen were just eighteen and nineteen years old. They were not handsome; Salchen had a gray, pimpled complexion, and Malchen, though she was not to blame for it, bore too striking a resemblance to her father. But they were *educated*--save the mark! and had recently attended the Whitsuntide fair and Trinity ball, at Rostock, so there was really a great difference between them and the little girls, and since they were not very kindly disposed, they looked rather coldly on the little maidens.

These, however, either did not notice it, or took it as a matter of course that their advances should be received with coolness, and Louise said with great admiration to Malchen, "Ah, what a beautiful dress you have on!"

Even an educated young lady might be pleased at that, and Malchen became a little more friendly, as she said, "It is only an old one; my new one cost, with the trimming and dress-making, all of ten dollars more."

"Papa gave them to us for the Trinity ball. Ah, how we danced there!" added Salchen.

Now Louise had heard in sermons about Sundays before and after Trinity, but of a Trinity ball she knew nothing; in fact she had no definite conception of a ball itself, for though the Frau Pastorin in her youth had taken pleasure like other people, and had occasionally set foot in a ball-room, yet, out of consideration for her present dignified position, she always answered Louise's questions what a ball was like,--"Mere frivolity!"

As for Lining and Mining they would have known nothing of balls, for though their mother danced in her younger days, it was merely at harvest feasts, and young Jochen had indeed once gone to a ball, but upon reaching the door of the saloon he was so frightened that he beat a retreat,--but Uncle Bräsigg's descriptions had given the children a confused idea of many white dresses with green and red ribbons, of violins and clarionettes, of waltzes and quadrilles, and many, many glasses of punch. And as Uncle Bräsigg had described it all, he had also given an illustration, with his short legs, of the sliding step, and the hop step, so that they laughed prodigiously; but what a "ball," such a ball as the last governess had taken away from Mining, had to do with it all, they had never comprehended. So Mining asked quite innocently, "But, if you dance, how do you play with a ball?"

Mining was a thoughtless little girl, and she should not have asked such a question; but, considering her youth and inexperience, the Misses Pomuchelskopp need not have laughed quite so loud as they did.

"Oh dear!" cried Salchen, "that is too stupid!"

"Yes, good gracious! so very countrified!" said Malchen, and drew herself up in a stately attitude, as if she had lived under the shadow of St. Peter's tower in Rostock from her babyhood, and the first burgomeister of the city had been her next door neighbor.

Poor little Mining turned as red as a rose, for she felt that she must have made a great blunder, and Louise grew red also, but it was from anger. "Why do you laugh?" she cried hastily, "why do you laugh because we know nothing about balls?"

"See, see! How excited!" laughed Malchen. "My dear child----"

She went no further in her wise speech, being interrupted by hasty words from the group on the sofa.

"Frau Pastorin, I say it is wrong; I am the owner of Gurlitz, and if the Pastor's field was to be rented----"

"It was my Pastor's doing, and the Kammerrath is an old friend, and one of our parishioners, and the field joins his land as well as it does yours, and Inspector Habermann----"

"Is an old cheat," interrupted Pomuchelskopp.

"He has already done us an injury," added his wife.

"What?" cried the little Frau Pastorin, "what?"

But her dear old heart thought in a minute of little Louise, and she overcame her anger, and began to wink and blink. It was too late; the child had heard her father's name, had heard the slander, and stood now before the arrogant man, and the cold, hard woman.

"What is my father? What has my father done?"

Her eyes shot fiery glances at the two who had spoken evil of her father, and the young frame which up to this time had known constant peace and joy, quivered with passion.

People tell us that sometimes the fair, still, green earth trembles, and fire and flame burst forth, and showers of gray ashes bury the dwellings of men, and the temples of God. It seemed to her that a beautiful temple, in which she had often worshipped, had been buried under gray ashes, and her grief broke forth in streaming tears, as her good foster-mother put her arms around her, and led her from the room.

Muchel looked at his Klücking, and Klücking looked at her Muchel; they had got themselves into trouble. It was quite another thing from having one of his laborer's wives come to him, in tears, and a pitiful tale of sorrow and distress--he knew what to do in such cases; but here he had no occasion for reproaches or advice, and, as he glanced about him in his confusion, and saw upon the wall the hands of Christ stretched out in blessing, it seemed to him that the flashing eyes of Louise had turned appealingly toward them, and he remembered how Christ had said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." He did not feel exactly comfortable.

His brave Klücking also, was quite disturbed. She had heard her own children screaming many a time under her vigorous discipline, but this was a different matter; Malchen and Salchen had often shot fire from their eyes, and stamped their feet, but this was a different matter. She recovered herself soon, however, and said,--

"Kopp, don't make such a stupid face! What did she say about her father? Is Habermann her father?"

"Yes," answered Mining and Lining, through their tears, "that is Louise Habermann." And they followed their little friend into the next room, to cry with her; for though they did not know how deeply her heart was wounded, they reckoned themselves one with her, in joy and sorrow.

"I did not know that," said Pomuchelskopp; the very words he had used years before, when Habermann's wife lay in her coffin.

"A foolish girl!" said his Häuhning. "Malchen and Salchen, come, we will go; the Pastor's wife won't come back again."

And so they went off, like the year 1822, of which Häuhning represents the 1, on account of her leanness, and because she would always be number 1, Pomuchelskopp the 8, on account of his size and rotundity, and the two daughters the two figure 2's,--for such a 2 always looks to me like a goose swimming on the water.

As they stepped out of the door, the Pastor was just returning from his duties at Warnitz, and had brought Uncle Bräsig home with him. He knew by their appearance that they had been making a ceremonious visit, and sprung hastily from the carriage, that he might be in time for a part of it.

"Ah, good day! How do you do? But," he added in surprise, "where is my wife?"

"She went off and left us," said Frau Pomuchelskopp, stiffly.

"Eh, there must be some mistake! Do come in again, I shall be back directly," and he ran into the house.

Meanwhile Bräsig had gone up to his old comrade Pomuchelskopp: "Good day, Zamel, how are you?"

"Thank you, Herr Inspector, very well," was the reply.

Bräsig elevated his eyebrows, looked him square in the face, and whistled square in his face. If Frau Pomuchelskopp wished to make him a courtesy, she might do so, but only to his back, for he turned about and went into the house.

"Come, Kopp," said she sharply, and the procession moved off.

As the pastor entered the house, he found nobody there; he went through into the garden, and called, and it was not long before he saw the little twins sitting under a raspberry hedge, with red eyes, and they pointed to the birch-tree arbor, with anxious looks, as if to say he must go there if he would find out what the trouble was. He went to the arbor, and there sat his Regina, with the child in her lap, trying to comfort her. When she saw her Pastor, she put the child gently down on the bench, drew him out of the arbor, and told him the matter.

Pastor Behrens listened in silence; but as his wife repeated the wicked word that the Herr

Landlord had used, there flashed over his intelligent, quiet face a look of bitter anger, and then his clear eyes shone with the deepest compassion. He said to his wife that she might go in, and he would speak to the child. So it had come at last! his lovely flower had been pierced by a poisonous worm; the pitiless world had grasped this soft, pure heart with its hard, coarse hand, and the finger-marks could never be effaced; now it had entered upon the great, never-ending struggle, which is fought out here on earth until hearts cease to beat. It must come, yes, it must come, he knew that well enough; but he knew also that the greatest art of one who would train a human soul lies in keeping away, as long as possible, the hard hand from the tender heart, until that also had become harder, and then, if the evil grip should be even worse, the black fingers will not leave such deep marks upon the heart, until then innocent of the never-ending struggle. He went into the arbor. Thou art still happy, Louise; well is it for one who in such an hour is blessed with a faithful friend!

Frau Pastorin, meanwhile, went into the parlor, and found Bräsigt. Bräsigt, instead of sitting down on the comfortable sofa, under the picture-gallery, or at least in a reasonable chair, had seated himself on a table, and was working like a linen-weaver, in his excitement over Pomuchelskopp's ceremonious behavior. "There you see me, there you have me!" he cried angrily. "The Jesuit!" As the Frau Pastorin came in, he sprang from his table, and cried,--

"Frau Pastorin, what should you say of anybody you had known forty years, and you meet him, and you speak to him, and he calls you "Sie?"^[1]

"Ah, Bräsigt---"

"That is what Pomuchelskopp has done to me."

"Let the man alone! He has done worse mischief here;" and she related what had happened.

Bräsigt was angry, exceedingly angry, over the injury which he had received, but when he heard this he was angry beyond measure; he stormed up and down the room, and made use of language for which the Frau Pastorin would have reproved him severely, had she not been very angry herself; at last he thrust himself into the sofa corner, and sat, without saying a word, looking straight before him.

The Pastor entered, his Regina looked at him inquiringly.

"She is watering the flowers," he said, as if to compose her, and he walked in his quiet way, up and down the room, finally turning toward Bräsigt. "What are you thinking of, dear friend?"

"Hell-fire! I am thinking about hell-fire, Herr Pastor!"

"Why of that?" asked the Pastor.

But instead of replying, Bräsigt sprang to his feet, and said:

"Tell me, Herr Pastor, is it true that there are mountains that vomit fire?"

"Certainly," said the Pastor.

"And are they good or bad for mankind?"

"The people who live in the neighbourhood consider the eruptions a good thing, because then the earthquakes are not so violent."

"So? so?" said Bräsigt, apparently not quite satisfied with the answer. "But it is true, isn't it," he went on, "that such mountains send forth flame and smoke, like a chimney?"

"Something so," said the Pastor, who had not the slightest idea what Bräsigt was driving at.

"Well," said Bräsigt, stamping with his foot, "then I wish that the devil would take Zamel Pomuchelskopp by the nape of his neck, and hold him over one of those fire-spouting holes till he got his deserts."

"Fie, Bräsigt!" cried the little Pastorin, "you are a heathen. How can you utter such an unchristian wish in a minister's house!"

"Frau Pastorin," said Bräsigt, going back into the sofa-corner, "it would be a great benefit to mankind."

"Dear Bräsigt," said the Pastor, "we must remember that these people used the disgraceful expression without any intention of hurting us."

"It is all one to me," cried Bräsigt, "with or without intention. He provoked me with intention, but what he did here without intention was a thousand times worse. You see, Herr Pastor, one must get angry sometimes, and we farmers get angry regularly two or three times a day,--it belongs to the business; but moderately, what I call a sort of farm-boy anger. For example, yesterday I was having the fallow-ground marled, and I had ordered the boys to form a line with their carts. Then I stood in the marl-pit, and all was going nicely. Then, you see, there came that

lubber, Christian Kohlhaas,--a real horned-beast of a creature,--there he was with his full cart coming back to the pit. 'You confounded rascal!' said I, 'what under heaven! are you going to bring the marl back again!' Do you believe, that blockhead looked me right in the face, and said he wasn't quite ready to empty the cart, and would go into the line. Well, I was angry, you may be sure; but there are different sorts of anger. This was a proper farm-boy anger, and that kind agrees with me, especially after dinner; but here--I can't scold Pomuchelskopp as I do the farm-boys. It all stays here, I can't get rid of it. And you will see, Frau Pastorin, to-morrow I shall have that cursed gout again."

"Bräsig," said the Frau Pastorin, "will you do me a favour? Don't tell Habermann anything of this."

"Eh, why should I, Frau Pastorin? But I will go to little Louise, and comfort her, and tell her that Samuel Pomuchelskopp is the meanest, most infamous rascal on the face of the earth."

"No, no," said the Pastor, hastily, "let that go. The child will get over it, and I hope all will be well again."

"No? Then good-bye," said Bräsig, reaching for his cap.

"Surely, Bräsig, you will stay to dinner with us?"

"Thank you kindly, Frau Pastorin. There is reason in all things. One must be angry sometimes, to be sure; but better after dinner than before. I had better go and work in the marl-pit; but Christian would do well not to come back today with his full cart to the marl-pit. So good-bye, once more." And with that he went off.

CHAPTER VI.

Habermann heard nothing of this occurrence. His child said nothing to him about it, only treated him with increased tenderness and reverence, if that were possible, as if with her greater love to make up to him the wrong which had been done him. Frau Nüssler, who had heard the whole story from her little girls, could not find it in her heart to say a word to her brother which could grieve him, or make him suspicious of others. The Pastor and his wife had the same reason for silence, and also the wish that the whole matter should be forgotten by Louise.

Jochen Nüssler said nothing of consequence, and Bräsig also held his peace, that is toward Habermann. It happened, however, through his feeling of injury at this self-restraint, and the attack of gout,--which came as he said it would the next day,--that he excited the whole neighborhood against Pomuchelskopp; and as the latter made no special efforts towards friendship and sociability, it was not long before his intercourse with his neighbors was like my wife's kitchen floor at Pentecost, so naked and bare was he left in this respect.

Pomuchelskopp looked upon social intercourse as a garden merely, in which he could plant his pride-beans; whether the garden gave him shade, or produced flowers, was of little importance to him provided that he had room for himself and what belonged to him to spread and grow. He had come into Mecklenburg, in the first place, because he could buy Gurlitz at a good bargain; but, secondly because he had a vague idea of his future prospects as a landlord.

"Hähning," said he to his wife, "here in Pomerania, every body rules us, and the landrath says, 'It shall be so and so,' but in Mecklenburg we shall be law-givers ourselves, I among others. And I have heard it is customary there for rich burghers, who live like the nobility, to become ennobled in time. Think, Kükling, how it would seem to be called 'my gracious lady von Pomuchelskopp!' but one must not throw himself away!"

And he took pains not to throw himself away, giving up, for that purpose, one of his chief pleasures, the boasting and bragging of his money, in order not to associate too familiarly with the farmers and inspectors of the neighborhood. For that purpose, he had greeted old Bräsig with "Sie," and had honored only Bräsig's Herr Count with a formal visit. He went in his blue dress-coat, with bright buttons, and the new coach with four brown horses, and was as welcome there as a hog in a Jew's house. When he came home, he sat out of humor in the sofa-corner, and struck at the flies; and as his wife who always became affectionate when he was cross, said, "Pöking, what is the matter?" he grumbled, "What should be the matter? Nothing is the matter, only these confounded nobility, who are friendly to look at, and when you come nearer it is good for nothing. Oh, yes, he asked me to sit down, and then he inquired very politely how he could serve me. I don't want anything of him, I am better off than he; but I could think of nothing to say, at the

moment, and then there was such a silence that I must needs go."

But for all that, Pomuchelskopp would not throw himself away,—by no means! He trailed after the nobility like the tail after a sheep, and although he would never advance a penny of wages to his own people, and the poor tradesmen in the city had to wait till the year's end for their hard-earned pay, he had money for any spendthrift young gentleman. And, while every poor devil of a fellow who went through his fields was fined without pity, for trespassing, Bräsig's gracious Herr Count had permission, even in harvest time, to go over them with the whole hunt; and while he cheated the Pastor shamefully in his Easter-lamb, the Herr Count's hunter could shoot the roebuck before his very door, and he made no complaint. No! Zamel Pomuchelskopp did not throw himself away!

Habermann kept out of his way. He was not a man for strife and contention, and was too well satisfied with his situation, to be looking here and there after other things. He was like a man, who, after being out in a storm, sits warm and dry in the chimney-corner; and his only trouble was his anxiety about his good master. He had some time before received a letter from him, in a strange hand, and with a black seal, which said that he had had a stroke of paralysis, and had not yet recovered the use of his right hand; but the greatest affliction which had befallen him was the loss of his wife, who had died suddenly, in full health. And it said also that his nephew Franz would arrive at Pumpelhagen, at Michaelmas, in order to learn farming. "It is his own wish to handle the spade and learn everything for himself. I also think it best." These words were written in the Kammerrath's own hand. A couple of weeks later he received another letter, in which the Kammerrath informed him that he had resigned his post in Schwerin and intended, after the next Easter, to reside at Pumpelhagen, with his three unmarried daughters; through the winter, he must remain in Schwerin, on account of his health. Habermann should however retain complete management of everything.

This would be a change, which would have some effect upon his situation; and, though he had no occasion to dread the eye of the master, and would gladly exert himself to do anything for his comfort, yet he could not help saying to himself that the quiet peace and simplicity of his life were over, and how long would it be before greater changes must come?

Michaelmas came, and with it came Franz von Rambow. He was not what is called a handsome young man; but he was healthy and strong, and upon nearer view one was struck by the earnestness of his manner, and the good-nature in his eyes. A shadow of sadness sometimes fell upon his face, which may have been owing to the fact that he lost his parents in early youth, and had since stood as an orphan, alone in the world. As one might infer from his appearance, he was no fool; he had good natural talents, which had been developed at the school in which he had fitted for the university, and he had also learned a more important lesson, how to labor. He was a young tree, raised in a nursery in a hard soil, and the wood had grown slowly, but firmly; he had shot out no rank shoots into the air, his branches were low, but wide-spread, and when he should be transplanted he would need no prop. "Let him be," the gardener would say, "he is tough and strong, he can stand alone."

At present, he was twenty years old, and the three years' child whom Habermann recollected had become a steady young man, with future prospects such as few young men in the country were possessed of. He owned two fine estates, which had become freed from debt by prudent management during his minority. It was before his recollection, to be sure, that Habermann had served as inspector with his father; but he had been told how friendly the inspector had always been toward him, and when a good, simple-hearted man knows that another has carried him in his arms, as a child, confidence easily glides into his heart, and he seems to see the little pillow in the cradle, and the tired head lies softly down, and the dreams of childhood return once more.

Habermann returned this confidence, heartily and gladly. He cautiously and quietly led the young man along, in the new and unaccustomed path; he instructed him in matters of the farm-yard and of the field; he told him the reasons why such a thing should be done, and why it should be done just so, and not in a different manner. At the same time, he endeavored to spare him; but as he noticed that his scholar had no wish to be spared, and desired faithfully to fill his post, he let him have his way, saying to himself, like the gardener, "Let him alone, he needs no prop."

But to these contented companions another was to be added, who would bring life into the house, and that was Fritz Triddelsitz.

The little Frau Pastorin had a brother-in-law, the apothecary Triddelsitz, at Rahnstadt, and when he heard that Habermann had taken a pupil to be instructed in farming, he took it into his head that his Fritz, who was a foppish stripling of seventeen, should learn how to manage an estate under Habermann's tuition. "Merely the higher branches," said Fritz; "I know all about common things already, for I have been twice in the dogdays at the miller's in Bolz, and helped about the harvesting."

The little Frau Pastorin was not quite pleased with the proposal, for she knew her greyhound of a nephew, and did not wish that Habermann should be troubled with him; but her brother-in-law persevered, and the matter was brought forward. Habermann would have gone through fire and water for the Pastor and his wife; but he could not decide such a question on his own responsibility. He wrote to his master about it: young Triddelsitz wanted to come in as a third, he had many crotchets in his head, but was good-hearted; his chief recommendation was that he was

the Frau Pastorin's nephew, to whom Habermann was under great obligation, as the Herr Kammerrath was aware. For the rest, his father would pay, for two years, a hundred dollars for board. Would it be agreeable to the Herr Kammerrath, that Fritz Triddelsitz should come to Pumpelhaven, to learn farming?

The Herr Kammerrath answered by return post; there was no question of board, the hundred dollars were for tuition, and with that he had nothing to do, that was Habermann's business; if he thought best, let him take the young man, and welcome.

This was a great joy to Habermann; nothing more was said of board or tuition money, for he could now discharge a small portion of the great debt which he owed to the Pastor and his wife.

So Fritz Triddelsitz came, and in such a way! He was his dear mother's only son,--to be sure she had a couple of daughters,--and she fitted him out for his new place, so that he could represent an apprentice, a travelling agent, an inspector, or a farmer and landlord, according to the occasion, or as the whim took him to play at farming, in this manner or that. He had dress-boots and working boots, laced boots and top-boots; he had morning shoes, and dancing shoes, and fancy slippers; he had button-gaiters, and riding-gaiters, and other gaiters; he had dress-coats, and linen frocks, and cloth coats and pilot-coats; overcoats and under-jackets, and rain-coats, and a variety of long and short trousers, too numerous to mention.

This outfit for a gentleman farmer arrived at Pumpelhaven one fine day, in several large boxes, with a fine, soft bed, and a great clumsy secretary; and the carrier volunteered the news that the young gentleman would soon be there, he was on the way, and was merely detained by a struggle with his father's old chestnut horse, who would come no further than the Gurlitz parsonage, because that had been the limit of his journeys hitherto. How the contest terminated he did not see, because he came away; but the young gentleman was coming. And he came, and as I said before, in what a guise! Like an inspector over two large estates belonging to a count, and who has the privilege of riding to the hounds with his gracious Herr Count, in a green hunting-jacket, and white leather breeches, top-boots with yellow tops, and spurs, and over the whole a water-proof coat, not because it was likely to rain, but it was new, and he wanted to hear what people would say about it. And he came upon his father's old chestnut, and, from the appearance of both, it was evident that their present relations were the result of a contest. The horse had come to a stand in the middle of the great puddle before the Pastor's house, with a fixed determination to go no further, and Fritz had exercised him for a good ten minutes with whip and spur, to the great dismay of the little Frau Pastorin, before he could persuade him to advance; so when he dismounted at Pumpelhaven, his rain-coat looked as if he had been pelted with mud.

The old chestnut stood before the house, and he pricked up his ears, and said to himself, "Is he a fool, or am I? I am seventeen years old, and he is seventeen years old. He has had his way this time, next time I will have mine. If he treats me so with whip and spur and kicks, next time I will lie down in the puddle."

When Fritz Triddelsitz came into the room where Habermann, and young Herr von Rambow, and Marie Möller, the housekeeper, were sitting at dinner, the old inspector was struck dumb with astonishment, for he had never seen him before. In his green hunting-jacket, Fritz looked like one of those long asparagus stalks which spring up in the garden, and he was so thin and slender that he looked as if one could cut him in two with his riding-whip. He had high cheek bones and a freckled face, and something so assured, and yet awkward in his whole demeanor, that Habermann said to himself, "God bless me! am I to teach him? He feels above me already."

His reflections were interrupted by a burst of laughter from Franz von Rambow, in which Marie Möller secretly joined, holding her napkin before her mouth.

Fritz had begun, "Good-day, Herr Inspector, how do you do?" when he was interrupted by the laughter; he saw his old schoolmate at Parchen, shaking with fun; he looked at him rather doubtfully? but it was not long before he joined in the laugh himself, and then steady old Habermann could refrain no longer, he laughed till his eyes ran over. "Man!" said Franz, "how you have rigged yourself up!"

"Always noble!" said Fritz, and Marie Möller disappeared again behind her napkin.

"Come, Triddelsitz," said Habermann, "sit down to dinner,"

Fritz accepted the invitation--the fellow was in luck, for he had come at the best season for good living, in the roast-geese season, and as it happened, a fine, brown bird stood before him, and this beginning of his study of farming might well be agreeable. He was not at all sparing of the roast goose, and Habermann reflected silently that if he sat on horseback as well as at table, paid as much attention to farm-boys as to roast geese, knew as much about horses' fodder as of his own, and cleared up business as completely as he did his plate, something might be made of him in time.

"Well, Triddelsitz," said Habermann, when dinner was over, "now you can go to your room, and change your clothes, and put this smart riding-suit away where the moths will not get at it, for you won't need it again this two years. We don't ride much here, we go on foot, and if there is

any riding to do, I do it myself, by the way."

Before long, Fritz re-appeared, with a pair of greased boots, short breeches, and a grass-green pilot-coat.

"That will do," said Habermann; "now come, and I will give you some instructions to begin with."

They went over the farm, and next morning Fritz Triddelsitz stood with seven of the farm laborers in the Rahnstadt road, and let the water out of the puddles,—an agreeable business, especially in November, with a drizzling rain all day long. "The devil!" said Fritz Triddelsitz, "farming isn't what I took it for!"

A couple of weeks after his arrival, Bräsig came riding into the yard, one Sunday noon. Fritz had by this time become so far subdued by Habermann, his monotonous work, and the everlasting rainy weather, that he began to comprehend his situation as an apprentice, and his natural good-heartedness made him ready for little services. So he started out of doors, to assist Bräsig down from his horse, but Bräsig screamed, "Don't come near me! Don't touch me! Don't come within ten feet of me! Tell Karl Habermann to come out."

Habermann came: "Bless you, Bräsig, why don't you get down?"

"Karl—no, don't touch me I just get me a soft chair, so that I can get down by degrees, and then bring a blanket or a sheepskin or something soft to spread under it, for I have got this confounded gout."

They did as he asked, spreading mats under the chair, and Bräsig crawled down from the horse, and hobbled into the house.

"Why didn't you send me word you were ill, Bräsig?" said Habermann. "I would gladly have gone to you."

"You can do nothing for me, Karl; but I couldn't stay in that confounded hole any longer. But what I was going to say is—I have given it up."

"Given what up?"

"Getting married. I shall take the pension from my gracious Herr Count."

"Well, Bräsig, I would do that, in your place."

"Eh, Karl, it is all very well to talk; but it is a hard thing for a man of my years to give up all his cherished hopes, and go to a water-cure; for Dr. Strump is determined to send me there. I don't suppose Dr. Strump knows anything about it, but he has had the accursed gout himself, and when he sits by me and talks so wisely about it, and talks about Colchicum and Polchicum, it is a comfort to think that such a learned man has the gout too."

"So you are going to a water-cure?"

"Yes, Karl; but not before spring. I have made my plans; this winter I shall grumble along here, then in the spring I will go to the water-cure, and by midsummer I will take the pension, and go to live in the old mill-house at Haunerwiem. I thought at first I would go to Rahnstadt, but there I should have no house rent-free, and no village, and they would take me for a fat sheep and fleece me and skin me; it would be contemptible, and also too expensive."

"You are right, Bräsig; stay in the country, it is better for you; and stay in our neighborhood, for we should miss you sadly, if we did not see your honest old face, every few days."

"Oh, you have society enough; you have these young people, and, I was going to say, old Bröker at Kniep, and Schimmel of Radboom would be glad to send you their boys also. If I were you I would put on an addition to the old farm-house, to have plenty of room, and establish a regular agricultural school."

"That does very well for a joke, Bräsig. I have enough to do with these."

"Yes? How do they get along?"

"Well, Bräsig, you know them both, and I have often thought I should like to ask your opinion."

"I can't tell, Karl, till I have seen how they go. Young farmers are like colts, one can't judge merely by looking at them, one must see them put through their paces. See, there goes your young nobleman; call him a little nearer, and let me examine him."

Habermann laughed, but complied with Bräsig's request, and called the young man.

"Hm," said Bräsig, "a firm gait, not too rapid, holds himself together well, and has his limbs under control. He'll do, Karl. Now the other one!"

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann as the young man came up, "where is Triddelsitz?"

"In his room," was the answer.

"Hm," said Bräsig, "resting himself a little."

"I don't know."

"Tell him to come down," said Habermann, "and come back yourself. Coffee will be ready presently."

"Karl," said Bräsig, when they were alone, "you will see, the apothecary's son has been taking a nap."

"No harm if he has, Bräsig; he is young, and has been at work all the morning, giving out corn for fodder."

"But he oughtn't, Karl; it isn't good for young folks to sleep after dinner. See, there he comes! Now send him somewhere, past the window, so that I can see how he goes."

"Triddelsitz," called Habermann from the window, "go to the stables, and tell Jochen Boldt to be ready to take Herr Inspector Bräsig home, by and by. He may take the two fore-horses----"

"Bon!" said Fritz Triddelsitz, and skipped vivaciously along the causeway.

"God preserve us!" cried Bräsig, "what an action! Just look how awkward he is! See the weakness of his ankles, and the thinness of his flanks! It will take you a good while to fat him up. He is a greyhound, Karl, a regular greyhound, and, mark my words, you will make nothing of him."

"Eh, Bräsig, he is so young, he will outgrow these peculiarities."

"Outgrow them? Sleeps in the afternoon? Says 'Bong' to you? And now look here--for all the world he is coming back again, and hasn't been near the stables."

Fritz was coming back again, to be sure; he came to the window and said, "Herr Inspector, didn't you say Jochen Boldt should go?"

"Yes," said Bräsig snappishly, "Jochen Boldt shall go, and shall not forget what he is told. You see now, Karl, am I right?"

"Bräsig," said Habermann, a little annoyed by Fritz's stupidity, "let him go! we are not all alike; and, though it may cost a good deal of trouble, we will bring him through."

Vexation was an infrequent guest with Habermann; and, whenever it came, he showed it the door. Thought, anxiety, sorrow of heart, he admitted, when they overpowered him; but this obtrusive beggar, which borrows something from each of the others, and lies all day at a man's ears, with all sorts of complaints and torments, he thrust out of doors, headforemost. So it was not long before the conversation became lively and pleasant again, and continued so until Bräsig departed.

CHAPTER VII.

The winter passed away without any special incidents. Habermann was accustomed to a uniform life, and desired no other, for himself; but the young people were sometimes wearied by it, and by their seclusion, especially Franz von Rambow. Fritz Triddelsitz had his aunt, the Frau Pastorin, close by, and a little farther off, his dear mother at Rahnstadt and, nearer than either, Marie Möller the house-keeper, who often comforted him with a bit of roast goose, or a morsel of sausage, so that they soon came into friendly relations. Sometimes they were together like mother and child, for Marie was seven years older than Fritz,--she was four and twenty; sometimes they seemed more like lovers, for four and twenty is no great age, after all; and Fritz instead of learning his Latin at school, had fed upon romances, and had been a regular customer at the circulating library, so that he was quite well informed about such matters, and as his father had advised him to study human nature, and Habermann often repeated the advice, he thought it a good opportunity to improve his knowledge of love-affairs; but don't be alarmed, there is nothing serious coming--nothing more tender than roast goose and sausage.

Habermann had no occasion to trouble himself about Fritz; it was only for Franz he felt anxious. He had taken him already once to the parsonage, and when Christmas time came, they were invited there to spend Christmas eve. The young Herr accepted,--Fritz had gone home to Rahnstadt for the holidays--and as they drove up in the sleigh--for it was fine sleighing--to the front door, which opened into the living-room, there stood the little, plump Frau Pastorin, motioning with both hand and foot:--

"No, Habermann, no! you mustn't come in here! Herr von Rambow, if you will have the kindness, just go round to my Pastor's study."

And, as they entered the study, Louise sprang towards her father, and kissed him, and whispered in his ear what presents she had made, and how she had arranged them, and who was to knock the Yule raps, and had scarcely time to give Herr von Rambow a hasty courtesy. But the Pastor made up for her neglect; he shook the young man's hand, and said that he was heartily glad that he had come to celebrate this joyous feast with them. "But," he added, "we must be under subjection; my Regina takes the rule to-day, and her head is never clearer and brighter than on Christmas eve."

He was right in that; for every few moments her head was thrust in at the door: "Wait just a minute longer! Sit perfectly still! The bell will ring directly." And once she whisked through the room, with a blue package peeping from under her apron, and then in the next room they heard her merry laugh.

At last, at last, the bell rung, and the door flew open, and there stood the Christmas tree, in the centre of the room, on the round table, and under the tree were as many dishes full of apples and nuts and ginger-bread as there were members of the family, and two more, for Habermann and the young gentleman. The Frau Pastorin fluttered about the tree, and then taking Habermann and Herr von Rambow by the hand, she led them up to the table. "This is your dish, and this is yours, and Louise and my Pastor have already found theirs!" then turning around, she cried, "Now all come in!" for the Pastor's man, George, and the two maids, Rika and Dürten, were all standing at the door, waiting for their Christmas boxes,--"now all come in! Where the bright dollars are sticking in the apples, those are your dishes, and the red cloth lying here is for the two maids, and this red vest is for George. And Louise--yes, yes, yes!" She could go no further, for Louise had grasped her about the neck, and was kissing the words from her lips, and in her hand she held a bright cherry merino dress: "This is from you, mother!"

Here it must be confessed, the Frau Pastorin so far forgot herself as to equivocate, not in words, to be sure, but by shaking her head, and nodding towards her Pastor, and Louise sprang upon him: "Then it is you!"

But he also shook his head, and professed to know nothing about it, and Louise grasped her own father by the arm, and cried: "No, no! It is from you!"

The good old inspector was much affected at receiving from his child the thanks which were due to others; he stroked her soft hair, and his eyes grew moist, as he took her hand and led her back to the Frau Pastorin, saying, "No, darling, no! Your thanks belong here."

But the Frau Pastorin had no time now to receive thanks. She was busy with her Pastor, whom she had drawn aside to see how his new dressing-gown fitted. It was fortunate that it did not happen to be a pair of pantaloons, for in the joy and excitement of this evening, the impropriety would never have occurred to her mind. The gown fitted well, and looked finely, and she drew back a couple of steps and looked at her Pastor, like a child when it has set up a new doll in the sofa-corner, and as she turned round she saw a package lying on her dish, which her Pastor had secretly placed there. Hastily she untied the string, and took off the wrappings, chattering all the while. What could it be? How strangely it felt! Somebody was surely playing a joke on her,--and at last, there was a beautiful black silk dress. Now the joy was at its height. Habermann had found a new pipe on his plate, and held it in his mouth, puffing contentedly, although it was quite cold, the Pastor lay back in the sofa-corner, like the new doll, and the Frau Pastorin and Louise walked up and down the room holding up the stuff for their new dresses, and looking down at them, as if the dresses were already finished.

And Franz! Franz sat a little aside, and a slight sadness stole over him, at the thought of the joys he had missed since his childhood. He rested his head on his hand, and the Christmas eves of his life passed before him; kind friends and relatives brought him their greetings, but the two faces which hung in his room, under the wreath of immortelles, were missing. He felt that he did not belong here, but he would not disturb their joy; he recalled his thoughts, and as he raised his head he looked into a pair of great, beautiful, childish eyes, full of thought and compassion, as if they had read his heart.

"Yule rap!" cried Rika's loud voice, and a package flew in at the door, "For the Frau Pastorin." It was a nice roller, and nobody knew where it came from. "Yule rap!" again; and this time it was a new stuffed cushion for the Pastor's arm-chair; but nobody had made it. Oh, what fibs they told that evening at the parsonage! "Yule rap!" There was a letter for the Frau Pastorin, and in it a ticket with a number, referring to another ticket up-stairs, and when she had got this, it referred her to another down in the cellar, and that to another, and another,--and if the Frau Pastorin wanted the pretty embroidered collar designed for her, she must chase it all over the house, to

find it, at last, close by, in her husband's boot-leg. Another "Yule rap!" All, that was a great package! "To the Herr Pastor," it was addressed, but when the first wrapper was taken off, it was for the Frau Pastorin, and then for George, and then for Rika, and finally for Louise, and when the last paper had been taken off, there was a little work-table, exactly such a work-table as her father had given years ago to her dead mother. He knew where it came from, no one else.

Then another "Yule rap!" Books for Louise. "Yule rap!" again--an embroidered foot-cover for Habermann. All this time Rika had not been visible. Now she came in and gathered up the wrapping paper and string. Then the door opened once more, a clear bell-like voice cried "Yule rap!" and, as the package was examined, it was found to be "For the Honourable Herr Franz von Rambow," and while they were looking, a little maiden crept softly in on tip-toe, a great joy beaming in her face.

Franz was taken by surprise, but when he opened his package, he found a letter from his youngest cousin Fidelia, and the three unmarried daughters of the Kammerrath had sent him their Christmas gifts--Albertine a smoking-cushion, and he never smoked on a sofa,--Bertha a saddle-cover, and as yet he had no horse,--and Fidelia a cigar-case, and in fact he never smoked at all. But what of that? Whether one can use them or not, it is all one; not the gift, but the giver, and the good-will is the important thing at Christmas time. Franz no longer felt so lonely; and as he saw the pleasure in Louise's face, when she returned, he laughed and joked with her about his presents, and, whether she liked it or not, she must receive his thanks, because he had recognized her voice.

Rika came in again, saying, "Frau Pastorin, they are all here."

"So? Then we will go out."

"No, dear Regina," said the Pastor, "let them come in."

"Oh, Pastor, they will bring in so much snow on their feet!"

"Never mind! Rika will get up early to-morrow morning, and clean it all up. Eh, Rika?"

To be sure, Rika would do it gladly; so the door was opened, and in came head after head, flaxen heads and dark heads, all the little people in the village, and they stood there rubbing their noses, and opening their eyes wider and wider, and stared at the apples and ginger-nuts, with their mouths also wide open, as if to invite the dainties to walk in.

"So!" said Frau Pastorin, "now let the godchildren come first. Habermann," added she, "we are next to their parents, my Pastor and I, in fact we are nearest to our godchildren." And more than half of the company pressed forward, for the Pastor and his wife had stood godparents to at least half the village children. One boy, who wanted to deceive, pushed forward with the others, that was Jochen Ruhrdanz, who had said last year that the godchildren got more than the others; but Stina Wasmuths noticed him, and pushed him back, saying, "You are not a godchild," so that his impudent attempt was unsuccessful.

Then the Herr Pastor came forward, with a pile of books under his arm, and all the godchildren, who had during the winter come to him for instruction, received every one a hymn-book, and the others received writing-books and slates and primers and catechisms, according as they needed them, and all the children said, "Thank you, godfather!" but those who had hymn-books said, "Thank you very much, Herr Pastor." That was an old custom.

Then came the Frau Pastorin. "So! I will take the nuts; Louise, you take the ginger-nuts, and, Herr von Rambow, will you take the apple-basket? And now, each in his turn! Come, children, put yourselves in rows, and hold your dishes ready."

It was not a very quiet proceeding, there was some pushing and shoving, for each one wished to be in the front row, and each held out whatever he had brought, to receive his Christmas gift. The little girls had their aprons, but the boys had brought anything they could lay hands on; one had a platter, another a peck-measure, a third his father's hat, and one a great corn-sack, which he evidently expected to get almost if not quite full. Now began the dividing.

"There, there, there--hold!" said the Frau Pastorin, as she came to a mischievous rogue of a boy. "Herr von Rambow, that boy is to have no apples, because he helped himself from the garden, last summer."

"Oh, Frau Pastorin----"

"Boy, didn't I see you myself, up in the great apple-tree by the wall, knocking off the apples with a stick?"

"But, ah, Frau Pastorin----"

"Not a word! Boys who steal apples can't expect to have any at Christmas." So she went on, but stopped again when she came to Jochen Ruhrdanz. "Didn't I see you, last week, fighting with Christian Rusborn, before the parsonage, so that my Rika had to go out and separate you?"

"Yes, Frau Pastorin, but he said----"

"Hush! Louise, he gets no ginger-nuts."

"Yes, Frau Pastorin, but we made it all up again."

"Ah! Then you may give him some, Louise."

So they went through the rows, and then the children went off with their Christmas boxes, saying only, "Good evening!" for thanks were not the custom, at this stage of the proceedings.

When they were gone, quite a different set of people came coughing and limping in at the door; these were the old spinning-women, and broom-tyers, and wooden-shoemakers, out of the village, and also some, who were no longer capable of any work. With these the Pastor spoke a few friendly, Christian words, and the Frau Pastorin gave each one a great loaf of plain, wholesome cake, and they went away, wishing God's blessing upon the Pastor and his wife.

About nine o'clock the Pastor's George brought Habermann's sleigh to the door, and the two guests said "Good night!" and, as Habermann came out, he went up silently to the horses, and took off their bells, for up in the church-tower other bells were ringing which rung for the whole world.

They drove slowly through the village. Here and there burned a Christmas candle in the cottages of the poor laborers, and up in the heavens God had lighted up his great Christmas tree with a thousand shining lamps, and the world lay stretched out beneath like a Christmas table, and winter had spread it with a cloth of whitest snow, that spring, summer and autumn might cover with Christmas gifts.

As they came out of the village, Franz noticed the lighted windows of Pomuchelskopp's house; "They are keeping Christmas there, too," said he. They gave presents; but it was not a real Christmas after all.

Pomuchelskopp had bought nothing at Rahnstadt; everything came from Rostock. "Always noble!" said he. He told also how much Malchen and Salchen's clothes had cost, and when Malchen heard that Salchen's dress was two dollars dearer than her's, she felt badly, and Salchen thought herself quite superior to her sister. And Philippping and Nanting began to quarrel about a sugar doll, and when Pomuchelskopp said that his favorite, Philippping, should have it, Nanting was angry, and threw a toy-box at Philippping, which unfortunately hit the great looking-glass, and broke it into a thousand pieces. Then their mother took the government into her hands, and got the strap out of the cupboard, and punished Nanting first for his misdeeds, and then Philippping, and afterwards the other boys for company. And not once in the whole evening did she say "Pöking" to her husband; not even when he brought out the new winter hat with great feathers, that he had bought for her; she said only, "Kopp, do you want to make me look like a scarecrow?"

As Franz went to bed that night, he said to himself that he had never spent so pleasant a Christmas eve, and when he asked himself the reason, the joyous face of Louise Habermann appeared before his mind's eye, and he said, "Yes, yes, such a joyous child belongs properly to Christmas time!"

Between Christmas and New Year's, a very unusual event occurred. Jochen Nüssler's blue cloak with seven capes drove over to Pumpelhagen in the "phantom," and when Habermann went out there sat Jochen himself inside the coat. He could not get out,--Oh, no!--he had been from home an hour and a half already; but he had been at the parsonage, and they were all coming to spend St. Sylvester's eve, and Bräsig also, and he wanted his brother-in-law to come, and bring the two young people with him, and he would do what he could to entertain them with a big bowl of punch.

Having uttered this long speech, he stopped abruptly, and when Habermann had accepted the invitation, and Christian had turned the horses' heads, a murmur came out of the seven capes, which sounded like, "Good-bye, brother-in-law!" but Christian looked back and said, "You must all come to coffee, Herr Inspector! The Frau told me so expressly."

Franz forwarded the invitation to Fritz, who was still at Rahnstadt, and wrote him that, as his vacation would be over, he could come to Rexow the last day of the year, and go home with them to Pumpelhagen.

As Habermann and Franz drove up to the Rexow farm house, at the appointed time,--it was a wet day,--there stood Jochen in the door, in his new black dress-coat and trousers, a Christmas present from his wife, and the red smoking-cap which Mining had given him, looking for all the world like a stuffed bullfinch.

"Look alive, Jochen," called Bräsig from within, "and do the 'honneurs,' that Karl's young nobleman may have some opinion of your manners."

After Jochen had received them, and the greetings with the family and the Pastor and his wife were over, Frau Nüssler began to talk to her brother about her domestic affairs, the Pastor

engaged in conversation with the young Herr von Rambow, the Frau Pastorin asked the little girls about their Christmas presents. Jochen sat silently in his old corner by the stove, and Bräsig in his great seal-skin boots which came nearly up to his waist, went from one to another, as if it were Christmas eve over again, and he were playing St. Nicholas, to frighten the children.

The sun looked in at the window now and then, the room was warm and comfortable, the coffee-steam rose in little clouds and mingled with the smoke-wreaths from the Pastor's pipe, till it seemed like a summer day, with light, feathery clouds floating in the sunshine. Only, near the stove, it looked as if a thunder-shower was coming up, for there sat Jochen, smoking as if for a wager. His wife had taken away the "Fleigen Markur" from his tobacco-pouch, and filled it for the occasion with "Fine old mild," and he could not get the strength of the "Markur" from this more delicate quality of tobacco, without using a double portion.

But a cloud was coming up outside, not exactly in the heavens, nor yet from the earth beneath,--which would disturb the repose of this quiet room.

One of Frau Nüssler's maids came in to say that there was a man outside with a cart, who had brought a travelling trunk from the apothecary at Rahnstadt, and where should it be put?

"God bless me!" cried the Frau Pastorin, "that is Fritz's trunk. You will see, Pastor, my brother-in-law is so inconsiderate, he has let the boy come on horseback again. Nobody ought to ride that wild horse, Habermann."

"Oh, don't be troubled, Frau Pastorin," said Habermann, laughing a little, "the horse is not so bad----"

"Ah, Habermann, but I saw him before, when he first came to Pumpelhagen; the creature would not stir a step."

"Frau Pastorin," said Bräsig, "it is not so bad if a beast is balky as when the rascal takes to running; then the Latin riders used to fall off."

But the little Frau Pastorin could not rest; she opened the window, and asked the man who had driven the cart whether Fritz was riding, and was the horse very vicious?

"Like a lamb," was the reply. "If he does nothing to the horse, the horse will do nothing to him. He will be here directly."

That was comforting, so the Frau Pastorin seated herself again on the sofa, saying, with a sigh,--

"My poor sister! I tremble for her, whenever I set eyes on the boy. He plays too many stupid jokes."

"He will be up to something of the sort, now?" said Bräsig.

Bräsig was right. In the time between Christmas and New Year's Fritz had accomplished a great deal of folly, all the time in his wonderful inspector suit; for, though the weather had been cold and disagreeable, he had worn the green hunting-jacket, white leather breeches, and yellow top-boots, not merely in the day-time, but occasionally through the night. Once, at least, after he had come home late from a lively company of young farmers, the maid-servant found him next morning lying in bed in his boots and spurs. He had met an old friend that evening, Gust Prebberow by name, who went round half the year in yellow top-boots, and the pleasure of seeing him, together with the lively, agricultural conversation, had been a little too much for Fritz. Gust Prebberow had given him all sorts of useful advice, how to manage "the old man," as he called Habermann, and to pull the wool over his eyes, and had told incidents from his own experience in the management of farm-boys; and, after discussing these branches of agriculture, they came to the subject of horses. Fritz related his adventures with the old chestnut, who was naturally a very gifted horse, and good-natured, for the most part, but like his own father the apothecary, old Chestnut had always been suspicious of him, and on the look-out for mischief. He had evidently made up his mind that Fritz knew nothing about the management of horses, although Fritz had made repeated efforts to bring him to a better way of thinking. His greatest fault was that he positively would not stir a step farther than he pleased, neither kicks nor kindness, whipping nor spurring, could alter this determination when once he had taken it into his stupid head.

"And do you allow that?" said Gust Prebberow. "Now, brother, I will tell you what to do. See, next time you mount him, take a good sized earthen pot full of water, and ride gently along just as usual, till you come to the place where he balks, and then give it to him with the spurs in the ribs, and break the pot over his head,--all at once!--so that the fragments of the pot will clatter down, and the water will run into his eyes."

Fritz paid close attention to this advice, and when he started to-day in his smart inspector suit, he took the bridle in his left hand, the riding-whip under his left arm, and in his right hand a great jar full of water. He could not ride fast, without spilling the water, and old Chestnut had no desire to run away, so they jogged along very peaceably until they reached Rexow farm.

Here Fritz wished to ride up to the house in a brisk trot, so he drove the spurs into old

Chestnut's ribs, but Chestnut, having a bad disposition and still bearing Fritz malice, on account of his adventure in the Pastor's mud-puddle, all of a sudden stood still. Now was the time. A stroke of the whip behind, spurs in his ribs, and crash! the pot between his ears. "Uff!" grunted Chestnut, shaking his head, in token that he would not stir a step, but the blow must have stunned him a little, for he lay down directly. Fritz went too, of course, and though he had sense enough to fall clear of the horse, he could not prevent himself from lying at his side.

The company in Frau Nüssler's parlor had witnessed the scene, and at first the little Frau Pastorin had lamented her poor sister's misfortune, but as she observed old Chestnut's quiet behaviour, and saw Fritz safely landed upon the soft and somewhat cold "bed of honor," which the rain and dew of heaven and Jochen Nüssler's dung-heap had prepared for him, she was compelled to join in the general laughter, and said to her Pastor, "It is good enough for him!"

"Yes," said Bräsig, "and if he takes cold, it won't hurt him. What business has he to behave so with that old creature!"

Fritz now approached, looking on one side like a plough-boy, black and muddy, on the other still smart and shining.

"You are a dainty sight, my son," cried the Frau Pastorin, from the open window. "Don't come in here like that! Fortunately, your trunk has arrived, and you can change your clothes."

He followed her advice, and entered the room, before long, in his most distinguished apparel, a blue dress-coat and long black trousers, like a young proprietor, but in great vexation, which Bräsig's jokes and his aunt's observations did not tend to diminish. Franz, on the contrary, was in the most cheerful temper. He joked to his heart's content with the three little girls, and looked at their Christmas gifts, laughing himself half dead as the little twins finally dragged forward a great foot-sack, which Uncle Bräsig had given them, "that the little rogues might keep their toes warm, and not get the cursed Podagra." Franz had never in his life enjoyed opportunities of intercourse with little girls younger than himself, and this confidential chatter and contented mirthfulness, making merry over things which in his eyes seemed nothing at all, made such an impression upon him, that when they sat down to supper, he kept among the little folks, decidedly refusing the pressing invitations of Frau Nüssler, who wished him, as a nobleman, to take a higher place.

That was a joyous evening meal; talk went briskly back and forth, every one taking his share except Fritz and Jochen. Fritz could not get over his annoyance, and was vexed that he could not enjoy himself as Franz was doing. Jochen said nothing to be sure, but he laughed continually; if Bräsig merely opened his mouth, Jochen stretched his from ear to ear, and when the punch was brought in, and Lining, as the most judicious of the little ones, undertook the task of serving it out, he found a voice, and endeavored to discharge his duties as host, saying now and then very quietly, "Lining, help Bräsig!"

The punch helped Fritz, also, to the use of his tongue. He was still in ill-humor, especially at Franz's undignified behavior. The little girls had hitherto seemed to him very small fry, but if one talked to them at all, one should employ a higher style of conversation. Accordingly he took up the *rôle* which he had played at the Rahnstadt ball, when he had danced with the burgomeister's daughter, aged twenty-seven, and addressed Louise as "Fräulein Habermann." The child looked at him in astonishment, and as he again uttered his "Fräulein," she laughed innocently in his face: "I am no Fräulein, I am only Louise Habermann,"--and Franz could not help laughing also.

That was annoying for Fritz, but he knew what was proper, and how one should converse with ladies; he refused to be snubbed, and went on relating his experiences at the ball, what he said to the burgomeister's daughter, and what she had said to him, "fräulein" ing also the little twins, right and left. And as this caused a great tittering and giggling among the little folks, he naturally talked louder and louder, in order to be heard, till at last the whole company were looking at him in silence. Jochen, who sat next him, had turned round and stared at him, as if to see how it were possible that one human being could talk so much. Bräsig looked over Jochen's shoulder with an uncommonly happy face, rejoicing at his own knowledge of human nature, and nodding now and then to Habermann, as if to say, "You see, Karl, didn't I say so? A good-for-nothing puppy!"

Habermann, annoyed, looked down at his plate, Frau Nüssler was in great perplexity to know what she ought to do as hostess, in such an emergency, the Pastor gently shook his head back and forth; but the most excited of all was the little Frau Pastorin. She bent down her head till the cap-strings rustled under her chin, and moved uneasily on her chair, as if the place were too hot for her, and as Fritz finally attempted to give a visible illustration of the schottische, how the gentleman embraced the lady, she could no longer contain herself. She sprang up and cried, "All keep still! As his aunt, I am the nearest to him! Fritz, come here directly!" And as he slowly rose, and very coolly and politely walked round to her, she took hold of his coat and pulled him along: "My dearest boy, come out here a moment!" With that, she drew him out of the door. The company inside heard fragments of a short sermon, which was interrupted by no reply, and then the door opened and the Frau Pastorin led Fritz back again, and, pointing to his place, said, "Now sit down quietly, and behave like a reasonable being."

Fritz followed her advice, that is to say the first part of it; the second was not so easy, and ought not to have been expected. After fashionable talk, reasonable talk seemed to him very

tame, and why should he spoil a good beginning by a bad ending?

As Franz and the little girls gradually resumed their lively chatter, and the older people travelled on in the country road of reasonable talk, with a jolt now and then, when Bräsigt drove against a stone, Fritz sat and grumbled to himself, feeding his anger with punch, which served as oil to the flame, and inwardly called Franz "a crafty rascal," and the little girls, "foolish children," who understood nothing of polite conversation.

In spite of this, and of the contempt which he felt for such childish intercourse, his anger was mingled with a little jealousy at not being himself "cock of the walk," and as he perceived that Franz seemed most taken with Louise Habermann, he vowed secretly that *that* should come to an end; he himself, Fritz Triddelsitz, would see what he could do, provided, that is, that his aunt would keep out of the way.

By this time it was growing late, but no one thought how late it was, until suddenly a strange figure appeared in the room, wrapped from top to toe in all sorts of warm garments, and he blew a horn, which was fearful to hear, and then began to sing, which was more fearful still. It was Gust Stöwsand, who was not more than half-witted, and, because he was fit for nothing else, Jochen Nüssler had made him night-watchman. And the boys and girls looked in at the door, to see how Just would manage his business, and they laughed, and pushed and pulled one another back and forth. Then congratulations began, and all wished each other "Happy New Year!" and after all was quiet again, the Herr Pastor made a little speech, which began quite playfully but ended seriously, how with every year one came a step nearer to the grave, and one must comfort oneself by this, that with every year new knots were tied, and friendship and love bound more closely together. As he finished his good words, he looked around the circle; the little Frau Pastorin had slipped her arm in his, Jochen stood by his wife, Habermann and Bräsigt held each other by the hand, the two little twin-apples had their arms around each other, and Franz stood by Louise Habermann. Fritz was nowhere to be seen, he had gone off in his vexation.

So ended the year 1839.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Easter came, Bräsigt set out for the water-cure, and the Kammerrath arrived at Pumpelshagen, with his three daughters, Albertine, Bertha, and Fidelia.

"He will never go away again, he is near his end," said Habermann to himself, and Franz thought the same, and they spoke sadly of it to each other as they sat together the evening after his arrival. Franz naturally took his meals after this with his uncle and cousins, and Habermann found himself very lonely in the old farm-house, he had become so accustomed to the young man's society, and found it so pleasant.

During the first week the Kammerrath had a visitor. Pomuchelskopp came, in his blue dress-coat with bright buttons, and in his new coach, which was rendered more splendid than ever, since it was adorned with a coat of arms, which he had ordered from Vienna for half a louis-d'or. It represented a haddock's head (Dorsch Kopp) on a blue field (Fell), which the stupid laborers, who understood nothing about haddocks and blue fields called "a block head (das Kopp) in a blue coat" (Fell); having possibly discerned a personal resemblance between the escutcheon and their master.

He had given up the idea of intercourse with Bräsigt's Herr Count, and no other families of nobility lived in the neighborhood, so he found the Kammerrath's arrival quite apropos. But the man was unfortunate. As he made known his errand to Daniel Sadenwater, the Kammerrath's old servant, in a melancholy tone--that he felt constrained to make personal inquiries after the Herr Kammerrath, and added that he had known the Herr Kammerrath very well at Rostock,--old Daniel went off with a peaceful face to announce him, but came back with a face quite as placid to say that the Herr Kammerrath regretted he was not in a state of health to receive callers. That was truly vexatious for Pomuchelskopp, and he sat all the afternoon sulking in the sofa-corner, and his dear wife, who always became so cheerful and affectionate on such occasions, called him "Pöking" incessantly, which certainly should have amply compensated for his disappointment.

The Kammerrath, in his illness, felt the need of no other society than he found at home. His two oldest daughters thought of nothing else from morning to night but to amuse and comfort him, and the youngest, who was the pet child of the whole family, and who continued a little too young to suit her elder sisters, and perhaps prided herself a little upon her childlike joyousness, sought for means to enliven him. Franz, in the kindness of his heart, had assumed the office of

secretary to his uncle, and took upon himself all the little annoying cares, which are not wanting in a household where sickness has entered; but the Kammerrath took especial pleasure in the society of Habermann, and consulted him not only about farming matters, but in all his affairs and perplexities.

Habermann had little time, now, to visit at the parsonage, and if Louise wished to speak to her father, she must seek him in the fields, or at noon in the farm-house. So it happened that she often came in the way of the Fräulein Fidelia, and as it is an old story that young girls who are growing to be rather old girls, hovering on the line between youth and age, always incline to the youthful side, and enjoy the society of those younger than themselves, it was quite natural that Fräulein Fidelia should take a great fancy to Louise, and in a little while they were the closest friends.

It is generally a good thing for a young girl to have such a friend, older than herself, but I would not say it is always so. It depends greatly upon the circumstances of the older lady. Louise took no harm from the intimacy, for Fräulein Fidelia was very kind-hearted; she was also a little tired of the frivolity and ceremony of high society, and when her blessed mama--the gracious old lady, as Daniel Sadenwater called her--had endeavored to make her more ceremonious and dignified, the Kammerrath had always taken his darling's part. He was a little to blame for her childishness; she had always frolicked with him, from her babyhood, and had laughed away his cares and troubles, and she kept on doing so from force of habit.

She spoke of this daily task of amusing her father in such a manner that Louise thought of nothing but how to comfort and assist her; and what might have been dangerous under different circumstances became now rather a preventive of contagion. Louise had too much good sense to look among Fräulein Fidelia's little fripperies of behavior for manners suitable to herself. But she not only received benefit, she gave it. If Louise had little knowledge of the world of fashion, Fräulein Fidelia had as little of the world in which she lived and moved--and there Louise could give the best instruction.

But a vexatious thing was first to occur, which gave Fräulein Fidelia great annoyance. It happened in this way. The Kammerrath had sent to Schwerin for a beautiful dress, for her birthday present, Fräulein Albertine had given her a new summer hat, and Fräulein Bertha, a pretty shawl, and when the presentation was over, the two elder sisters had arrayed their pet in the new finery, and stood looking at her right and left, admiring her fine appearance, and Fräulein Bertha exclaimed, "She is a little fairy!" (*fée*).

Corlin Kegels, one of the maids, was going through the room at the moment, and had nothing better to do than to say in the kitchen: "What do you think, girls? Fräulein Bertha says that our little Fräulein looks like a little cow (*vieh*)." The joke took, and Fräulein Fidelia was soon known among the servants only as "the little cow." Of course it must come to her ears, sooner or later, and then there was a great uproar and a great investigation, and Corlin Kegels, in spite of her weeping and begging, was turned out of doors. Louise came in just then, and met Corlin crying on the door-steps, and found Fräulein Fidelia crying in the parlor. One word led to another, and when Louise knew the whole affair, she said, placing her hands compassionately on the Fräulein's shoulders, "Ah, the poor things didn't mean any harm."

"Yes, indeed they did," cried the Fräulein, hastily. "The rough, unmannerly common people!"

"No, no! Don't say that!" exclaimed Louise, really distressed. "Our people are not rough; they have as much feeling as distinguished people. My father says one must learn to know them, and that is not so easy, their language separates them from their masters."

"Very likely," said Fidelia. "I call 'little cow' a rough, coarse expression."

"It was a misunderstanding," said Louise. "The word '*fée*' is unknown to them, and this sounds like it, and seemed comical to them. They had no idea of offending you. Dear Fräulein, you are the idol of all your servants."

This last sugar-plum, which Louise administered with no thought of flattery, pacified the Fräulein, and at last, in the kindness of her heart, she resolved upon a nearer acquaintance with her people, and Corlin Kegels was taken again into favor.

The Fräulein made inquires of Franz, and he praised the Pumpelbogen people highly, the Kammerrath, also, gave them a good character, and said that their ancestors had lived on the estate since the memory of man. "The first Herr von Rambow of whom we have intelligence," said he, "bad two servants, one of whom was called 'Asel' and the other 'Egel.' These had many namesakes, and in time a great confusion arose among the different 'Egels' and 'Asels.' One Egel would take home the bushel of wheat, which another Egel should have had, and one Asel would get the load of hay which properly belonged to another. This confusion had reached such a point under one of my forefathers, who--I am sorry for the family to confess--had a very short memory, that the Frau von Rambow, who was a good deal quicker-witted than her husband, undertook to remedy matters. She had an idea, and as she had the rule she could carry it out. All the fathers of families in the village were called together, One Sunday morning, and every one must tell his christened name and his father's name, and she wrote them down--for she knew how to write--and then took the first letter of the christened name, and the father's name together, and

baptized the whole village. So 'Karl Egel' became 'Kegel,' and 'Pagel Egel' 'Pegel' and 'Florian Egel' 'Flegel,' and 'Vullrad Asel' was changed to 'Vasel,' and 'Peter Asel' to 'Pasel,' and 'David Asel' to 'Däsel,' and so on. And, it is a thing to be noted, the old story said the ancestor of the Egels was a flax-head, and that of the Asels a black-head, and so it is among their namesakes to this day. And the resemblance was not merely external, they inherited mental peculiarities as well; for the first Egel was greatly skilled in cutting spoons and ladles, and making rakes and wooden shoes, while the first Asel was an uncommonly fine singer, and the gifts have remained in the families,—the night-watchmen have always been chosen from the Asels, and the wheelwrights from the Egels; you know at this day, Fidelia, David Däsel is the watchman, and Fritz Flegel is the wheelwright."

Fräulein Fidelia was excessively pleased with this story, and in her restless and frolicsome humor she ran about to all the laborer's cottages, chatting with the housewives by the hour, and keeping them from their work, and bestowing cast-off finery upon the children. If Louise Habermann had not been with her, she would have given Pasel's eleven-year-old Marie a riding-hat with feathers and veil, and Däsel's Stina, who watched the goslings in the duck-pond, would have got a gorgeous pair of light blue satin slippers. The old fathers of the village shook their heads over such doings; but the old mothers defended her, saying that if she were not so sensible as she might be, yet she meant well; and instead of calling her merely "little cow," as before, they called her "a nice good, pretty little cow."

Pastor Behrens shook his head, also, when he heard of this new sort of beneficence. The Pumpelhagen people were the best in his parish, he said, and they had good reason to be, in having such a good old master, the Gurlitz people had suffered greatly from the change of proprietors; but nothing was so bad for people as indiscriminate and unmerited beneficence,—he must talk to the Fräulein about it.

He did so at the next opportunity; he told her that the Pumpelhagen people were so situated that unless in case of sickness, or the death of a cow, or some other misfortune, an industrious fellow and a tidy housewife could take care of themselves, and that unnecessary favors only taught them to look too much to others for assistance. These people must go their own, free way, just like others and one must be careful of intruding into their concerns, even to benefit them.

I am glad to say that Fräulein Fidelia saw the justice of these remarks, and limited her benefactions in future to the people who could no longer help themselves, to the old and the sick, and for these she was changed from a little "vieh" to a little "fée." Louise helped her in these Good-Samaritan labors, and as Franz now and then met them in the cottages, he saw to his surprise that the little maiden had a good deal of experience, and was both wise and skilful in action, and that the lovely eyes rested with as much sweetness and compassion upon a poor old sick laborer's wife, as upon him, that Christmas eve. He rejoiced at this, without rightly knowing why.

The spring was over, summer had come, and one Sunday morning Habermann received a letter from Bräsig, at Warnitz, saying that he must stay at home that day; Bräsig had returned from the water-cure and was coming to see him in the afternoon. So it happened; Bräsig came on horseback, and dismounted with a spring, as if he would send both feet through the causeway.

"Ho, ho!" cried Habermann. "How active you are, you are as quick as a bird!"

"Freshly sharpened, Karl! I have made a new beginning."

"Well, old fellow, how did it go?" asked Habermann, when they were established on the sofa, and had started their pipes.

"Listen, Karl! Damp, cold, soaking wet, that is only the beginning. They make a man into a frog, and before human nature changes to frog-nature a man suffers so much that he wishes he had come into the world as a frog, to begin with; but it is good, for all that. You see, the first thing in the morning is generally sweating. They wrap you up in cold, wet cloths, and then in woolen blankets, so tightly that you can move nothing but your toes. After that they take you into a bathing room, ringing a bell to keep the ladies away, and then they put you into a bathing-tub, and pour three pailfuls of water over your bald head, if you happen to have one, and then you may go where you please. Do you think that is the end? You may think so, but it is only the beginning; but it is good, for all that.

"Well, then you go walking, for exercise. I have done a good deal of walking in my time, raking and harrowing and sowing peas, and so forth; but I always had something to do. Here, however, I had nothing at all. And then you drink water from morning to night. It is just like pouring water through a sieve, and they stand there and groan, and say, 'Ah, the beautiful water!' Don't you believe them, Karl, they are hypocrites. Water is bad enough, outside, but inside it is fearful; it is good, though, for all that.

"Then you take a sitz-bath—can you imagine how that feels, four degrees above freezing point? Just as if the devil had got you on a red-hot iron stool, and kept putting fresh fire under; but then it is good for you. Then you walk again, till noon, and then you eat your dinner.

"But you have no conception, Karl, how people eat at a water-cure! The water must sharpen

the stomach famously. Karl, I have seen ladies, as slender and delicate as angels, who would eat three great pieces of steak, and potatoes--preserve us! enough to plant half an acre! The water-doctors are to be pitied, for one must eat them out of house and home. After dinner, you drink water again, and then you can talk with the ladies; for in the morning they won't speak to you, they go about in strange disguises, some with wet stockings, as if they had been crabbing, others with their heads tied up in wet cloths, and their hair flying. You can talk to them as you please, but you will find it hard to get answers, unless you inquire about their diseases, whether they have had an eruption, or swellings or boils, for that is polite conversation at a water-cure. After you have amused yourself in this manner, you must go to the "Tüsche,"^[2] but don't think that it is black,--no, nothing but clear cold water; it is good, though. You must take notice, Karl, everything that is particularly disagreeable and a man's especial horror, is good for the human body."

"You should be cured of your gout, then, Bräsig, for you have a special horror of cold water."

"One may see very well, Karl, that you have never been at a water-cure. You see, the doctor explained it to me at length, this confounded Podagra is the chief of all diseases,--it is the mother of all mischief,--and it comes from the gout-stuff that lodges in the bones and ferments there, and the gout-stuff comes from the poison stuff that you swallow by way of nourishment, for example, Kümmel and tobacco, or the things you get from the apothecary. And if you have the gout you must be sweated in wet sheets, till all the tobacco which you have ever smoked, and all the Kümmel you have ever drank, is sweated out. So you see the poison-stuff goes away, and then the gout-stuff, and then the cursed Podagra itself."

"Was it so with you?"

"No."

"No? why didn't you stay longer, then? I would have held out till the end."

"Karl, you may talk. Nobody holds out,--no human being could. They had one man there who was sweated till he smelt so strong of tobacco that the doctor called the patients in, that their own noses might testify, and it was put down in the books; but it came out afterward that the rogue had been smoking a cigar, which is forbidden,--and Kümmel is forbidden also. But to go on with the daily life. After the Tüsche, you walk again, and by that time it is evening. You may still walk about in the twilight, if you please, and many of the gentlemen and ladies do so, or you may amuse yourself in the house, with reading. I used to read the water-books which a certain Russian has written, his name is Frank, one of the chiefs of the water-doctors. Karl, there is everything in those books, everything in brief. But it is hard for a man to understand, and, on that account, I did not get beyond the second page. That was quite enough for me, for after I had read it I was as dizzy as if I had been standing on my head half an hour. Do you think, Karl, that fresh air is fresh air? Not a bit of it! And do you think that water out of your pump is water? You are quite mistaken! You see, fresh air is composed of three parts, oxygen and nitrogen and carbonic acid gas. And the pump water is composed of two parts, oxygen and hydrogen. The entire water-cure system is founded upon fresh air and water. And you see, Karl, how wisely nature has provided; we go about in the open air, and we breathe in the black carbonic acid, and the nitrogen, for they cannot be separated, and then comes the water-cure and turns these ugly things out of doors, for the oxygen of the water unites with the carbonic acid, and the hydrogen drives out the nitrogen from the body, in the sweating process. Do you understand, Karl?"

"No," said Habermann, laughing heartily, "not a word of it."

"You shouldn't laugh at things that you don't understand, Karl. You see. I know the nitrogen is driven out, I have smelt it myself; but what becomes of the black carbon? That is the point, and I never could get beyond it, in my water-cure science, and do you suppose Pastor Behrens understands it? I asked him yesterday, and he knows nothing at all about it. But you will see, Karl, the black carbonic acid is still in my body, and so I shall have the cursed Podagra again."

"But, Zachary, why didn't you stay a little longer, until you were thoroughly cured?"

"Karl," said Bräsig, dropping his eyes, with a confused expression, "it wouldn't do! Something happened to me, Karl," looking Habermann in the face again. "You have known me since I was a child, have you ever noticed any disrespectful behavior to the ladies?"

"No indeed, Bräsig, I can testify to that."

"Well, then, just think how it must have troubled me! A week ago this last Friday, I had an infamous grumbling in my great toe,--for it always begins at the extremities,--and the water-doctor said, 'Herr Inspector, you must have an extra packing. Dr. Strump's confounded Colchicum is doing the mischief, and we must have it out.' So he packed me himself, and bandaged me up so tight that I could scarcely draw breath, saying I did not need air so much as water, and upon that he was going to shut the window. 'No,' said I, 'I understand enough to know that I must have fresh air; leave the window open,' and he did so, and went off. I lay there quietly, thinking no harm, when suddenly I heard a humming and a buzzing, and as I looked up, a whole swarm of bees came in at the window, and the leader,--for I knew him, Karl, you know I am a bee-master, I went out one spring at Zittelwitz with the schoolmaster, and took seven and fifty hives--and this leader made straight for the blanket which the doctor had drawn over my head. Well,

what was I to do? I could not stir,--I blew and blew at him, till I had no breath left; not the slightest use. The beast fastened himself on my bald head,--for I always left off my peruke, in order not to injure it--and the whole swarm came hovering over my face. I rolled myself out of bed, fell on the floor, struggled out of the blankets and wet sheets, and ran out of the door, with the devils after me, and cried for help. God be praised, the assistant of the water-doctor--the man's name is Ehrfurcht,--met me, and took me to another room, and got me necessary clothing, so that after resting awhile I could go down into the dining-room, that is to say, with half a score bee-stings in my body. I began to talk to the gentlemen, and they laughed. I turned to one of the ladies, and made a friendly remark about the weather, and she blushed. Why should the weather make her blush? I don't know, nor you either, Karl. Why do you laugh? I turned to another lady, who was a singer, and asked her very politely to sing a song, that she had sung every evening. What do you think she did, Karl? She turned her back on me. As I stood there wondering what it all meant, the water-doctor came to me, and said, 'Herr Inspector, don't take it ill, but you made yourself quite noticeable this afternoon.' 'How so?' said I. 'Yes,' said he, 'when you sprang out of the door, Fräulein von Hinkefuss was crossing the corridor, and she has told it in confidence to all the rest.' 'And on that account, am I to be deprived of all pity? Shall the gentlemen laugh, and the ladies turn their backs on me? I did not come here for that! If Fräulein von Hinkefuss had got half a score of bee-stings in her body, I should inquire after her every morning, with the greatest interest. But let her go! One cannot buy sympathy in the market. But now come, Herr Doctor, and take the bee-stings out of me.' If you believe me Karl, he couldn't do it. 'What,' said I, 'not take a bee-sting out of my skin?' 'No,' said he, 'I *could*, to be sure, but I dare not, it would be a surgical operation, and according to the Mecklinburg laws I am not qualified for it.' 'What?' said I, 'you can drive the poison out of my bones, and not draw the stings out of my body? You dare not touch the skin of the outer man, and you clear out his inside with your confounded water? I am obliged to you!' and from that moment, Karl, I lost confidence in the whole concern, and without that it could do me no good, they say so themselves to everybody, when he first arrives. So I came away, and had the stings taken out by old Surgeon Metz, at Rahnstadt. And so ends my story of the water-cure. It is a good thing, though; one gets quite a different view of things, and even if the cursed Podagra is not cured, one gets an idea of what a human being can endure. And, Karl, I brought you home a water-book, you can study the science in the winter evenings."

Habermann thanked him, and the conversation turned to farming matters, and so, by degrees, to the apprentices.

"How does your young gentleman get along?" inquired Bräsig.

"Very well indeed, Bräsig, he is equally good at everything. I am only sorry that cannot see more of him. He does his duty, wherever he is, and Daniel Sadenwater tells me that he watches many a night with our poor, sick master, though he is very tired. He is a model young man. He has interest in his work, and a kind heart for his friends."

"Well, Karl, and your greyhound?"

"Oh, he is not so bad; he has a good many maggots in his head, but the youth is not vicious. He does what he is told, when he doesn't forget it. Well! we were young once ourselves."

"The best of your young folks is that they are so hearty. I was at Christian Klockmann's, you see, lately, he has a son, fourteen years old, just confirmed. He is tired all day, falls asleep while he is walking, when he ought to eat he won't eat, and if he is sent to the field he perishes with cold."

"Ah, no! my two are not like that," said Habermann.

"And the young gentleman watches at night by the old master?" said Bräsig. "It is sad for the young man! The Herr Kammerrath is then very feeble? Give him my respects, Karl, I must say adieu, I have an appointment to meet my gracious Herr Count." Whereupon Bräsig departed.

The Kammerrath had indeed grown very feeble, of late; he had suffered another slight shock, but had fortunately retained his speech, and this evening Franz came to ask Habermann to go over and see his uncle, who wished to speak with him.

When the Inspector entered the room, Fidelia was there, chattering to the old gentleman of this and that; the poor child knew not how long she might be able to talk with her good father. The Kammerrath bade her leave him alone with Habermann, and when she was gone he looked at the inspector with deep sadness, and said, feebly, "Habermann, dear Habermann, when that which has always given us pleasure pleases us no longer, the end is near." Habermann looked at him, and could not conceal from himself the sad truth, for he had seen many death-beds; his eyes fell, and he asked, "Has the doctor been here to-day?"

"Ah, dear Habermann, what good can the doctor do me? I would rather see Pastor Behrens once more. But I must speak to you first of other affairs. Sit down here, near me."

He went on hastily, yet with frequent interruptions, as though time and breath were both growing short for him. "My will is at Schwerin. I have thought of everything, but--my illness came so suddenly--my wife's death--I fear my affairs do not stand quite so well as they should." After a short pause, he resumed, "My son will have the estate, my two married daughters are provided

for, but the unmarried ones--poor children! they will have very little. Axel must take care of them--God bless him, he will have enough to do to take care of himself. He writes me that he wishes to remain another year in the army. Very well, if he lives carefully, something may be saved to pay debts. But the Jew, Habermann, the Jew! Will he wait? Have you said anything to him?"

"No, Herr Kammerrath; but Moses will wait; at least I hope so. And if not, there is a good deal of money coming in from the farm, much more than last year."

"Yes, yes, and real estate has risen. But what good is it? Axel understands nothing of farming; but I have sent him books, through Franz, books about agriculture,--he will study them; that will help him, won't it, Habermann?"

"God bless the poor old Herr!" thought Habermann. "He was always so practical and reasonable himself, he wouldn't have said that when he was strong and well; but let him take what comfort he can," so he said yes, he hoped so.

"And, dear friend, you will stay with him," said the Kammerrath earnestly, "give me your hand upon it, you will stay with him?"

"Yes," said Habermann, and the tears stood in his eyes, "so long as I can be useful to you or your family, I will not leave Pumpelhagen."

"I was sure of it," said his master, falling back exhausted upon the pillows, "but Fidelia shall write--see him once more,--see you and him together."

His strength was gone, he drew his breath with difficulty.

Habermann rose softly, and pulled the bell, and as Daniel Sadenwater came, he took him into the ante-room, "Sadenwater, our master is worse, I am afraid he cannot last long; call the young ladies, and the young Herr, but say nothing definite about him."

A shadow fell upon the old servant's face, as when the evening wind passes over a quiet lake. He looked through the half-opened door of the sick-room as if it came from thence, and said to himself as if in excuse, "God bless him, it is now thirty years----" turned away, and left the room.

Franz and the young ladies came. The poor girls had no idea that their father was failing so rapidly; they had thought surely the doctor would be able to help him, and the Lord would spare him a little longer. They had taken turns in watching by him, of late, and it struck them strangely that they should all be there at once, with Franz, and Habermann, and Daniel Sadenwater.

"What is it, what is it?" began Fidelia, to the old inspector.

Habermann took her hand, and pressed it. "Your father has become worse, he is very ill, he wishes to see your brother---- Herr von Rambow, if you will write a couple of lines, I am going to send the carriage for the doctor, and the coachman can take the letter to the post. In three days your brother can be here, Fräulein Fidelia."

"He will not last three hours," said Daniel Sadenwater, softly, to Habermann as they came out of the sick-room.

And the three daughters stood around their father's bed, weeping and lamenting, and would fain hold fast the prop that had upheld them so long, and each was thinking anxiously for something to alleviate and help, and the three hearts beat more and more anxiously and quickly, and the one heart ever more slowly and feebly.

Franz sat in the ante-room, listening to every sound, and now and then going into the sick-room. He had never before seen the departure of human life, and he thought of his own father, whom he had always imagined like his uncle, and it seemed as if his own father were dying a second time. He thought also of his cousin, who was not here, and whose place he filled, and thought that he should love him the more, all his life.

Habermann stood at the open window, and looked out into the night. It was just such a warm, damp, cloudy night as that in which his heart had come so near to breaking. Then it was his wife, now his friend; who would come next? Would it be himself, or---- No, no, God forbid! that could not be.

And Daniel Sadenwater sat by the stove, and did what he had done every evening for thirty years; he had a basket of silver forks and spoons on his lap, and on the chair near him lay a polishing cloth, and a silk pocket-handkerchief; and he rubbed alternately the spoons and forks with the handkerchief, and as he looked at his master's name on the fork which he had polished every evening for thirty years, his eyes were so dim that he couldn't see whether it were bright or not, and he set the basket down, and looked at the fork till his eyes ran over with tears.

Amid all this trouble and sorrow, the pendulum of the old clock moved steadily back and forth, back and forth, as if old Time sat by a cradle and rocked his child safely and surely to sleep.

And he slept. Two eyes closed themselves forever, the dark curtain between Here and Beyond dropped softly down, and this side stood the poor maidens, lamenting and vainly stretching their

arms after that which was gone, and wringing their hands over that which was left behind. Fidelia threw herself down by her father's body, and sobbed and cried until she was taken with spasms. Franz, full of sympathy, lifted her in his arms, and carried her out of the room, and her two sisters followed, in new anxiety for their darling, and Habermann was left alone with Daniel Sadenwater. He pressed down the eyelids of the dead, and after a little turned away with a heavy heart; but Daniel sat on the foot of the bed, looking with his quiet face into the still more quiet face of his master, and he held the fork still in his hand.

CHAPTER IX.

Axel arrived three days after, having travelled by extra post, too late to hear the last words of his father, but not too late to render the last honors to his remains. The postillion blew lustily on his horn, as he drove into the court-yard, and at the door of the mansion-house appeared three pale mourners in black raiment. The young master knew what had happened. Everything came upon him at once,--thoughts for which he was, or was not accountable,--God's providence, his own weakness and frivolity, his sisters' desolate condition and his own inability to help them, more than all, his father's thoughtfulness and kindness, which were never wanting in good or evil times. He was quite beside himself. His nature was one to be easily excited even by less serious causes than the present. He wept and mourned and lamented, and kept asking how this and that had happened, and, when he heard from Franz that the last words of his father had been spoken to Habermann, he took the old Inspector aside and questioned him, and the latter made a clean breast of it, and told him that his father's last earthly care had been about his future, and how he and his sisters might get along by a prudent management of the estate.

Ah, yes, that should be done! Axel swore it to himself, under the blue heavens, as he walked alone through the garden; he would turn the shillings into dollars, he would retire from the world and from his comrades. He could do it easily; but he would not resign from the army immediately, and take up the study of farming, as Habermann advised; he was too old for that, and it did not suit his position as an officer, and there was really no necessity. When he came by and by to live on the estate, he should learn about it, naturally; meantime he would live sparingly, pay up his debts, and study agricultural books, as his father desired. So a man deceives himself, even in the holiest and most earnest hours.

The next day was the funeral. No invitations had been sent out; but the Kammerrath had been too much beloved in the region not to have many followers at his burial. Bräsig's Herr Count came, and it seemed as if he thought he was receiving an honor instead of conferring one. Bräsig himself was there, and stood in the room by the coffin, and while others bowed their heads and dropped their eyes, he stretched his wide open, and raised his eyebrows, and as Habermann passed by, he grasped his coat-sleeve, and, shaking his head, asked impressively, "Karl, what is human life?" but he said nothing more, and Jochen Nüssler, standing by his side, said softly to himself, "Yes, what shall we do about it?" And the laborers stood around, all the Pegels and Degels, and Päsels and Däsels, and as Pastor Behrens came from the other room, leading the youngest daughter by the hand, and, standing by the coffin, spoke a few words which would have gone to the heart even of a stranger, then many tears fell from all eyes. Tears of thankfulness were they, and tears of anxiety; the one for what they had enjoyed under the old master, the other for their unknown future under the new master.

When his remarks were ended, the procession started for the Gurlitz church-yard. The coffin was placed in a carriage, and Daniel Sadenwater sat by it, with his quiet old face as stiff and motionless as if he were set up for a monument at his master's grave. Then came the carriage with the four children, then the Herr Count, then Pastor Behrens and Franz, who wished to take Habermann with them, but he declined, he would go with the laborers; then Jochen Nüssler and others, and finally Habermann, on foot, with Bräsig and the laborers.

Close by Gurlitz, Bräsig touched Habermann, and whispered, "Karl, I have it, now."

"What have you, Zachary?"

"The pension from my gracious Herr Count. The last time I was with you, I went round to see him, and he gave it to me, paragraph for paragraph: two hundred and fifty thalers in gold, a living, rent free, in the mill-house at Haunerwiem,--there is a little garden there too, for vegetables,--and a bit of land for potatoes."

"Well, Zachary, I am glad you have such a comfortable provision for your old age."

"Eh, yes. Karl, that does very well, and with my interest from the capital which I have laid up, I

shall want for nothing. But what are they stopping for, ahead?"

"Ah, they are going to take the coffin from the carriage," said Habermann, and he turned to the laborers, "Kegel, Päsel! you must come now and carry the coffin." And he went forward with those who should do this office, and Bräsig followed.

Meanwhile, the people were getting out of the carriages, and, as Axel and his sisters stepped down, they were met by the little Frau Pastorin and Louise in mourning raiment, and the Frau Pastorin pressed the hands of the two older sisters, with the greatest friendliness and compassion, although she had hitherto held herself rather aloof from them, on account of the difference in rank. But death and sympathy bring all to a level, the lofty bow themselves under the hand of God, knowing that they are as nothing before him, and the lowly are lifted up, because they feel that the pity which stirs in them is divine. Even David Däsel might have taken the gracious Fräuleins by the hand to-day, and they would have recognized his honest heart in his wet eyes.

Louise held her friend Fidelia in her arms, and knew not what to say or what to do. "There!" she cried, with a deep sob, pressing into her hand a bunch of red and white roses, as if she gave with it the love and sympathy of which her heart was full.

All eyes were turned upon the child of fourteen years,--was she still a child? When the barberry bush turns green after a warm rain, are they buds still which it bears, or are they leaves? And for the human soul, when its time has come, every deep emotion is like a warm rain, that changes the buds to leaves.

"Who is that?" asked Axel of Franz, who looked steadfastly at the child. "Who is that young maiden, Franz?" asked he again, taking his cousin by the arm.

"That young maiden?" said Franz, "do you mean that child? That is Inspector Habermann's daughter."

Habermann had seen his child also, and the thought recurred which had come to him in the night, when the Kammerrath was dying. "No," said he again, "the good Lord will not suffer it." Strange! she was not ill; and yet who could tell? His poor wife had just such beautiful rosy cheeks.

"What comes now?" said Bräsig, rousing him from these gloomy thoughts. "Truly! Just look, Karl, Zamel Pomuchelskopp! With a black suit on!"

It was so indeed. Pomuchelskopp came forward and bowed to the young ladies, the most melancholy bow which it was possible for a man of his build to achieve, and then, turning to the Herr Lieutenant: "He would excuse--neighborly friendship--deepest sympathy on this melancholy occasion--highest respect for the departed--hope for a future good understanding between Pumpelhagen and Gurlitz"--in short, whatever he could think of at the moment, and, as the lieutenant thanked him for his friendly interest, he felt as light as if he had discharged himself of all the sympathy that was in him. He looked around over the company and, seeing that there were no proprietors present besides the Count, he managed in the walk through the church-yard to follow closely behind him, and tread in his very footsteps, a proceeding to which the gracious Herr Count was utterly indifferent, but which gave Pomuchelskopp the liveliest satisfaction.

The body was buried. The mourners stopped for a few moments at the parsonage, and partook of a little refreshment. The little Frau Pastorin was quite beside herself, torn into two halves, one part of her would gladly have remained on the sofa by the three daughters, endeavouring to comfort them, the other would be fluttering about the room, offering her guests bread-and-butter and wine, and, when Louise assumed the latter office, and the Pastor the former, the poor Pastorin sat down, quite unhappy, in her arm-chair, as if old Surgeon Metz of Rahnstadt had been putting together her two halves, and she had found the process a painful one.

Louise filled her office well, for it was not long before the followers took leave, one after another; Jochen Nüssler was the last, and, when he had bowed awkwardly to the lieutenant, he went up to the Frau Pastorin, and took her hand and pressed it as affectionately as if she had just buried her father, and said very sadly, "Yes, it is all as true as leather."

The Pastor also had discharged well the office of comforter, but it is easier to fill an empty stomach with bread-and-butter and wine, than to fill an empty heart with hope and joy. He began however, in the right way, touching lightly upon the thought of the love and protection which they had lost, and turning to what should come next, plans for the future, what would be most reasonable to do, and where they should live, so that when the three ladies went back with their brother to the desolate house, their future lay before them like a piece of cloth, which they must cut out with the shears, and turn this way or that as suited the pattern best, and fashion from it such raiment as they could.

Other people were looking at the future, also, and calculating on what *might* happen and what *must* happen. Out of the Kammerrath's grave grew not only daisies, but, from the blight upon the fortunes of Pumpelhagen, burdock and nettles and henbane shot up also, and the golden daisies bloomed in strange company. Whoever would harvest here must not be afraid of a little poison, or mind being pricked by the briars and nettles. He who has to do with nettles must grasp them

firmly, and the man who stood in the Gurlitz garden, looking over toward Pumpelhagen, had a firm grip, but he could wait till the right time,--the daisies must go to seed first.

"The stone was out of the way," he said to himself, with satisfaction, "and it was the cornerstone. What was left now? The Herr Lieutenant? He would fatten him first, feed him with mortgages and bills of exchange, and processes and procurations, until he should be fat enough, and then knock him on the head. Or, could he do better? Malchen was a pretty girl, or Salchen either,--Herr von Zwippelwitz said the other day, when he borrowed the money for that chestnut colt, that Salchen had a pair of eyes like--now, what was it? like fire-wheels, or like cannon-balls? Well, Salchen would know.

"But no, on the whole, no! He understood the other way best, he would not meddle with this. To be sure, it might do, in case of necessity; but safe was safe, better keep the cork in the bottle.

"Then there was Habermann! Infamous, sneaking scoundrel! That very morning he wouldn't speak to him. Did he think it was for Pomuchelskopp to speak first? To a servant? What was he but a servant? No, let me first have the lieutenant well in my clutches, and then I will see to him.

"Bräsigt, too, shall he keep putting stones in my way? The fool doesn't know that I have got him out of Warnitz; that upon my suggestion Slusuhr has put a flea in the Herr Count's ear, about the bad management at Warnitz. Now he must stay at Haunerwiem. And then the Herr Pastor! Oh, the Herr Pastor! I shall go round to his house to-morrow, and we shall be so friendly--oh, I know his friendliness! there lies the pastor's field before my eyes! To pretend friendship under such circumstances! Well, only wait a little, I will be even with him yet, for I have it. I have money." And with that, he slapped his fat hand upon his trowsers' pocket, till the golden seals on his watch chain danced merrily; but he quieted down suddenly, as he felt a hard hand on his shoulder, and his Häuning said, "Muchel, you are wanted in doors."

"Who is there, my Küking?" asked Pomuchelskopp gently, damped as usual by his wife's presence.

"Slusuhr the notary, and old Moses' David."

"Good, good!" said Pomuchelskopp, throwing his arm around her, so that the pair resembled a basket embracing a hop-pole,--"but just look over at Pumpelhagen and that beautiful field. Is it not a sin and a shame it should be in such hands? But that those two should come to-day, don't it seem like a special providence, Klücking?"

"You are always dreaming, Kopp! You had better come in and talk to the people. Such plans as you have in your head take too long to carry out to suit me."

"Gently, gently, my Klücking, slow and sure!" said Pomuchelskopp, as he followed his wife into the house.

Slusuhr and David were standing, meanwhile, in Pomuchelskopp's parlor. David had been suffering torments, for, as ill luck would have it, he had made himself fine with his great seal ring, and his gold watch-chain, and, as he entered the room, and stood with his back to the window, Philippping had spied the ring on his finger, and Nanting the watch-chain knotted across his vest, and they darted on him like a couple of ravens, tugging at the ring, and pulling at the chain, and Nanting trod on poor David's corns, and Philippping, who had got up on his knees in a chair, kept hitting him in the shins, and David's corns and shin-bones were tender points, especially the latter, since they bore the entire weight of his body, and nature had omitted to assist them with appropriate calves.

Slusuhr stood at the other window, before Salchen, who sat there embroidering a landscape painting on a sofa cushion for her father. It represented a long barn and a plum-tree thickly set with blue plums, and before the barn hens were scratching, and a wonderful bright-colored cock, while ducks and geese, beautiful as swans, were swimming in a little pond, and in the foreground lay a fat young porker.

Old Moses was right about the notary; he did look like a rat. His ears stuck out like a rat's ears, he was small and lean, like the rats in Rahnstadt,--exception being made of those who were so fortunate as to have a share in David's "produce business,"--he had grayish-yellow complexion and eyes, and also grayish-yellow hair and moustaches; but Malchen and Salchen Pomuchelskopp said he was "extremely interesting."

Interested, Bräsigt said; he knew well enough how to talk, only it must be about himself and his own meannesses. But was it not quite natural for the notary, to prefer talking about his own cunning craftiness, rather than the stupidity of other people? Was the notary to blame if his wisdom was too great to be concealed under a bushel? It had increased to such an extent, indeed, that he was able to accommodate it only by turning out his entire stock of honesty. We are not competent judges of such people; rat-nature is rat-nature, David himself said,--if you spoke of rats, they were too many for him.

To-day, he was telling Salchen, with great enjoyment, about an uncommonly stupid man, for whom he had promised a rich wife, and how on every journey to see the lady, he had plucked from the poor cock now a wing-feather, and now a tail-feather, until the last journey found him

thoroughly stripped. "Extremely interesting," said Salchen, just as Pomuchelskopp entered the room.

"Ah! Delighted to see you, Herr Notary! Good day, Herr David!"

Salchen would have gone on laughing, but Father Pomuchelskopp motioned with his hand toward the door, so she gathered up her plums, chickens, geese and pigs, and saying, "Come, Nanting and Philippling, father has business to attend to," she went out with them.

"Herr Pomuchelskopp," said David, "I came about the hides, and I wanted to ask about the wool. I got a letter----"

"Eh, what? wool and hides!" cried the notary. "You can talk about those afterward. We came for this particular business that you know about."

One may observe that the notary was a cunning business man, who could dispense with preliminaries, he took the bull by the horns, and that was what Pomuchelskopp liked,--he knew how to pull up nettles.

He went up to the notary, shook his hand, and motioned him to the sofa. "Yes," said he, "it is a difficult, far-reaching piece of business."

"Hm? Well, we can make it long or short, as you like. But difficult? I have managed much harder case's. David has a bill for two thousand five hundred; I myself lent him last quarter eight hundred and thirty. Would you like the note? Here it is."

"It is good paper," said Pomuchelskopp, gently and composedly, and he stood up and took the money for it out of his pocket.

"Will you have mine too?" asked David.

"I will take yours also," said Pomuchelskopp, nodding his head with dignity, as if he were doing a great work for humanity. "But, gentlemen," he added, "I take them on this condition. Make out a bill, in my name, that you are indebted to me for the amount, and keep these notes and worry him with them. He must be only worried, for if we carry it too far he will get the money somewhere else, and the right time hasn't come yet."

"Yes," said the notary, "we understand; we can manage the business; but David has something else to tell you."

"Yes," said David, "I have a letter from P---, when he has been with his regiment, from Marcus Seelig, who writes me that he can buy up about two thousand dollars of the lieutenant's paper, and if you would like--what do you say?"

"Hm?" said Pomuchelskopp, "it is a good deal to take at one time; but--yes, you may get it for me."

"But I have a condition, too," said David. "You must sell me the wool."

"Well, why not?" said Slusuhr, slyly treading on Pomuchelskopp's toes. "Let him go and look at it."

Pomuchelskopp understood the sign, and complimented David out of doors that he might go and examine the wool, and, when he returned and seated himself on the sofa by the notary, the latter laughed loudly, and said, "We know each other!"

"What do you mean?" asked Pomuchelskopp, feeling as if he had stepped out of his coach into the mud.

"My friend," said the notary, slapping him on the shoulder, "I have known all along what you wanted, and, if you will pull at the same rope with me, you shall not fail of securing it."

Good heavens, what a sly fox! Pomuchelskopp was frightened.

"Herr Notary, I don't deny----"

"No need of words between us. If things go as they should, you shall get Pumpelshagen in time, and David shall have his compound interest, and I--ah, I could manage the business myself, but it is a little too much for me to undertake,--I will take a mill or a farm, and by and by set up as a landed proprietor myself. But it will cost you a good deal of money."

"That it will, God knows, a great deal of money; but that is no matter. It torments me too much to look over at that beautiful estate; isn't it a sin and a shame it should be in such hands?"

The notary looked askance at him, as if to say, "Do you really mean that?"

"Well," said Pomuchelskopp, "what do you look at me so for?"

"Are you sure you are not joking?" said the notary, laughing. "If you want the end, you must

use the means. You don't think that you can bring such an estate as Pumpelshagen to bankruptcy with a trumpety thousand thaler note? You must go to work on an entirely different plan; you must buy up all the mortgages on the estate."

"I will do that," whispered Pomuchelskopp, "but there is Moses, with his seven thousand thalers not to be got at."

"I have nothing to do with Moses, and desire nothing to do with him; but there is David, perhaps he can get it for us. But that is not all, by a great deal, that you must do. You must get on good terms with the lieutenant; as a friend, you can assist him in some temporary embarrassment, and then, in a temporary embarrassment of your own, sell his note,--to me, if you like,--so that I can worry him a little, and, finally, when the whole concern is ready to smash, then----"

"I will do it," whispered Pomuchelskopp impressively, "I will do it all; but I must have him here first. You must go to him directly with the notes, so that he may be obliged to leave the army."

"That is a small thing; if there is nothing more----"

"Yes, yes, but there is something more," said Pomuchelskopp, still whispering, as if he feared being betrayed by a listener, "there is that Habermann; and so long as that sly old watch-dog is there, we cannot get him into our power."

"Oh, how stupid you are!" and the notary laughed in his face. "Did you ever hear of a young man in pecuniary difficulties making a clean breast of it to an old friend like Habermann? I take it, the lieutenant is not different from the rest of the world. No, Habermann may stay at Pumpelshagen, for all that; but yet, if it is possible, we must get him away. He is too good a steward, and, if he manages Pumpelshagen as well as he has so far, the lieutenant can afford to keep us waiting a good while yet."

"He a good manager! He didn't manage very well for himself."

"Well, let him go! One mustn't undervalue things. But he must go."

"Yes, but how can we bring it about?"

"I can't do anything," laughed the notary, "but you--when you get the Herr Lieutenant with the bright dollars under his eyes, it will be easy to get an old, worn-out inspector turned off. The devil is in it, if you can't."

"Yes, yes," cried Pomuchelskopp, in a tone of annoyance; "but all that takes so long, and my wife is so impatient."

"She will have to wait," said the notary, very quietly, "such things are not done precipitately. Only think how long Pumpelshagen has been in the Rambow family; the change cannot take place in a hurry. But now, stop! David is coming; not a word of this before David! Do you understand? Say nothing to him but about his money affairs."

As David entered the room, he saw a couple of remarkably jolly faces. Pomuchelskopp was laughing as if the Herr Notary had made an uncommonly witty remark, and the Herr Notary laughed, as if Pomuchelskopp had been telling the best joke in the world. But David was not so stupid as he appeared at the moment; he knew very well that he had been made an April fool of; and that his two colleagues had been discussing something beside jokes. "They have their secrets," said he to himself; "I have mine." He sat down by the table, with the stupidest Jew-lubber face, and nodding to Pomuchelskopp said, "I have looked at it."

"Well?" inquired Pomuchelskopp.

"Well," said David, shrugging his shoulders, "you say it has been washed, and it may have been washed, for all I know."

"What! Don't you believe me? Do you mean to say it isn't white as swan's-down?"

"Well, if it is swan's-down it may be swan's-down for all me."

"What are you driving at?"

"Look here! We got a letter from Löwenthal in Hamburg; the great Löwenthal house in Hamburg--the stone is fourteen dollars and a half."

"I know all that; you are always writing about that nonsense."

"A house like the Löwenthals doesn't write about nonsense."

"Eh, children," interrupted the notary, "this isn't business, this looks like a quarrel. Pomuchelskopp, let us have a couple of bottles of wine."

The Herr Notary was extremely familiar with the Herr Proprietor; but the Herr Proprietor

rang, and, as Dürting came, he said in a very friendly and pleasant way, for he was always pleasant in his own house, and especially to the women-kind, from his Häuning down to the little girls, "Dürting, two bottles of wine, from those with the blue corks."

When the wine stood on the table, Pomuchelskopp filled three glasses, and then emptied his own; but David merely sipped at his. As the notary finished his glass, he said, "Now, gentlemen, let me tell you something," and he winked at David across the table, and under the table he trod on Pomuchelskopp's toes.

"You, David, can have fifteen dollars for the stone, and you, Pomuchelskopp"--here he trod on his toes again--"you don't care for ready money at present, if you can get good bonds you would like it all the better"--

"Yes," said Pomuchelskopp, seeing the drift of the notary's remarks, "if you can get me the Pumpelhagen bonds from your father, I will give you up the surplus of the wool money."

"Why not?" said David, "but how about the knots?"

"The knots!" repeated Pomuchelskopp. "We can compromise----"

"Hold on!" cried the notary, "you can settle about the knots, when you bring the bond."

"Why not?" said David again.

When they had finished their wine, and were getting into their wagon, the notary said softly and very jokingly to Pomuchelskopp, "To-morrow David can begin to worry the Herr Lieutenant, and next week I will tread on his toes."

And Pomuchelskopp pressed his hand as gratefully as if the notary had saved his Philippping from drowning, and, after they were gone, he sat down with his Hänning, and cut and clipped contentedly at the web of the future, and the notary sat in the wagon highly pleased, well satisfied with himself that he was wiser than the others, and David sat at his side, and said to himself, "We shall see! You have the secrets, and I have the knots."

But it was not all right about the knots yet; for when David told the business to his father, and wanted the bond, the old man looked at him sideways, over his shoulder, and said, "So! If you have been with that notary, that cut-throat, and that Pomuchelskopp,--he is another cut-throat,--and bought wool, you may pay for it with your own bonds and not with mine. Do business with rats if you like, but I shall have nothing to do with them."

That was not so favorable for David and the knots.

CHAPTER X.

But it was worse for the poor Herr Lieutenant next morning, when David entered the room. David was never handsome,--nobody could say that, not even his own mother, but he had not improved since the lieutenant first made his acquaintance. Then, when he got the money for him at the notary's, there was something quite friendly in his appearance; but now, when he wanted the money again, he looked so tough and sour, that the lieutenant, without thinking what he was doing, drew on his gloves before speaking to him.

Speak with him he must, however, though David's face seemed to him as if Moses and all the prophets were looking out from behind it; and when David said, "Take off your gloves, Herr Lieutenant, and write," he took off his gloves, and wrote across the note, and David's face became as friendly as at their first interview.

"Thank God!" said the Herr Lieutenant, "that is done with."

But a few days later a wagon drove into the yard, and in the wagon sat the notary Slusuhr, and Habermann shook his head, and said, "God preserve me, with *him* too?"

And as the notary entered the room, the Herr Lieutenant said also, "God preserve me, him too?"

But he got on with him a little better than with David; the notary looked like a man of some cultivation, he always dressed well, and appeared outwardly like a gentleman, he understood also how to preserve such an appearance in his language,--that is to say, as long as he liked. This was

the case at present; the lieutenant invited him to a seat on the sofa, and ordered coffee, and there followed what seemed a very friendly chat about the weather and the neighborhood and the bad conduct of people in general, for in the latter topic the Herr Notary was well posted, because he had cultivated the habit of looking around him, and never acquired that of looking within. "Yes," said he, telling about a merchant in Rahnstadt, "Just think, Herr von Rambow, how wicked men are! There, out of pure kindness,--that is, on account of the interest which I must pay, for I hadn't so much money lying idle, I had to borrow it myself,--I lent him the money, and helped him out of his difficulties, and he was so thankful,--and now--now that I want it again, must have it, he is rough, he threatens to complain of me for charging illegal interest."

Of course there was not a word of truth in this story, the notary only told it to frighten the Herr Lieutenant, and it answered the purpose. In order to turn the conversation, he asked what sort of business the merchant was engaged in.

But the notary was not to be diverted; he did not answer the question, but went on with his story.

"But I have entered a complaint against him, and now let him look out! His credit is good for nothing,--and then the disgrace! It is not exactly entered yet, to be sure, but I have written it myself. What do you say to that?" The poor lieutenant was terribly distressed, the prospect looked as dark as if this was but the few drops before a heavy storm. He coughed, and cleared his throat, but said nothing, for he could think of nothing to say. It made no difference to the notary, he went on:

"But, thank God! I don't often have to deal with such idiots, this fellow is an exception. And since we are talking of money business,"--here he drew out his pocket-book,--"will you allow me to give you back your note?"

He held out the note for eight hundred and thirty dollars, and the rat-like ears seemed to erect themselves, and the grey eyes to protrude from the grayish yellow face, and the dry lips to moisten, like a rat when he smells bacon. The poor lieutenant took the note, and attempted to put aside the matter with a semblance of indifference.

Yes, he said, he would send him the money; he had started so suddenly, and the occasion of his journey had been so sad, that he had not thought of the matter.

Yes, replied the notary, he believed him, he knew how it was when his own father died; at such a time, a man thinks of nothing but his loss,--and he put on such a melancholy face, that the lieutenant took fresh courage,--but, said the notary, he had thought a great deal of this note lately, he depended on it, for he was under engagements, and to meet them,--he must have money.

"But this is such a trifling matter," interrupted Axel.

"Well, yes," said the notary, taking other papers from his pocket-book; "but then these little matters too!" and he laid on the table the notes for over two thousand dollars, which David had bought up at the lieutenant's garrison town.

The lieutenant was startled out of his show of indifference.

"How did you come by these papers?" he exclaimed.

"Herr von Rambow, I believe the name 'exchange' is applied to such bills because they are transferable by their possessors; you cannot be surprised that I should take them instead of cash payment, all the more since I was saved a good deal of writing and postage money."

The lieutenant became more and more perplexed, but the idea that all this was a concerted game did not yet occur to him.

"But, my dear Herr Notary, I have for the moment no money on hand."

"No?" cried the notary, shrugging his shoulders with an expression which let one look straight into the black depths of his soul, and revealed the compact that he had made with the devil. "No?" he repeated; "I don't believe it." And, in spite of all the lieutenant's assurances the notary stood before him, hard and cold, saying insolently, to his face, that he did not believe him; it was only that he *would* not pay. Finally, the good old means of prolongation came upon the carpet, to which Axel would gladly have agreed at the first, if it had been proposed to him; but that would not have suited the notary. He wanted more commission than David, and he meant to take his satisfaction in the business, for he was a man who enjoyed a joke, and the best of all jokes to him was when he could say to himself, "No one can match you in craftiness; you set your foot on the necks of high and low, and it is good sport to watch their struggles."

These were the troubles and distresses in which Axel von Rambow sat, up to the neck, and they distracted him from his grief about his father. From a deep sorrow, of God's sending, a soul works itself out fresh and pure, like a man over whom the waves of the sea have rolled; he may have had a hard struggle, but when he comes forth he stands on the beach clean and cool, and ready for new work. But he who has fallen into trouble through his own temerity, is like one who,

having fallen into a slough, is covered with filth, and is ashamed to meet the eyes of others. So it was with the young Herr, he was ashamed that he had lived so thoughtlessly, he was ashamed of having involved himself with black and with white Jews, he was ashamed that he could not help himself out of the slough, and that the help which others had given could only sink him deeper. How easily he might have escaped all this, if he had but confided in Habermann! How gladly he would assist him even now, since the reason was gone that had hindered him before, the Kammerrath! But the human heart is a stubborn and also a perverse thing, and this perverse thing believes it will find more rest if miles lie between it and its disgrace; so Axel left his estate much sooner than his sisters had hoped.

At his garrison he found everything as he had left it, only he himself was changed; at least he said so to himself, daily; but if one had asked his comrades they would have said they observed nothing peculiar about him, and quite naturally, for his good resolutions, which were the only respect in which he had altered, had not yet come to light. He meant to be economical, he meant to follow his father's advice, and study agriculture as well as he could from books, he meant to do well in all respects. His economy began the first morning; for a week he drank no sugar in his coffee,--"For," said he, "if a man despises little things, he will not prosper in great ones,"--and he smoked cigars at nineteen instead of twenty dollars the box. His servant got a serious lecture, when he brought the bread and butter for his breakfast, and received orders to give his two horses each half a measure of oats less than usual, "For," he said, "times are hard."

The latter was the only enduring retrenchment--probably because he was not fed at the same crib with his mares; all the others stopped after a week or so; it was of no use, he said, to begin things that one couldn't carry through. It was much in the same way with his agricultural studies. The first three pages of every book, he knew almost by heart, he had read them so often; for he always began at the beginning, because, when he had got so far, some thing would divert his attention from the text. Then, as he felt so sure of these, he would reward himself for his industry by looking up something interesting in the books, and as he read a chapter on the breeding of horses, he would say to himself he knew all that, and more too; there had been great progress in those matters. After all, what good would it do for him to read these books, if he could not take hold of the business practically? he knew very well a farmer should be practical,--nothing if not practical! So he made the acquaintance of a Herr von So-and-So, who owned an estate in the neighborhood; he rode with him over the fields, and asked the inspector what he was doing that day, and when they returned to the house, he knew as well as the Herr von So-and-So that in Seelsdorp on the 15th of June, they were carting manure, and that his gray Wallach was foaled in Basedow from the gray Momus; or he went with Herr von So and So, with a gun over his shoulder, through the barley stubble, and got the information by the way that the barley had been harvested on the 27th of August, shot a brace of partridges, and when he went to bed at night he knew as well as Herr von So and So how the partridges tasted.

He found this sort of practical apiculture very agreeable, and as a man is apt to talk about the things that please him, Axel did not fail to exhibit his attainments, and was soon known among his comrades as a shining light, quite an agricultural tallow candle, four to the pound. Since most of them were the sons of noble landed proprietors, and destined to the same life, and looking forward with horror to the time when they must leave their jolly soldier-life, for the hard work of gentlemen farmers, Axel seemed to them an unusual example of diligence, and they looked upon him as upon some wonderful animal who out of pure love for labor had put his head into the yoke. Most of them admired him accordingly, though a few blockheads turned up their noses, and insinuated that for a lieutenant his conversation savored too strongly of the farm-yard.

Having set himself up as an authority in agricultural matters, it was necessary to sustain his reputation, and to make progress with time. And that was a period of wonderful progress in agricultural science, for Professor Liebig had written a famous book for the farmers, which was brimful and running over of carbon and saltpetre, and sulphur, and gypsum, and lime, and sal-ammoniac, and hydrates and hydropathy, enough to drive one crazy. People who wished to dip their fingers in science procured this book, and sat down to it, and read and read, until their heads were dizzy; and if they tried to recollect, they could not tell whether gypsum were a stimulant or a nutriment,--that is to say, for clover, not for human beings.

Axel bought this book, and it fared with him as with the rest, he read and read, but kept growing dizzier, and his head turned round as if there were screws getting loose in it, and he shut the book. It would probably have stopped here, with him, as with the others, he would have forgotten the whole concern, if he had not had the fortune to know a good-natured apothecary, who could let him take all the drugs, of which the book treated, into his own hands, and smell them with his own nose. This was the practical way, and from that moment he understood the business, yes, as well as Liebig himself, so that he had no occasion to read farther in the book.

The branch of agriculture which gave him particular pleasure was farming-implements and machinery. He had from a child taken great delight in all sorts of inventions; as a boy he had made little mills, he had pisted, and, although his mother had a great dislike to anything that smacked of handicraft, he had, during his school-days, taken private lessons in book-binding. These tastes came into exercise now; he was uncommonly pleased to see a design of a new-fashioned American rake, or a Scotch harrow, and it was not long before he indulged in the innocent amusement of cutting little rakes and harrows and rollers himself.

He did not stop here, however, but went on to design rape-clappers, flax-bruisers, and corn-

shellers. He might possibly have rested in these achievements,--and it was surely worthy of honor in a lieutenant to lay aside his uniform and go to work with drawing-knife, auger and glue-pot,--if he had not made the acquaintance of an old half-crazy watchmaker, who had wasted his life and his small property in endeavoring to discover, for an ungrateful world, the secret of perpetual motion. This old benefactor of humanity led him into his workshop, and showed him how one wheel must be made to turn upon another, and this upon a cylinder, and that upon a screw, and the screw upon a winch, and that upon a wheel again, and so on, over and over; he showed him machines that wouldn't go, and others that would go, and yet others which wouldn't go as they should; he exhibited machines which Axel could comprehend, and some which he couldn't comprehend, and some which he didn't comprehend himself; but it was all very interesting to Axel, and he became inspired in his turn with the desire of being a benefactor to mankind. His idea was to invent a machine, which would do all sorts of field labor, which should rake, harrow, roll, and pull up weeds. It was really touching to see the fresh, young lieutenant of cavalry and the withered, wrinkled old watchmaker, sitting together and planning with the lever and screws to elevate mankind.

And so it might have gone on, for all me, and for all him, and he might possibly have elevated mankind, though the constant tugging of securities and discounts and such matters had a tendency to bring him down, for he thought nothing about the payment of his debts, and although there was a good income from Pumpelhagen, according to his father's will it was I to be applied first to the payment of his own debts, and the sisters must be supported out of it; and, as for the rest, he lived without anxiety when his first needs were supplied.

But there are a pair--brother and sister--who shake the most indifferent person out of his dreams, and drive him, without, ceremony, out from the warm chimney-corner, into the storm and rain,--these are hate and love. Hate thrusts one head-foremost out of the door, saying, "There, scoundrel, away with you!" Love takes one gently by the hand, leads one to the door, and says, "Come, with me, I will show you a better place." But it comes to the same thing; one must leave his nice, warm chimney-corner. Axel made the acquaintance of both; and it happened quite accidentally, it was none of his doing.

I don't know whether it is so still; but at that time it was the custom, among the Prussians, for the regimental commanders to send regular department lists of the officers to Berlin, and King Frederic William was in the habit of looking into the papers himself, in order to see what his officers were fit for.

Now Axel's good old colonel liked the Herr Lieutenant very much, because he had once owned an estate himself, alongside Bütow and Lauenburg, which he had got rid of through his singular methods of farming; and because he still owned one, on which he could carry out these methods, one of them being never to enrich the soil, because he thought it not good for the land. He had a great opinion of his own methods, and as he was like the old carrier who, when they can no longer drive, still like to crack the whip, he enjoyed talking about them, and as Axel listened attentively, and was too polite to contradict him, the old colonel conceived a high opinion of his wisdom. For this reason Axel's testimonials were always very good; but unfortunately the old Colonel paid little attention to orthography, and so he wrote once, "Lieutenant von Rambow is a thoroughly 'feiger' officer," when he meant to say "fähiger" (capable). The king himself saw it, and wrote on the margin, "I have no occasion for a 'feiger' (cowardly) officer; let him be dismissed at once." It was a stupid thing in the old colonel; the mistake must be corrected; but he did not know how to do it without taking his adjutant into counsel. With his assistance, the orthography and the business were made right; but the rogue could not hold his tongue, and before long the whole set were aiming their poor jokes at our innocent Axel. Especially one thick-headed fellow, of "very old family," who had all along poked fun at him on account of his agricultural pursuits, not because he managed them foolishly, but because he took to them at all,--now applied the screw so insolently that all his comrades observed it; Axel alone took no notice, because he had not the slightest suspicion of the cause.

There was another matter, in addition. The Herr von So and So, with whom Axel took practical lessons in farming on horseback and with a shot-gun, had a wonderfully pretty daughter,--nobody need laugh! she was really a fine girl,--by whom the Herr Lieutenant of the "old family" was strongly attracted. She, however, treated him quite coolly, and was much more gracious to Axel, who also turned his best side out in her presence. Whether it was that the young lady took no pleasure in the stupidly forward behavior of the Herr Lieutenant of "old family," and if she were going to marry preferred a man gifted with more brains, or that she was pleased with Axel's good-temper and modesty, it was not long before Axel was evidently "cock of the walk," and the Herr Lieutenant of "old family," sat upon the nettles of jealousy.

It happened, about this time, that the officers of the corps gave a ball, and the Herr Lieutenant of "old family" adorned himself for this festivity with a pair of false calves. Looking at his legs, his own comrades scarcely knew him, and as there is always a mischief-maker among so many frolicsome young people, who in this case happened to be the adjutant, he converted the cotton-wool calves of Axel's rival into a pincushion, and stuck them full of butterflies, with which the unconscious lieutenant hopped about quite merrily. People could not help looking and laughing, and the Herr Lieutenant, discovering how his calves were ornamented, became fearfully angry, as he had reason to be, and his wrath broke loose upon the first laughing face he chanced to meet, which happened to be Axel's. "If you were not already designated upon the colonel's conduct list, I should have the satisfaction of applying the epithet myself!" exclaimed he, in his

rage. Axel did not hear the words distinctly, the insolent tone, however, was not to be misunderstood; and as he was really no poltroon, and very easily excited, he turned with equal anger to his rival, saying that "he did not understand what he said, but the tone he had used made an explanation necessary;" and with that he went to his captain, with whom he stood on good terms, and asked an account of the matter, and what he heard from him did not tend to diminish his anger. He fell into a terrible passion, and challenged the lieutenant of "old family," and also the adjutant, because he had brought the matter about, and the lieutenant challenged the adjutant, an account of the butterflies, and so the three rode out one fine Sunday afternoon, with a crowd of seconds and witnesses and impartial observers and doctors and surgeons, and they cut each other's faces, and shot at each other's limbs, and then there was peace again. Axel got a scar on his nose, because he was stupid enough to parry a thrust with his face instead of his sword. If this did not exactly beautify him, it certainly did him no harm. Herr von So and So's pretty daughter heard of the matter, she put together many little pleasantries which she had noted between the rivals, and who can blame this intelligent girl if she believed herself the innocent cause of such heroic deeds, and liked Axel afterward better than before?

Here I might relate the entire love-story of Axel and Frida, and I leave it to any unprejudiced person if I should not have a pair of characters for a love-story, such as cannot be found even in the Bible, a lieutenant of cuirassiers, and a young lady of the nobility; but no, I will have nothing to do with it. For, in the first place, I never do more than I am obliged, and who can compel me to give private instructions to the burghers' daughters, who may possibly read this, about falling in love with a lieutenant of cuirassiers, or to teach young mechanics how they may ingratiate themselves with noble young ladies? Who would give me anything for that? And, secondly, I may as well say, once for all, I do not write with any regard to young people, I write merely for the old folks, who lie down of an afternoon on the sofa, and take a book to drive the flies from their faces, and the cares out of their heads. Thirdly, I have already three young maidens to dispose of, and any one who wants to know what a task that is may inquire of any mother of three unmarried daughters. Louise Habermann must have a husband, and would it not be a shame to leave the two little twin-apples to trundle through the world as old maids? Fourthly and lastly, I am not fitted to describe correctly the love of a lieutenant of cuirassiers, it is a touch beyond me, it requires the pen of a Shakespeare or a Mühlbach, and who knows whether Shakespeare himself were adequate to the task, for so far as I am informed he never ventured upon it.

In short, they were betrothed, and the wedding was held at Whitsuntide, 1843, and the Herr von So and So gave his blessing as a dowry, because it was all he had to give. Well, we will treat him like a Christian, and give him something, to wit a name,--for since he is become our father-in-law he must have a name,--so he shall be called Herr von Satrup of Seelsdorp, of which estate he owned still less than Axel of Pumpelhagen.

Frida von Satrup was an intelligent girl, and understood before her marriage that a "Herr Lieutenant" was only a large piece of a small apple, and that a "Frau Lieutenant" would be a small piece of a large apple; she stipulated, therefore, that Axel should leave the army. Axel was not unwilling, for the foolery about the "feiger" officer was not by any means over, although he bore the mark of the old colonel's blunder in red ink on his face, and he had also a great desire and purpose to turn his agricultural science into ready money, at Pumpelhagen, and therewith to pay his debts.

He took his discharge, therefore, packed his uniform, sash and epaulettes in a box, delivered, with tears in his eyes, a touching farewell address to his brave sword, laid that also in the box, nailed and sealed the box, and wrote on the top, "In case of sudden death, to be opened by my heirs," sent the whole to Pumpelhagen, was married in a black dress-suit, and started with his young bride for a journey up the Rhine.

How he made his entrance into Pumpelhagen, in the midsummer of 1843, shall be told in another place.

CHAPTER XI.

The three years which, since his father's death, Axel had spent in garrison, occupied with agriculture, heroic deeds and love-affairs, had been passed by the dwellers in Pumpelhagen and the vicinity in much the same occupations. The agriculture was a matter of course; but the heroic deeds and the love affairs would have been wanting, if Fritz Triddelsitz, in his hours of leisure, had not turned his attention that way. His relations with Marie Möller had slipped gradually out of the motherly into the brother-and-sisterly, and from thence, on her part at least, into the tenderly affectionate, and although they were still based on a foundation of ham and sausage, Marie Möller indulged in all sorts of uncertain heavenly hopes touching priest and sexton, bridal

wreath, and farming and house keeping for herself, if in process of time the business should take a serious turn, while Fritz lived in fear of being discovered by Habermann at some of these private repasts, and suspected that, if his aunt and his father and mother knew of his foolish behavior, the business might take a disagreeable turn for himself. In short, his love-affairs were not altogether satisfactory, and though he thought no harm of throwing his hook here and there, for example, to the little twin-apples, and, when his aunt was off duty, to Louise Habermann, yet he was forced to confess, when he dealt honestly with himself, that his only success was with Marie Möller.

The heroic deeds of Pumpelshagen were also confined to his department. He had at first attempted them merely against the farm-boys, and that in a quiet way, for if Habermann had known of it, the renown which he achieved upon their shoulders would have been sadly interfered with; now, however, as all went well, he grew bolder, and in an evil hour ventured to strike a stable-boy, and the rascal was so insolent as to forget all the respect due to his station, and gave him such a thrashing, in broad day-light, and Palm Sunday at that, that Marie Möller must spend the whole Sunday afternoon cooling his shoulder-blades. And the most disagreeable of all was that with every cold bandage that Marie Möller laid on his shoulders she sent a sting to his conscience, while she reminded him of all her kind deeds, and inquired about his plans and prospects, trustfully assuring him that she believed in his affection and would faithfully share his future. It was very annoying, because, for his part, he believed more in his appetite for ham and sausage than in his affection, and he preferred keeping his prospects to himself. He stammered out something which she did not or would not fully comprehend, and the cooler his blisters became the cooler became their relations; he tried to change the subject, she was not disposed to do so; she still applied the wet cloths, but with a less and less gentle hand.

"Triddelsitz," said she finally, "what am I to think of you?"

With that, she came round from her position behind him, and placed herself before his face, with arms akimbo.

"Mariken," said he, alarmed and confused, "what do you mean?"

"What do I mean? shall I, speak out more clearly?" exclaimed she, and the sweet, tender expression was quite gone from her eyes. "Am I a person to be made a fool of?"

Then she went back again, and slapped a cold bandage on his shoulders, with emphasis.

"Oh! Thunder!" cried Fritz, "that hurts!"

"So? It hurts, does it? Do you think it doesn't hurt me, to find that a man for whom I have done so much means to betray me?"

"Mariken, I ask you, what do you mean?"

"What do I mean? I mean"--with another emphatic bandage--"will you tell me what to think of you?"

"Thunder and lightning! That burns like fire!"

"I hope it does! I should think your conscience would burn you, deceiving a poor girl with all sorts of promises and prospects and then backing out in this way!"

"Good heavens, Marie, I am only nineteen years old."

"Well, what then?"

"I must serve somewhere else for a time, and then----"

"Well, and then?" with another wet cloth on his shoulders.

"Good heavens! You might be a little more careful, Marie."

"*You* might be a little more careful! Well, what then?"

"Then, I must get me a farm; and all that will take ten years or more."

"Well, and then?" pursued Marie Möller, with truly infamous persistency.

"And then," stammered Fritz finally, in his distress, "by that time, you will be too old for me."

Marie Möller stood at first as if thunder-struck; poisonous glances shot from her eyes; then she bent round and threw the cloth that was in her hand right in his face, so that the water spattered over his ears.

"Too old? Impertinence! Too old, do you say?" and grasping the washbowl full of water she threw it over his head, and ran out of the room. And as Fritz stood there, gasping and snuffling, she opened the door again, and putting her head in, said,--

"Don't let me see you in my pantry again!"

Love had now received its death-blow; there was an end also of the pantry indulgences; and as Fritz stood there dripping, it seemed to him, among his confused thoughts, that the whole story did not exactly harmonize with his ideas of love, still less with the romances he had read, and he uttered in his vexation the selfsame words he had spoken at the beginning of his apprenticeship, when he was working on the road in the November rain: "It is quite different from what I thought! A good, thing, though, that the old man is not at home," added he, "or he might have heard the uproar."

Habermann had gone with Franz this morning to the Gurlitz church. He always took this walk, with still, pious thoughts, but to-day his heart was brimful of thankfulness to God, whose fatherly hand had led his child so far on her life journey, for, on this Palm Sunday morning, Louise was to be confirmed. He walked, silent and absorbed in thought, along the foot-path, his eye resting on the pleasant landscape, where the snow still lay in white streaks along side the ditches and under the shade of the dark fir-trees, and where the green, springing rye in the bright sunshine told of Easter, and preached the Resurrection. The chimney-smoke lay over the little villages, and the sun seemed to press it down, as though this token of human care and labor ought not to darken the bright world, as if there would not be room enough else for the joyous sound of the church bells, which echoed, far and wide, over field and forest.

"Ah, if she had only lived to see this day!" said the old man aloud, and as if he thought himself alone.

"Who?" asked Franz, a little shyly, as if he feared to be too inquisitive.

"My poor wife, the mother of my dear child," said the old man, softly, and looked at the young man with such friendly, honest eyes, that seemed to say, "Look into our depths and read this simple, true heart! We will answer all thy questions, and it shall echo long in thy memory." "Yes," said he, "my good wife! But what do I say? She sees more, to-day, than I can of her child, and she does more than I can for her child; for her thoughts are higher than the blue heavens, and her joys brighter than the golden sun."

Franz walked silent by his side, he was careful not to disturb the Inspector; this old man, whom he loved, to-day seemed to him so worthy of reverence,—his white hair lay across his broad forehead, as pure as the white snow on the earth, his fresh countenance and bright eyes spoke as trustfully of the resurrection as did the springing rye, and the whole face shone with such a sunlight of love, that the young man, after a while, could no longer restrain himself, he grasped his friend's hand:

"Habermann, my dear Habermann, you have certainly lived through much sorrow."

"Not more than other people," was the reply, "and yet enough to think of, all one's life."

"Will you tell me about it? I do not ask from curiosity."

"Why not?" and he told his story; but he did not mention Pomuchelskopp's name, and he closed his narration with this remark about his child: "Yes, she was then my only comfort, and she is now my only joy!"

They came to the parsonage. The little Frau Pastorin had become a little older, and a little fuller, with time, and could not fly round quite so quickly as before; and to-day she was unusually quiet, running in nobody's way, and the duster lay unnoticed in its corner, as lonely as a dog under the table, for to-day the approaching solemn ceremony forbade her usual bustling about, for, as the Pastor's wife, she was the nearest.

But it was impossible for her to keep quite still, if she did not buzz about, she must at least run a little, now to fasten her Pastor's bands and bring him a glass of wine, now to Louise, to set her ruffle straight, and whisper a loving word in her ear; and when young Jochen and Frau Nüssler and the little twins and Bräsig all arrived together, she would certainly have forgotten herself, if the sexton had not exercised his judgment, and commenced ringing for the last time. The twins were also to be confirmed to-day, and as the company were going to the church, and the Frau Pastorin looked at the three lovely children walking together across the church-yard, Louise in the middle, half a head taller than her little cousins, she said to Habermann, while tears stood in her friendly eyes, "Habermann, our child has no gold chain and brooch to wear, as is the foolish custom now-a-days; and that black silk dress, dear Habermann, is all of thirty years old. I wore it last the first time I went to church here after I was married, and a happy heart beat under it, for in that heart dwelt my Pastor; it was too small for me afterwards, for, you see, I was already growing rather stout, but it is as good as new, and nobody would know that it was pieced down. And, Habermann, I put the money that you gave me for a dress into Louise's money-box. You won't take it ill of me? I was so glad to see my old dress in use again."

Just before the church door Bräsig pulled Habermann by the coat, and as he turned round he said, quite moved with emotion, "Karl, it is remarkable, it is really remarkable, such a confirmation! See, when I look at those three little girls walking along it reminds me of my own, and how I had got through the infamous sheep-keeping for my sainted father, and was going to begin farming. We went along just like the three little girls, Karl Brandt and Christian Guhl and I,

to the church, only we didn't have black silk dresses on; no, Christian had a green, Karl a brown, and I a gray coat; and instead of the bouquets of flowers, that the little girls carry in their hands, we had little sprigs of green stuck in our buttonholes; and instead of walking three abreast we went one behind the other, like geese in the barley. Yes, it was just so."

After a hymn had been sung by the congregation, Pastor Behrens preached his sermon. He had grown older in his appearance, but his voice was strong, and his thoughts clear as ever, and a mild and gentle spirit breathed in every word. It is certain there is no profession in which age is less of a drawback than in the ministry, when the man who holds this office has discharged it faithfully. The people do not listen to his words merely, they look at his long, upright, honorable life, and he stands before them a living example of the truth which he utters. So it was with this Pastor.

Then came the examination. The young maidens laid aside their outside wrappings, Louise embraced, with tearful eyes, her father and her foster-mother, Frau Nüssler affectionately kissed her little twins, young Jochen tried to say something, but did not succeed, and the three children stepped out from the Pastor's seat, up to the altar. "I wonder if the rogues know their lessons," said Bräsigt to Franz, who was next him; "I believe my godchild--that is Mining--will stumble." And with that, he blew his nose, and wiped, not his eyes, but his eyebrows.

Franz did not answer; everything around him had disappeared for the time, he saw only one face, a familiar face, and yet he saw it as for the first time; he saw but one form, a form which he had seen springing joyously about, but now a wonderful, solemn thrill trembled through it; he saw a pair of hands which had been joyfully extended to him, now reached up to the Most High; and it seemed to him as if the Lord looked down, and upheld this trembling form, in the simple black dress, in which a happy heart had once throbbed, and showed him this pure virgin heart, and said, "Watch thine own, that it may be worthy to unite with this." He was like a man who had long ago seen a beautiful region, in bright sunshine, and who had rambled about therein, thinking of nothing but his own enjoyment, and coming again after a long time saw the same region under the silent moon, and could scarcely recognize it, because over hill and forest, over thatched roof and church-tower, lay the thick veil of the evening mist, upon which rested the silver moonlight, so that he saw only this, and not the pleasant region that he knew. It seemed to him as if his soul was stretching out imploring hands, from a deep abyss, and a profound self-pity came over him, because its own heart was so poor a gift to bestow. And this deep self-pity, this secret longing for a better heart, that falls upon us, like a moonbeam woven out of mist and light, we children of men call "Love."

Bräsigt stood near him, and whispered now and then a couple of words, which Franz did not hear and which, if he had heard, he would probably have considered very stupid, and might have been annoyed by them; and yet the old Inspector's remarks had their origin in the same feeling which had come over himself, only that it was not so heavenly blue and rosy red as in his case, but old age had given it a tinge of gray.

Bräsigt was in the greatest distress lest his godchild, Mining, should fail; and with every question that she answered properly, such a great sigh was heard that Pastor Behrens, if he had been of the new-fashioned style of preachers, must have thought he had brought a great sinner to repentance in sackcloth and ashes. "God be praised!" said this sinner, half aloud, "Mining knows it;" and after a while he touched Franz: "Now it is coming, just listen, now it is coming;" and he punched Habermann on the other side: "Karl, you will see Mining has got it. Mining has the great water-question. I knew it, Christian Guhl couldn't say it, and it came to me; but I have forgotten it all now, except just the beginning: 'Water indeed avails nothing of itself, but the Spirit of God'"--and as Mining repeated the answer, without faltering, the old man whispered after her the whole "water-question," and when the sexton came round with the poor-box, he put in a silver thaler, as if it were a relief to his feelings; and he turned round, and pressed Frau Nüssler's hand, and said almost aloud, "Frau Nüssler, did you hear our little rogue?" and blew his nose with so much emphasis, that Frau Pastorin secretly pronounced him an irreverent sinner, for disturbing the holy ordinance.

If one should follow up the cord which bound Bräsigt to little Mining, and go a little way beyond Mining, he would find the end made fast, in Frau Nüssler's heart, where it was tied in a great double knot, which could never be parted. It seemed to be sure, quite another thing, and much rougher than the delicate, silken, rosy noose, which Franz would fain have knotted about Louise Habermann's little heart and which seemed to him too rough and hard for that tender heart. Love is everywhere, the world over, but she takes strange forms; she flies like an angel upon rosy pinions, and she shuffles about on wooden shoes; she speaks with tongues, like the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and she sits in the corner like a sulky child, whom the schoolmaster has struck on the mouth with the primer; she gives diamonds and coronets, and old Inspector Schecker sought to win the hand of my Aunt Schöning, with a fat turkey.

When the confirmation was over, and the Lord's Supper had been administered to the young communicants, Pastor Behrens went into his vestry. Samuel Pomuchelskopp, in his blue dress-coat, followed after him, for his Gustaving had also been confirmed, and opening the door of the vestry stood before it, instead of going in,--"so that all the people may see what a blockhead he is," said Bräsigt to Habermann,--and invited the Pastor to "a spoonful of soup, and a morsel of roast meat, and a bottle of red wine," in as loud a tone, as if they were at a fair,--"that everybody may know what a confounded hypocrite he is," said Bräsigt,--but the Pastor thanked him, and said

he was too much fatigued to-day, and besides he had company at home.

Pomuchelskopp went back, and threw over his left shoulder a glance into the parsonage-pew, making most elaborate attempts at distinguished behavior, but they were quite discomfited as he met Bräsig's venomous face, for Bräsig was such a bad Christian--as the Frau Pastorin would have said had she seen it--that even in the Lord's own house he could not keep his wicked feelings from showing in his face. But how quickly was his old face changed when the three little girls came back, with happy tearful faces, to give him also their hands, and offer their lips to be kissed, as they had done to their parents and foster-parents! How he lifted his eyebrows, and wrinkled his forehead, giving himself a really paternal expression! This was his manner to Louise and Lining, but when his little pet Mining came, he looked as comical as if he were a child himself, he put his arms round her and whispered in her ear, "You shall see, Mining, you shall see, I will give you something!" And since he did not know what, at the moment, and chanced to have his handkerchief in his hand, he said, "I will give you a dozen handkerchiefs, bright ones!" for he wanted to do the business thoroughly.

Each of the company had now offered his kind wishes, and each had taken his thanks in kisses from the fresh, red lips, two only excepted.--young Jochen never got more than half a kiss, and Franz got none at all. Young Jochen could, of course, blame no one but himself, for he need not have squeezed himself into the farthest corner of the pew, so that the long left side of his mouth was quite out of their reach, and the little girls must content themselves with the short right side, which was not quite half of it. And Franz? He never thought of the matter, he had not yet returned to earth, but was still in heaven, and it did not occur to him, till they were leaving the church, and he found himself near Louise at the door, to take her hand and say something, which he could not recollect a moment after. He was certainly in love! That beautiful face in deep devotion was imprinted upon his heart and imprinted for ever-more!

I may be interrupted here, possibly, by some pious lady, or some experienced maiden.--I do not mean old people here, but also middle-aged.--who will inquire, "Could not this young man find some other place to concern himself with such worldly matters as falling in love?" And I reply, "Honored madame, and especially honored mademoiselle, this young man was as yet so stupid in a business with which you are quite familiar from early experience, that he had never thought of love as belonging to worldly matters. And pray, where should a young man fall in love? Only in an arbor, in the summer twilight, or in a cotillion at a ball in winter? Many roads lead to Rome, but many more to marriage, and he who starts on his bridal journey does better to begin it in a church than in a ball-room; for he finds the marriage altar close by, and the path is straight and clean; but between the ball-room and the altar stretches the long, dusty, dirty street, and many enter with soiled boots and shoes upon the holy path of marriage. Is it not true, honored madame? Do you not agree with me, respected mademoiselle?"

A simple dinner was waiting at the parsonage. Bräsig was very lively, and smiled like sunshine after rain; the old Pastor was also very cheerful, for he knew with Solomon that everything has its time, there is "a time to gather stones, and a time to cast them away;" but they were all quiet, the church bells still chimed in their hearts, and only with the hot coffee did Frau Pastorin and Frau Nüssler find their tongues unlocked.

Immediately after dinner, the old Herr Pastor took a little nap on the sofa in his study, to rest from the fatigue of the morning. Habermann had gone out into the fresh air, with his daughter and his two nieces, that the sweet influences of the secretly awakening spring might compose these young agitated souls, and Franz had gone with them, also to enjoy the secretly awakening spring, but the one which was budding and blooming in his own breast. Jochen Nüssler had found a corner, which was almost as convenient as his own particular corner, by the stove, at home. Bräsig went up and down the room, with his short legs and his long pipe, his feet turned out in an extraordinary manner, for since he had received his pension his gait had acquired a peculiar swing, and he used his little feet broad side out, so that people might see that no man was his master, and he stood in his own shoes, and that his long years of farming had not prevented him from appearing what he was, an elderly gentleman, living on his own income. Frau Pastorin and Frau Nüssler sat under the picture gallery, upon the sofa.

"Yes, dear Frau Nüssler," said the Frau Pastorin, "thank God! we have got on so far with our children. Louise is seventeen years old, and your twins are six mouths older. My Pastor says, and I know it too, they have learned much; and with a little more help here and there, they could earn their bread as governesses, any day."

Bräsig stopped, lifted his eyebrows, and blew a cloud of smoke toward the sofa, and young Jochen also turned himself about, in that direction.

"Yes, indeed," exclaimed Frau Nüssler, "and the little girls owe it all to you and the Herr Pastor!" and she grasped the Frau Pastorin's hand, "my brother Karl said, and I say too, we could do well enough for them in some respects, we could get them their daily bread and see that they were neatly dressed, and teach them to tell the truth, and how to take care of themselves, and keep house; but for all which makes a human being of real worth, we were not capable. Isn't it so, Jochen?"

From behind the stove came a low, comfortable, assenting growl, such as a faithful old watch-dog gives, when he has his head scratched.

"You hear, Frau Pastorin, Jochen says so too."

"Oh, I have done nothing," said the little Frau Pastorin, turning off the compliment, "that is to say, for your two; of course it was different with Louise, for I was the nearest to her. But--what I was going to say,--we have never spoken about it,--had you thought of having your children, or one of them, perhaps Mining, become a governess?"

"What?" said Frau Nüssler, looking at the Frau Pastorin, as if she had told her Mining had a prospect of becoming a Papist; and as the Frau Pastorin was about to explain her project, she was interrupted by a singular burst of laughter: "Ha, ha, ha! A good joke! Did you hear that, young Jochen? Our little Mining to teach children! Ha, ha, ha!"

That was Bräsig; but he made a great mistake. The Frau Pastorin sat there, like a puppet on a wire, her red face grew pale with anger, and under her little chin the little cap-ribbons fluttered quite indignantly:

"What are you laughing at, Bräsig? You are laughing at me, perhaps? You laugh because I thought Mining might be a governess? Oh, Herr Inspector," and she drew herself up, stiffly, "I have been a governess myself, and it is quite a different thing to teach children, from what it is to cudgel farm-boys."

"To be sure! You mustn't mind me, Frau Pastorin, but our little Mining a school-mistress! Ha, ha, ha!"

But the Frau Pastorin was carried away by her feelings, and went on to say: "And it makes a great difference whether one has learned something, or whether one knows nothing at all; a man like you could never be a governess!"

As she uttered these words, her Pastor entered the room, having been awaked by Bräsig's laughter, and it struck him as so ludicrous that they were talking about Bräsig's qualifications as a governess--and, being short-sighted, he did not notice his wife's anger--that he joined in the laugh: "Ha, ha! Bräsig a governess!"

The entrance of her Pastor made a singular impression upon the Frau Pastorin, at first the waves of passion rose higher than ever, but then it seemed as if oil were poured on the troubled waters; she had indeed often allowed herself a momentary ebullition of anger in his presence; but to break out into flaming wrath! that was quite contrary to her principles, and a droll conflict began in her spirit and gleamed through her round honest face, like the light through a basket lantern; the flame of anger blazed up once more, and then sank down into the deep red glow of shame, that she, a Pastor's wife, and on such a day as this, had so far forgotten herself, and the glow died out in the gray ashes of a wholesome anger with herself, and as her own last words, that Bräsig could never be a governess, recurred to her, and she saw her Pastor laughing, the ashes were blown away by a little gust of merriment, but she held her handkerchief before her face, that the others might not see it.

Frau Nüssler had meanwhile been sitting on thorns, and, as the Pastor came in, she sprang up and said, quite distressed, "Herr Pastor, I am the innocent cause of all this trouble. Bräsig, stop your stupid laughing! Frau Pastorin thinks our Mining should be a governess. Dear heart, yes! If you and the Frau Pastorin think it best, it shall be so; you have always advised us for the best. Isn't it so, Jochen, it shall be so?"

Jochen slowly emerged from behind the stove. "Yes, it is as true as leather; if she must, she must," and with that, he went out of the room, probably to get the business through his head, in solitude.

"But what is all this?" asked the Pastor. "Regina, are you really in earnest?" And Frau Nüssler went up to the little Frau Pastorin. "It shall be just as you say, Frau Pastorin. Bräsig, for shame! Frau Pastorin, don't cry any longer!" and she drew away the handkerchief, and started back in surprise as she met the laughing face. "What does it mean?" she exclaimed.

"Only a misunderstanding, dear neighbor," said the old gentleman. "Nobody has thought of Mining being a governess. No! our children shall not swell the number of poor, unhappy maidens thrust out into the world, to earn their bitter bread in this hard calling, with weariness of mind and sickness of body. No, our children shall, with God's blessing, first become fresh, healthy and skilful housewives, and after that they may be governesses, if they like,--that is, to their own children."

"Herr Pastor, dear Herr Pastor," cried Frau Nüssler, as if a stone had been lifted from her heart, "God bless you for these words! Our Mining shall not be a governess. Jochen--where are you, Jochen? Ah, he has gone out in his grief! Yes, Herr Pastor, and they shall learn housekeeping! You shall see, I will do my best for them."

"Yes," interrupted Bräsig, "and they must learn to cook a good dinner."

"Of course, Bräsig. Ah, Herr Pastor, I have had so much trouble with governesses, myself; and only last week, I went to see the new Frau Amtmann,--she was a governess,--you see she totters and staggers, and sighs and gasps around the house, and looks as pale as a corpse--what you call

interesting."

"Interesting people always look as if they needed tying up to a stake," said Bräsig.

"But you Bee, Frau Pastorin, she cooks her eggs too hard, and burns her roast meat. I have nothing to say against learning, a great deal of learning if one likes--it is very nice to read the papers, and to know something about old Fritz and such people, and to know where the oranges and the spices grow; but even if one doesn't know such things, one can wait till one meets learned people, and then ask them; but about cooking, Frau Pastorin, you can't wait for that, for you must have your dinner, and who can you ask about that,--in the country? the stupid maid-servants? That would be a fine story!"

"You are right, neighbor," said the Pastor, "it is very important that girls should be well trained in housekeeping."

"So I say, Herr Pastor. To think of that poor little Frau Amtmann! She has the best will in the world, but knows nothing at all. She asked questions that my children could answer at seven years of age, whether the swine were milked, and how the little chickens cut open the shell. And Louise will not be a governess either, Herr Pastor?"

"No, not with our consent, and Habermann is of the same opinion; she shall learn housekeeping. Regina is getting a little too lazy, and--isn't it so?" sitting down by his wife on the sofa, and putting his arm about her,--"a little too old also, she will be glad of a young assistant, and could not bear to be parted from her Louise."

"You mean you could not bear it, Pastor! Really, I feel myself quite set aside; from morning to night, it is, 'Louise, get this!' and 'Louise, bring me that!'"

"Well, we will not quarrel, I should miss the child sorely, if she were away."

Meanwhile, Habermann had returned, with Franz and the children, and had met young Jochen wandering about in a state of unusual agitation. He ran to Mining, took her in his arms and kissed her, saying, "Mining, I can do nothing to prevent it;" and when Habermann asked what was the matter, he said only: "Brother-in-law, what must be, must." And as they took their departure from the parsonage, and he sat in the carriage, he felt as if he were carrying a lamb to the slaughter, and although his wife explained the whole matter fully, and told him Mining should never be a governess, the whole thing had made such a deep impression upon him, that he ever afterward looked upon Mining as an unhappy maiden, and treated her accordingly. She must always sit next him at the table, and, he gave her the best of everything, as if every meal were her last.

CHAPTER XII.

So now, for the first time, the future of the little maidens was marked out, so far, that is, as one human being can arrange the course of life for another; but destiny is a strange fellow for a godfather, and he interferes often in the most quiet and reasonable plans that old, serious, white-haired people can think out, with some stupid trick that nobody could dream of. The worst of this plan-making is, that generally the very wisest prove the stupidest in the end, because the good, old, white-haired people think merely of their own white heads, and do not take into account the black ones which they had in their youth.

It had never seriously occurred to the old Herr Pastor that his foster-child might be taken off his hands by a young man; and the Frau Pastorin, who, after the fashion of women, had thought much and often upon this chapter in the woman's catechism, had always comforted herself with the reflection that Louise was not acquainted with any young men; since, on account of his nobility, she did not consider Franz as a young man, and Fritz, with his stupid jokes and her own motherly authority over him, seemed like a little, undeveloped boy. But her eyes were to be opened, she was to discover that a young, pretty maiden, even if she is hid in a parsonage, will attract young people as surely as a flower the butterflies. The gay-colored caterpillar, which had crept across her path so often to her annoyance, had popped out of its chrysalis, a gorgeous, yellow, swallow-tailed butterfly, which fluttered around the flower in her garden, and settled upon it, and devoted himself to it, in a way which would have amused her extremely, if the butterfly had not been her sister's son, and the flower Louise Habermann.

Fritz came to Gurlitz, a few days after the confirmation, with a great and righteous hatred in his heart, against the whole race of womankind.

The wash-bowl full of water, which he had got over his head, and the banishment from his pantry-paradise, had exercised a damp, cold, hungry influence upon him, and as he had learned from his romances that every young man in love, when he quarrels with his loved one, has a right to hate all other women too, he made use of his right. He had not been at Gurlitz for a long time, because he wished to punish his aunt a little for the everlasting fault-finding in which she allowed herself toward him. Now, as he sat in the parsonage, feeding his hatred, and speaking to no one but the Pastor, the Frau Pastorin rejoiced over his serious behavior, and said to Louise, out in the kitchen, "Fritz is really quite sensible. Thank God! he is coming to years of discretion."

Louise said nothing, but she laughed, for though she had not much acquaintance with young people, she knew Fritz for the scapegrace that he was. In undertaking to represent a new character, he was like the donkey who attempted to play the guitar, and, however painful his efforts had been to assume a strange rôle,—as for example, to-day, that of a woman-hater,—it was not long before he stripped off the whole disguise, and appeared in his proper person, as Fritz Triddelsitz, much to the chagrin of his dear aunt. He had been but a little while in the society of Louise, before he threw overboard the whole cargo of hatred of the sex, and painful recollections of Marie Möller, the washbowl and pantry, and took in, beside the ballast of romantic ideas, "a fresh, budding love for Louise,"—as he described to himself his new lading,—and when he had stowed it away under the hatches of his heart, and taken in his cable and made everything clear, he set sail. At first he tacked and cruised about, and his aunt, standing on the shore, could not tell thither he was steering, but that did not last long, his course became more direct, and as he was now fairly out on the high sea of "his feelings," and hoisted his topsail, she saw to her dismay in what direction he was steering, and that her beloved sister's son was no better than a reckless sea-rover, pirate and corsair, who was pursuing, in a scandalous manner, the pretty little brig, in which all her motherly hopes were embarked.

She spoke the strange craft, and asked "whence?" and "whither?"—but the pirate paid no attention; she hung out signals of distress to her Pastor, but the matter seemed only to amuse him, probably because he foresaw no danger for the little brig; he sat there, and laughed to himself, though he shook his head a little, now and then.

The little Frau Pastorin was disgusted beyond measure, with the behavior of her nephew; "Stupid fellow, scape-grace, rascal!" she kept saying to herself,—and when the pirate began to bombard the little craft with honey-comb speeches, and bonbon verses, she put to sea herself, and grappled the pirate, and when she had him fast, she sailed away with him, out of the room. "Come with me, my son, come! I have something to tell you, Fritz! And take your hat, too!" And when she had got him into the pantry, she manoeuvred him into a corner, from which, on account of the pots and pans, egress was difficult, and she seized a loaf of bread and cut off a thick slice, with the words, "You are hungry, Fritz, you have an empty stomach, my little son, and an empty stomach leads to all sorts of mischief, see I have spread butter on it, and here is cheese for you too, now eat!"

Fritz stood there, hardly knowing what had happened; he had designed to win a heart, and he had got a piece of bread and butter; he attempted to say something, but his aunt gave him no time: "I know, my boy, what you would say; never mind, my child! But here,—if you will do me the favor,—here is a bottle of beer,—Habermann is back of our garden, sowing peas in the Pastor's field, take it to him, come along! and greet him from me. I know he will be glad to get some of the Stauenhagen burgomeister's beer." And with that she had him through the kitchen, and out of the back-door, and before she shut the door, she called to him, through the crack, "You will be too busy, Fritz, to visit us much at present, for seed-time is coming,—no, never mind, my boy, it is no matter,—but when you do come again, perhaps in the autumn, Louise will be seventeen then, and you mustn't talk such nonsense to her as you did to-day, she will be too sensible for such folly. So, my son, now eat your bread and butter." And she shut the door, and Fritz stood there, in one hand a great slice of bread and butter, in the other a bottle of beer!

Fie! It was really infamous treatment on the part of his aunt! He was very angry, and at first had a great mind to throw the bread and butter through the kitchen-window, and send the beer-bottle after it, and he swore never to set foot in the parsonage again; but reflection is a man's best teacher, and he started at length, along the garden path, looking alternately at his bread and butter and his beer-bottle, and grumbling to himself: "The devil knows I am not hungry, and the old man is not on this side of the field. She only wanted to get rid of me. Just wait, though; you shall not succeed quite yet! I know when and where Louise goes out walking. She must be mine! Whatever opposes, she must be mine!"

Then he sat down on the garden fence, and planned out his new campaign; but how angry he would have been if he had known that Louise was watching him, that very minute, from her chamber window!

But he didn't know it, and as the bread and butter might have fallen into the dirt, if he had laid it down on the fence, he eat it up leisurely, and when he had finished it he said, "I laugh at my aunt, and I laugh at Marie Möller. Louise is an angel! She shall be mine! My relations do not approve of our love, it is evident. Good! Louise cannot be won without a struggle. I will—well, what shall I do?"

And before he did anything else, he preferred to drink up the beer so he did that, and when he had finished it he went on, with fresh courage, across the field, and with every step he stamped

into the soft-ploughed-ground the firm resolve: "She shall be mine!" and when the seed had sprung up, the old peasants in the region often stopped on their way, to look, and to say to each other: "The devil has been sowing thorns and thistles in old Inspector Habermann's peas."

So Fritz was established in a new love, and it had one good effect; he became very dutiful toward the old inspector, since he looked upon him as his future father-in-law. He sat with the old man of evenings, and told him about his expectations from his father, and asked his advice whether he should rent or purchase a farm, or whether he would think it better for him to buy a nice little estate in Livonia or Hungary. The old man tried seriously to dissuade him from such ideas, which were a little too absurd, but he could not help wondering what had wrought such a change in his apprentice; formerly the youngster had talked of nothing but riding, dancing, and hunting, and now he talked entirely about serious matters, although in a foolish way. He wondered still more when Fritz, one evening when Franz had gone to Gurlitz, told him in confidence that if he remained in Mecklenburg, he should look out for a handsome residence to purchase or to rent, with a park attached,--"park," said he, "not garden,--for the latter he would be indebted to his future wife, and she should have a good one; her relations should be the same to him as his own," and with that he looked at the old inspector so touchingly that the latter had much ado not to laugh.

"Don't be a goose, Triddelsitz," said the old man. "Have you been filling your head with love-stories?"

Maybe, said Fritz, maybe not; at all events, his old father-in-law should live with him, and one wing of the house should be set apart entirely for him, and if he wanted out-door exercise, either riding or driving, a pair of horses should always stand ready for his use. And then he got up, and walked about the room with great strides, flourishing with his hands, and Habermann, sitting in the sofa-corner, kept turning his head back and forth like a man with the palsy, to observe the singular behaviour of his apprentice. As he took leave that evening, Fritz pressed the old gentleman's hand with the deepest emotion, and as Habermann cordially returned the pressure, he felt a warm hand on his white hair, his head was bent gently back and a hot kiss was pressed upon his forehead, and, before he recovered from his astonishment, Fritz strode out of the room.

Fritz was a good fellow, he wanted to make everybody happy; his disposition was good, but his discretion was small. Go to Gurlitz again to see his aunt, he positively would not. He raged inwardly, and the grief which he endured, in his separation from Louise, was a bitter-sweet draught in which he indulged daily. But this bitter was mingled with another, as if one should add gall to quassia--a draught for the devil! and the gall was added by whom, of all persons in the world--Franz! Franz ran over to Gurlitz that spring whenever he had time, and when the three unmarried daughters came to Pumpelhagen, in the summer, Louise often came to visit them, and Franz, naturally, was not far away; but he--our poor Fritz--stood afar off, and could look on only from a distance, which was a doubtful gratification for him.

I would not say, and nobody who has read this book so far would say, that Fritz was that sort of a suspicious rascal who ferrets out something for his purposes from any kind of tokens, but he must have been a perfect idiot if he had not noticed that something was the matter with Franz. Even if this had not been the case, a young man in love must be jealous of somebody, it belongs to the business, and a young man who is in love, and has no rival, always reminds me of my neighbor Hamann, when he sits on horseback with only one spur. But it was the case; Franz was truly his rival, and Fritz treated him as such, and so before long he was as much vexed with Franz as with Marie Möller and his aunt, he scarcely spoke to him, and had friendly intercourse only with his good, old, future father-in-law.

The human heart can hold but a limited measure of woe, what is too much is too much; there must be some relief, and the only relief, for a lover, is intercourse with the beloved object. Fritz must contrive means to this end, and he went craftily to work; he lay in wait everywhere for Louise. Every hollow tree was a sentry-box, from whence he watched for his darling, every ditch on the Pumpelhagen estate was a trench, from which he besieged her, every hill was a look-out, where he stood on picket-guard, and behind every bush he lay in concealment.

Of course this could not last long without his attaining his desired end, and frightening Louise out of her wits, for at times when she was thinking of nothing at all, or perhaps--let us confess it--thinking of Franz, his long body would shoot out from behind a bush, or he would thrust up his head, like a seal, out of the green rye, or suddenly drop down before her feet, from a tree, where he had been lying in wait, like a lynx for a deer. At first, she soon recovered from her fright, for she took those for some of his stupid jokes, such as she knew of old; she laughed, then, and talked with him about ordinary matters; but she soon became aware that the young man was in an extraordinary condition. He was so solemn in his manner, he spoke of common things in such an uncommon tone, he rubbed his head as if the deepest thoughts were struggling for birth, he laid his hand on his heart, when she spoke of the weather, as if he were taken with a stitch in his side, he shook his head sadly, when she invited him to Gurlitz, and said his honor would not allow him to accept; when she spoke of her father, a stream flowed from his lips, as when one takes the tap from a barrel: that was an angel of an inspector, never was such an old man born before; his father was good, but this father was the father of all fathers; if she asked after Fräulein Fidelia, he said he did not trouble himself about the ladies, they were nearly all alike to him, and as she once, unfortunately, inquired after Franz, lightnings shot from his eyes, he cried "Ha!" laughed in a fearful manner, grasped her hand, thrust a paper into it, and darted headlong into the rye, in

which he disappeared, and when she opened the paper she found the following effusion.

"To Her.

"When with tender, silvery light,
Through the clouds fair Luna beams,
When from vanquished shades of night,
Sunlight o'er the heaven gleams,
Where the whispering waters dance,
And the ivy leaves entwine,
Ah, bestow one loving glance
On a heart that beats for thine!

"Where thou goest with joyous tread,
Only truest love can be;
Spring flowers twine about thy head,
I, unseen, still follow thee;
Love is vanished, sweetest flowers
Bloom in vain, when thou art gone;
Ah, a youth has also hours,
Thou, alas! hast never known!

"But revenge will I enjoy,
I will lay my rival low!
I, who write this poetry,
Dream of vengeance only, now.

"Fritz Triddelsitz.

"Pumpelhagen, July 3rd, 1842."

When Louise read "this poetry" for the first time, she did not quite understand it, she read it the second time, and understood it still less, and when she had read it for the third time she did not understand it at all; that is to say, she could not positively decide upon whom the unhappy poet intended to execute vengeance, although she was not so stupid as to be ignorant that the "Her" addressed was herself.

She would gladly have taken the whole thing for a piece of his usual buffoonery, and tried to think it nothing but a joke; but as she called to mind his appearance and language, and his unusual behavior, she had to acknowledge to herself that this was something beyond a joke; and she resolved that, as much as possible, she would keep out of his way. She was innocent enough to think it a great misfortune for Fritz, and to feel profound compassion for his suffering. Compassion is a bridge which leads over to love, and Louise stood for the first time, looking over beyond the bridge into that fair meadow, adorned with rose-arbors and jasmin-hedges,--and that is for a young maiden of seventeen like cherries to a bird,--and who knows but she might have gone a little way beyond the bridge, if she had not, in her mind's eye, seen Fritz, in his yellow top-boots and green hunting-jacket, riding about, among the rose-arbors, on old Chestnut, and sitting under the jasmin-hedges, with a slice of bread and butter and a beer-bottle in his hands, and his legs dangling. She had to laugh, in spite of her compassion, and remained on the safe side of the bridge, preferring to contemplate Fritz from a distance, for old Chestnut might lie down in the mud puddle a second time, or Fritz might smear her with his bread and butter.

The most stupid young man can sometimes lead a girl of seventeen by the nose, and fellows, who carry a puff-ball instead of a heart under their vests, can captivate such young hearts; only the poor fools, who wear harlequin jackets, are never successful, for nothing is so fatal to young love as a touch of the ridiculous. So, finally, she had to laugh over the poetry, a clear, hearty laugh, and as she finished laughing, she was startled, for it seemed to her as if a warm hand had pressed her hand, and a pair of friendly eyes had looked deep into her own, and the thought of Franz came into her mind, probably because he was that moment approaching, in the distance. She tore up the vengeance-poetry into little scraps, and as Franz came towards her, and greeted her, she blushed, and, becoming conscious that she was growing red, she was angry with herself, and grew still redder, and as Franz talked with her about every-day matters, she became embarrassed, gave confused answers, and, in her absence of mind, strewed the fragments of Fritz's vow of vengeance upon the air.

"What can be the matter?" said Franz to himself, when he had accompanied her a little way, and was returning. "She is so different from her usual self. Is it my fault? Has something annoyed her? What paper was that, which she was strewing the bits of to the wind?" With such thoughts he came to the place where she had dropped them, and see! There lay the fragments of paper, and, without picking them up, he read on one of them,--"dreams of vengeance!! only now Fritz Triddelsitz," for Fritz had forgotten to put a period after "now." This excited his curiosity, for he recognized Fritz's handwriting; he looked further, but found only a couple of fragments, and, fitting them together, made out these disconnected words:--

"Entwine--a loving glance--heart that beats for thine--Spring flowers--I unseen, still follow--

Love is vanished--Bloom in vain--Ah, a youth--But Revenge!--vengeance!! only now Fritz Triddelsitz;" the wind had carried away the rest.

There was not much to be made out of this; the only thing which after long reflection he believed himself positively to have arrived at, was that Fritz Triddelsitz was in love with Louise, that he was upbraiding her, and threatening her with vengeance. The thing was ridiculous, but Fritz was a creature as full of stupid tricks as a donkey of gray hairs, he was quite capable of doing some crazy thing, and giving annoyance to Louise; so Franz resolved to be on the watch, and if Fritz went toward Gurlitz, not to let him out of his sight.

Fritz had broken the ice now, he had done his part; now it was the turn of Louise, she must speak, if anything was to come of the matter. He waited and watched, but nothing came. "It is very provoking," he said to himself, "but she knows nothing of such affairs, and it is doubtless all right; I must show her the way." So he set himself to work, and wrote a letter in a disguised hand.

Address:--"To One Who Knows."

Superscription:--"Sweet Dream of my Heart!"

"This letter is dumb, it says merely what is necessary, and will be found on the *third* rose-bush in the *second* row; other things by word of mouth. This by way of preliminary: when a cross is marked with white chalk on the garden gate, the *contents of my heart* may be found under the pot of the third rose-bush in the second row. *Waving a handkerchief*, from the Gurlitz side betokens thy presence, and desire for an interview; my response will be three whistles on the handle of my walking-stick. (Our shepherd taught me that, love is an apt scholar.)

"Rendezvous: the great water-ditch at the right of the bridge.

"Thine ever!!

"One Whom thou Knowest.

"P.S. The loved one will excuse me for writing this in my shirt-sleeves, it is so infernally hot."

This letter fell into the wrong hands; it was the little Frau Pastorin who found it, as she was watering the flowers, while Louise, who was learning housekeeping, was preserving gooseberries. She made no scruple of opening and reading the letter, and when she had made herself acquainted with its contents, she had no doubt that it was intended for Louise, and that it came from Fritz, her precious nephew. She said nothing to Louise of her discovery, that would have been playing into Fritz's hand; but she alluded in a variety of ways to ridiculous correspondence, just to ascertain if Louise had found similar epistles before; it was to no purpose however, the child understood nothing from her hints, and she then resolved to say nothing of the matter to her Pastor,--why should he be worried about it? and then it went terribly against the grain to confess that her own flesh and blood--for so, unfortunately, she must consider Fritz--should perpetrate such a piece of nonsense. She would gladly have spoken her mind to *him*, but he kept out of her way.

She went about with such thoughts in her mind for a day or two, taking, by the way, the watering of the flowers out of Louise's hands, once for all, that she might suspect nothing. It was wise in her to do so, for it was not long before she found a water-soaked letter, under the third rose-bush in the second row. This spoke more clearly:

Address:--"To the *Only One*, known to me *alone*."

Superscription:--"Soul of my life!"

"Snares surround us; I know that the enemy lies in wait. Cowardly *spy*, I *laugh* at thee! Have no fear, my dearest, I can rescue thee. One bold deed will give *freedom* to our love. To-morrow afternoon, at two o'clock, when the DRAGON sleeps, who guards my TREASURE, I will expect thy signal with the handkerchief, I shall be strewing manure, behind the water-ditch, three *whistles* on the handle of my stick will give thee warning, and though hell itself bursts forth, I have sworn it. Ever

"Thine."

When the Frau Pastorin read this she was quite off her balance. "That! That! Oh, the miserable scamp! 'Dragon Sleeps!' The rascal means me by that! But wait! I will give you a signal, and if hell doesn't burst forth, something shall crack about your ears, let me only get hold of you!"

The next day, before two o'clock, the Frau Pastorin rose from her sofa, and went into the garden. The house-door had creaked, and her Pastor heard the gate-latch also rattle, so he got up and looked out of the window, to see what his wife was doing in the garden, at this unusual hour, for her nap generally lasted until three o'clock. He saw her go behind a bush, and she stood there and waved her handkerchief in the air. "She is beckoning to Habermann, perhaps," said he, and lay down again. She was, however, merely giving a friendly signal to her nephew, till she might get a little nearer to his ears.

But he did not come, nor did she hear the three whistles. Greatly disappointed, she went back to the house, and when it was time for coffee, and her Pastor asked her whom she had been beckoning to in the garden, she was so much embarrassed, that, I regret to confess, she fibbed, although she was a pastor's wife, and said she had been so oppressed by the heat, she was merely waving her handkerchief to get a little fresh air.

On the third day, she found another letter.

Address: "TO MY OWN, destined for me by FATE."

Superscription: "Sun of my darkened Soul!!"

"Dost thou know what *hell-torments* are? I suffered them yesterday afternoon, at two o'clock, when I was strewing manure. The air was free, the enemy was in the clover-field, and thy handkerchief fluttered like one of my white pigeons in the perfumed air. I was just upon the point of giving the pre-arranged signal of three whistles, when that old horned beast of a Bräsig came up to me, and stood talking a whole hour, about the manure. When he was gone, I rushed down to the water-ditch, but, vinegar!

"The time had seemed long to thee, and thou wert gone! But now, *listen!* This evening, punctually at half past eight, when I have eaten my sour milk, I will be at the *place of rendezvous*; to-day is Saturday, the Pastor is writing his sermon, and the *dragon* is cleaning house; the *opportunity* is favorable, and the underbrush will conceal us there. (Schiller.) Wait but a little, thou too shalt rest, (Goethe) in the arms of thy DEVOTED ONE, who would sell all that is dear to him, to buy with it something dear to thee.

"Oh, meeting blest! Oh, meeting blest!
Awaiting which I calmly rest,
And all my longing, all my dreams,
Bury in Lethe's silent stream.
I shall behold thee, dear, once more.
When the waves wash me to the shore,
So farewell, yet not in sorrow,
We shall meet again to-morrow!

"The *beginning* is my own, the *middle* from Schiller, and the *end* from a certain Anonymous, who has written a great deal; but I altered it a little to suit my purpose.

"With torments of longing,

"THINE OWN."

"Well!" exclaimed the little Frau Pastorin, when she read this patch work, "This goes beyond everything! Yes, my dear sister, you have brought up a beautiful plant, and it bears fine fruit. But other people must trim and prune it, and I think, as his aunt, I am the nearest to him. And I'll do it!" she cried, in a loud voice, stamping her little foot, "and I should like to see who will hinder me!"

"I for one would not think of it, Frau Pastorin," said Bräsig, who had come up, unperceived, behind the bee-hives.

"Have you been listening, Bräsig?" asked the Frau Pastorin, still in an excited tone.

"Listening?" said Bräsig, "I never listen; I only keep my ears open, and then I hear something, and I keep my eyes open, and see something. For instance, I see now that you are provoked about something."

"It is true; but it is enough to drive an angel wild."

"No, Frau Pastorin, the angels have enough to do with their wings; we need not incommode them about our matters, but if you want to see something wild, I believe the devil has broken loose here in Pumpelhagen."

"Good heavens, has Fritz----"

"No, I didn't say so;" said Bräsigg; "I don't know what it is; but there is something going on."

"What is it, then?"

"Frau Pastorin, Habermann is irritable, and when that is the case, you may be sure there is some disagreeable business in the wind. You see, a few days ago, I came to Pumpelshagen, when he was busy with the hay and the rape harvest, and I said, 'Good morning,' says I. 'Good morning,' says he. 'Karl,' says I, and was going on to say something, when he interrupts: 'Have you seen my Triddelsitz anywhere?' 'Yes,' said I. 'Where?' asked he. 'Sitting in the great water-ditch,' said I. 'Did you see young Herr von Rambow anywhere?' asked he. 'He is sitting in the next ditch close by,' said I. 'What are they doing?' asked he. 'They are playing,' said I. 'You are joking,' said he, 'playing at this busy time?' 'Yes, Karl,' said I, 'and I have been playing too.' 'What have you played then?' asked he. 'Bo-peep, Karl. See! there is your greyhound peeping over the ditch towards Gurlitz, and your nobleman is peeping after the greyhound, and I was peeping out of the marl-pit after both of them, and when one turned his head, the other ducked, and so we sat there, peeping and ducking alternately, till the thing grew rather tedious to me, so I went boldly up the nobleman. "Good day," said I. "Good day," said he. "Begging your pardon," said I, "what sort of farm-work are you doing here?" "I?" said he, and stammered, "I was looking after our peas, whether they were filling out well." "Hem!" said I. "So?" said I. "Well!" said I, "good morning," and went towards the greyhound.' You won't mind it, Frau Pastorin, I always call your nephew so."

Not at all, said the Frau Pastorin, she called him worse names, herself.

"Good day!" said I, 'what sort of work are you doing?' 'Oh, nothing just now,' said he, going off, like a whipped hound, 'I have been looking after the peas.' 'Karl!' said I to Habermann, 'if your peas fill up according as they are looked after, you will have a plentiful harvest.' 'The cuckoo knows,' said he, terribly provoked, 'both of them are as stupid as possible; I can't make out the young Herr at all, this summer; he goes about like a man in a dream, forgets everything I tell him, and is no longer always up to the mark, as he used to be; and the other stupid fellow is worse than ever.' You don't mind Habermann calling your Herr Nephew a stupid fellow, Frau Pastorin?"

"God forbid!" said the Frau Pastorin, "Habermann has reason."

"You see, this was, say, a week ago,—now I started out yesterday morning early with my fishing rod, to see if the perch would bite; what do I see? Your Herr Nephew, the greyhound, goes slyly down here into the garden, and after a while comes out again, and behind him creeps along the nobleman among the bushes, and along side the ditch, as if he were tracking a fox, and when he has gone past my place of observation, there comes my good Karl Habermann over the hill, following the other, and when he had passed, I went on behind him, and so we went in a great curve, with wide spaces between us, clear down around the village, each one seeing only the man in front of him, which I found extremely amusing. They will do it again to-morrow probably, and if you would like to see the fun, Frau Pastorin, or the Herr Pastor, you can come in behind me, for Habermann says he shall make thorough work of the business, and he has been after them three times already."

"Thank you very much for the proposal," said the Frau Pastorin; "I have had amusement enough already, from this affair. Can you keep a secret, Bräsigg?"

"Like a sieve, with a hole in it."

"No; jesting aside, can you be silent?"

"Utterly," said Bräsigg, striking his hand over his mouth.

"Well, then listen," said the Frau Pastorin, and told him what she knew.

"Why, he really is a stupid fellow, then, your Herr Nephew!" said Bräsigg, and Frau Pastorin read him the letter.

"But, Frau Pastorin, how did this stupid fellow get such a command of language? He is stupid, to be sure, but his writing is not so stupid, he writes like a poet." And when Frau Pastorin read about the dragon, Bräsigg laughed merrily: "He means you, Frau Pastorin."

"I know that," said she shortly, "but the horned beast here, in the third letter, means you; and we have nothing to hold us back. The thing to be done is simply this; let me get hold of the fellow, and I will wash his head for him."

"You are right, and nothing is easier. You see, we two, you and I, will hide here in the garden, about eight o'clock; at half past eight, take Louise, and seat her in the water-ditch, and you shall see, he will come, like a bear after honey, and when he has began to lick it, we two will break loose and catch him."

"Ah, you are not very cunning, Bräsigg. If I am to tie the business to the big bell, I don't need your assistance, It would be a great pity for Louise to have anything to do with it; Habermann too, and even my Pastor himself need know nothing of the matter."

"Hm, hm!" said Bräsigg, "then--then--hold! I have it; Frau Pastorin you must make yourself as thin as possible, and put on Louise's dress, and go to the rendezvous, and when he comes, and sits down by you, and begins to caress you, you must catch him, so, by the throat, and hold on until I come;" and with that he laid hold of the Frau Pastorin's nearest hand, to illustrate his remarks.

"You are imprudent, Bräsigg."

"Yes, you say so, Frau Pastorin; but if he doesn't see his dearest sitting in the ditch, he won't come down, and if we don't take him unawares, we may whistle for him, for he is a confoundedly long-legged, thin-ribbed hound, and we can never chase after him with our short legs and our corpulence."

That was true, to be sure; but no! should she go to a rendezvous? Bräsigg was going quite too far, and, besides, how could she get Louise's clothes? But Bräsigg was not dismayed, he represented to her that it was merely an interview with her own nephew, and that, if she sat on the edge of the ditch, she need only wear Louise's shawl, and her Italian straw hat: "But you must keep sitting, for, if you should stand up, he will see in a minute that you are a foot shorter than Louise, and that you are a foot larger round the waist."

Finally,--finally, the Frau Pastorin let herself be persuaded, and as she went out about eight o'clock that evening, through the back door, dressed in Louise's hat and shawl, the Herr Pastor, who stood at the window, in deep thought over his sermon, said to himself, "Good heavens! where is Regina going, with Louise's hat and shawl? And there comes Bräsigg, out of the arbor. Well, he will come in, if he wants to see me; but it is very singular!"

The Frau Pastorin went along the garden walk with Bräsigg prepared for any emergency, opened the garden gate, and went through it alone, while Bräsigg remained in the garden, and ensconced himself behind the fence.

"Bräsigg," said she, as the thought occurred to her, "you will be too far off here; come down with me to the ditch, for when I have caught him, I must have you close by."

"All right!" said Bräsigg, and followed her down to the ditch.

Such a ditch, as this water-ditch was, is not often seen now-a-days; for our modern system of drains has made them unnecessary; but every old farmer remembers them, how they were dug through a field, sixteen or twenty feet from bank to bank, but narrow at the bottom, bordered right and left with thorn-bushes, nearly always dry, only in spring and fall there was perhaps a foot and a half of water; and occasionally in summer also, after a heavy rain. This was the case at present.

"Bräsigg," said the little Frau Pastorin, "lie down behind that bush, close by me, so that you can come quickly to my help."

"Why not? all right," said Bräsigg. "But, Frau Pastorin, you must think up some catch-word, upon which I shall break loose."

"Yes, surely. Yes, that is necessary; but what? Wait a moment! when I cry, 'The Philistines be upon thee,' then you must spring out."

"Good, Frau Pastorin."

"Good heavens!" said she to herself, "I seem to myself like a Delilah indeed. Seated at a rendezvous, at half past eight in the evening! At my time of life! How scandalized I should have been when I was a young girl, at the thought of such a thing, and to be doing it now in my old age! Bräsigg! Don't sneeze so dreadfully! One might hear you a quarter of a mile off. And all this for that boy, for that miserable boy! God bless me, if my Pastor knew! Bräsigg, what are you laughing at? I forbid you to laugh!"

"I am not laughing, Frau Pastorin."

"Yes, you were laughing: I distinctly heard you laugh."

"I was merely yawning a little from weariness, Frau Pastorin."

"And can you yawn, over such a matter as this? I am ready to fly, hand and foot. Ah, you miserable scamp! What have you made of me! And I can tell nobody, I must fight it out alone. Bräsigg is a real godsend."

By and by Bräsigg spoke--in a whisper to be sure, but one could hear it as distinctly as the cry of the quail in the distance:--"Frau Pastorin, make yourself as long as Lewerenz's child, and as thin as possible, and put on a lovely, shamefaced mien, for he is coming over the hill, I can see him against the evening sky."

And the little Frau Pastorin's heart throbbed, and her wrath rose high against the youth, and she glowed with shame at her own situation, and now she would certainly have run away, if Bräsigg had not laughed again; but that provoked her, and she meant to show him that she was in

earnest.

This time, Bräsig really did laugh, for, behind the first dark figure that came over the hill he saw a second, and behind the second a third, and he chuckled to himself, behind his thorn-bush: "So! There is Karl Habermann, too; and now the whole inspectorship of Pumpelhagen is on foot, probably out to see how the peas look in the evening. This looks like a comedy!"

The Frau Pastorin did not see the others, she saw merely her precious nephew, who came straight towards her. Now he ran across the bridge, now he ran along the bank of the ditch, now he sprang forward a couple of feet, and clasped his dear aunt about the waist: "Beloved angel!" "Wait, you rascal!" cried she in reply, and with the grip which Bräsig had taught her she seized him, not exactly by the throat, but by the coat-collar, and cried with a clear voice, "The Philistines be upon thee!" and Bräsig, the Philistine, scrambled up. Oh, thunder! his foot was asleep! but no matter! He hopped on one leg along the ditch, and almost sprang upon Fritz; but the overtaken leg failed under the weight of the hundred and eighty pounds it dragged after it; Bräsig fell backwards into a thorn-bush, lost his balance, and tumbled, a lump of misfortune, into the foot and a half of ditch-water.

There he sat, for a moment, stiff and stark, as if he were at the water-cure, taking a sitz-bath. Fritz, also, stood stiff and stark, and felt as if he were taking a bath, but a shower-bath: he stood fairly under the stream of his aunt's indignant reproaches, which rushed and roared about his ears, ever ending with the words: "The dragon has you now, my son! The dragon has you now!"

"And here comes the horned beast!" growled Bräsig, who had scrambled out of the ditch, and was close upon them. But Fritz had come to himself by this time; he broke loose from his aunt, and would have escaped, if a new enemy had not come upon him, from across the ditch. This was Franz, and it was not long before Habermann also was there, and the little Frau Pastorin had scarcely recovered from this shock, when her Pastor stood before her, asking, "For heaven's sake, Regina, what does all this mean?"

The little Frau Pastorin was at the last extremity; but Bräsig was not quite so far gone, although he felt as if he were changed into running waters, and on the point of dissolving. "Infamous greyhound!" cried he, giving Fritz a couple of digs under the ribs, "must I go and get my cursed Podagra again, on your account? But they shall all know what a confounded Jesuit you are. Habermann, he----"

"For heaven's sake!" cried the Frau Pastorin, catching breath again, in the gathering storm, and springing between them,--"don't any of you listen to Bräsig! Habermann, Herr von Rambow, I beg of you! just go quietly home, the business is over, it is all over, and what isn't finished, my Pastor will attend to; it is a family affair, merely a family affair. Isn't it so, Fritz, my son? It is just a family affair, that concerns only us two. But now come, my son! We will tell my Pastor all about it. Good-night, Herr von Rambow! Good-night, Habermann. Fritz shall come back to you soon. Come, Bräsig, we must get you to bed immediately."

And so she dispersed the company. The two who were not to be enlightened went off homewards, each by himself, shaking their heads; Habermann annoyed at the inexplicable behavior of his two young people, and that he could not penetrate its secret; Franz more than suspicious of the whole concern, for he had clearly recognized Louise's hat and shawl, in the half-twilight, and Louise must have some connection with the affair though he could make no sense of it.

Fritz, quite abashed, followed the Pastor and the Frau Pastorin, while the latter, in shame and sorrow, related the whole story. The procession drew near to the parsonage, and the evil-doer had so far recovered his courage, that he showed signs of running away; but Bräsig stuck so close to his side that he was compelled to yield outwardly; but he raged inwardly all the more, and when Bräsig asked the Frau Pastorin, who it was that had come so opportunely to their aid, and she mentioned the name of Franz, Fritz stood still, and shook his fist over the peas, in the direction of Pumpelhagen, and exclaimed, "I have been betrayed, and it shall be avenged, the Junker shall pay for it."

"Boy!" cried the Frau Pastorin, "will you hold your foolish tongue?"

"Softly, Regina!" said the Pastor, who was getting a tolerable idea of the matter, "go in and see that Bräsig is put to bed; I will have a few words with Fritz."

She complied with his request, and as much reason as Fritz was capable of taking in was then, in all kindness, administered by the old Herr Pastor; but one can pour only so much clear wine into a full cask, as the working off of the froth and scum leaves room for, and while the Pastor gently poured in, Fritz was foaming out of the bung-hole: his own relations had conspired against his happiness, and thought more of the rich Junker than of their own sister's child.

Much the same thing was going on inside the house; only the cask, before which the Frau Pastorin stood, neither foamed nor dripped; this was Uncle Bräsig, who would not be put to bed.

"I couldn't do it, Frau Pastorin," said he; "that is to say, I could, to be sure, but I oughtn't, for I must go to Rexow. Frau Nüssler has written me orders to report myself at Rexow."

The same spirit and leaven which worked in Fritz sending off froth and scum not of the purest, fermented slowly but strongly in old Bräsigt, although the old cask had stood long in the cellar, and had become seasoned; and when he at last, out of respect for the Frau Pastorin and the Frau Podagra, suffered himself to be persuaded into bed, his thoughts turned the same corner which those of Fritz were turning, as going through the pease-field, back of the Pastor's garden, he stamped for the second time his heroic resolutions into the earth: "He would renounce her! Renounce her! But the devil take the confounded Junker!"

CHAPTER XIII.

The next morning--it was Sunday morning--Bräsigt awoke, and lay stretching himself in the soft bed--"A pleasure," he said to himself, which I have never allowed myself before, but which is very agreeable. However, it is mainly from the novelty of the thing; one would soon get tired of it; "and he was on the point of getting up, when Frau Pastorin's maid-servant whisked in at the door, seized his clothes with one grasp, and ran off with them, leaving in their place a black coat and black trousers, and a black vest, lying on the chair.

"Ho, ho!" laughed he, looking at the black suit. "It is Sunday, and this is the parsonage; can it be possible they think I am going to preach to-day?" He lifted one garment after another, and said, at last, "Now I understand! It is only because of the ditch yesterday; because my own clothes are so wet and dirty, I must make myself comfortable in the Herr Pastor's. Well, here goes!"

But it didn't go quite so easily, and as for being comfortable that was out of the question. The clothes were long enough, to be sure, but as for breadth, he found close quarters in the Herr Pastor's trousers, it was utterly impossible to button the lower buttons of the vest, and when he put on the coat, it cramped him dreadfully between the shoulder-blades, and his arms stood out from his body, as if he were ready on this Sunday morning, to press the whole world to his honest heart.

So he went down stairs to the Frau Pastor in, his legs turned outward, as was his usual manner of walking since he had been pensioned; but his arms also were turned outward now, and the Frau Pastorin had to laugh heartily; but retreated behind the breakfast table, as Bräsigt came towards her, with open arms, as if she were to be the first subject of the world-embrace.

"Don't come near me, Bräsigt!" cried she "If I had dreamed that you would cut such a ridiculous figure in my good, old Pastor's clothes, you should have stayed in bed till noon, for it will be as late as that before yours are washed and dried."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Bräsigt, "was that the reason? And I was flattering myself that you sent me the Pastor's clothes that I might be more pleasing in your eyes at our rendezvous this morning."

"Just listen to me, Bräsigt!" said the Frau Pastorin, with a face red as fire. "I will have no such joking as that! And if you go round in the neighborhood--you have nothing else to do now, but carry stories from one to another--and tell about last evening, and that confounded rendezvous, I'll have nothing more to say to you."

"Frau Pastorin, what do you take me for?" cried Bräsigt, advancing upon her again, with outspread arms, so that she took refuge a second time behind the table. "You need not be afraid of me, I am no Jesuit."

"No, Bräsigt, you are an old heathen, but you are no Jesuit. But you must tell something. Oh, dear! Habermann must know, my Pastor says so himself. But when he asks you about it, you can leave me out of the story. Only think, if the Pomuchelskopps should get hold of it, I should be the most miserable woman in the world. Oh, heaven help us! And I did it only in the kindness of my heart, for that innocent child, Bräsigt. I have sacrificed myself for her."

"That you have, Frau Pastorin," said Bräsigt, earnestly, "and therefore don't worry yourself about it the least in the world; for, you see, if Karl Habermann asks me what we were doing there, then I can say--then--then I will say you had appointed a rendezvous with myself."

"With you? For shame, Bräsigt!"

"Now, Frau Pastorin, am I not as good as that greyhound? And surely our years are more suited to each other!" And with that Bräsigt looked up as innocently, as if he had thought of the best excuse in the world. The Frau Pastorin looked keenly in his honest face, and folded her

hands thoughtfully on her lap, and said, "Bräsigt, I will trust you. But, Bräsigt, dear Bräsigt, manage it as quietly as you can. And now come, sit down, and drink a cup of coffee." And she grasped one of his stiff arms, and turned him round to the table, as a miller turns about a windmill to the wind.

"Good!" said Bräsigt, taking the cup, which he held out with his stiff arm as if he were a sleight-of-hand performer, and the cup a hundred-pound weight, and he was holding it before an appreciative public in the open air; he tried to seat himself also; but as he bent his knees something cracked, and he sprang up,--whether it was the Pastor's chair, or the Pastor's trousers, he did not know; but he drank his coffee standing, and said, "It was just as well; he could not wait long, for he must go to Rexow, to Frau Nüssler."

All the Frau Pastorin's entreaties that he would wait till his own clothes were dried were of no avail; Frau Nüssler's least wish was for him a command, registered in the memorandum book of his conscience, and so he sailed off,--the long, black flaps of the priestly garment flying behind him in the summer morning,--toward Pumpelhaven and Rexow, slowly and heavily, like the crows we used to catch, when I was a boy, and then let fly again.

He came to Pumpelhaven, and there he was accosted by Habermann, who saw him over the garden fence. "Good heavens, Zachary, how you look!"

"The result of circumstances, Karl! You know I fell into the mud, last night,--but I haven't time, I must go to your sister."

"Bräsigt, my sister's business can afford to wait better than mine, I have noticed for some time, there has been a great deal going on behind my back, which I was to know nothing of. That wasn't so much; but, since last night, I am sure that the Herr Pastor and the Frau Pastorin know all about the matter, and if they are keeping anything from me, I know it can be merely out of kindness."

"You are right, Karl; it is out of kindness," interrupted Bräsigt.

"I am sure of it, Bräsigt, and I am not disposed to be suspicious, but for some time it has lain heavy on my heart that this is a matter which concerns me very nearly. What did you have to do with the business last evening?"

"I, Karl? I only had a rendezvous with the Frau Pastorin, in the water-ditch."

"What did the Herr Pastor have to do with it?"

"Karl, we did not know anything about it, he surprised us."

"What had the Herr von Rambow to do with it?"

"He caught your greyhound by the collar, because I had tumbled into the ditch."

"*What had Fritz Triddelsitz to do with the business?*" asked Habermann with terrible emphasis. "And what had Louise's hat and shawl to do with it?"

"Only this Karl, that they didn't fit the Frau Pastorin at all well, because she is much too large for them."

"Zachary," said Habermann, reaching his hand over the fence, "these are merely evasions. *Will* you not tell me,--and we such old friends,--or *dare* you not tell me?"

"Karl--the devil take the whole rendezvous business, and the Frau Pastorin's worry besides!" cried Bräsigt, and grasped Habermann's hand across the fence, and shook it in the tall nettles that grew by the fence, until both were stung, and drew back. "Karl, I will tell you. The Pastor will tell you himself--why shouldn't I? Your Fritz Triddelsitz, the cursed greyhound, loved you, doubtless because you have been like a father to him, and now his love has gone on to Louise, for love always goes on, for instance, mine for your sister and Mining."

"Bräsigt, speak seriously."

"Am I not speaking seriously, when I speak of your sister and Mining?"

"I know that," said Habermann, reaching after Bräsigt's hand again, in spite of the nettles, "but what had Franz to do with it all?"

"For all I know, he may love you too, for your fatherly kindness, and for all I know, his love may have gone on to your daughter."

"That would be a misfortune!" cried Habermann, "a great misfortune! To put that right again, is more than I can do; the Lord himself must help us!"

"I don't know about that, Karl: he has two estates----"

"Not a word, Zachary: come in, and tell me all you know."

And when Bräsigt had told all that he knew, and was again under way, and steering toward Rexow, Habermann stood looking after him and talking to himself: "He is a good fellow, his heart is in the right place; and, if I found it was really so, I should like it right well,--but--but----" He did not mean Bräsigt this time, however, he meant Franz.

On this Sunday morning young Jochen was sitting, about breakfast time, in his usual chimney-corner, and in his arm-chair. Lining and Mining had spread the table for breakfast, and had brought in the dishes of ham, and sausage, and bread, and butter, and when all stood ready on the table, Frau Nüssler herself came in, and set down a platter of hot scrambled eggs, saying: "There, Jochen, don't let it get cold!" and went out again, to see about some thing or other.

The eggs were still crackling in the dish,--they were really splendid--but young Jochen did not stir. Whether it was, that he had not yet smoked out his pipe, and wanted to finish it, or that he was lost in thought over two letters, which were lying in his lap, he did not stir, and his eyes remained fastened upon one particular spot. And on this spot, under the stove, close by him, lay young Bauschan, looking at his master. Young Bauschan was the latest new-comer of the whole Bauschan race, which had been brought up and weaned in the house, since old Jochen's time; when one spoke *to* him he was called "Bauschan," but when one spoke *of* him, he was called the "Thronfolger" (crown-prince,) not on his own account, but on Jochen's account, because, so far as anybody could recollect, this was the only joke he had ever perpetrated.

So, as I said before, these two young people, young Jochen and young Bauschan, sat and looked at each other, each thinking his own thoughts; young Jochen's suggested by his letters, and young Bauschan's by the savory smell which came to his nose. Jochen did not move, but the crown-prince stroked himself with his paw over his thoughtful face, his nose grew sharper, and the nostrils quivered, he crept out from under the stove, put on a courteous mien, and made his compliments to young Jochen with his tail. Young Jochen took no notice, and young Bauschan inferring that everything was in its usual condition, went nearer to the table, looked round sideways, more after Frau Nüssler than for young Jochen, then laid his head against the table and indulged in blessed hopes, as young folks will. Hope kept him quiet for a time, but--one really needs something more substantial, for one's stomach,--the crown-prince returned to put his two paws--merely the fore paws--in a chair, and bring himself a little nearer. His nose came directly over the dish containing the red bacon, and--now, young folks--Bauschan snapped at it, exactly as we should in our youthful days, when a pair of red lips smiled up to us; and--just like us--he was frightened, in an instant, at his wickedness, and crept away, but--that I should have to say it! with the bacon in his teeth.

"Bauschan!" cried young Jochen, as impressively as the mother, who keeps guard over the red lips; but for all that, he did not move; meanwhile Bauschan--whether that as crown-prince he believed himself possessed of a species of regal right over all the red lips in his realm, or that he was so spoiled that even such a sweet, clandestine titbit made no impression upon him--looked Jochen boldly in the face, licked his chops, and hankered for more. Jochen looked him right in the eye, but did not stir, and after a little while Bauschan got up again on a chair, this time with his hind legs, and ate up a plate full of sausage. "Bauschan!" cried Jochen. "Mining, Bauschan is eating up the sausage!" but he didn't stir. The crown-prince bestirred himself, however, and when he had made way with the sausage, he addressed himself to his chief dainty, the dish of scrambled eggs. "Mother, mother!" cried young Jochen, "he is eating up the eggs!" But young Bauschan had burned his moist nose against the hot dish, he started back, upset the platter, knocked the Kümmel bottle over with his tail, and disordered the whole table, young Jochen never stirring the while, only calling from his corner, "Mother, mother! The confounded dog! he is eating up our eggs!"

"What are you roaring about, young Jochen, in your own house;" cried one, who just then entered the door, but it was such a singular figure, that Jochen was frightened. He let his pipe fall from his mouth, in his terror, put out both hands before him, and cried, "All good spirits praise the Lord! Herr Pastor, is it you, or, Bräsigt, is it you?"

Yes, it was Bräsigt, at least one who looked at him near enough, and had time to consider, would recognize the yellow-topped boots as belonging to an inspector's uniform, but Jochen had no time to consider, for the figure which entered the door at once perceived Bauschan's misdeeds, and ran into every corner of the room, in search of a stout stick for the crown prince's back, and behind him fluttered in the air two long, long black coattails, like the wings of a dragon, and out of the high black coat-collar, and under the high black hat, which had slipped down half over his eyes, shone a red, angry face, as if a chimney-sweep had taken a glowing coal in his mouth, to frighten the children. Young Jochen was no longer a child, to be sure, but yet he was frightened, he had started up, and held on with both hands to the arms of his chair, and exclaimed alternately, "Herr Pastor! Bräsigt! Bräsigt! Herr Pastor!" and the crown-prince, who was still in his childhood, was terribly frightened, he also ran into all the comers, and howled, and could not get out of the room, for the door was shut, and when the black figure beat him with the yellow stick--necessity works wonders--he sprang through the window sash, and took half the glass along with him.

This made uproar enough to raise the dead, why, then, should not Frau Nüssler hear it in the kitchen? and, just as she opened the door, Bräsigt was shoving up his hat with one hand, and pointing with the other, still holding the stick, to the broken window, while he uttered the remarkable words, "You can thank nobody but yourself, young Jochen! For what does the dumb

creature of a crown-prince understand? All the beautiful Kümme!"

"Good heavens!" cried Frau Nüssler, coming in. "What is all this, Jochen? Bless me, Bräsig, how you look!"

"Mother," said young Jochen, "the dog and Bräsig--what can I do about it?"

"For shame, young Jochen," cried Bräsig, going up and down the room with great strides, his long coat-tails almost dipping in the Kümme, "who is master of this house, you, or young Bauschan?"

"But, Bräsig, why in the world are you dressed so horribly?" asked Frau Nüssler.

"So?" said Bräsig, looking at her with great eyes, "suppose you had gone to a rendezvous with the Frau Pastorin, last night, and tumbled into the ditch, so that your clothes were all damp and muddy, this morning? And suppose you got a letter, that you must come here to Rexow, to a family council? And what was I to do? Is it my fault that the Herr Pastor is tall as Lenerenz's child, and as thin as a shadow, and that his head is so much bigger than mine? Why did the Frau Pastorin rig me out in his uniform this morning, so that all the old peasants going to church called out to me, from a distance, 'Good morning, Herr Pastor!' but that I might come here, out of pure kindness, to your family council?"

"Bräsig," said young Jochen, "I swear to you----"

"Don't swear, young Jochen! You will swear yourself into hell. Do you call this a family council, with all the Kümme running about the room, and I in the Pastor's clothes, to be made a laughing-stock of?"

"Bräsig, Bräsig," exclaimed Frau Nüssler, who scarcely knew her old friend in his anger, and who had been picking up the broken fragments and setting the table-cloth straight, "don't mind such a trifle! Sit down, it is all right again, now."

Under Frau Nüssler's friendly words, Bräsig quieted down, and allowed himself to be seated at the breakfast-table, only growling to himself, "The devil knows, young Jochen, I have always lived in the hope that you would grow a little wiser with years, but, I see well, what is dyed in the wool will never wash out. Meanwhile though--what is the matter here?"

"Yes," said Frau Nüssler--"Yes," said Jochen also, and his wife was silent, for she thought Jochen was really going to say something; he said nothing, however, but "It is all as true as leather." So Frau Nüssler began again: "Yes, there is Rector Baldrian's Gottlieb, Jochen's sister's son, a right good fellow, and well-educated, and has studied his Articles as a Candidate--you have seen him here a great many times."

"Yes," nodded Bräsig, "a right nice young fellow, a sort of Pietist, combed his hair behind his ears, and instructed me that I did wrong to go fishing Sunday morning."

"Yes, that is the one. And he has got through with his schooling, and the Rector wants us to take him here, for a while, till he studies some last things into his head, and we wanted to ask you what we should do about it."

"Why not? The Pietists are quiet people, their only peculiarity is their love of instructing; and you, Frau Nüssler, are likely to give them opportunity for it, and young Jochen, too--God be praised!--since he will not allow himself to be instructed by Bauschan and me."

"Yes, that is well enough, Bräsig, but there is something else; there is Kurz's Rudolph, he has studied for the ministry, too, and he also is Jochen's nephew; he heard that the other wanted to come here, and he wrote yesterday, saying he had wasted his time dreadfully at Rostock, and he would come here to Rexow, and review what was necessary. Just think of it! there in Rostock he has all the learned professors, and here at Rexow only Jochen and me."

"Oh, I know him," cried Bräsig, "he is an exceedingly fine fellow! When he was first beginning to study, he caught me half a dozen perch out of the Black Pool; the very smallest weighed a good pound and a half."

"Eh! How you remember everything! And he was the one who got Mining, when she had climbed up on the ladder to the old stork's nest, and stood there clapping her hands for joy, and we down below frightened out of our wits, and he brought her down, safe and sound. Yes, he is bright enough about such matters, but not so good at his books, and Rector Baldrian says, there at Rostock he is always getting into fights. Just think, they fought with bare swords, and he was in the midst of it all, and it was all on account of a rich merchant's pretty daughter."

"May you keep the nose on your face!" cried Bräsig. "In a real, regular fight, and about a pretty merchant's daughter! Well, young Jochen, all the troubles come from the women!"

"Yes, Bräsig, you may well say so; but what shall we do about it?"

"Why, where is there any difficulty? If you don't want the two young ecclesiastics, write and say so, and if you do want them to come, write and say so; you have room enough, and plenty to

eat and drink, only look out for the expenses for the books, for those make fearful holes in the pocket. And if you wish to take only one, take the fighter, for I, for my part, would much rather fight with the one, than be instructed by the other."

"Yes, Bräsigg, that is all very well," said Frau Nüssler, "but we have already written to Gottlieb Baldrian, and now we cannot refuse to take Rudolph, without affronting the Kurzes."

"No? Well, then, take both."

"Yes, Bräsigg, it is easy to say so; but our two little girls--they have just been confirmed--there, Jochen, you tell him!"

And Jochen really began to speak: "It is all as true as leather,--you see, Bräsigg. Mining is just like--you know all about it--educated just like a governess, and my old mother used to say, a governess and a candidate in the same house--that would never do."

"Ho, ho! Young Jochen! Now I understand you. You are afraid of love-affairs. But that little rogue and love-affairs!"

"Well, Bräsigg," said Frau Nüssler, hastily, "it is not so improbable! I, as a mother, should know that. Why, I was not so old as they are, when----" Frau Nüssler stopped suddenly, for Bräsigg had pulled a terribly long face, and was looking very keenly in her eyes. Fortunately, Young Jochen took up the conversation, and said; "Bräsigg,--mother, fill Bräsigg's glass,--Bräsigg, you can understand something about it, and now, what ought we, as parents, to do?"

"Let them alone, young Jochen! Why has the Lord put young people into the world, and what else have they to do but make love to each other? But that little rogue!"

"You are jesting, Bräsigg," interrupted Frau Nüssler. "You ought not to talk so about such a serious matter, for out of a smooth egg many times crawls a basilisk."

"Let him crawl," cried Bräsigg.

"So?" asked Frau Nüssler. "Do you say so? But I say otherwise. Jochen is not accustomed to trouble himself about such things; for all he cares, every one of our servant-maids might fall in love. Idle about, and get married; and I--God bless me! I have both hands full of work, and enough to find fault with before my eyes, without looking after what goes on behind my back."

"What am I for, then?" asked Bräsigg.

"Oh, you!" said Frau Nüssler, off hand, "you have no experience in such matters."

"What!" exclaimed Bräsigg. "I, who once had three sweethearts----" He went no further, for Frau Nüssler put on a long face, and looked at him with so much curiosity, that he covered his embarrassment by drinking the Kümmel in his glass.

"A miserable piece of business!" he cried, standing up, "and who is to blame for it all? Young Jochen!"

"Eh, Bräsigg, what have I to do with it?"

"You let the crown-prince eat up the breakfast, under your very nose, and take two ministerial candidates into your house, and don't know what to do about it! But, never mind, Frau Nüssler, take the two young fellows in, and don't be afraid. I will look after the little rogue, and the two confounded rascals shall catch thunder and lightning. The fighter, the duel-fighter--I will take care of him; but you must keep an eye on the proselyter; they are the slyest."

"Well, we can't do otherwise," said Frau Nüssler, also rising.

And at Michaelmas the two clerical recruits arrived at head-quarters, and Franz went away to the agricultural college at Eldena, and as he went out of the Pastor's garden, there looked after him, over the fence, in the same place where Fritz had sat, with his bread and butter and his beer-bottle, a dear, beautiful face, and the face looked like a silken, rose-red purse, out of which the last groschen had been given for a dear friend.

When Louise came back into the parlor, in the twilight, that evening, the Frau Pastor in took the lovely girl upon her lap, and kissed the sweet mouth, and pressed the pure heart to her own. Well the women-folks can't help doing such things!

CHAPTER XIV.

The evening before St. John's day, 1843, David Däsel's oldest boy was sitting with Johann Degel's youngest girl, in the pleasure-garden at Pumpelhagen, enjoying the moonlight, and Fika Degel said to Krischan Däsel, "Say, did you see her, that time, when you took the horses to the young Herr?"

"To be sure I saw her; he took me into the parlor, and shewed her to me, and said, 'See, this is your gracious lady!' and she filled me a glass, that I should drink there."

"What does she look like?"

"Well," said Krischan, "it is hard to describe her; let me see, she is about your size, and has such light hair as yours, and just such a pink and white face, and she has grey eyes also, as you have, and just such a little, old, sweet, pouting mouth," and with that, he pressed a hearty kiss on the red lips.

"Gracious, Krischan!" cried Fika, freeing herself from his arm, "then does she look just like me?"

"Child, have you no more sense than that?" said Krischan. "No, don't flatter yourself to that extent! You see, that sort of people have always a something about them, quite different from our sort. The gracious lady might sit here with me, till she were frozen to death in midsummer, it would never come into my head to give her a kiss."

"So?" said Fika Degel, standing up, and tossing her pretty head, "then you think I am good enough for you?"

"Fika," said Krischan, throwing his arm round her again, though she made a show of resistance, "that sort are too slender-waisted, and have too weak bones for us, if I should hug her as I do you, I should always be afraid of dislocating her spine, or knocking her down. No," said he, stroking her soft hair, "like must mate with like." And as they separated, Fika was quite gracious again towards her Krischan, and looked as friendly as if she were his gracious lady.

"Well, I shall see you to-morrow," said she, "I am going to help the girls tie wreaths, in the morning."

And so she did. Yes, they were tying wreaths in Pumpelhagen, and a great gate of honor was constructed, and while Habermann was overseeing the preparations, and Marie Möller was running hither and thither, with greens and flowers, and Fritz Triddelsitz, as a volunteer of the first class, in his green hunting-jacket, and white leather breeches, and yellow top-boots, and a blood-red neck-handkerchief, strutted about among the farm-boys and day-laborers, there arrived upon the scene Uncle Bräsig also, neat as wax, in light-blue, tight summer trousers, and a brown dress-coat, of unknown antiquity, which covered his back very well, down to the calves, but in front he looked as if the lightning had struck him, and torn off his brown bark, leaving exposed a long strip of yellow wood, for he wore under it a fine, yellow piqué vest. On his head he had, of course, a silk hat, three-quarters of an ell high.

"Good morning, Karl! How are you getting on? Ha, ha! There stands already the whole concern. Fine, Karl! The arch should be a little higher, though, and right and left you should have a couple of towers; I have seen them so in old Friedrich Franz's time, at Gustrow, when he came home in triumph. But where is your flag?"

"Flag?" said Habermann, "we have none."

"Karl, bethink yourself! How can you celebrate without a flag? The Herr Lieutenant is a military character, of course he must have a flag. Möller!" he went on, without hesitation, "go into the house, and bring me out two sheets, and sew them together lengthways; Krischan Päsel, bring me a nice, smooth, straight beanpole; and you, Triddelsitz, get me the brush that you mark bags with, and an inkstand!"

"What under heaven are you going to do, Zachary," said Habermann, shaking his head.

"Karl," said Bräsig, "it is a mercy he was in the Prussian army, if he had been in the Mecklenburg, we couldn't have got the colors; but the Prussian--black ink, white linen, and there are your colors!"

Habermann would have entered a protest, but he thought: "Well, let him work, the young Herr will understand that it is all meant well."

So Bräsig worked away, and painted a great "Vivat!!!" with the brush. "Hold it tight!" he cried to Marie Möller, and Fritz Triddelsitz, whom he had pressed into the service as assistants, "so that the 'Herr Lieutenant' and 'Frau Lieutenant' may come out nice and clear on the flag!" for he had decided upon these words to put under the "Vivat," instead of "A. von Rambow" and "F. von Satrup" which had been his first thought: for these were merely a couple of names of the nobility, and having lived among noblemen all his life he held them for nothing remarkable; but he had not had so much to do with lieutenants, and considered the title a very high one.

When he had finished his flag, he ran up to fasten it on the highest point of the manor-house, then puffed down stairs again, to see the effect from outside, and placed himself at the door of the granary, and then at the sheep-barn, but nowhere did it seem to satisfy him.

"It don't look right, Karl," said he, much annoyed; but, after a little reflection, he placed himself before the green archway, and called out, "Karl, what am I thinking of? *This* is the right spot, from which they will perceive it!"

"But, Bräsig," remonstrated Habermann, "it would cover our triumphal arch entirely, and under the tall poplars there wouldn't be a breath of air for the flag, and the two heavy old sheets would hang down on the bean-pole like a great icicle."

"I'll make it all right, Karl," and Bräsig pulled out from his pocket a long string, which he proceeded to fasten to the upper, outer end of his flag. "Gust Kegel," he called to one of the swineherds, "are you a good climber?"

"Yes, Herr Inspector," said Gust.

"Well, my dear swine-marquis," said Bräsig, laughing at his own joke, and all the men and boys and girls laughed with him, "just take this end of the string, and climb into that poplar, and draw it tight." And Gust did the business very skilfully, and drew the string tight and hauled up the sail, as if all Poppelhagen were making ready to sail off and Bräsig stood by the bean-pole, as if he were standing by the mast of his ship, an admiral commanding a whole fleet: "They may come now, Karl, whenever they like; I am ready."

But Fritz Triddelsitz was not ready yet, for he had appointed himself commander of the land-forces, and wished to draw them up in military array, by the sheep-barn, on one side the old day-laborers, and the servants, and farm-boys, and on the other, the house-wives, servant-maids and little girls. After much instruction, he had got his breeches-company about half-drilled, but with the petticoat-company he could do nothing at all. The house-wives' carried, instead of a weapon, a baby each, upon the left arm, that little Jochen and Hinning might be able to see too, and manoeuvred with them in a highly irregular manner; the maid-servants declined to recognize Fritz as their commander, and Fika Degel called out to him that Mamselle Möller was their corporal, and the light-troops of young girls skirmished behind poplars and stonewalls, as if the enemy were in sight, and they in danger of being taken prisoners. Fritz Triddelsitz struck fiercely at his troops with his cane, which he carried as a staff of command, and told them they were not worth their salt, and, going up to Habermann, vowed he would have nothing more to do with the concern; but if Habermann had no objections he would take his gray pony, and ride off to see how soon the Herr lieutenant and his lady would arrive. Habermann hesitated, mainly out of consideration for the old Gray; but Bräsig whispered quite audibly, "Let him go, Karl, then we shall be rid of the greyhound, and it will be much nicer."

So Fritz rode off on the Gray, towards Gurlitz; but a new annoyance intruded itself in Bräsig's plan, that was schoolmaster Strull, who came marching up with the school-children, descendants of Asel and Egel, with open psalm-books in their hands. The order which Fritz had not been able to accomplish with an hour's training, Master Strull had held for a whole year; he advanced his troops in two divisions, in the first stood the Asels, whose singing could always be relied upon, in the second, were the Egels, of whom he was--alas! but too well aware, that each one had his own idea of time and melody.

"Preserve us, Karl, what is all this?" asked Bräsig, as he saw the schoolmaster approaching.

"Now, Zachary, Master Strull wishes to show honor to the young Herr, as well as the rest of us, and why shouldn't the children have a chance to show what they have learned?"

"Too ecclesiastical, Karl; altogether too ecclesiastical for a lieutenant? Haven't you got a drum or a trumpet?"

"No," laughed Habermann, "we don't keep that sort of agricultural implement."

"Very unfortunate," said Bräsig, "but hold! Krischan Däsel, come and hold the flag a moment! It is all right, Karl," said he, as he went off. But if Habermann had known what he had in his mind, he would have called it all wrong. Bräsig beckoned the night-watchman, David Däsel, to step aside, and asked him where his instrument was. David bethought himself a little, and finally answered, "Here!" holding up his staff, for Fritz Triddelsitz had ordered all the day-laborers to bring them along, "that they might do the honors to the Herr Lieutenant," as he said.

"Blockhead!" cried Bräsig, "I mean your musical instrument."

"You mean my horn? That is at home."

"Can you play pieces on it?"

"Yes," said David Däsel, he could play one.

"Well," said Bräsig, "bring your instrument, and come out behind the cattle-stall, and I will hear you play."

And when they were alone, David put the horn to his mouth, and blew, as if the whole cattle-stall were in flames: "The Prussians have taken Paris. Good times are coming now,—toot! toot!" for he was very musical. "Hold!" said Bräsig, "you must blow quietly now, for I want to give Habermann a pleasant surprise; by and by, when the lieutenant comes, you can blow louder. And when the schoolmaster is through with his ecclesiastical business, then keep watch of me; I will give you a sign, when I wave the flag three times, then begin."

"Yes, Herr Inspector; but the old watch-dog ought to be tied fast in his kennel, for we are not on good terms of late, and whenever he sees me with my horn, he flies at me."

"It shall be attended to," said Bräsig, and he went back with Däsel, to the celebration, and grasped his flag-staff again, just at the right moment, for Fritz Triddelsitz came riding over the hill, as fast as old Gray could gallop: "They are coming! They're coming! They are in Gurlitz already!"

They were coming. Axel von Rambow and his lovely young wife rode slowly on, in the lovely morning; the chaise-top was down, and Axel pointed over the wide green fields, full of sunshine, to the cool shadows of the Pumpelhagen park: "See, dearest Frida, this is our home." The words were few, but much happiness lay in them, and much pride, that he was in circumstances to spread a soft couch for the dearest one he had on earth; if he had said it in a thousand words, she could not have understood him more clearly. She felt the happiness and pride in his heart, and a great wave of love and thankfulness broke over her own. Everything about her was cool, and fresh, and clear; she was like a cool brook, which, until now, had flowed under green, silent shadows, aside from the highway, through hills and forests, and now springs forth suddenly into golden sunshine, and sees in its own depths bright pebbles and close-shut mussels, treasures of which it had never dreamed, and bright little fish darting hither and yon, like wishes and longings for working and waking, and green banks and flowers mirrored in the clear water, like her joyous future life.

And outwardly, she was cool, and fresh, and clear, and agreed in all respects with Krischan Däsel's description; but if one had seen her at this moment, as she looked over toward the Pumpelhagen garden, and back again into her young husband's face, he would have seen the fresh cheeks take on a deeper glow, and the clear light that shone from her gray eyes, a softer, warmer radiance, as when the summer evening bends over the bright world, and hushes it to sweet sleep with a cradle-song.

"Ah," she cried, pressing his hand, "how beautiful it is here, at your home! What rich fields! Only see, how stately the wheat stands! I have never seen it so before."

"Yes," said Axel, happy in her pleasure, "we have a rich country, much richer than your region."

He might have kept silence, now, and it would have been quite as well; but she had touched unwittingly upon his favorite province, that of agriculture, and he must needs show her that he knew something of it, so he added: "But that must all be altered. We are lacking in intelligence, we don't know how to make the most of our soil. See! yonder there, over the hill, where the wheat is growing, that belongs to Pumpelhagen, wait a couple of years, and we will have all sorts of commercial products growing here, and bringing us three times the profit." And he began to harvest his hemp and hops and oil-seeds, and anise and cummin, and sprinkled among them, like an intelligent farmer, lucerne and esparcet also, "to keep his cattle in good condition," and while he was among the dyer's weeds, and selling his red madder, and blue woad, and yellow weld for a good price, and well in the saddle on his high horse, up shot a living example of all these bright colors, close by the turn, on this side of Gurlitz, who was also on a high horse, that is the gray pony. This was Fritz Triddelsitz, who went up like a complete rainbow, and disappeared like a shooting star.

"What was that?" cried Frida, and Axel called "Hallo! hallo!"

But Fritz never looked round, he must carry tidings to the gate-of-honor, and he had barely time, as he galloped through Gurlitz, to call out to Pomuchelskopp, who stood in his door, "They are coming! They will be in Gurlitz in five minutes!" and Pomuchelskopp called over the garden fence, toward the arbor: "Come, Malchen and Salchen! It is time now!"

And Malchen and Salchen threw down the landscape paintings they were embroidering, among the nettles by the arbor, and tied on their straw hats, and fastened themselves one on each side, to Father Pomuchelskopp's elbows, and Father Pomuchelskopp said, "Now don't look round, for pity's sake, for it must appear as if we had just gone out walking, for all I care, to see the beauties of nature."

But misfortune was impending. As Muchel and his young ladies stepped out of the door, and Axel rode slowly through the village, while his young wife asked him "who was that lovely girl, who just greeted us?" and he replied that it was Louise Habermann, his inspector's daughter, and the house where she stood was the parsonage, the devil of housekeeping possessed old Häuning to come out, in her white kerchief and old black merino sacque,—for it still held together, and was plenty good enough,—to feed the little turkeys with malt grains. When she saw Pomuchelskopp walking off with his two daughters, she thought it a great piece of impertinence for her Muchel to

go off without her; she wiped her hands on the old black merino, and hastened after, black and white, stiff and straight, as if one of the old, mouldering tombstones, in the church-yard near by, had taken a fancy to go walking for pleasure.

"Muchel!" she called after her husband.

"Don't look round!" said Muchel, "it must all appear quite natural."

"Kopp," she cried, "will you stop? shall I run myself out of breath for you?"

"For all I care," said Pomuchelskopp angrily. "Don't look round, children, I hear the carriage, it must seem quite off-hand."

"But, father," said Salchen, "it is mother."

"Ah, mother here, and mother there!" cried Pomuchelskopp, downright angry, "she will spoil the whole business! But, my dear children," he added, upon a little reflection, "you need not tell mother I said so."

And Klücking came puffing up: "Kopp!" but she had not time for fuller expression of her feelings, for the carriage came opposite, and Pomuchelskopp stood, bowing: "A-a-ah! Congratulations--best wishes, God bless them!" and Malchen and Salchen courtesied, and Axel bade the coachman stop, and said he was very happy to see his Herr Neighbor and his family looking so well, and Muchel tugged secretly at the old black sacque, to make Häuning courtesy also, but she stood stiff and straight, puffing away, as if the reception was too warm to suit her, and Frida sat there, very cool, as if the thing was not much to her taste. And Muchel began to speak of the wonderful coincidence, that he should have just started out walking with his two daughters, but he got a poke from his Hanning's elbow, and heard a venomous whisper, "So your wife is of no account, is she?" so that he lost the thread of his discourse, and went rambling about in a distressed manner, until Axel bade the coachmen drive on, saying he hoped to see Herr Pomuchelskopp again soon.

Pomuchelskopp stood in anguish, by the roadside, hanging his head, and Malchen and Salchen took hold of his arms again, and instead of going on naturally with their walk they went back to the house. Blind behind him marched Hanning, and led him, with gentle reproaches, back to his duty again; but he remembered this hour for a year and a day, and her reproofs he never forgot while his life lasted.

"Those seem very disagreeable people," said Frida, as they drove on.

"They are, indeed," replied Axel, "but they are very rich."

"Mere riches are a small recommendation," said Frida.

"True, dear Frida, but the man is a large proprietor, and since they are such near neighbors, we must keep up some intercourse with these people."

"Do you really mean it, Axel?"

"Certainly," he replied.

She sat a little while, reflecting, and then inquired, suddenly;--

"What sort of man is the Pastor?"

"I know very little of him, myself, but my father thought very highly of him, and my inspector reveres him wonderfully. But," he added, after a moment, "that is natural enough, the Pastor has brought up his only daughter, since she was a little child."

"Oh, yes, that charming girl, at the door of the parsonage; but the Pastor's wife must have had the most to do with that. Do you know her?"

"Why yes,--that is to say, I have seen her,--she is a lively old lady."

"They are certainly good people," said Frida, with decision.

"Dear Frida," said Axel, drawing himself up a little, "how you women jump at conclusions! Because these people have brought up a strange child, and--we will take it for granted that they have brought her up well--you--" and he was going on, in his shallow wisdom, which he called "knowledge of human nature,"--for it is an old story that those who have come into the world as blind as young puppies, and have only nine days' experience, are the very ones to pride themselves on their "knowledge of human nature; "--but, unfortunately for the world, he had no opportunity, for his Frida sprang up suddenly, crying,--

"See, Axel, see! A flag, and a triumphal arch! The people mean to give us a grand reception."

And Degel, the coachman, looked round over his shoulder, with a grin of delight: "Yes, gracious lady. I was not to speak of it; but now you can see it for yourself, and it is a great

pleasure. But I must drive slowly, or else the horses will be frightened."

CHAPTER XV.

And now they were come; and Habermann stepped up to the carriage, and spoke a few words, which sprang from his heart to his lips, and the clear eyes of the young wife shone on the white hair of the old man like a sunbeam, full of friendly warmth, and before Axel noticed,--for with his surprise and his interrupted discourse, he was not prepared for the occasion,--she reached out her hand to him, and with the grasp of the hand a friendship was settled, without a word, for each had looked into the eyes of the other, and had read there clearness, truth and confidence. And now Axel was ready with his hand, and Schoolmaster Strull came forward with his Asels, and struck up a song of "Thanksgiving for particular occasions," No. 545, out of the Mecklenburg Psalm-book, "After a heavy thunderstorm," beginning, like a sensible man, with the second verse, because it seemed to him particularly appropriate,--

"We praise Thy might, Oh Lord,"--

and Bräsig was trying to wave the flag, but Gust Kegel held it fast.

"Let go of the string, you rascal!" cried Bräsig.

"We know Thine anger's power,"

sung the schoolmaster.

"Boy, let go the string out of your hand!" screamed Bräsig again.

"Protect us by Thy grace
In sorrow's gloomy hour,"--

sung the schoolmaster.

"Boy, when I get hold of you, I'll break every bone in your body!" roared Bräsig.

"They who rest within Thy arm,
Shall be safe from every harm,"

sang the schoolmaster.

"Herr, it sticks fast in the poplar," cried the boy, and Bräsig tugged at the flag, and brought down with it part of a branch, while the schoolmaster sung,

"How it roars and crashes!"

and Fritz Triddlesitz ran for the dinner-bell, which hung in the door-way, and played a storm, and Bräsig waved the flag, and the men and women, and servants and maids, and boys and girls shouted "Vivat!" and "Hurrah!" and David Däsel blew on his horn: "The Prussians have taken Paris, good times are coming now, toot! toot! toot!" and it was all so festive that no dog could help howling, and at the last "toot!" out sprang the old watch-dog, which Gust Kegel had mischievously unfastened, so that he might enjoy himself with the rest, and made straight for David Däsel's legs, and the two brown coach-dogs also began to sniff and howl in such a singular manner that it was really a piece of good fortune that Degel the coachman had his reins well in hand, and was prepared for emergencies.

As it was, all passed off well, and the carriage soon arrived safely at the manor-house, and Axel lifted out his lovely young bride. Inside the house, there was the same preparation and adornment, with flowers and greens, as outside, and among the wreaths and garlands, Marie Möller in a new red jaconet dress, with a fiery red face, moved her fiery red arms hither and thither, and when she had cooled off a little among the greens, ran back into the kitchen, to the

cooking stove, as if she were a flatiron-heater, which must be kept constantly red-hot,--and when the gracious young lady stepped across the threshold, she came towards her, with her fiery arms outspread, as if she were a priestess of Moloch, and placed a wreath of bright red roses on the young lady's head, and then, falling back a couple of paces, and gesticulating with the fiery arm, as if striking out brilliant flames, she repeated a verse, which she had been learning for the last three months, under Bräsig's tuition,--

"Hail, beauteous lady, sweet and bright,
Accomplished, virtuous, wise and bland,
Deign to accept this offering slight,
From your devoted, humble servant's hand."

And when she had said her lesson, she threw wide open the door of the dining-room, and there stood a table spread for dinner, in good season, for it was high noon, and Axel said a word or two to his wife, and she nodded in a pleased way under her wreath of roses, and turned to the old inspector: he must be her guest today, and also the schoolmaster, and the young farmer, and would the old gentleman who had waved the flag honor them with his company also? Then she went to Marie Möller, and thanked her for her fine speech and all that she had done to welcome them, and would she have time to enjoy with them the nice things she had prepared? And Marie Möller became as red with delight as if there were a cooking stove in her heart, filled with glowing coals.

Of before long, they all came in. Habermann brought up Bräsig, and introduced him as his old friend of many years' standing, who had also been well acquainted with the late Herr Kammerrath, and would by no means be found wanting in taking his part in the rejoicing at Pumpelshagen. And Bräsig went to Axel, and got hold of his hand, will he, nill he, and squeezed it, and, shaking his head back and forth, assured him of his friendship for life and death: "Herr Lieutenant, very dear and welcome, as I just said to Karl, how glad I shall be if you only take after your good father!" And then he turned to the young lady: "Gracious Frau Lieutenant," and fumbled after her hand, which he succeeded in grasping, and it looked as if he intended to kiss it; but he held it for moment, and then said, "No! not that! I always kissed the hand of my gracious countess, and it was proper, as a token of service; I will not take that liberty, you are so lovely to look at; but if you ever need an old man's service--my name is Zachary Bräsig--just send for me,--a short mile from here--Hauerwiem,--and the day shall not be too hot for me, or the night too dark."

Bräsig's speeches were peculiar things; honest folks have a way of talking right out of their hearts, without thinking, at the moment, how they will be understood. Axel did not take it as it was meant. That such an one as Inspector Bräsig should presume to hold up an example to him,--even if it were his own father, to whom he was so deeply indebted,--did not suit him; he was put out of humor. Frida, who went to the heart of every thing, took the old inspector's speech in her hand, like an onion, and shredded off the old, dry skins, one after another, and found a bright, hard kernel inside, and, as she cut it across, there was such a sound heart disclosed that she took the old fellow by the hand, and made him sit next to her at table.

Then came Fritz Triddelsitz, in the guise of a young proprietor, for he had arrayed himself in his blue coat with gilt buttons, which looked, for all the world, like a young son of Pomuchelskopp's. And then came Schoolmaster Strull, a great, strong fellow, whom the Lord had made fitter to be a hewer of wood than a trainer of children. The old boy looked, with his big head and his black suit, which was getting rusty, like a stout wheel-nail, which Fate had shoved to the wall, and which had quietly rusted there. His face was rather rusty, too, and the only thing which looked gay about him was his shirt-bosom, which his old mother, because it was a little yellow, had dipped so generously in the blueing, that a fine sea-green color was the result.

These two were treated with special attention by Axel, and when he heard that Fritz's father was an apothecary in Rahnstadt, and could make chemical analyses (Analysen), he asked Fritz to sit next him, and as Uncle Bräsig heard the word "Analysen" he snapped it out of the Herr Lieutenant's mouth, and said, aside to Habermann, "Allelüssen? Allelüssen? What does he mean by Allelüssen? Some kind of vermin?" and without waiting for an answer, he said to Axel: "Gracious Herr Lieutenant, for such stuff you must let the apothecary's son bring you a pot of 'ungewendten Napoleon,'" (unguentum Neapolitarum), which was, naturally, quite incomprehensible to Axel. But if he had understood it, he had no time to explain, for as soon as they were fairly seated,--the schoolmaster not more than a quarter, for he balanced himself on the edge of his chair,--he launched forth into his favorite subject, the farming of the estate, and began to enrich the fields with bone-dust, and Chili saltpetre and guano, and laid out behind the garden a great plantation of hops; while old Habermann said to himself, he had not thought the young Herr knew so little about farming, and wondered how Bräsig could sit there and laugh at it all. But that was very natural, since Bräsig took all these brilliant plans of Axel's for a good joke, and when the young Herr had got his hop-field in working order, Bräsig laughed heartily, and said, "Of course the soil must first be prepared,--and when we are through with this preparation, we can fertilize it a little more, and then we can raise raisins and almonds, to feed the pigs with; you have no idea, gracious Frau Lieutenant,--turning to the lady--"how sweet a pig tastes, that is fatted on raisins and almonds."

This was not pleasing to Axel; he looked down, and knitted his brows in vexation; but he was too fairly started in his agricultural progress to be turned back for such a trifle; he began on tillage, and told about his invention of a machine for a clod-breaker, and with that he turned graciously to his neighbor, to Fritz Triddelsitz, who gave such uncommonly intelligent answers that Marie Möller sat listening, with open mouth, and inwardly smote on her breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me sinner! Ignorant worm that I am, to stretch out my hand toward him! No! a goose might as well seek to mate with an eagle."

When the dinner was over, the gracious lady arose, took her leave of the company, and said to Habermann that Axel and herself proposed going over the estate, the next morning, and reckoned on his company to show them the way. Habermann assented with pleasure, and when she had left the room the bottle went round the table once more, and Daniel Sadenwater brought cigars.

At Frida's request. Axel had retained the old servant, and Daniel had put on the old master's knife and fork, and so consecrated them, in his mind, to the new master, and every time he presented a dish on the salver to his young Herr, he laid himself with it as an offering, and his old eyes said clearly, his young master might do with him whatever he liked, he had given him all.

Bräsig accepted a "Zichalie," as he called them, and informed Herr von Rambow that he smoked such a thing, now and then, of Köster Bröker's make, though they were a little strong to be sure. Axel made no reply; he did not like Bräsig, he thought he had been laughing at him, and did not appreciate his knowledge of agriculture. Fritz Triddelsitz was a much more agreeable listener; he had nodded, and shaken his head, and admired so much, and ah'd and oh'd and wondered, till Axel appeared to himself a great light in agriculture, set up on a lofty candlestick, to enlighten Pumpelhagen and the country round about, and, for all I know, the world itself.

As I have often said. Axel was a good fellow, he liked to make everything bright and pleasant about him; the good dinner, the costly wine, the feeling that he was master, had excited benevolent thoughts, to which he must give expression. He called Habermann to the window, and asked him how he was satisfied with Fritz. Habermann said, pretty well; he had learned a good many things, and he hoped, in time, he might become a skilful farmer. This was quite enough, in Axel's gracious mood; he asked, farther, how much salary Fritz received, and whether he had a horse. No, said Habermann, he had neither horse nor salary, as yet; he gave nothing, and he got nothing.

Axel then turned to Fritz, and said, "Dear Triddelsitz, I am glad to hear from the Herr Inspector that he is very much pleased with you; I shall do myself the pleasure of offering you, for the next year, a small salary of fifty thalers, and the keeping of a horse."

Fritz could not believe his ears; that Habermann was very much pleased with him was sufficiently wonderful,—fifty thalers, that would be very nice; but a horse! that took away his breath and his senses, so that he could scarcely thank Axel. The latter left him little time, however, but turned back to Habermann, at the window. And now galloped through Fritz's brain all the old horses of the whole region, black and brown and gray and chestnut, and he held parley with each one of them, as if the Rahnstadt horse-market were going on in his head, and Bräsig sat opposite and grinned.

All at once, this blessed child of fortune cried out, "Herr Inspector, next month the Grand Duke makes his entry into Rahnstadt, I must have her by that time, for the reception, for we young country-people are to receive him."

"*Whom* must you have?" asked Bräsig.

"The chestnut mare, the Whalebone mare. Gust Prebberow has her."

"I know her," said Bräsig, very coolly.

"Famous horse!"

"An old sch----" he couldn't say schinder (carrion,) he bethought himself in time that he was in a distinguished house, so he said, "she is an old shyder, and you can't do anything with her when the Grand Duke comes to Rahnstadt, for she cannot hear a 'Hurrah!'"

That was fatal, for a great many hurrahs would be necessary on that occasion; but Fritz knew that Bräsig delighted in contradicting him, on every opportunity, and he would not let him see his disappointment.

Meanwhile, Axel had favored the old inspector with a brief discourse upon the progress recently made in the science of agriculture, and at the close, put into the old man's hand a book, with the words, "I have the pleasure of giving you this book; it should be the Bible of every farmer."

Habermann thanked him gratefully, and, as it was now beginning to grow dark, the company broke up. The two old inspectors and Schoolmaster Strull, who was invited to accompany them, went to Habermann's house; Fritz Triddelsitz went to the stables.

What he wanted there, nobody knew, certainly not himself, but a sort of instinct drew him toward the horses, as if to bring his inner man into harmony with the outward world, and so he went, in the half-twilight, up and down behind the old farm-horses, that he had seen a thousand times, and examined their legs. This one had spavin,--nobody should sell him a spavined horse, he would take care of that,--bones shaped like a ship; this one was balky,--he found out what a balky horse was, two years ago; this had fits,--a man must be a fool to be imposed upon by such a horse; this had swellings, not dangerous, blistered a little by the crupper-iron; and then came wind-galls, and other ills which horse-flesh is heir to; and through all this his thoughts were dwelling on a friendly smile, and a wonderfully fair face, that of his gracious lady, with whom, since dinner, he had fallen desperately in love, and the ungrateful rascal was conspiring against the happiness of the master who had just been so kind to him.

"Yes," said he, as he stood in the stable-door, and the evening light sunk softly into darkness, "what is Louise Habermann compared with this angel! No, Louise, I am sorry for you! But I cannot imagine how I came to fall in love with you. And then Mining and Lining! A pair of little goslings! And Marie Möller, to be sure! A lump of misfortune! How she looked to-day beside the gracious lady, like a wild plum beside a peach. And when I get the chestnut mare, then--'Gracious lady, any commands?' Perhaps a letter for the post? or when she is coming home from some ball at Rahnstadt, and old Daniel Sadenwater is not at hand--down with the carriage steps, hand her out--'Ah, I have forgotten my handkerchief,' or 'my overshoes,'--'They shall be sent for immediately,' and then I mount my chestnut,--hs-hsch--off we go,--in half an hour I am back again. 'Gracious lady, here are the overshoes,' and then she says, 'Thanks, dear Triddelsitz, for this kindness,'--thunder and lightning! the confounded pole!" for as he went back to the house, in the dark, absorbed in these charming anticipations, he stumbled over a carriage-pole, left there by his own negligence, and lay, in all his gorgeous attire, upon something which felt very soft. What it was, he didn't know, but his nose had a sort of suspicion, and he thought he should do well to examine himself by the light, before going into Habermann's room.

Meanwhile the three old men had gone in, and, as they were sitting in the twilight, Bräsigg asked:

"Karl, is the book a story-book, to read in the winter evenings?"

"Eh, Zachary, I don't know. I will light a candle, and we can see."

When it was light, Habermann was going to look at the title; but Bräsigg took the book out of his hand:

"No, Karl, we have a scholar here, let Strull read it."

Strull began to read, all in a breath, as if he were reading the Sunday's lesson out of the Gospels, stopping only for a strange word: "Printed by Friedrich Vieweg and Son in Brunswick Chemistry in its Relation to Agriculture and Phy-si-o-logy."

"Hold!" cried Bräsigg, "that word isn't right, it should be 'fisionomy.'"

"No," said Strull, "it is spelled 'physiology.'"

"For all I care, Strull," said Bräsigg; "let them spell their outlandish words as they please, at one time this way, another time another way. Go ahead!"

"By Justus Liebig, Doctor of Medicine and Philosophy, Professor of Chemistry at the Ludwig's University at Giessen, Knight of the Grand Ducal Hessian Ludwig's Order, and of the Imperial Russian St. Annen, Order of the Third Class, Corresponding Member of the Royal Academy of Science at Stockholm,'--now comes some Latin which I cannot read,--'Honorary Member of the Royal Academy at Dublin----'"

"Stop!" cried Bräsigg, "Lord preserve us, what is all this fellow?"

"But that isn't all, by a great deal, there is ever so much more."

"We will give him the rest. Go ahead!"

"Fifth Revised and much Enlarged Edition. Brunswick published by Vieweg and Son 1843.' Now comes a preface."

"Let that go, too," said Bräsigg. "Begin at the beginning."

"The heading runs in this way: 'SUBJECT' with a line underneath."

"Well!" said Bräsigg. "Go on!"

"Organic Chemistry has for its purpose the investigation of the chemical conditions of life, and the complete development of all organisms.' Period."

"What sort of things?" asked Bräsigg.

"All organisms," said the schoolmaster.

"Well," exclaimed Bräsigt, "I have heard a great many outlandish words, but 'organisms,' organ---- Hold! Karl, don't you know 'Herr Orgon stood before his door,' that we used to learn by heart, with Pastor Behrens, out of Gellert? Do you suppose this organ can be any connection of his?"

"Let it go, for the present, Bräsigt, we don't understand it yet."

"No? why not, Karl?" said his old friend, "We can learn. You will see, this is a water-book; they always begin with something you can't understand. Go ahead!"

"The existence of all living beings is carried on by the reception of certain materials into the system, which we call means of nourishment; they are expended by the organism for its own improvement and reproduction. Period."

"The man is right there," said Bräsigt; "Means of nourishment belong to living beings, and"--taking the book out of Strull's hands, "'they are expended by the organism,'--now I know what organism means; it means the stomach."

"Yes," said the schoolmaster, "but then here is 'reproduction.'"

"Ah," said Bräsigt, off hand, "production! We have got used to that of late years; when I was a child, nobody knew anything about production; but now they call every bushel of wheat and every ox a production. It is only an ornamental way of speaking, that they may appear learned."

So they went on for a little while, until the schoolmaster went home, and when he had gone, the two old friends sat together, quietly and trustfully,--for Bräsigt was to spend the night at Pumpelhagen,--until Habermann gave a deep sigh, and said:

"Ah, Zachary, I am afraid there are hard times coming for me."

"Why so? Your young Herr is a lively, witty fellow; what amusing things he said about farming!"

"Yes, that is the very thing; you took it for jest, but he meant it for earnest."

"He meant it for earnest?"

"Certainly he did. He has studied farming out of new-fashioned books, and they don't agree with our old ways, and though I should be very glad to understand the new methods, I can't do it, I haven't the requisite knowledge."

"You are right there, Karl! See, the sciences always seem to me, like seafaring. When one has been used to it from a child, going up the mast, and out on the shrouds, he can do it when he is old without being dizzy-headed, and so a school-boy, who is trained in the sciences from his youth up, won't be dizzy either and can run out with ease, even in his old age, on any rope that science stretches out for him. Do you understand me, Karl?"

"I understand you. But we did not learn in our young days, and for dancing on such ropes," pointing to the book, "my old bones are too stiff. Ah, I would not say a word against it, he can farm in the new fashion, for all me, and I will help him to the best of my power; but this kind of farming needs a long purse, and that is something we haven't got. I supposed, at first, he would get something with his wife; but it couldn't have been much, for even the new equipage and the new furniture were ordered from Rahnstadt, and the first shilling is not yet paid for them."

"Well, Karl, never mind; he hasn't made a bad bargain. The lady pleased me uncommonly."

"She pleased me, too, Bräsigt."

"And you can see by your own dear sister, what the right sort of woman can accomplish, in a family. I must go and see her to-morrow, for the two confounded divinity students will be getting into all sorts of mischief. And so, good-night, Karl."

"Good-night, Bräsigt."

CHAPTER XVI.

Fritz Triddelsitz darted about the Pumpelhagen court-yard next morning, like a pickerel in a fish-pond, for he had put on his little uniform, the green hunting-jacket, and gray breeches, to

please the gracious lady,--as he said,--that her lovely eyes might have something agreeable to look upon. His own eyes, which were usually directed to Habermann's window like the compass to the north star, wandered this morning over the whole front of the manor-house, and when a window was raised, and the young Herr put his head out and called to him, he darted across the court-yard, like a pickerel, as if Axel in his silver-gray dressing-gown were a flat-fish, and the red handkerchief about his neck were the fins.

"Triddelsitz," said Herr von Rambow, "I have decided to make a little address to my people this morning; get them together here at nine o'clock, before the house."

"To command," said Fritz, using this form of speech to do honor to the Herr Lieutenant.

"Where is the inspector? I wish to speak to him; there is no hurry, however."

"He has just gone out with Inspector Bräsig."

"Very well. When he comes back."

"Fritz made a particularly fine bow, and went off; but turned back after a little, and asked:--

"Does Herr von Rambow wish the women to come also?"

"No, merely the men. However,--wait a moment,--yes, you may tell the housewives to come."

"To command," said Fritz, and went to the village, and told the housewives and the men who were at work about the farmyard, to put on their best clothes. It was eight o'clock already, and if the farm-laborers who were at work in the fields were to be there by nine, and also in state, they must be called. So he started for the fields.

Habermann had walked a little way with his old friend, and was now crossing the field to join the laborers, when Fritz came hurrying over the hill, as fast as his slovenly gait and the broken ground of the ploughed field would allow.

"Herr Inspector, you must let them stop work, the people are all to be at the manor-house by nine o'clock, the Herr is going to deliver an oration."

"What is he going to do?" asked Habermann, in astonishment.

"Deliver an oration," was the reply, "the laborers have already been notified, and the woman also. He had forgotten them, but I reminded him of them in time."

"You might----" have been in better business, Habermann was going to say, but controlled himself, and said quietly, "then do your errand to the people."

"You are to come, too."

"Very well," said the old man, and turned, quite out of humor, towards the house. He had pressing work for his teams, and they would be taken out of the field for the whole morning; however he could have got over that, that was not the trouble. His master had issued orders, the very first day, without taking him into counsel, he had consulted with Triddelsitz instead, and there could be no hurry about the matter; but although he felt the slight, it wasn't that so much which annoyed him; it was the "oration" itself. Why should he talk to the people? Would he admonish them about their duties? The people were good, they did their work as simply and naturally as eating and drinking, they had no idea that they were doing any thing remarkable; and it was a mistake to lecture such people about their duties. If they were much talked to, they would begin to grow discouraged. In one sense laborers are like children, they would soon reckon their duty as a merit. Or was he going to bestow gifts upon them? He was good-natured enough. But what would he give them? They had all that they needed, and he could not give them anything definite, he did not know their circumstances well enough, he could merely give them fair words and general promises, which each would fill out according to his own wishes, and which it would be impossible to make good. And so he would make the people discontented.

These were his thoughts, as he entered his master's room. The young wife was there, ready for the walk agreed upon the night before. She came towards him in a friendly manner: "We must wait a little while, Herr Inspector; Axel will speak to the people first."

"That will not take long," said Axel, who was turning over his papers. There was a knock at the door. "Come in!" and Fritz entered, with a letter in his hand. "From Gurlitz," said he.

Axel broke the seal, and read; it was an odious letter, it was from Slushur, the notary, who announced himself as coming before noon, with David; they were accidentally at Herr Pomuchelskopp's, and had heard from him that Herr von Rambow was returned, and since they must speak with him on necessary business, they begged his permission, etc. The business was very urgent, however, as was mentioned in a postscript. Axel was in great perplexity, for he could not decline the visit; he went out and told the messenger the gentlemen were welcome, and when he came in again, he seemed so disturbed that his wife asked, "What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing. But I think my talk to the laborers may take longer than I supposed; it will be

best for you to go alone with the Herr Inspector to see the fields."

"Oh, Axel, I was so pleased at the thought of going with you."

"Yes; but it cannot be helped, my dear child. I know the fields well enough. Go with the Herr Inspector, dear Frida, and--well, as soon as ever I can, I will follow you."

It seemed to Habermann that he was really in haste to get rid of them; so he helped him in his design, and the young lady finally started, upon his invitation, though a little out of humor.

When they were gone, and the whole village had come together. Axel made his address, although the pleasure of this state occasion was quite spoiled for him by that infamous letter; for, however he might put it to himself, his own pleasure, and the importance which he felt as master, were his chief reasons for the undertaking. As for the speech itself, it happened much as Habermann had feared. Admonitions and promises, in lofty words and fine figures of speech, paraded themselves quite unintelligibly before the old laborers' eyes, and the only things which they saw clearly, though somewhat dizzied by these, were the golden wings of the benefits he promised them, saying that his people were to come to him with every wish; he would care for them like a father.

"Yes," said Päsel to Däsel, "'father;' I like that. He will do it. I shall go to him to-morrow, and ask him to let me wean a calf next year."

"But you had one last year."

"That is no matter; I can sell it to the weaver in Gurlitz."

"Yes," said Kegel to Degel. "I shall go to him to-morrow, and ask him to let me have twenty roods more of potato land next spring; mine will not last through the winter."

"Eh! you didn't hoe your potatoes at the right time; the old man gave you a fine scolding for it."

"No matter; *he* knows nothing about it, and he is master now, and not the inspector."

So unrest and discontent were in full progress; Axel himself was restless and discontented, because he dreaded the coming visit, and the only being at the Pumpelhagen farm, who, though restless, was yet contented, was Fritz Triddelsitz, so the young Herr had not altogether thrown his pearls before swine.

Slusuhr and David came, and what shall I say about their visit? They sang the same song which they did before, and Axel had to write the notes for it. This time, he did it readily. Borrowing is certainly a bad business; but there is not a business in the world, down to beheading and hanging, so bad that somebody will not pursue it with satisfaction; I have known people who were not contented till they had borrowed money of all Judea and Christendom, and if Axel had not gone quite so far, he was ready enough to improve favorable circumstances; he added a new debt, to-day, to those he already owed David, that he might pay for the new furnishing of his house, "in order not to have to do with so many people, but with one;" but he probably did not reflect that this one was worse than a thousand others.

Meanwhile Habermann and the young Frau were going through the fields. The clear summer morning soon drove away the little shadows of annoyance from her fresh face, and her bright eyes looked at everything with hearty interest, and desire to inform herself, and Habermann saw, with great pleasure, that she understood the business. She had been brought up in the country, and it was natural to her to observe things that lay a little out of her usual way, and that not superficially, she must know a reason for everything. Thus she knew enough about farming to feel quite at home here, although her father's place was a great sand-hill, and Pumpelhagen was the finest wheat soil, and if she saw anything unfamiliar which she did not understand, the old Inspector helped her, with brief, simple explanations. The walk was, for both of them, a real pleasure, and from a pure, mutual pleasure grows the fair blossom, Confidence.

They came to the Gurlitz boundary, and Habermann showed her the Pastor's field, and told her how the late Kammerrath had taken it in lease.

"And the barley, over yonder?" asked the young Frau.

"That is Gurlitz ground and soil; that belongs to Herr Pomuchelskopp."

"Ah, that is the proprietor who greeted us yesterday, with his family," said Frida. "What sort of a man is he?"

"I have no intercourse with him," said Habermann, a little embarrassed.

"But you know him, don't you?" asked the young lady.

"Yes--no--that is, I used to know him, but since he has lived here, we have nothing to do with each other," said the old man, and would have spoken of something else; but Frida laid her hand on his arm, and said--

"Herr Inspector, I am a stranger in this region,--Axel seems to be acquainted, though only superficially, with this man; are they suitable associates for us?"

"No," said Habermann, short and hard.

They walked on, each occupied in thought. The young Frau stood still, and asked, "Can you, and will you, tell me the reason why you have broken off intercourse with this man?"

Habermann looked at her thoughtfully.

"Yes," said he, finally, rather as if he were speaking to himself, "and if you receive my words with the same confidence that the blessed Kammerrath did, it may be for your profit," and he told her his story, without heat or anger, but also without restraint. The young Frau listened attentively, without interrupting him, and when he had finished said merely:

"I half disliked those people yesterday; I quite dislike them to-day."

They had just come through the Pastor's field, up to the garden fence, when a clear, joyous voice sounded from the other side: "Good morning, father! Good morning!" and the lovely young girl, whom Frida had seen yesterday, came running through the garden gate towards the old inspector. She stopped suddenly as she saw the gracious lady, and stood blushing, so that Habermann must help himself to his good-morning kiss, if he meant to have it at all.

Full of happiness and pride, the old man introduced his dear daughter; the young Frau spoke to her very kindly, and urged her to come often to Pumpelhagen, to visit her father and herself; and when Habermann had sent greetings to the Pastor and the Pastorin, she took leave, and they continued their walk.

"The Pastor and his wife must be very good people?" said Frida.

"Gracious lady," said Habermann, "you ask this question of no impartial man. These people have saved for me all that was left out of my misfortunes; they have given loving protection and nurture to my only child, and taught her everything good; I can only think of them with the highest respect and the deepest gratitude. But ask in the neighborhood, if you will; rich and poor, high and low, will speak of them with respect and affection."

"Herr Pomuchelskopp, too?" inquired the gracious lady.

"If he would speak honestly, and without prejudice, yes," said the old man, "but as he is now--he quarrelled with the Pastor, soon after his arrival here, about this very field, in which we are walking. It was not the Pastor's fault; I gave the first provocation to his anger, because I advised the blessed Herr to rent the field. And, gracious lady," he added, after a moment, "Pumpelhagen cannot spare this field; the advantage is too great for us to give it up."

Frida asked him to explain it more fully, and, when she understood the matter, it was easy to see that she said to herself, she would do what she could to keep the field.

As they came into the Pumpelhagen court-yard Slusuhr the notary and David were just starting off, and Axel stood before the door taking leave of them as politely as if Slusuhr were the colonel of his Regiment, and David a young count.

"Who is that?" asked Frida of Habermann. He told her. Then she greeted her husband, and asked, "But, Axel, what business have you with these people, and why are you so uncommonly polite to them?"

"Polite?" repeated Axel, "why not? I am polite to everybody," with a quick glance at Habermann, who met it quietly and firmly.

"Of course you are," said his wife, taking his arm, in order to go into the house with him, "but towards a common Jew moneylender and----"

"Dear child," interrupted Axel hastily, to prevent her saying more, "the man is a produce-dealer, and wool-merchant, I shall often have business to transact with him."

"And the other?" she inquired.

"Oh, he--he only came along with him accidentally. I have nothing to do with him."

"Adieu, Herr Inspector," said Frida, giving her hand to the old man, "I thank you very much for your friendly company."

With that, she went into the house. Axel followed her; at the door he looked round, the old inspector's eyes rested sadly upon him, and he turned away. He followed his wife into the house.

In this honest and mournful glance lay the whole future of the three persons who had just separated.

Axel had lied; he had betrayed, for the first time, the confidence of his young wife, and

Habermann knew it, and Axel knew that Habermann knew it. Here was a stone in the path, over which every one must stumble who passed that way, for the path was darkened by falsehood and dissimulation, and no one could speak to another of the stone, and warn him against it. Frida went onward innocently and trustfully; but how long would it be before she would stumble over this stone? Axel tried to deceive himself, also, he thought he could bring her safely over it, in the darkness, without her being aware of it, and, beyond, the path would be smooth. Habermann saw the danger clearly, and could and would have helped; but if he stretched out his hand to point it out, and warn them against it, Axel repulsed him with coldness, and secret resentment. People say that a bad man will, in time, conceive a hatred for one who has bestowed benefits upon him; it is possible, but that is nothing to the secret gnawing and boring of resentment, which a weak man feels towards one who is the only person in the world conscious of his falsehood. Such a feeling is not developed at once, like downright hatred, born of open strife and contention, but bores slowly and gradually into the heart, like the death-worm into dry wood, and eats deeper and deeper, till the whole heart is full of ill-will and bitterness, as the wood is full of worm-dust.

CHAPTER XVII.

Bräsig went next morning, as he had designed, to Rexow, to see Frau Nüssler. The crown-prince came to meet him at the door, wagging his tail in such a Christian manner that one must believe him to be a dog of good moral principle, since he bore no malice against Bräsig for his late chasing and drubbing. One would infer, also, from the quiet content expressed in his yellow-brown eyes, that all was well at Rexow, Frau Nüssler in the kitchen, and Jochen sitting in his arm-chair.

But it was not so, for when Bräsig opened the door, Jochen was sitting indeed in his old place; but Frau Nüssler stood before him, delivering a brief but impressive discourse to the effect that he troubled himself about nothing, and said not a word to the purpose, and when she caught sight of Bräsig, she went up to him, quite angrily, saying, "And you, too, notice nothing, Bräsig; for all you care, everything here may stand on its head; and it is your fault, too, we never should have taken those two but for you!"

"Fair and easy!" said Bräsig, "fair and easy! Not quite so fast, Frau Nüssler! What has happened now with the young candidates?"

"A good deal has happened, and I have said nothing about it, because they were Jochen's friends, and it is a bad bird that fouls its own nest; but since the time those two fellows came into my house, there has been no peace nor rest, and if it goes on so much longer, I shall quarrel, at last, with Jochen himself."

"Mother," said young Jochen, "what shall I do about it?"

"Keep still, young Jochen," cried Bräsig, "you are to blame. Can't you rouse up and teach them manners?"

"Let Jochen alone, Bräsig," said Frau Nüssler, hastily, "this time it is your fault. You promised to have an eye to these young men, and see that they did not get into mischief, and instead of that, you have let one go on as he liked, without troubling yourself about him, and you have put the other up to all sorts of nonsense, so that instead of minding his books, he goes off with his fishing-pole, and brings me home at night a great string of perch, as long as your finger. And when I think I have everything tidy, I must go and dress the horrid things, and make it all straight again.

"What? Brings home things a finger long, and I showed him the right place to catch the great fellows! oh, you must--no, hold on!"

"Ah, what!" cried Frau Nüssler. "You should forbid his fishing altogether, he did not come here for that purpose. He was to learn something, his father said, and he is coming here to-day, too."

"Well, Frau Nüssler," said Bräsig, "I am very greatly annoyed that he should do so little credit to my instructions, in his fishing. Has he done anything else amiss?"

"Ah, yes, indeed! both of them have. But, as I said before, I have said nothing about it, because they were Jochen's friends, and at first, it seemed as if everything would go on well. At first, there were merry, lively times here, and my little girls enjoyed it uncommonly; it was Mining here and Rudolph there, and Lining here and Gottlieb there, and they talked with Gottlieb, and romped with Rudolph, and the two old fellows were very industrious at their work, and Gottlieb sat up

stairs in his room, and studied until his head swam, and Rudolph, too, read in his books; but it was not long before they got to disputing and quarrelling about ecclesiastical matters, and Gottlieb, who is much more learned than the other, told him he did not look at things from a Christian standpoint."

"Standpoint, did he say?" asked Bräsig.

"Yes, he said standpoint," replied Frau Nüssler.

"Ho, ho!" cried Bräsig, "I can hear him talk. Where other people stop, at a standpoint, is only the beginning with the Pietists. He wanted to proselyte him."

"Yes," said Frau Nüssler, "so it appeared. Now the other one is much cleverer than Gottlieb, and he began to crack all manner of jokes at him, and got the better of him, and so the strife grew worse and worse, and, I don't know how it happened, but my little girls began to take a part in the business, and Lining, as the most intelligent, was on Gottlieb's side, and talked just as he did, and Mining laughed over Rudolph's jokes, and carried on with him."

"Yes," interrupted Jochen, "it is all as true as leather."

"You should be ashamed of yourself, young Jochen, to allow such doings in your house!"

"Come, Bräsig," said Frau Nüssler, "let him alone; Jochen has done everything he could to keep peace; When Gottlieb talked about the devil, to frighten one out of his wits, then he believed in the devil, and when Rudolph laughed about the devil, and made fun of him, then he laughed with Rudolph. But, when the dispute was at the highest, little Mining happened on a bright idea; she took their books and changed them, and put Rudolph's into Gottlieb's room, and Gottlieb's into Rudolph's, and when they looked at her in astonishment, she said, merrily, they had better exchange studies for awhile, and they might possibly learn to agree. Well, at first they would hear nothing of it; but Gottlieb is always a good-natured old fellow, he soon began to read, and since it was a winter day, and he could not amuse himself out of doors, Rudolph finally began also. And then you should have seen them! It was not long, before it seemed as if they had been exchanged with their books. Gottlieb made bad jokes, and laughed about the devil, and the other old fellow groaned and sighed, and talked of the devil, as if he sat at table with us every day, and eat his potatoes, like other honest people. Now, my little girls were quite perplexed; Mining attached herself to Gottlieb, and Lining to Rudolph, for now it was Rudolph who said Gottlieb did not occupy a Christian standpoint."

"Fie!" said Bräsig, "he should not have said that. And such a fellow as that cannot catch a good-sized perch!"

"Yes," cried Frau Nüssler quite angrily, "and with your confounded old perch-fishing, the whole trouble came again, for when it was spring, and the perch began to bite, Rudolph threw his Christian standpoint aside, and took up his fishing-rod, and ran off into the fields, and Gottlieb took up the devil again, for he was going to pass his examination, and there is no getting through that without the devil. And my two little girls were puzzled to tell which they should stand by."

"They are a pair of confounded rascals," cried Bräsig, "but the proselyter is to blame for it all; why couldn't he let the other alone, with his devil and his standpoint?"

"Well, never mind! He studied well at any rate and passed his examination all right, and can be a minister any day; but the other cousin has done nothing at all at his books, and has made us all this dreadful trouble!"

"Why, what else has he done? He hasn't been catching whittings?"

"Whittings! He caught a sermon. You see, the Rector Baldrian's wife wanted to hear her Gottlieb preach, and she asked the pastor in Rahnstadt about it, and he promised her Gottlieb should preach last Sunday, and she told her sister, Frau Kurz. She is naturally very much annoyed that her boy is not so advanced as Gottlieb, and she goes to the pastor also, and the old pastor is such a sheep that he promised her Rudolph should preach the same Sabbath. Then they drew lots, who should preach in the morning, and who in the afternoon, and Rudolph got the morning. Well, old Gottlieb studied as hard as he could, and sat from morning till night, out in the arbor, in the garden, and because he has a bad memory, he studied aloud, and the other went roving about as usual; but the last two days, he seated himself on the grassy bank behind the arbor, as if he were making a sermon too. And then Sunday came, and Jochen let them ride in to town, and we all rode, and were seated in the pastor's pew, and, I tell you, I was terribly afraid for Rudolph; but he stood there, as if there were nothing the matter, and when it was time, he went up into the pulpit, and preached a sermon, that made all the people open their eyes and mouths, and I rejoiced over the youth, and was going to say so to Gottlieb, who sat by me; but there sat the poor creature, fidgeting with his hands and feet, as if he would like to go up and pull the other out of the pulpit, and he said, 'Aunt, that is *my* sermon!' And so it was, Bräsig; the wicked boy had learned the sermon by hearing it, because Gottlieb must study it aloud."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bräsig heartily, "that is a good joke!"

"Do you call that a *joke*?" exclaimed Frau Nüssler, greatly excited. "Such a trick as that in the

house of God, you call a joke?"

"Eh, now," said Bräsigg, still laughing, "what would you have? It is a devil of a joke, it is an infamous trick, to be sure: but I can't help laughing, for the life of me."

"Oh yes!" said Frau Nüssler, bitterly, "that is the way with you; when we others are ready to die with shame and anger, you stand by and laugh!"

"There, don't scold me," said Bräsigg, trying to appease her, "tell me what the proselyter did. I wish I could have seen him!"

"What could he do? He couldn't preach the same sermon over again, in the afternoon; the old pastor had to warm up an old sermon for the occasion, but he was fearfully angry, and said, if he should report the matter, Rudolph might as well hang up his gown on the nearest willow."

"Well, and the proselyter?"

"Ah, the good old creature was so confounded, he said nothing at all; but his mother talked all the more, and quarrelled so fiercely with her sister, Frau Kurz, that they have not spoken to each other since. Oh, what a time it was! I was ashamed, and I was provoked, for Kurz and the rector came up, too, and Jochen was lingering with them, but fortunately our carriage drove up, and I got him away."

"But what did the duel-fighter say?"

"Oh, the rogue was clever enough to keep out of the uproar, he made himself scarce after his fine sermon, and ran off home."

"He got a proper good lecture from you, I will wager."

"No," said Frau Nüssler, "he didn't. I don't meddle in the affair. His father is coming, to-day, and he is the nearest to him, as the Frau Pastorin says. And I told Jochen, decidedly, he ought not to talk so much about it, for he has quite changed his nature, of late, and is always troubling himself, and talking about things that are none of his business. Keep still, Jochen!"

"Yes, Jochen, keep still!"

"And my two little girls, I scarcely know them again; after the sermon, they cried all the way home, and now they keep out of the way so shyly, and speak so short to each other, and they used always to go about together arm in arm, and if one had anything on her heart the other quickly knew it. Ah, my house is all topsy-turvy!"

"Mother," said young Jochen, rising suddenly from his chair, "it is what I have said before, but I will say it once more; you shall see, the boys have put something into their heads."

"What should they put into their heads, Jochen?" said Frau Nüssler, rather sharply.

"Love-affairs," said Jochen, sitting down again in his corner. "My blessed mother always said: A candidate and a governess in the same house--you shall see, Gottlieb and Mining."

"Now, Jochen, so you talk and talk! The Lord keep you in your senses! If I thought that was the case, the candidate should be turned out of the house, and the other after him. Come out here, Bräsigg, I have something to say to you."

When they were outside, Frau Nüssler took him to the garden, and sat down with him in the arbor.

"Bräsigg," said she, "I cannot listen to this everlasting chatter of Jochen's; he has got it from Rudolph, who used to talk with him so much, last winter, in the evenings, and now he has got in the habit of it, and cannot break off. Now tell me honestly,--you promised that you would look after them,--have you ever had any idea of such a thing?"

"Eh, preserve us!" said Bräsigg, "not the remotest conception!"

"I cannot believe it is so," said Frau Nüssler, thoughtfully; "at first, Lining and Gottlieb were always together, and Mining and Rudolph,--afterwards, Mining held to Gottlieb, and Lining to Rudolph, and after the examination, Lining went back to Gottlieb again; but Mining and Rudolph are not friends, for since the sermon she will scarcely look at him."

"Frau Nüssler," said Bräsigg, "love is a thing which begins in some hidden way, perhaps with a bunch of flowers, or a couple say 'Good morning' to each other, and touch each other's hands, or they stoop, at the same time, to pick up a ball of cotton, and knock their heads together, and a looker-on observes nothing more, but after a while, it becomes more perceptible, the women often turn red, and the men cast sheep's-eyes, or the women entice the men into the pantry, and offer them sausage and tongue and pig's head, and the men come to see the women, dressed up in red and blue neck-ties, or, if it is very far gone, they go out walking on summer evenings, in the moonlight, and sigh. Anything of that sort with the little rogues?"

"I cannot say, Bräsig. They have been in my pantry, off and on; but I soon sent them out, for I won't have people eating in the pantry, and I never noticed that my little girls turned red, though they have cried their eyes red, often enough, of late."

"Hm!" said Bräsig, "this last is not without significance. Now I will tell you, Frau Nüssler, leave it wholly to me, I know how to track them; I detected Habermann's confounded greyhound, in his love-affairs. I am an old hunter; I can track him to his lair; but you must tell me where they have their haunts; that is, where I shall be likely to find them."

"That is here, Bräsig, here in this arbor. My little girls sit here in the afternoon, and sew, and the other two come and sit with them; I never thought any harm of it."

"No harm in that," said Bräsig, and stepping out of the arbor he looked carefully around, and in so doing perceived a large Rhenish cherry-tree, full of leaves, which stood close by the arbor.

"All right!" said he, "what can be done shall be done."

"Dear heart!" sighed Frau Nüssler, as went back to the house, "what a miserable time we shall have to-day! Kurz is coming this afternoon, in time for coffee, he is bitterly angry with his son, and such a malicious little toad. You shall see, there will be a great uproar."

"It is always the way with little people," Bräsig: "the head, and the lower constitution are so close together, that fire kindles quickly."

"Yes," sighed Frau Nüssler, again entering the house, "it is a misery." She had no idea that the misery in her house was already in full course.

While these transactions were going on below stairs the two little twin-apples sat up in their chamber, sewing. Lining sat by one window, and Mining by the other, and they never looked up from their work, they never spoke to each other, as in those old times, at the Frau Pastorin's sewing-school,—they sewed and sewed, as if the world were coming to pieces, and they, with needle and thread, were patching it together again, and they looked so solemn about it, and sighed so heavily, as if they knew right well what an arduous task they had under their fingers. It was strange that their mother had said nothing to Bräsig of how their pretty, red cheeks had grown pale, and it must have been because she had not noticed it herself. But it was so, the two little apples looked as wan as if they had grown on the north side of the life-tree, where no sun-beams pierced to color their cheeks, and it seemed, too, as if they hung no longer on the same twig. At last Lining let her work drop in her lap, she could not sew any longer, her eyes filled, and the tears ran down her white cheeks; and Mining reached for her handkerchief, and held it to her eyes, and great tears dropped in her lap, and so they sat and wept, as if the fair, innocent world in their own bosoms had gone to pieces, and they could not patch it together again.

All at once Mining sprang up and ran out of the door, as if she must get into the free air; but she bethought herself, she could not run off without being seen and questioned by her mother, so she stood there, on the other side of the door, still crying. Lining sprang up also, as if she should comfort Mining, but she bethought herself that she did not know how, so she stood on this side the door, crying.

So is often interposed, between two hearts, a thin board, and each heart hears the other sighing and weeping, and the thin board has on each side a latch, that one needs merely to lift, and what has separated the hearts may be shoved aside; but neither will stir the latch, and the two hearts weep still.

But, thank God! such selfish pride towards each other these little hearts had not yet learned, and Mining opened the door, and said, "Lining, why are you crying?" and Lining reached out her hands, and said, "Ah, Mining, why are *you* crying?" And they fell into each others arms, still crying, but their cheeks grew red as if the sunlight had reached them, and they clung fast to each other, as if they were again growing on the same stem.

"Mining!" said Lining, "I will give him up to you, and you shall be happy with him."

"No, Lining!" cried Mining, "he cares more for you, and you are a great deal better than I am."

"No, Mining, I have made up my mind; uncle Kurz is coming this afternoon, and I will ask father and mother to let me go back with him, for to stay here and look on might be too hard for me."

"Do so, Lining; then you will be with his parents; and I will ask Gottlieb to get me, through his father, a place as governess, somewhere, far, far away, before you come back; for my heart is too heavy to stay here."

"Mining," said Lining, pushing her sister back, and looking earnestly in her eyes,— "with his parents? whom do you mean?"

"Why, Rudolph."

"You mean Rudolph?"

"Yes, of course; whom do you mean, then?"

"I? I meant Gottlieb."

"No, no!" cried Mining, throwing her arms again about her sister's neck, "how is that possible? Why, we don't mean the same one, after all!"

"Dear heart!" exclaimed Lining, "and what misery we have made ourselves!"

"And now it is all right!" cried Mining, dancing about the room, "it is all right now!"

"Yes, Mining, it is all right now," and Lining also danced about the room. And Mining fell upon her sister's neck again, this time in joy.

Yes, when one touches the latch, in time, and shoves back the separating wall, then the hearts come together again, and all is right, even if there is not such a rejoicing as here in the little chamber. First they wept, and then they danced about the room, then they sat down one in the other's lap, and talked it all over, and blamed themselves for stupidity, that they had not noticed how it stood with them, and wondered how it was possible that they should not have come to an explanation before, and then each confessed how far she had gone with her cousin, and that the young men had not yet spoken openly, and they were both half inclined to scold them, as the cause of all the trouble. And Lining said she had been, all along, in great doubt; but since last Sunday, she had been convinced that Mining cared for Gottlieb, for otherwise why should she have cried so? and Mining said she could not help crying, because Rudolph had done such a dreadful thing, and she supposed Lining was crying for the same reason. And Lining said that what troubled her was because her poor Gottlieb was served so. But it was all right now; and when the dinner-bell rang, the little twin-apples tumbled down stairs, rosy-red, and arm in arm, and Bräsigt, who had seated himself with his back to the light that he might judge the better of their appearance, stared in astonishment at their bright eyes and joyous faces, and said to himself: "How? they are shy? They are in trouble? They are in love? They look just ready for a frolic."

Upon the ringing of the dinner-bell, entered Bräsigt's proselyter, the candidate Gottlieb Baldrian. Lining grew red, and turned away, not in ill humor, but on account of the confession she had made upstairs, and Bräsigt said to himself, "This strikes me as a very curious thing; Lining is affected. How can it be possible? and he such a scarecrow!"

Bräsigt had expressed himself too strongly, but Gottlieb was no beauty. Nature had dealt niggardly with him, and the little that he had he did not use to advantage. Take his hair, for instance. He had a thick head of hair, and if it had been properly kept under by the shears, it would have been good, respectable light hair, and he might have gone about, without attracting any attention; but he had, in his clerical heart, set up for his model, St. John the beloved, and he parted his hair in the middle, and combed it down on each side, though its natural tendency was to stand upright. Eh, well, I have nothing to say against it if a little rogue of ten or twelve years runs around with curls about his head, and the mothers of the little rogues have still less to say against it, and they turn them about, and stroke the hair out of their eyes, and comb it smooth, too, when a visitor is coming,--silly people sometimes go so far as to put it up in curl-papers, and use hot irons; I should have nothing to say, if it were the fashion for old people to curl their hair in long curls, for the old pictures look very fine so; but he who has no calves ought not to wear tight trowsers, and if a man's hair does not curl, he does better to keep it short. Our old Gottlieb's incongruous wig hung down, tanned by the sun, as if he had tied in a lot of rusty lath-nails, and because he had to oil it very liberally to keep it in its place, it ruined his coat-collar,--farther, it did not reach. Under this rich gift of nature, looked out an insignificant, pale face, which usually wore a melancholy expression, so that Bräsigt was always asking him what shoemaker he employed, and whether his corns troubled him. The rest of his figure harmonized with this expression, he was long, and thin and angular; but the part devoted to the enjoyment of the good things of this world seemed quite wanting, and the place which this necessary and useful organ generally occupies was a great cavity, like Frau Nüssler's baking-tray, seen from the inside. He was really a natural curiosity for Bräsigt, who ate like a barn-thresher, and couldn't help it. One would almost have believed that the Pietist was nourished in some other way than by eating and drinking. I have known people, and know some people still, whom I never could rival in this respect. It is true these candidates are often very thin, as one may see by the best of the Hanover candidates, who are so plenty among us; but when one gets a fat parish, he often begins to fill out, and so Bräsigt did not give up the hope that Gottlieb might come to something, in time, though he puzzled his brains over him a great deal. This was the way Gottlieb Baldrian looked; but the picture would not be complete, if I did not say that over the whole was spread a little, little smirk of Pharisaism; it was a very little, but that Pharisee stuff is like a calf's stomach; with a little, little bit one can turn a whole pan of milk sour.

They sat down to dinner, and Jochen asked,--

"Where is Rudolph?"

"Good gracious, Jochen, what are you talking about?" said Frau Nüssler hastily, "you ought to know by this time, that he never in his life was in season. He has gone fishing; but if people won't come in time, they may go without their dinner."

The meal was a quiet one, for Bräsig did not talk, he lay in wait, with all his senses and faculties, and Frau Nüssler wondered in silence what could have so changed her little girls. They sat there laughing and whispering lightly to each other, and looking so happy, as if they were just awaked from a bad dream, and were rejoicing that it wasn't true, and that the sun shone brightly once more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When dinner was over, Mining, whose turn it was to help her mother, in clearing up, tidying the room and making coffee, asked her sister, "Lining, where are you going?"

"I am going to get my sewing," said Lining, "and sit in the arbor."

"Well, I will come soon," said Mining.

"And I will come too," said Gottlieb slowly, "I have a book that I must finish reading to-day."

"That is right," said Bräsig, "that will be a devilish fine entertainment for Lining."

Gottlieb wanted to preach him a little sermon upon his misuse of the word devilish, but restrained himself, since he reflected that it would be thrown away upon Bräsig; so he said nothing, but followed the girls out of the room.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frau Nüssler, "what has happened to my children? I don't know what to make of it; they are one heart and one soul again."

"Keep quiet, Frau Nüssler," said Bräsig, "I will find out all about it, to-day. Jochen, come out with me; but don't go to talking!"

Jochen followed him into the garden. Bräsig took him under the arm. "Keep quite still, Jochen, and don't look round, and act as if we were taking a walk after dinner."

Jochen did so, very skilfully.

When they came to the cherry-tree before the arbor, Bräsig stopped.

"So, Jochen, now stoop over,--with your head against the tree."

Jochen would have spoken, but Bräsig pushed down his head.

"Keep still, Jochen,--put your head against the tree!" and with that he clambered up on Jochen's back. "So I now stand up! Sure enough, I can just reach,"--and he caught the lowest boughs, and pulled himself up into the tree. Jochen had said nothing as yet, but now he broke out:

"Bräsig, they are not ripe yet."

"Blockhead!" cried Bräsig, looking, with his red face among the green leaves, like a gay basket hung on the branches, "do you think I expect to pick Rhenish cherries on St. John's day? But you must go away now, and not stand there looking at me, like a dog that has treed a cat."

"Yes, what shall I do about it?" said Jochen, and left Bräsig to his destiny.

Bräsig had not long to watch, before he heard a light, quick, step on the gravel-walk, and Lining seated herself in the arbor, with a great heap of needle-work. If she meant to do all that to-day, she should have begun immediately; but she laid it on the table, rested her head on her hand, and, looking out into the blue heaven through Bräsig's cherry-tree, sat in deep thought. "Ah, how happy I am!" said the little, thankful soul, "my Mining is good to me again, and Gottlieb is good to me, else why did he keep touching my foot at dinner? and how Bräsig looked at me! I believe I turned quite red. Ah, what a good old fellow Gottlieb is! How seriously and learnedly he talks, how steady he is, the minister is clearly written on his face! He is not handsome, to be sure, Rudolph is much better looking, but he has something peculiar about him, as if he were ever saying, don't come near me with your pitiable, lamentable nonsense, I have higher thoughts, I am spiritually minded. But I will cut his hair for him, by and by."

It is a merciful providence that the little maidens are not all taken with a fine exterior, else we ugly fellows would be obliged to remain bachelors, and it would be a sad company, for what can be uglier than an ugly old bachelor?

In Lining's closing reflection--that she would cut Gottlieb's hair shorter--was implied such a confident hope, that she blushed to think of it, and, as she heard the gravel creak under slow, dignified steps, she seized her needle-work and begun to sew diligently.

Gottlieb came with his book, and seated himself about three feet from her, and began to read, but often looked off from his book as if he were turning over in his mind what he had just read, or perhaps something else. It is always so with the Pietist candidates, that is, when they have found their right calling, and sincerely believe what they preach to the people; before their examination they have none but spiritual thoughts, but after their examination worldly matters claim their share of attention, and instead of thinking of a parish they think first of a marriage. It was so with Gottlieb, and because, since his examination, no other girls had come in his way but Lining and Mining, and Lining had paid much closer attention to his admonitions than her light-hearted sister, he had happened upon the worldly thought of making her a pastor's wife. He was not very expert at the business, labouring, indeed, under great embarrassment, and had as yet gone no further than treading on her feet, a proceeding which he was quite as bashful in attempting, as Lining in receiving. He had decided, however, to open the matter in proper style, so he said, "Lining, I have brought this book out really on your account. Will you listen to some of it?"

"Yes," said Lining.

"It will be a tedious story," said Bräsigg to himself. He did not lie on a bed of roses, up in the cherry-tree.

Gottlieb read an edifying discourse upon Christian marriage, how it should be thought of, and with what feelings entered into, and when he had finished, he moved a step nearer, and asked:

"What do you say to it, Lining?"

"It is certainly very beautiful," said she.

"Marriage?" asked Gottlieb.

"Oh, Gottlieb!" said Lining, and bent lower over her needlework.

"No, Lining," said Gottlieb, moving up another step, "it is *not* beautiful. God bless you for it, that you have not placed a light estimate upon this important act of human life. It is terribly hard, that is in a Christian sense," and he gave her a fearful description of the heavy duties and troubles and cares of married life, as if he were preparing her for a residence at the House of Correction, while Bräsigg, up in the cherry-tree, crossed himself, and thanked his stars that he had not entered on that sad estate. "Yes, Lining," said he, "marriage is a part of the curse, with which God drove our first parents out of Paradise," and he took his Bible, and read to the little girl the third chapter of the first book of Moses, till Lining trembled all over, and did not know where to go, for shame and distress.

"Infamous Jesuit!" exclaimed Bräsigg half aloud, "to distress the innocent child like that!" and he was almost ready to spring down from the tree, and Lining would almost have run away, only that the book out of which he was reading was the Bible, and what was in the Bible must be good; she covered her face with her hands, and cried bitterly. He was now full of spiritual zeal, and threw his arm about her, saying, "I spare thee not, in this solemn hour! Caroline Nüssler, wilt thou, under these Christian conditions, be my Christian wedded wife?"

Ah, and Lining was in such a dreadful confusion, she could neither speak nor think, but only cry and cry.

Then resounded along the garden path, a merry song:

"Little fish in silver brook,
Swimming off to a shady nook,
Little gray fish
Seeking a wife."

And Lining made a desperate effort, and started out of the arbor, spite of the Bible and Christian conditions, to meet Mining, who was coming out, with her sewing; and Gottlieb followed, with long, slow steps, and his face looked as wonder-stricken as that of the young preacher, when in the midst of his long sermon, the sexton laid the church-door key on the pulpit, saying that when he had finished he might lock up, himself, for he was going to dinner. And he might well look astonished, for, like the young preacher, he had done his best, and his church stood empty.

Mining was a little, inexperienced child, being the youngest, but she was sufficiently acute to perceive that something had happened, and to ask herself whether she would not cry under similar circumstances, and what sort of comfort would be necessary. She seated herself quietly, in the arbor, arranged her needle-work, and, reflecting upon her own unsettled circumstances, began to sigh a little, for want of anything else in particular to do.

"Preserve me!" said Bräsigg, in the tree, "now the little rogue has come, and my legs are perfectly numb, and the business is getting tedious."

But the business was not to be tedious long, for soon after Mining had seated herself, there appeared around the corner of the arbor a handsome, young fellow, with a fishing-rod over his shoulder, and a basket of fish suspended around his neck.

"This is good, Mining," cried he, "that I find you here. Of course you have had dinner long ago?"

"You may well think so, Rudolph," she replied, "it is just two o'clock."

"Aunt will certainly be very angry with me."

"You may be sure of that, she is so already, without your being late to dinner; but your own stomach will be the worst to you, for you have cared for it poorly, to-day."

"So much the better for yours, this evening. I could not come sooner, it was out of the question, with the fish biting so finely. I have been to the Black Pool today. Bräsig will never let me go there, and I understand the reason; it is his private pantry when he cannot find fish elsewhere; the whole pond is full of tench, just look! See there, what splendid fellows!" and he opened his basket, and showed his treasures. "I have got ahead of old Bräsig, this time!"

"Infamous rascal!" exclaimed Bräsig, to himself, and his nose peered out between the leaves, like one of the pickled gherkins, which Frau Nüssler was in the habit of putting up for the winter, in these same cherry-leaves. "Infamous rascal! he has been among my tench, then! May you keep the nose on your face! what fish the scamp has caught!"

"Give them to me, Rudolph," said Mining. "I will take them in, and bring you out something to eat."

"Oh, no! no! Never mind.

"But you must be hungry.

"Well, then, just a little something, Mining. A slice or two of bread and butter!"

Mining went, and Rudolph seated himself in the arbor.

He had a sort of easy indifference, as if he would let things come to him, but yet, when they touched him nearly, he would not fail to grapple with them. His figure was slender, and yet robust, and with the roguery in his brown eyes was mingled a spark of obstinacy, with which the little scar on his brown cheek harmonized so well, that one could safely infer he had not spent all his time in the study of dogmatic theology. "Yes," said he, as he sat there, "the fox must go to his own hole. I have beaten about the bush long enough; to be sure there has been time to spare, there was no hurry about settling matters until now; but, to-day, two things must be decided. To-day the old man is coming; well for me that mother does not come too, else I might find myself wanting in courage, at last. I am as fit for a parson as a donkey to play on the guitar, or Gottlieb for a colonel of cuirassiers. If Bräsig were only here, to-day, he would stand by me. But Mining! If I could get that settled first."

Just then, Mining came along, with a plate of bread and butter.

Rudolph sprang up: "Mining, what a good little thing you are!" and he threw his arm around her.

Mining pulled herself away; "Ah, let me be! What a naughty boy you are! Mother is dreadfully angry with you."

"You mean on account of the sermon? Well, yes! It was a stupid trick."

"No," said Mining, earnestly, "it was a *wicked* trick. It was making light of holy things."

"Oh, ho! Such candidates' sermons are not such holy things,--even when they come from our pious Gottlieb."

"But, Rudolph, in the *church*!"

"Ah, Mining, I acknowledge it was a stupid trick, I did not consider it beforehand; I only thought of the sheepish face Gottlieb would make, and that amused me so that I did the foolish thing. But let it go, Mining!" and he threw his arm about her again.

"No, let go!" said Mining, but did not push it away. "And the pastor said, if he should report the matter, you could never in your life get a parish."

"Let him report it then; I wish he would, and I should be out of the scrape once for all."

"What?" asked Mining, making herself free, and pushing him back a little way, "do you say that in earnest?"

"In solemn earnest. It was the first and last time I shall enter a pulpit."

"Rudolph!" exclaimed Mining, in astonishment.

"Why should that trouble you?" cried Rudolph, hastily. "Look at Gottlieb, look at me! Am I fit for a pastor? And if I had whole systems of theology in my head, so that I could even instruct the learned professors, they would not let me through my examination; they demand also a so-called religious experience. And if I were the apostle Paul himself, they would have nothing to do with me, if they knew about the little scar on my cheek."

"But what will you do, then?" asked Mining, and laid her hand hastily on his arm. "Ah, don't be a soldier!"

"God forbid! Don't think of such a thing! No, I will be a farmer."

"Confounded scamp!" said Bräsigt, up in the tree.

"Yes, my dear little Mining," said Rudolph, drawing her down on the bench beside him, "I will be a farmer, a right active, skilful farmer, and you, my little old dear Mining, shall help me about it."

"She shall teach him to plough and to harrow," said Bräsigt.

"I, Rudolph?" asked Mining,

"Yes, you, my dear, sweet child,"--and he stroked the shining hair, and the soft cheeks, and lifted the little chin, and looked full in the blue eyes,--"if I only knew, with certainty, that in a year and a day you would be my little wife, it would be easy for me to learn to be a skilful farmer. Will you, Mining, will you?"

And the tears flowed from Mining's eyes, and Rudolph kissed them away, here and there, over her cheeks, down to her rosy mouth, and Mining laid her little round head on his breast, and when he gave her time to speak, she whispered softly that she would, and he kissed her again, and ever again, and Bräsigt called, half aloud, from the tree, "But that is too much of a good thing! Have done!"

And Rudolph told her, between the kisses, that he would speak with his father, to-day, and remarked also, by the way, it was a pity Bräsigt was not there; he could help him finely in his undertaking, and he knew the old man thought a great deal of him.

"Confounded scamp!" said Bräsigt, "catching away my tench!"

And Mining said Bräsigt was there, and was taking his afternoon nap.

"Just hear the rogue, will you?" said Bräsigt. "This looks like an afternoon nap! But it is all finished now. Why should I torment my poor bones any longer?" And as Rudolph was saying he must speak to the old gentleman, Bräsigt slid down the cherry-tree, until his trousers were stripped up to his knees, and caught by the lowest branches, saying, "Here he hangs!" and then he let himself fall, and stood close before the pair of lovers, with an expression on his heated face, which said quite frankly he considered himself a suitable arbiter in the most delicate affairs.

The young people did not conduct themselves badly. Mining did like Lining in putting her hands before her face, only she did not cry, and she would have run away like Lining, if she had not, from a little child, stood on the most confidential footing with her Uncle Bräsigt. She threw herself, with her eyes covered, against her Uncle Bräsigt's breast, and crept with her little, round head almost into his waistcoat pocket, and cried,--

"Uncle Bräsigt! Uncle Bräsigt! you are an abominable old fellow!"

"So?" asked Bräsigt. "Eh, that is very fine."

"Yes," said Rudolph, with a little air of superiority, "you should be ashamed to play the listener here."

"Monsieur Noodle," said Bräsigt, "let me tell you, once for all, I have never in my life done anything to be ashamed of, and if you think you can teach me good manners you are very much mistaken."

Rudolph had sense enough to see this, and, although he would have relished a little contest, it was clear to him that on this occasion he must yield to Mining's wishes. So he remarked, in a pleasanter tone, that if Bräsigt were up in the tree by chance--he would take that for granted--he might at least have advised them of his presence, by coughing, or in some way, instead of listening to their affairs from A to Z.

"So?" said Bräsigt, "I should have coughed, should I? I *groaned* often enough and if you had not been so occupied with your own affairs, you might easily have heard me. But you ought to be ashamed, to be making love to Mining without Frau Nüssler's permission."

That was his own affair, Rudolph said, and nobody's else, and Bräsigt knew nothing about such matters.

"So?" asked Bräsigg, again. "Did you ever have three sweethearts at once? I did, sir; three acknowledged sweethearts, and do I know about such matters? But you are such a sly old rascal, fishing my tench out of the Black Pool, on the sly; and fishing my little Mining, before my very eyes, out of the arbor. Come, leave him alone, Mining! he shall have nothing to do with you."

"Ah, Uncle Bräsigg," begged Mining so artlessly, "be good to us, we love each other so much."

"Well, never mind Mining, you are my little goddaughter; though that is all over now."

"No, Herr Inspector!" cried Rudolph,--laying his hand on the old man's shoulder, "no, dear, good Uncle Bräsigg, that is not over, that shall last as long as we live. I will be a farmer, and if I have the prospect of calling Mining my wife, and"--he was cunning enough to add--"and you will give me your valuable advice, the devil must be in it, if I cannot make a good one."

"A confounded rascal!" said Bräsigg to himself, adding, aloud, "Yes, you will be such a Latin farmer as Pistorius, and Prætorius, and Trebonius, and you will sit on the bank of the ditch and read that fellow's book, with the long title, about oxygen and carbonic acid gas, and organisms, while the cursed farmboys are strewing manure, behind your back, in lumps as big as your hat-crown. Oh, I know you! I never knew but one man who had been to the great schools, and was worth anything afterward, and that was the young Herr von Rambow, who was with Habermann."

"Ah, Uncle Bräsigg," said Mining, lifting her head, suddenly, and stroking the old man's cheeks, "what Franz can do, Rudolph can do also."

"No, Mining, that he can *not!* And why? Because he is a greyhound, and the other is a decided character!"

"Uncle Bräsigg," said Rudolph, "you are thinking of that stupid trick of mine, about the sermon; but Gottlieb had teased me so with his zeal for proselyting, I must play some little joke on him."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bräsigg, "well, why not, it amused me, it amused me very much. So he wanted to convert you too, from fishing, perhaps? Oh, he has been trying to convert somebody here, this afternoon, but Lining ran away from him; however, that is all right."

"With Lining and Gottlieb?" asked Mining anxiously, "and have you listened to that, too?"

"Of course I listened to it, it was on their account I perched myself in this confounded cherry-tree. But now come here Monsieur Rudolph. Will you, all your life long, never again go into the pulpit and preach a sermon?"

"No, never again."

"Will you get up at four o'clock in the morning, and three o'clock in the summer-time, and give out fodder grain?"

"Always, at the very hour."

"Will you learn how to plough and harrow and mow properly, and to reap and bind sheaves, that is, with a band,--there is no art in using a rope?"

"Yes," said Rudolph.

"Will you promise never to sit over the punch-bowl, at the Thurgovian ale-house, when your wagons are already gone, and then ride madly after them?"

"I will never do it," said Rudolph.

"Will you also never in your life--Mining, see that beautiful larkspur, the blue, I mean, just bring it to me, and let me smell it--will you," he continued, when she was gone, "never entangle yourself with the confounded farm-girls?"

"Herr Inspector, what do you take me for?" said Rudolph angrily, turning away.

"Come, come," said Bräsigg, "every business must be settled beforehand, and I give you warning: for every tear my little godchild sheds on your account I will give your neck a twist," and he looked as fierce as if he were prepared to do it immediately.

"Thank you Mining," said he, as she brought him the flower, and he smelled it, and stuck it in his buttonhole.

"And now, come here, Mining, I will give you my blessing. No, you need not fall on your knees, since I am not one of your natural parents, but merely your godfather. And you, Monsieur Rudolph, I will stand by you this afternoon, when your father comes, and help you out of this clerical scrape. And now, come, both of you, we must go in. But I tell you, Rudolph, don't sit reading, by the ditches, but attend to the manure-strewing. You see there is a trick in it, the confounded farm-boys must take the fork, and then not throw it off directly, no! they must first break it up three or four times with the fork, so that it gets well separated. A properly manured field ought to look as neat and fine as a velvet coverlid."

With that, he went, with the others, out of the garden gate.

CHAPTER XIX.

Towards the middle of the afternoon, the merchant Kurz, and the rector Baldrian were approaching the Rexow farm.

Kurz had invited the rector to be his companion, to his own detriment, for a little man appears to fearful disadvantage beside a long-legged fellow, and nature, in cheating Kurz of his rightful dimensions, appeared to have endowed the rector with the surplus. So they walked along the road, and the rector made a joke; he said that they two together reminded him of the metre, which the Romans called a dactyl, long, short, short; long, short, short. That provoked Kurz, since it was disparaging to his legs and his capabilities as a pedestrian; he took the longest possible steps.

"Now we can pass for a spondee," said the rector.

"Do me the favor, brother-in-law," said Kurz, angrily, and wholly out of breath, "to spare me your learned witticisms. They are altogether too much for me." And he wiped off the sweat from his face, pulled off his coat, and hung it over his stick.

In his belief, Kurz was properly a materialist, but by trade he was a mercer. There were always remnants left over, in this business, which was quite a convenience to a man of his short stature, since he could use them up for himself. When he had cleared out his old stock last year, he had a piece of ladies' dress goods left on hand, on which were represented giraffes plucking at a palm-tree. He could not think of throwing it away, and he could not get rid of it, so he had it made up into a summer coat for himself, and he was now marching on the Rexow farm, with this banner over his shoulder, as if he were the youngest standard-bearer in the army of a German prince, who bore a giraffe and a palm-tree in his shield; and rector Baldrian stalked by his side, in a yellow nankeen coat, like a right file-leader, in the body-guard of the German prince, who might, for a change, have adopted yellow nankeen as a uniform.

"Dear me!" sighed Frau Nüssler, "Kurz is bringing the rector with him."

"Sure enough," said Bräsigg, "but he shall not incommode us much to-day, I will cut his speeches short." For they both had, not without reason, a great terror of the rector's circumstantiality.

The two guests entered, and the rector delivered a long oration upon his joy in seeing them again, and the happy opportunity of coming with Kurz; to which Bräsigg replied curtly, that long legs were the best opportunities for one who was going across country, and turned away, so that the rector, while Frau Nüssler was occupied with Kurz, found his audience limited to Jochen, who listened in the most exemplary manner to the whole discourse, and finally said, "Good day, brother-in-law, sit down a little while."

Kurz was out of temper; in the first place, because he had come to give his boy a scolding, secondly, because the rector had walked him off his legs, and, thirdly, because in pulling off his coat he had taken cold, and got a fit of the hiccoughs. His crossness, to be sure, was nothing remarkable, for he was angry year in and year out, because he was a democrat, of course not a state democrat, for they didn't have such then in Mecklenburg; only a city democrat, since he made it the particular business of his life to pull public offices from the grasp of the thick-nosed baker, in the market-place, who was so horribly favored by the burgomeister. He went puffing and hiccoughing about the room, and looked, with his red, moist face and his short grizzled hair, like a fine, red, freshly cut ham, cooked in paste, well sprinkled with pepper and salt, with the gravy following the knife.

The comparison is not strictly accurate, because the knife was wanting, but Bräsigg took care for that; he ran to the dresser, caught up a long, sharp carving-knife, marched directly up to the ham and said, "So, Kurz, now sit perfectly still."

"What is that for?" inquired Kurz.

"Remedy for the hiccoughs. So! Now you must look right at the point of the knife. Now I come nearer and nearer to you with the point; but you must be frightened, or it will do you no good. Still nearer,--still nearer, as if I were going to split your nose open. Still nearer--close to your eyes."

"Thunder and lightning!" cried Kurz, springing up. "Do you mean to put my eyes out?"

"Good!" said Bräsig, "good! You are frightened, and that will help you."

And it did help, truly, that is, as regards the hiccoughs, not as regards the crossness.

"Where is my boy?" he asked. "He shall get a scolding to-day. Nothing but vexations, brother-in-law!" turning to Jochen. "Here with the boy, at the Rathhaus with the public documents, at home with my wife, on account of that confounded sermon affair, in the shop with that beast of an apprentice, selling a half ounce of black sewing silk for a drachm, and here, on the road, with the rector's long shanks."

"Mother," said young Jochen, pushing a coffee-cup towards her, "help Kurz."

"Eh, brother-in-law," said Frau Nüssler, "there is time enough, let us talk it over first; to come down on the boy when you are so heated would be like pouring oil on the fire."

"I'll come down on him----" began Kurz; but he went no further, for the door opened, and Gottlieb entered.

Gottlieb's step was more than usually dignified, as he walked up to his father, and greeted him. He was so excessively solemn, and had such an air of clerical reserve, that he looked as if St. Salvaderus had taken him under his special tuition, and hung him up by a string every night, to keep him out of harm's way.

"Good day, how goes it, papa?" said he, and kissed his father on the cheek, so that the old man kissed in the air, like a carp, when he comes up out of the water.

"How is mamma?" inquired the son.

Gottlieb had been brought up from a child to say "Papa" and "Mamma," because the rector thought "Father" and "Mother," although quite good enough for ordinary burghers, were not suitable for educated people; at which Frau Kurz was naturally very indignant, since her children always said "Daddy" and "Mammy."

"Good day, uncle," said Gottlieb to Kurz, "good day, Herr Inspector," to Bräsig, and, turning again to his father, he went on: "I am very glad you have come to-day, for I wish to speak to you particularly, on important business."

"Ha, ha," said Bräsig to himself, "it is beginning already."

The rector went out into the court-yard with his son, and Bräsig stationed himself at the window, and watched them. Frau Nüssler came up to him: "Bräsig, did you find out anything, this afternoon, about my little girls?"

"Frau Nüssler," said Bräsig, "don't you be troubled, the business has settled itself."

"What?" cried Frau Nüssler, hastily, "how has it settled itself?"

"You will soon find out, for if you look out of the window you will see it is being settled now. Why do you think the rector is shaking hands with Gottlieb, and embracing him? On account of his Christian belief? Come, I will tell you why; it is because you, Frau Nüssler, are such a good housekeeper."

Bräsig had great knowledge of human nature, and could read hearts like a prophet; but he shared the common failing of prophets, he uttered dark sayings. Frau Nüssler did not understand a word: "What? He embraces Gottlieb because I am a good housekeeper!"

Bräsig had another prophet's failing; he gave no answer to a reasonable question, if it did not suit his humour. "Can't you see how he gives him his blessing?" he exclaimed. "He knows very well that money answereth all things, and he knows there is plenty of it here."

"What has that to do with my children?"

"You will soon find out. See! now the Pietist is going away, and now look at the old man. Lord have mercy on us! he is learning off a speech by heart; and it will be a long one,--all his speeches are long, but the ceremonious ones are the longest."

Bräsig had great knowledge of human nature, as was fully proved on this occasion, for the rector came in, and began immediately:

"Honored friends, a certain wise man of antiquity has uttered the indisputable truth, that the happiest home is that where quiet peace dwells, in company with a comfortable, substantial competency. Here, in this house, this is the case. I have not come here to disturb this quiet peace; my dear brother-in-law, Kurz can do what he pleases,--I have come by accident, but accident is a 'casus' or falling out, whereby important things sometimes fall in a man's way. This is the case with me to-day. This accident may fall out for good, or it may fall out for evil; but I will not anticipate, I will say nothing further about it. Dear Brother Jochen, you as the proper head of

this happily situated family"--Jochen made a face as if his brother-in-law had said he was the proper autocrat of all Russia, and ought by good rights to be sitting on his throne in the Kremlin at Moscow, instead of sitting here in the chimney-corner--"yes," repeated the rector, "you, as the proper head of the family, will pardon me if I address myself also to my dear sister-in-law, who has cared for the affairs of her own family with so much love and circumspection, and with such blessed results, and also upon the families related--I refer here particularly to the friendly reception of my Gottlieb--has exerted a highly beneficial influence. You, my dear brother-in-law Kurz, belong also to the family, and although our two families, at least the female members, have been lately a little divided, though--well, on this happy occasion we will say nothing more about it--I am sure you really feel interested in my happiness. But now," going up to Bräsigt, "how shall I address you, Herr Inspector? You, though you do not, strictly speaking, belong to the family, have yet been so helpful in action, so wise in counsel----

"Come. I will give you a bit of advice," said the old man; "take a fresh start or you will never get to the end."

"End?" said the rector, with the authority of the clergyman breaking through the crust of the pedant. "End?" asked he, solemnly, raising his eyes to heaven, "will it come to a good or a bad end? Who knows the end?"

"I know it," said Bräsigt, "for I heard the beginning, this afternoon, up in that confounded cherry-tree. The end of the whole story is, the Pietist wants to marry our Lining."

Then there was an uproar, "Gracious heavens!" cried Frau Nüssler. "Gottlieb! our child?"

"Yes," said the rector, snapping out the word, and standing there like Klein, the head-fireman at Stemhagen, when the engines were being tried, and the hose burst, and he got the whole stream of water over himself.

Kurz sprang up, exclaiming; "The rascal! Gottlieb? That is too much!"

And Jochen also got up, but slowly, and asked Bräsigt, "*Mining*, did you say, Bräsigt?"

"No, young Jochen, only *Lining*," said Bräsigt, quietly. And young Jochen sat down again.

"And you knew that, Bräsigt, and never told us?" cried Frau Nüssler.

"Oh, I know yet more," said Bräsigt, "but why should I tell you? What difference could it make whether you knew it a quarter of an hour sooner, or not; and I thought it would be a pleasant surprise for you."

"And here he is," said the rector, leading in Gottlieb, who had been behind the door all the time, "and he wishes to receive his answer from your kindness."

And now came old Gottlieb, for once with nothing ludicrous about him, but like any other man. His clerical demeanor, and the exclusiveness of his Levitical calling, he had quite thrown overboard, since he had no room in his heart for such folderols. At this moment it was full of pure human nature, of doubt and hope, of fear and love, and those who could decide his happiness or misery stood before him as human beings in flesh and blood--Jochen to be sure was sitting--and real love, with its proper circumstances of betrothal and marriage, is such a fair, pure, human feeling, that truly no clerical parade can make it fairer. At any other time, Gottlieb himself would have been the first to dispute this assertion, but at this moment he was so overcome by this tender feeling, and expressed himself with so much warmth and confidence toward Frau Nüssler and Jochen, that Bräsigt said to himself, "How the man has altered! If Lining has done so much in this short time, let her go on, in heaven's name! She will make a good fellow of him yet!"

Frau Nüssler listened to Gottlieb's straightforward story, and indeed she had always liked old Gottlieb, but the thought of losing her child overcame her for the moment; she was much agitated; "Good heavens!" cried she, "Gottlieb, you were always a good fellow, and you studied your books well, but----

Here she was for the first time in her life, interrupted by Jochen. When Jochen understood that they were not talking about Mining, he became quiet; while Gottlieb addressed him, he was collecting his thoughts and, as he became aware that all eyes were turned upon him, he resolved to speak, and so he took the words out of his wife's mouth, saying, "Yes, Gottlieb, it is all as true as leather, and what I can do in the matter, as a father, I will do, and if mother is willing I am willing; and if Lining is willing I am willing."

"Good heavens, Jochen!" cried Frau Nüssler, "what are you talking about? Just keep quiet! No, I must first speak, to my child, I must first hear what she will say to it." With that she ran out of the room.

But it was not long before she came back, leading Lining by the hand, and behind her followed Mining and Rudolph, probably intending to make a practical use of this occasion; and Lining, red as a rose, dropped her mother's hand, and threw herself upon Gottlieb's breast, and then on her mother's, and then went and sat down on Jochen's knee--for he had seated himself again--and would have kissed him, but could not for coughing, for Jochen in his excitement was puffing

violently at his strong tobacco, so she only said "Father!" and he said "Lining!" and when she rose, Bräsig was standing beside her, and he caressed her, and said; "Never mind, Lining, I will give you something." Then Gottlieb took her by the hand, and led her up to his father, and the rector bent so low to give her his fatherly kiss, that the others thought he was picking up a pin from the floor, and he began on a new oration, but did not get far in it, for Bräsig stood at the window, drumming "The old Dessauer," so that nobody could hear a word. The old man was staring over Jochen's barn-roof, into the clear sunshine, as if there were something quite remarkable to be seen there. And there was, in fact, something remarkable to be seen; he saw, far off, an apple-tree, which had been once covered with rosy bloom; it was his tree, he had propped and trained it, it was his tree, but Jochen had transplanted it to his garden, and he had been compelled to suffer it; but for all that, he had still watched and tended the tree, and the tree had borne fruit, beautiful red, round fruit; and the fruit had grown ripe, and was fair to look upon, and now a couple of boys had climbed over the fence, and one had plucked an apple, and put it in his pocket, and the second was reaching out his hand for the other. Well, boys will be boys, and apples and boys belong together; he knew that, and had often said to himself that it must come; he did not grudge them but it troubled him that the care of his little twin-apples should pass into other hands, especially he could not easily give up the care of his little rogue, so he drummed lustily on the window-frame.

And Kurz, the shop-keeper, blew his nose as fiercely as if he were playing the trumpet to Bräsig's drumming. It was not from emotion, that he blew it so impressively, only from anger; for he was the fifth wheel on the wagon amid all this domestic happiness, and yet he had come on an important piece of business; but the circumstances demanded that he should offer friendly congratulations, so with a face like a salt plum that has been steeped in vinegar, he passed by his son Rudolph without looking at him, and congratulated, right and left, as if he stood behind his counter, serving his customers, and must have a friendly word ready for every one, though he heard clearly all the time, behind his back, the whole vinegar barrel running out. But when he came to the rector, and should have poured him out a measure of oil for his pathetic oration, there was the vinegar, which his boy had left running, close at his heels, and he could talk to his customers no longer; he turned quickly on his heel, and cried to Rudolph, "Are you not ashamed of yourself?" then turning back to the customers, "I beg your pardon! but this business must be attended to--are you not ashamed of yourself? Have you not cost me more than Gottlieb his father? Have you learnt anything? Just tell me!"

"Dear brother-in-law," said the rector, and laid his hand with friendliness on Kurz's head, as if he had done his Latin exercise uncommonly well, "what he has learned, he cannot tell you in a moment."

"Eh, what!" cried Kura, twitching out from under the hand, and stumbling backward, "did you bring me along, or did I bring you along? I think I brought you along; it is time for my business to be attended to now. Are you not ashamed of yourself?" he cried, to Rudolph again; "there stands Gottlieb, has passed his examination, has a bride,--a fair, a lovely bride,"--with that he endeavoured to bow to Lining, but in his excitement always made his compliments to Frau Nüssler,--"can be a pastor to-morrow,"--Bräsig got this bow, instead of Gottlieb,--"and you, and you--oh, you have fought duels, and what else have you done? Got into debt; but I won't pay your debts!" and although nobody said that he should pay them, he kept repeating, "I won't pay them! No! I won't pay them!" and he placed himself by Bräsig, at the window, and joined him in drumming.

The poor boy, Rudolph, stood there, terribly mortified. It is true, nature had given him a pretty tough hide, and he was too well used to his father's abuse, to take it for more than it was worth, for nobody must believe that Kurz, in his inmost heart, was angry with his boy, no, God forbid! quite the contrary! because he cared so much for him, he was angry that his boy was not so well off as the rector's.

But for all that, and although Rudolph knew right well how much his father thought of him, he could not bear it this time, for the old man was too hard on him, and before so many witnesses, and he had a whole stream of bitter words on the cud of his tongue, when his eye fortunately fell upon Mining, who this afternoon reckoned herself truly one bone and one flesh with Rudolph, for her flesh was pale instead of his, and every bone in her body trembled for him. Rudolph swallowed his bitter words, and for the first time the feeling came over him, that his misdeeds could recoil on any other head than his own, and he resolved to do nothing for the future, without looking into Mining's eyes first. And, I say, that is a very good sign of a young, honest love.

"Father," said he, when he had controlled himself, and went, without troubling himself at the long faces around him, up to his father, and laid his hand on his shoulder, "Father, come! I have done with stupid tricks from henceforth."

Kurz kept on drumming; but Bräsig stopped.

"Father," said Rudolph again, "you have reason to be angry with me, I have deserved it, but---"

"Stop your confounded drumming!" said Bräsig, arresting Kurz's knuckles.

"Father," said Rudolph, offering his hand to his father, "come, forgive and forget!"

"No!" said Kurz, thrusting both hands in his pockets.

"What?" said Bräsig, "You will not? I know very well, nobody should interfere between father and son, but I *will* interfere, because it is your own fault that the business has been talked about so openly. What! You will not forget and forgive this young fellow's follies, and he your own son? Haven't you always sent me that old, sweet Prussian Kümmel, and didn't I forgive and forget, and go and trade with you again, and pay you honestly?"

"I have always served you well," said Kurz.

"So?" asked Bräsig, mockingly. "How about that trousers' pattern? Young Jochen, you know all about it, you can remember how they looked afterwards."

"Those stupid old trousers!" cried Kurz, "you have made so much fuss about them already that---"

"Ha, ha!" interrupted Bräsig, "do you talk like that? Wasn't it pure wickedness on your part, to let me wear them, and you knowing they would turn red, and haven't I forgiven and forgotten? Well, not forgotten, to be sure, for I have a very good memory,--but if you don't forget what the young fellow has done, you can at least forgive him."

"Dear brother-in-law," began the rector, who believed that, in consideration of his having formerly been a clergyman, it was his duty to make peace.

"Do me the pleasure!" cried Kurz, turning short round, "you have a bride, and will get a parish,--that is to say, your Gottlieb will get one, and we--we--we have learnt nothing, we have no bride, no parish, and we have a scar!" and then he ran wildly about the room.

"Father!" cried Rudolph, "just hear me!"

"Yes," said Frau Nüssler, who was heated to the point of boiling over, and she caught Kurz by the arm; "just hear what he has to say for himself. If he did do a foolish thing about the sermon,--and no one was more troubled about it than I,--yet otherwise he is a good boy, and many a father would be proud of him."

"Yes, yes!" said Kurz, impatiently, "I will hear him, I will listen to him," and he placed himself before Rudolph with his hands on his sides: "Come now, say what you have to say, now say it!"

"Dear father," said Rudolph, standing there with a beseeching and yet resolved expression upon his face, "I know it will grieve you deeply, but I cannot do otherwise; I shall not be a clergyman, I am going to be a farmer."

It is said that they teach the bears to dance, in Poland, by putting them on hot iron plates, where they must keep their legs constantly in motion, to avoid being burned. In precisely such a manner, did Kurz hop about the room, at these words of Rudolph's, first on one foot and then on the other, as if the devil were under Frau Nüssler's floor, toasting his feet for him. "That is pretty," he cried at every jump, "that is fine! My son, who has cost me so much, who has learned so much, will be a farmer! will be a clodhopper, a blockhead, a stable-boy!"

"Young Jochen," cried Bräsig, "shall we suffer ourselves to be called by such names? Stand up, young Jochen! What, Herr!" exclaimed he, going up to Kurz, "such a herring-dealer, such a syrup-prince as you, to despise farmers! Herr, do you know who we are? We are your very foundation; if it were not for us, and our buying of you, the shopkeepers might all run about the country with beggars' sacks,--and you think your son has learned too much for such a calling? He has learned too much, perhaps, in one way, but he has learned too little in another. Do you believe, Herr, that a capable agriculturalist--stand up here by me, Jochen!--needs nothing but a sheep's head and asses' ears?"

"Dear brother-in-law," began the rector, again.

"Will you kill me, with your long speeches?" roared Kurz. "You have sheared your little sheep; I came out, also, to shear my black sheep, and now you all seem bent on shearing me."

"Kurz," said Frau Nüssler, "be reasonable. What cannot be, cannot. If he won't be a pastor, he is the nearest thing to it, as the Frau Pastorin says; and in my opinion, if he is only an industrious fellow, it is all the same whether he preaches or ploughs."

"Father," said Rudolph now, as he noticed that his father was considering, "give me your consent; you do not know how much my life's happiness depends on it."

"Who will take you for a pupil?" cried Kurz, still angrily. "Nobody!"

"That is my affair," said Bräsig. "I know a man,--that is Hilgendorff, of Tetzleben,--who understands book-farming, and who has already done well for his pupils. He had one fellow, who was beside himself with poetry, which he used to write behind the shed; if he wanted to say that the sun was risen, he said, 'Aurora had looked over the hedge,' and when he would speak of a storm coming up, he said, 'It glowed and towered up, in the west,' and if he would say it drizzled, he said, 'Light drops distilled from heaven,'--and for all that, he has made a useful man out of

him. He must go to Hilgendorff."

"Yes," said Kurz, "but I must speak with Hilgendorff; I shall tell him----"

"Tell him everything, father," said Rudolph, embracing the old man, "but I have yet another petition."

"Ha, ha!" cried Kurz, "about your debts, I suppose; but don't come near me with those to-day, I have enough of this clodhopper business, and I won't pay them!" and he shoved his son away.

"And you shall not, father," said Rudolph, drawing himself up proudly, and his whole bearing expressed such cheerful courage and such sure confidence, that all eyes were attracted towards him. "You shall not do it!" he cried, "I have incurred debts to-day, and I have given my word of honor, honestly to pay and discharge them, and I will do it, with my heart's blood. I have made them here," he exclaimed, going up to Mining, who all this time, and through all this quarrel, had been lying on her sister's shoulder, and who felt as if it were the beginning of the judgment day. "Here!" said he, and laid Mining on his own breast. "If I am ever good for anything, you have this little girl here to thank for it," and the tears started from his eyes, "my darling little bride."

"Confounded rascal!" said Bräsig, rubbing his eyes, and he went back to the window, and drummed the Dessauer, for he was the only one who was not surprised at this announcement. The others stood there, confounded.

"Good Heavens!" cried Frau Nüssler, "what is this?"

"What?" cried Jochen, "*Mining*, did he say?"

"Good gracious, Jochen, don't talk so much!" cried Frau Nüssler, "Mining, what is this, what does this mean?"

But Mining lay on Rudolph's breast, as white and still, as if she would never raise her head, or speak another word. Kurz had comprehended the matter at once, he had quickly ciphered out in his head a couple of examples in arithmetic, of which Jochen's property furnished the principal items, and he found the result so satisfactory, that he began to dance again, this time, however, not like the Polish bears, but like a wild Indian executing a war-dance, and Bräsig drummed the measure. Rector Baldrian's face was the one quiet point, in all this general excitement, for it looked as uncomprehensive as mine would, if I were poring over a Hebrew Bible.

"What is this, what does this mean?" cried Frau Nüssler again, sinking into a chair. "Both my two! Both my little girls in one and the same day! And *you* said," turning upon Bräsig, "that you would look after them!"

"Frau Nüssler," said Bräsig, "have I not looked after them, till all my bones were sore? But there is no harm done, so far as I can see. What do you say to it, Jochen?"

"I have nothing to say; my blessed mother always said: A candidate and a governess----"

"Jochen," cried Frau Nüssler, "you will talk me dead, and you learned this very chattering from Rudolph, the rascal!"

"Blockhead!" exclaimed Kurz, dancing about the pair, "why didn't you tell me that, in the first place? I would have forgiven you anything, on account of this little--this dear little daughter!" and he lifted up Mining's head, and kissed her.

"Gracious heavens!" cried Frau Nüssler, "there is Kurz calling her his daughter, and kissing her, and his boy is nothing at all yet, and Mining is so inconsiderate!"

"So?" said Bräsig. "You mean because she is the youngest? Now come here a minute, I want to speak to you privately," and he led Frau Nüssler into the corner, and the two looked attentively at the old spittoon, which stood there. "Frau Nüssler," said he, "what is right for one, must be reasonable for the other. You have given your blessing to Lining, why not to Mining? Yes, it is true, she is not so thoughtful, because she is the youngest; but after all, Madame Nüssler, the difference in years is so little, in a pair of twins, that it is scarcely to be regarded, and then--you must give your daughter to the presbyter, and how he will take care of her, the devil knows! we know nothing about the ways of the clergy, for you and Jochen and I have never studied theology; but the other, the duel-fighter, you see how he stands there, as if he could cut his way through the world--a confounded rascal! well, you see with him, as a farmer, we shall have the advantage, for you and Habermann and I, and if the worst comes to the worst, Jochen himself, an look after him, and admonish him, and Keep him in order. And you see, Frau Nüssler, I always thought Jochen would improve with age; but does he improve? No, he doesn't improve, and it may be a real blessing for you to have this youth here, as a son-in-law, if he does well, for we are getting old, and when I close my eyes--well, I shall last a little while longer, perhaps--but it would be a great comfort to me to know that you had some one on hand, to look after you."

And the old fellow looked down fixedly into the spittoon, and Frau Nüssler threw her arm around his neck, and kissed him, for the first time in her life, and said in a quiet, friendly way; "Bräsig, if you really think it right, then it cannot be against the will of God." Many an arbor has

witnessed a fresher, rosier, more glowing kiss, but the old spittoon would not exchange with them.

And Frau Nüssler turned back, and went up to Rudolph, and said, "Rudolph, I say nothing more but, In God's name," and she drew Mining to her arms, and reached after Lining, and laid the two little twins alternately upon her breast, as she had done years ago, and hope stood again at her side, in her freshest, green wreath, as she had done years ago; yet it was quite different to-day, from that other time. Then she had given the two little twins, now she would take them away; for hope is like the bee, she plunges into every flower, and extracts from each its honey.

And Bräsig went up and down the room, with great strides, and held his nose in the air, and snuffed about, and elevated his eyebrows, and turned out his little legs, with as much dignity and importance, as if he were the rightful father, who should give away the children, and had made up his mind to the sacrifice, and by him also stood a fair, womanly image. With a wreath, it was a wreath of moss and yellow immortelles; but it harmonized well with the still, sad eyes, and she took him softly by the hand, and led him again and ever again towards the mother and children, till he laid his hands on her head, and whispered in her ears, "Be content, you shall have them still."

Rudolph had gone directly up to Gottlieb, and offered him his hand: "You are no longer angry with me, to-day, are you, Gottlieb?" and Gottlieb pressed his hand, saying, "How can you think so, dear brother? Forgiveness is the Christian's duty." And the rector coughed, as if he were preparing to deliver a brief oration, but Kurz caught hold of his coat, and begged him, for God's sake, not to spoil the business--and then all at once, the company became aware that Jochen was missing. Where was Jochen?

"Good gracious!" cried Frau Nüssler, "where is my Jochen?"

"Good gracious! where is Jochen?" repeated one and another; but Bräsig was the first who made any efforts to bring him back to his proper place; he ran out, and screamed out of the front door, across the court-yard, "Jochen!" and ran back again, and screamed through the garden, "Jochen!" and, as he came back through the kitchen, he saw a fiery face puffing and blowing at the coals, under a great copper kettle, and that was Jochen's face.

The feeling had come over him, that he ought to do something, in honor of such a special occasion, and his heart became so warm, that five and twenty degrees (Reaumur) in the shade seemed too cool for him, and since he wanted to bring his outside into harmony with his inside, and could think of nothing more suitable to a family festival, he decided upon punch, and was brewing it in the most energetic manner. Bräsig assisted, and undertook the tasting, and they came back finally, bearing in Frau Nüssler's largest soup-tureen, both fiery as a pair of dragons guarding a treasure, and Jochen placed it on the table, with the single word, "There!" and Bräsig said to the little twin-apples, "Go to your father, and thank him; your father thinks of everybody."

As the old fellows gathered about the punch-bowl, and the young people had something else to think about, Frau Nüssler stole quietly out of the room; she wished to talk over the matter with an older friend than Bräsig.

The little twin-apples were hidden in the green arbor of their happy future; only as Uncle Bräsig's playful jests blew aside the green leaves, their blushing faces were revealed.

"Yes," said he to Gottlieb, "there are all sorts of people in the world, and wicked Pietists among them. You wanted to convert me, take care I don't convert you; I shall convert you by means of Lining." And as Gottlieb was about to reply, he stood up, and gave him his hand in the heartiest manner, "Well, never mind, you will have fire enough yet, and if you are the village pastor, I shall get on well with you, and we shall be good friends."

And to Rudolph, he said, "Just wait! You have caught my tench out of the pool, you rascal, but Hilgendorff will make you face the music," and he went up to his young fishing-comrade and whispered in his ear: "It is not so bad! You must always think of Mining, with every bushel of corn you measure out, and when you are out in the spring, in a stiff east wind, with a dozen laborers, and the old loam-dust flies in your nose, and sticks there, as if a swallow had built her nest in your head, and the sun looks out through the dust, as round and red as a copper-kettle, then you must think that is Mining's face, looking down on you. Isn't it so, my little godchild?"

Meanwhile the rector had drunk three glasses of punch, one to the health of each betrothed pair, and one to the health of the company, and he would allow himself no longer to be hindered, even by Kurz, from resuming his interrupted speech. He began with the introduction to the introduction. He stood up, reached after a tea-spoon and after the sugar-tongs, which had been on the table since coffee was served, coughed a couple of times, as a sign that he was ready to begin, and when he was aware that all were looking at him, and Jochen had folded his hands, he first looked very thoughtfully, now at the spoon, and then at the tongs. All at once, he thrust the spoon right under Bräsig's nose, as if Bräsig had stolen it, and must be convicted of the act: "Do you know that?"

"Yes," said Bräsig, "what of it?" Then he held the sugar-tongs before Kurz's eyes, and asked if he knew it.

Kurz knew it, it was Jochen's.

"Yes," he began; "you know them; that is, you have a sensible perception of them, you know how to distinguish them from other objects by color, shape, and brightness: but the moral conception, which I connect with them, you do not know."

He looked around, as if he expected some one to contradict him; but they were all silent.

"No, you do not know it! I must communicate and explain it to you. See, how long will it be before the careful housewife of this family will come and take spoon and tongs, and put these, which are now visibly divided, lying here on the table, into one common tea-caddy, where they will rest together; in thousands of houses they rest together in one tea-caddy, and for a thousand years, they rest together in one tea-caddy. It is a custom honored for ages, that what belongs together should not be separated. And Adam"--here he held up the sugar-tongs--"and Eve"--then he held up the tea-spoon--"belonged together, for they were created for each other,"--here he held them both up--"and the Lord himself put them together in the tea-caddy of Paradise. And what did Noah do? He built himself an ark, a tea-caddy,--if you will, my beloved,--and he called the males and females, and they followed his call,"--here he marched the sugar-tongs over the table, alternately pinching them together and letting them loose again, and shoved the tea-spoon after them--"and they went----"

"Come in!" cried Bräsigg, for somebody knocked at the door, and in walked Fritz Triddelsitz. "Herr Habermann's compliments to Herr Nüssler, and would he lend him a pair of rape-sifters, as they were ready to begin harvesting." This made a little disturbance, but the rector remained standing at his post.

"Yes," said Jochen, he would do so; and Fritz perceiving by the odor of the punch, and the rector's state of preparation,--which he knew well enough of old, since he had many a time made his shoulders black and blue,--that there was something unusual in progress, crossed the room on tiptoe, and sat down, and Jochen said, "Mining, help Triddelsitz." Fritz drank, and the rector waited.

"Begin again at the beginning," said Bräsigg, "else Triddelsitz cannot understand it."

"We were speaking, then," began the rector----

"About the sugar-tongs and the teaspoon," cried Kurz, wickedly, "and that they belonged in the tea-caddy," and he snatched the silver out of his hand and put it into the caddy, saying, "There, now the males and females are in Noah's ark, and I think ours will get in there too. You must know, Triddelsitz, we are celebrating a double betrothal here, to-day, and that is the principal thing; the rector's sermon is only the fringe about the garment. What is Habermann doing?"

"Oh, thank you," said Fritz, "he is very well," and he stood up, and offered his congratulations to the two couples, on their betrothal, in suitable terms enough, and yet with rather a condescending manner, as if it were merely a birthday, and the little twin-apples were betrothed every year. The rector stood waiting, all this time.

"Lining, help uncle rector," said Jochen.

She did so, and the rector drank; but, instead of diverting his attention, the punch moved and stirred and poked about among the thoughts which he had collected for his speech, and there was a great commotion in his brain, and every idea wanted to take the lead, but they were constantly pushed back by one after another of the company, now Jochen, now Kurz, and now Fritz, and as he was at last bringing forward his heavy artillery of "reflections on marriage," Bräsigg observed, in the most innocent way, "You have been very happy, then, in the married state, Herr Rector?"

He seated himself, with a deep sigh, and to this day, no one knows whether it was over his marriage or his speech. I incline to think the latter, for I hold it easier to resign a happy marriage than a happy speech.

It was now evening, and the rector, Kurz, and Triddelsitz took leave; Rudolph also was to go with them, for Bräsigg and Frau Nüssler had both given their opinion that he should get into the traces immediately, for his new business, and not loaf about any longer. Jochen and Bräsigg accompanied the others a little way.

"How does your new master get on, Triddelsitz?" inquired Bräsigg.

"Thank you, Herr Inspector, he is quite remarkable, he made a speech to the laborers this morning, as one might say, extempore."

"What!" exclaimed Kurz, "does he make speeches too?"

"What had he to speak about?" asked Bräsigg.

"What did he make?" asked Jochen.

"A speech," said Triddelsitz.

"I thought he was going to be a farmer," said Jochen.

"Why, yes," said Triddelsitz; "but cannot a farmer make a speech?"

That was too much for Jochen; a farmer make a speech? such a thing had never occurred to him before; he did not say another word during the whole evening, until, just before he fell asleep, he uttered his ultimate conclusion: "That must be a confounded smart fellow!"

Bräsig did not give up so easily. "What had he to speak about?" said he again. "If there was anything to be done about the laborers, there is Habermann!"

"Herr Inspector," said the rector, falling in, "a good speech is always in place. Cicero----"

"Who was this Cicero?"

"The greatest orator of antiquity."

"Eh, I didn't ask about that; I mean, what was his business; was he a farmer, or a shopkeeper, or was he appointed a magistrate, or was he a doctor, or what was he?"

"I have told you, he was the greatest orator of antiquity."

"Oh, antiquity here, antiquity there! if he was nothing else--I cannot bear those old gabblers, a man should do something. Let me tell you, Rudolph, don't be an orator, you may fish, for all me, it is all one, perch or carp,--but this speaking is as if you should go fishing in a well. And now, good night! Come Jochen!"

With that, they went off, and Fritz struck off to the right, across the Pumpelhagen fields, with a medley of thoughts in his head.

The old fellow was not envious, but it went against the grain that his two schoolmates in Rahnstadt should each have a bride, while as yet he had none. But he knew how to comfort himself. No, said he, he would not thank any one for such a bride as they had got; he could have had either of the little twins, but he wouldn't take them. Louise Habermann, too, might go to Jericho, for him. He would not be a fool, to pick the first good plum, for the first plums were always wormy; he would wait till they were all properly ripe, and then he could take his choice from the upper or the lower branches; and, meanwhile, all the little maidens who ran about the world on their pretty feet belonged to him, and then he was going to have a horse, and the very next day he would go and buy the Whalebone mare of Gust Prebberow.

CHAPTER XX.

A couple of weeks had passed, which Axel, instead of acquainting himself with his fields, and the management of his estate, spent, for the most part, with Flegel, the wheelwright, in his work shop. The model of his new machine had arrived, which was to plough, harrow, and break clods, all at the same time, and he must set it at work, for himself and for the world. Letters and accounts, and other business in the way of writing, incident to a large estate, must naturally be postponed; and when he came into the house to dinner or supper, he had an important air, as if he must show his young wife what progress he was making in husbandry. And who is more credulous than a young wife? a bride, perhaps? Oh, no! a bride is uncertain, she is feeling and inquiring round, she wishes to learn to know the man she loves; but when she believes that she has learned to know him, and has given him her hand for life, then she becomes secure, and follows him blindly, until the bandage is forcibly torn from her eyes, and even then, she turns away, and strives not to see, and thinks it her duty not to believe what she cannot help seeing. It was nothing wicked which he concealed from her, it was merely follies, and he himself believed that in future he should be active and diligent; but it was a pity that he did not understand, and she did not understand; for, with all her clear eyes and her clear head, she had no idea but it was the same with him as with herself, who went about looking into kitchen and cellar, into milk-house and butter-room, learning how to take the charge of the housekeeping into her own hands.

But everything has its time, and old Kopf, the shepherd, used to say, "On the ninth day, puppies got their eyes open." She was walking one day, towards evening in the garden, under the shade of the high enclosure which separated it from that part of the farm-yard, where the work-shop was situated; and, as she went thoughtfully up and down, she heard, on the other side of the fence, a scolding and disputing, as if two people were having a quarrel: "So? That doesn't suit

you? Do you think it suits me? Rascal, what lies in my way? What are you doing here? I would like----" Bang! went something against the door. She became curious, and peeped through the fence; but saw only one man, that was the old wheelwright, Fritz Flegel, and there was nobody with him, at the moment, and he was carrying on the scolding and arguing with his tools and his work. Such a passion in a person entirely alone is very amusing, and the young Frau looked on, with laughing eyes as the old man went on cursing and scolding: "The devil take you, for all me I shall I go crazy over you?" bang! bang! he threw his tools about the shop, and through the half-open door, and then thrust his hands into his hair, and tossed it about his head. Then he stood still again, staring down at the ground. "Infamous creature! making me so much trouble and misery!"

"Good evening, Father!" said another voice, and Kegel, the day-laborer, came in, and stood leaning on his shovel, "what are you working here for? it is evening."

"Working, do you say? Here is something to work at! Say to torment one, rather. What? Do you call that a model? I can work very well after a model, but the devil himself couldn't work after such a model as that."

"Is that the same old beast, you had begun on, the other day?"

"What else should it be? You may ask me next summer, if it is finished!"

"He must have a clever head, though, to think out such things as that."

"So? Do you think so? let me tell you any blockhead can *think* out things, but the difficulty is to *make* them. You see, there are three sorts of people in the world; one understands things, but cannot make them, and the second can make them, but don't understand them, and the third can neither make nor understand, and he belongs to the last class,"--here he threw a wedge against the door,--"and that is why he torments a fellow so!"

"Yes, Father, that is so, he doesn't understand. You know, he said we were to go straight to him, if we wanted anything; well I went to him, and told him about the potato-land, how I wanted some more, and he said he knew nothing about such matters, he would speak to our old man about it. If he comes to him, I may wait long enough, for he knows that I let the hoeing go by."

"The old man for me! he stands by his word; he says to me, Flegel, cut me out a plough-board; and I do it, and he says, Flegel, the wheels must have new felloes, and I put them on, and I have nothing to worry about; but with him! You will see, neighbor, he will lie in the nettles, and we shall lie in the nettles too."

"That is so," said Kegel, "my potato-patch lies in the nettles, already."

"Yes," said Flegel, shutting the door, and pulling on his jacket, "but it serves you right! If you have no potatoes it is your own fault, because you did not hoe them; and if the inspector should give you more land, it would not help you."

"That is true," said Kegel shouldering his spade, and going off with Flegel, "it wouldn't help, especially towards filling the children's mouths, yet I might help myself by means of it."

People say, and it is true, that praise from the mouth of a child, or the humblest person, is pleasing to the wisest and most distinguished; but it is just as true that a hard judgment, from the same insignificant source, is painful, and especially painful when it concerns one whom we hold dear. And what had happened? It was only the gossip of laborers, such as often occurs among ignorant people; but the smile had gone from the young wife's eyes, and a look of vexation found place there. Her husband's insight, and his good will to carry out what he had promised in his speech, were called in question, and it all came from this, that he had not grown up to the business he had undertaken.

She was out of humor, when she came in to supper, and he was gay, so that their moods were discordant.

"So, dear Frida," said he, "now we are comfortably settled, I think it is time for us to make our visits in the neighborhood."

"Yes, Axel, but to whom?"

"Well, I think first our nearest neighbors."

"Our Pastor, first of all."

"Why yes, there, too,--later."

"Who else is there, in the neighborhood?" asked the young wife, reckoning over as if thinking aloud, "the landlord Pomuchelskopp, and the pächter^[3] Nüssler."

"Dear Frida," said Axel, looking more serious, "you must be jesting about the pächter Nüssler, we can have no intercourse with pächter people."

"I do not agree with you," said Frida, quietly, "I look more at the man, than at his rank. It may not be the same here, as with us, in Prussia; but in my father's house, we were intimate with several pächter families, why not here? Frau Nüssler seems to be a very nice woman."

"My inspector's sister. I cannot visit her; it would not be suitable."

"But the landlord Pomuchelskopp?"

"Of course; the man is a proprietor, is wealthy, is a deputy, as well as myself--"

"And is notorious, in the whole region, and his wife yet more so. No, Axel, I shall not visit there."

"My dear child----"

"No, Axel. If the pächter Nüssler had bought the Gurlitz estate, would he be another person, and would you visit him?"

"That has nothing to do with the case. I shall *not* visit the pächter," said Axel, angrily.

"Nor I the landlord, I have an aversion to the family," said Frida, putting down her trump, also.

"Frida!" begged Axel.

"No, Axel," said she, decidedly, "I will go with you to Gurlitz, to-morrow, but I shall stop at the Pastor's."

That was the conclusion; there was no quarrel about it, but each remained fixed in the same decision. How readily and gladly would she have yielded, if she had not sat down to supper with the uneasy feeling that Axel was lacking in insight to understand a business, and in firmness to carry it out; and how readily and gladly would Axel have yielded, and stayed away from Pomuchelskopp's, if it had not been always in his mind that Pomuchelskopp was a rich man, and he must keep on good terms with him, because he might be useful; how readily and gladly he would have called at the Nüsslers', but for the foolish opinions he had imbibed, in his regiment.

But it was done; and could not be undone, the first beginning of discord had entered the house, and the door stood half-open for the rest to follow; for discord is like one of those dragon's tails that children play with, there is a long thread, and bit after bit is fastened to it, and though each bit is a mere nothing, it makes a great bunch, when it is rolled up in a heap, and it is hard to disentangle, for there is neither beginning nor end to be found.

The next afternoon they walked over to Gurlitz;--in that, Axel had yielded to Frida, who preferred walking to riding,--and Axel took his wife to the door of the parsonage, and promised to call for her; he himself went to the court.

The Pomuchelskopps were just taking coffee, and Philippping and Nanting and the other little ones were playing their tricks, and standing about the table, like colts at the rack, and dipping biscuits in the chicory-coffee, and smearing their faces, and dabbling with fingers and tea spoons in the cups, after the soaked biscuit, and writing their beautiful name. "Pomuchelskopp," in the spilt coffee and milk, all over the table, and shoving and pushing each other, and then looking up innocently at their mother, as if they were not the culprits; for Häuning, in her every-day black gown, sat with them at the table, and kept order.

It was a charming family picture, full of domestic happiness, biscuits and chicory; and Pomuchelskopp lay in the corner of the sofa, and smoked his pipe. He had finished his coffee, for father was served first, with pure coffee, out of a special coffee-pot; but it was a cheat, after all, for Malchen and Salchen, who took turns in making the coffee, always drank off the first drawing from father's, and filled it up with chicory, out of the family pot. He sat in his sofa corner, with his left leg thrown over the right, quite in accordance with Duke Adolph von Klewe's direction: "A judge should sit for judgment in this manner, with the left leg thrown over the right," etc., and if he was not a judge, he was something more important, at this very moment he was a law-maker, and thinking about the Landtag, (assembly of deputies,) which he had positively decided to attend next year.

"Häuning," said he, "next year, I am going to the Landtag."

"So?" said the old woman, "have you no other way to spend your money?"

"My Klücking, it is expected of me; I must show myself, and it will not be very expensive. The Landtag is held quite near us next year, at Malchen, and if I take a basket with me----"

"So? and I shall go round in your boots meantime, wading through the deep mud in the farm-yard, to look after the threshers?"

"My Klücking, Gustaving is here for that, and if I am needed I can be here again, at any time."

"But, father," said Malchen, who was the only one of the family who ever looked into the Rostock "Times," and for that reason, and because she always knew where the Grand Duke and

the Frau Grand Duchess were, at the time being, considered herself to have a great taste for politics, for Pomuchelskopp read only the prices current, and the rate of exchange,--"but, father, if something important should come up, for instance about the red cloak, whether you burgher-proprietors may also wear red cloaks, or about the convent question, then you couldn't get away."

For she possibly had a feeling, that the convent question might become *her* question.

"Now, you do not really think," said Pomuchelskopp, going up and down the room with great strides, "that your father would make himself so common, and run in the same groove with all the burgher proprietors, and vote with them, and neglect his affairs at home? No, if anything is wanted here, you must write, and I will come, and if I want the red cloak, I know a better way to get it--let every man look out for himself--and it is more honorable for me, if I get it alone, and not with trumpety landlords, who have perhaps a couple of thousand thalers, and when I come back sometime, and say, Malchen, I *alone* have got it! then you may be proud of your father;" and with that he stalked about the room, and puffed tobacco in the eyes of his innocent children, till they looked like trumpeting angels in the clouds, who needed only a mouth-piece, with which to trumpet his future glory.

"Kopp, are you going daft?" inquired his loving wife.

"Let me alone, Häuning! Always noble! Tell me who you go with, and I will tell you who you are. If I agree with the nobility----"

"I should think you had got snubbing enough from the nobility."

"Häuning," began Pomuchelskopp, but went no further, for Salchen, who sat by the window, sewing, sprang up: "Good heavens! there comes the Herr von Rambow into the yard."

"Häuning," said Pomuchelskopp once more, and there was great reproof in his expressive eyes, "do you see the nobleman comes to *me*. But now, out with you! Out!" and he hunted his offspring out of the room. "Malchen, take the coffee things away! Salchen, a wiping cloth! And Häuning," folding his hands in supplication, "now go and put on another dress!"

"What?" said she, "do I go to him, or does he come to me? I am good enough for him, as he finds me."

"Häuning," begged Pomuchelskopp, abjectly, "I beseech you! you will spoil the whole thing with your black morning dress."

"Muchel, are you a perfect idiot?" she asked, not stirring from her seat, "Do you think he comes on your account, or on mine, either? He comes because he wishes to make use of us, and, for such a beggar, the old sacque is good enough."

Muchel still petitioned,--vainly. Malchen and Salchen whisked out of the room, to dress themselves up a little,--the old woman sat there, stiff as a stake.

Axel came in, and greeted the pair, and the old black sacque received as much attention as the green checked trousers, for the young Herr knew how to turn his good manners to account, at the right time, so that Pomuchelskopp was quite carried away with the friendliness and graciousness of the young nobleman, and Häuning became so cheerful and affectionate that she called her dear husband "Pöking;" yes, even the old every-day black gown grew so ashamed of its own shabbiness, in this sunshine of courtesy, that even to Frau Pomuchelskopp's eyes, it looked quite rusty. And now Salchen came in, as if she had forgotten something, and then Malchen came in, as if she had something to attend to, and Pomuchelskopp introduced them, and the courteous conversation took an artistic turn, over Salchen's embroidery, and again a political, as Malchen happened to take up the Rostock "Times." And Philippping came in, and placed himself in the corner, behind his mother, and Narting came in, and stood by Philippping, and the other little ones all came in, one after another, and crowded up beside them, till Häuning looked like our old black hen, with all her chickens huddled about her, when a hawk is in the air. And when mother took the key of the linen-closet out of the basket, and went out,--for, she said to herself, one must do something in return for so much courtesy,--the whole brood followed her, for in that linen-closet were kept the cookies, which Häuning always kept on hand, and baked fresh, twice a year. And these cookies were always very fine, only they acquired, in course of time, rather a soapy taste, as they took the flavor from the linen; but that didn't hurt them for the children, they were not fastidious, and had always been accustomed to the flavor, and if Axel had not been listening to Pomuchelskopp, he must have heard the begging and whining outside; "Mother, me!" "Mother, me too!" But Pomuchelskopp had taken possession of him, and was endeavoring to inspire him with a good opinion of himself and his family.

"You see, Herr von Rambow," said he, "you find here an extremely simple family, I am very simple, my wife--" here he looked round to see if Häuning were present--"is extremely simple, as you have seen; my daughters, my other children, have been brought up very simply. We make no pretensions, we merely live by ourselves, in a happy family-circle. Every society does not suit us, thank God, we are sufficient to ourselves; but," he added, putting on a venerable patriarchal expression, "every one must pull his own rope, each has his particular occupation, which he must attend to,--*must*, I say, when he has once undertaken it, and then the blessing of God will not be wanting."

Axel said, courteously, he believed that must be an excellent arrangement.

"Yes," said Pomuchelskopp, catching hold of Philippping, who had his mouth full of eight and ninety per cent cooky, and two per cent fresh soap, and presenting him to the young Herr: "Make your compliments, Philippping! You see this little fellow, he looks after the eggs, that is to say, when the hens lay astray; for every dozen eggs, he gets a shilling, and the money goes into his saving's box. Philippping, how much have you collected, already, my little son?"

"Seven thalers, and forty-three shillings,"^[4] said Philippping.

"You see, my boy," said Pomuchelskopp, patting his child on the head, "the blessing of God always accompanies industry; and so," turning again to Axel, "Nanting has old iron, nails, horse-shoes, etc., he gets paid for it by the pound, and Marriken and Heining and Stöffing have the apples and pears and plums, that is, the wind falls; to be sure, they are mostly unripe, but no matter, the city people buy them. So you see, Herr von Rambow, each one of my children has his own apartment."

Axel laughed in his sleeve a little, at this conclusion, and Malchen and Salchen looked at each other, and laughed secretly over their father's blunder, for Pomuchelskopp slipped occasionally, as well as Bräsigg; but there was a great difference between the two. Bräsigg knew very well that he made queer work of foreign words, but he had fallen into the habit of using them, and could not leave off, it pleased him, and injured nobody else; but Pomuchelskopp meant to ornament his language with them, and when he found that he had said something ludicrous, he was out of humor. When he saw his daughters laughing together, he knew this was the case, and it was fortunate that his Häuning came in, just then, with a bottle of wine, and a plate of cookies, and, to his joy, without her black sacque, in a yellow silk gown, and with a stately cap on her head.

"Häuning," said Pomuchelskopp, "not *that* wine! When we have such a highly honored guest, let us offer him the best we have!"

"Order it yourself, then," said the old woman, curtly. He did so, and then resumed the thread of his discourse:

"Yes, and my two eldest daughters have also each her peculiar province. Salchen is all for art, with her embroidery and piano-playing, and Malchen cares more for the newspapers and politics." Axel professed to be astonished at Malchen's taking pleasure in such things, which ladies usually cared nothing about, and Malchen replied, somebody must trouble themselves about such things, for father wouldn't, and now he was a deputy, he ought to know what was going to be done at the Landtag, adding that, just as Herr von Rambow came in, they were saying that father must go to the Landtag next year.

"Yes, Herr von Rambow," said Muchel, "I am going, for once; not on account of the business which my burgher colleagues are moving about, that does not concern me, and I know the difference between nobles and burghers, very well; no! I am only going for once, to show people who I am."

Axel then asked, for sake of saying something, if Pomuchelskopp had any intercourse with the people in the neighborhood.

"With which of them?" asked Pomuchelskopp. "With the farmer at Rexow? He is a blockhead. With the inspector? He does not suit me. And there is nobody else about here."

"Then you don't associate with the Pastor?"

"No, not with him either. He has behaved in such a manner from the first, that I would have nothing to do with him; he has intercourse with people who do not suit me, and he has adopted the daughter of your inspector, Habermann, and I should be sorry for my daughters to have any acquaintance with her.

"I thought she was a very worthy girl," said Axel.

"Oh, yes, I dare say," said Pomuchelskopp. "I don't want to say anything bad of the girl,—you see, Herr von Rambow, I am a simple old man,—but I knew Habermann long ago, I will not say that he cheated me at that time, but—no! I have not been pleased at the way and the manner in which she and the young Herr von Rambow have been brought together, by her own father, and the parsonage people."

"With my cousin Franz?" asked Axel.

"Is his name Franz? I mean the one who was studying here, with Habermann. I don't know him, he never came to my house. But I liked what I heard about him."

"He is always writing to her," said Häuning.

"No, mother," said Malchen, "you mustn't say that, his letters are always to the Pastor. Our post-boy always brings the Pastor's letters with ours," she explained to Axel.

"That is all the same," said Häuning, "I beat the sack, but I mean it for the donkey."

"This is the first I have heard of the matter," said Axel, looking annoyed.

"Yes!" said Pomuchelskopp, "the whole region knows it. Under the pretence of visiting her father and your sisters, she was always running after him, and when something came between them once, Habermann and the parsonage people soon made it right again."

"No, father," said Salchen, "old Bräsigt was the chief canal, he was always fetching and carrying."

"Who is this old Bräsigt?" asked Axel, now really irritated.

"He is an old beggar!" cried Häuning.

"That he is," said Pomuchelskopp, puffing himself up, "he has got a little pension from the Herr Count, and now he has nothing better to do than to run from one to another, and tell tales of people; and then he is besides----"

"No, father," interrupted Malchen, "let me tell that. Herr von Rambow, the old fellow is a democrat, an out and out demo-crat!"

"That he is," continued Pomuchelskopp, "and I shouldn't wonder if he was an incendiary as well."

And this good-for-nothing subject had sat at Axel's own table, and whose fault was it? Habermann's. These communications having sufficiently heated the young gentleman's blood, and the cookies not being very tempting, he took leave and Pomuchelskopp went with him across the yard, to the gate.

"Is that really true, about my cousin?" asked Axel, as they went out together.

"Herr von Rambow," said Pomuchelskopp, "I am a simple old man, and at my age, one does not trouble himself about such stories. I merely tell you what people say."

"It can be only a passing fancy; 'out of sight, out of mind.'"

"I don't believe that," said Pomuchelskopp, very seriously; "so far as I know Habermann, he is a crafty old serpent, who always keeps a definite end in view. Your Herr Cousin is caught."

"The boy must be crazy," said Axel, "but he will be obliged to listen to reason. Farewell, Herr Neighbor! I thank you for your company so far, and hope to see you soon. Adieu!" and with that he turned towards the right, into the street.

"Begging your pardon," called Pomuchelskopp after him, "you are going the wrong way; you turn to the left to go to Pumpelhagen."

"I know it," said Axel, "I am going to the Pastor's, to call for my wife. Adieu!"

"Ah," said Pomuchelskopp, going back across the yard, "this is very nice, this is very pretty! For the young Herr, I am good enough; but for the gracious lady? Children!" cried he, as he entered the door, "the gracious lady is at the Herr Pastor's, we are not good enough for her."

"That pleases me, uncommonly, Pöking," said the old woman, "that the nobleman has put such a fine pair of leather spectacles on you."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Salchen.

"Possible indeed!" said her father, "it is certain;" and he gave Nanting and Philippping, who were running about, the remainder of the cookies, one apiece: "Out with you, baggages!" and he threw himself into the sofa corner, and struck at the flies; and the old woman teased him with invidious remarks about distinguished acquaintances, and beggars, and the nobility, and said, "Salchen, take that bottle of costly wine back to the cellar; there is some in it still, father can treat some highly honored friend with it." And after a while she called, "Father, come here to the window! See, there goes your distinguished friend, with his gracious lady--the foolish fellow! and who have they with them? Your incendiary, that old Bräsigt!"

It was really so: Bräsigt was walking with the pair, towards Pumpelhagen, and it did not trouble him in the least that Axel turned a cold shoulder on him, and gave him very short answers, for he was taking his delight in the gracious lady, whom he had met at the Pastor's, and whom he had found still more pleasing to-day than at the dinner.

And she might well have pleased him, or have pleased any body, as she came in, so friendly and confiding, to the Frau Pastor's parlor, where he sat with the old Herr Pastor, who was lying half sick upon the sofa; as she held back the old gentleman, who would have risen in honor of her visit, and, laying her two hands on the little Frau Pastorin's shoulders, asked if she would be mother-confessor to one who was a stranger, and needed good advice, And then turned to Bräsigt, and shook hands with him as frankly, as if he were an old acquaintance. And then Louise! came

in, and she greeted her also as an old acquaintance, but kept looking at her, as if there were something new to be read in her face, and grew thoughtful, as one who reads a beautiful book, and will not turn the leaf, until he fully comprehends it.

The young Frau had many leaves to turn here, and upon every leaf stood something lovely and intelligent; on the Pastor's side, stood experience, and friendliness and benevolence, and on the Frau Pastorin's stood housewifery, and enjoyment of life, and the kindest disposition, crossed over each other, and on Louise's stood modesty, and good sense, and pleasure at meeting a lady who bore that name which had become so dear to her; and on Bräsig's side, stood at first sight, only notes on the whole, but they belonged to the matter, and made it clearer, and the young Frau read these notes with as much pleasure as we sluggards used, formerly, on the *pons asinorum*, or *ad modum Minellii*, in Cornelius Nepos. And it all harmonized together, so sweetly and innocently, and there was such love and joyousness, that the gracious young lady felt as if she stood among a group of pretty children, in a lovely garden, under cool shadows of old trees, dancing Kringelkranz, and Louise stood in the ring, and reached her hand towards her, saying, "Come, now you must release me!"

Into this lovely peace Axel came, full of annoyance at the story that had been trumpeted in his ears, and vexed at having to call for his wife among such people, and Bräsig's greeting, "Good day, Herr Lieutenant!" quite overflowed the measure of his good temper. He turned shortly to the Pastor, and made some indifferent remark about the weather, but so coldly, that his manner struck like an icicle to the warm heart of his wife, and she sprang up, hastily, to take leave, that all this warm friendliness should not be chilled, as by a shower of hail in summer.

They went, but Uncle Bräsig went too, not at all disturbed by the young Herr's discourtesy; he had done nothing, and he had a good conscience, and withal he had a great opinion of his ability in entertaining people, and putting them in a good humour, when they were vexed. He limped along, therefore, by the young lieutenant, and talked to him of this and that, but did not succeed in changing the young Herr's short and cutting replies to more friendly remarks. But as the young Herr stopped, where the church path joined the street, and asked him which way he would go, it shot through his head, for the first time, that the "confounded fool" might think he wished to force himself upon them.

"Listen to me, Herr Lieutenant," said he also standing still, "this strikes me as very strange. Perhaps you are ashamed to be seen walking with me, in the public street? Then let me tell you, I was not going on your account, I was only going with your honored, gracious lady wife, because she is friendly towards me. In future, I will not incommode you," and, with a profound bow to the young lady, he started off across the rape-stubble, to Habermann, who was building a stack of rape-straw, near by.

"Axel," said Frida, "why have you grieved that good-hearted old man?"

"Your good-hearted old man is nothing but an old tattler and busybody."

"Do you really believe that? and do you think, if he were, our Habermann would be on such intimate terms with him?"

"Why not, if he is useful to him?"

The young wife looked at him half astonished, half grieved: "Axel, what is the matter with you? You were always so friendly towards everybody, and trusted everybody, what has prejudiced you so against these people? against these, too, who have always been so friendly and honest towards us?"

"Friendly? Why shouldn't they? I am the master of the estate. But honest? Time will show, and what I have heard today, does not agree very well with my conception of honesty."

"What have you heard? From whom have you heard it?" asked Frida, quickly and meaningly. "Tell me. Axel! I am your wife."

"I have heard a good deal," said Axel, in a derisive tone, "I have heard, that our Habermann, as you call him, has already been a bankrupt; and the best thing I heard about him was that he perverted the influence that he exercised as an instructor, to fasten his daughter--with the help of the parsonage people and this old go-between, whom I have just got rid of--to our cousin Franz, and"--he added, angrily and spitefully, "the stupid dunce has let himself be caught!"

Frida boiled over with indignation; by this detraction, not merely that poor child, Louise Habermann, but her whole sex was wounded to the heart, and put to shame; her eyes kindled, as she grasped Axel by arm, and made him stand still: "You have been in bad company, and have yielded to the most unworthy influences!" Her hands loosed their hold, the anger passed, and a deep sadness came over her. "Oh, Axel," cried she, "you used to be so good, how can such insinuations disturb your honest judgment?"

Axel was startled at the heat with which his wife took up the matter, he would gladly have taken back what he had said; but he had said it, and if he should make light of it now, he would seem to himself like a credulous, easily prejudiced man, and he wished to seem a decided one, so he took nothing back, but said, "Frida, what ails you? There is no denying the matter. The whole

region knows that our foolish cousin has entangled himself with this girl."

"If you will express this part of your news differently, if you say that your cousin has fallen in love with this girl, I shall be glad to believe it, and your cousin, whom I do not yet know, will be so much the dearer to me."

"What? Shall my cousin, who has a large, independent fortune, marry the daughter of my inspector?"

"That is the greatest advantage of a large, independent fortune for a young man, that he is free to choose; and, truly! he has not chosen unworthily."

"And so I shall be connected with my inspector, in a sort of family relationship, and this old busybody, who has tied and twisted, and knotted the match, shall triumph? I will never, never consent to such a thing!"

"See here!" cried Frida, "it is in this part of your news, that the lies and calumny are interwoven; how is it possible for you to believe such an unlikely accusation? How can you--to say nothing of this lovely, innocent girl--suspect such a simple, old man, such an affectionate father, who finds his own happiness only in that of his daughter,--how can you suspect the worthy Pastor and his kind-hearted wife, or this poor old man, who has just left us, feeling so grieved, and to whom, in his uprightness, many an inappropriate word may be pardoned,--how can you suspect these people, of making the darling of their hearts the object of a speculation!"

"Oh, that is very easily understood," said Axel, "they wanted to insure her happiness."

"Oh," said Frida earnestly and sadly, "then we differ widely in our conception of happiness. One never obtains happiness in such ways."

"I was not speaking of my idea of happiness," said Axel, surprised at the reproach, "I meant only what these people consider happiness."

"Do not deceive yourself in this, Axel, for God's sake, do not deceive yourself! A higher rank may afford one a wider range in social relations, but in more modest circumstances, on the other hand, love is more apt to be the controlling power, which is of far higher value than mere worldly relations,--and which we must so often do without," she added slowly, and wiped a tear from her eye, as she thought of her own youthful years, without a mother, brought up by her father alone, who could poorly sustain the style of living demanded by his rank, and consoled himself, for his trouble and pains, in the amusements of country squires.

They went home, and Axel was kind to her, in his good nature, and she took the kindness as it was meant, and they were again united,--at least to outward appearance,--for on the subject of discussion each retained his own opinion.

Bräsigt had gone to Habermann, who was standing by the foundation of his straw-stack; he was angry, exceedingly angry; this must be Pomuchelskopp's work; and his irritation could only be put out by a counter-irritation, he had a real hankering after a little farm-boy anger.

"Good day, Karl," said he, and pushing by Habermann, he bent his head, elevated his eyebrows, looked hard at the stack, and without raising himself up, stalked entirely round it.

"Are you going to bake a pancake, here?" he asked his friend, when he had completed his journey, and placed himself saucily before him.

"Ah, don't talk to me about it!" cried Habermann, out of humor, "I have vexed myself enough over it. I said yesterday to Triddelsitz he should lay the stack twenty paces through-measure, and he has laid it twenty paces half-measure, and, when I came out to-day, here stood this monster. Well, let it go; it is nothing but straw, even if it should get spoiled by the rain; but I cannot help being provoked to see such a pancake on my field."

"Yes, Karl, and your neighbor Pomuchelskopp will be cracking his jokes on it."

"Let him! But what to do with my Triddelsitz, I don't know. Since the time that the young Herr promised him a horse, he is of no mortal use."

"Try giving him a good flogging!"

"Ach, what good would that do? He can think of nothing but horses. He doesn't consult me, now-a-days, but our young Herr has advised him to get an English brood mare, and says he will buy the colts. And I sent him off this morning,--he is not to be talked out of it,--to make an end of the matter, and get his old mare."

"Gust Prebberow's chestnut mare, the Whalebone mare?"

"Yes, that must be the one."

"Splendid!" cried Bräsigt, "Beautiful! And he will exercise about on this horse, when the Grand Duke enters Rahnstadt? Karl, you have a great treasure in your greyhound!"

"Yes, Lord knows," said Habermann, looking at his stack.

"I say nothing of him as a farmer, Karl, I speak of him merely as an agreeable fellow, and if he agrees with his young master----"

"Bräsig, don't speak of my master here, before the laborers."

"I agree with you there, Karl, it is not proper; but come this way!"

And when they had gone a little way towards the street, he stood still, and said, slowly and impressively, "Karl, this young fellow thought it something to be ashamed of, to be seen walking with me on the highway. What do you say now? He gave me a Timothy, in the presence of his lovely wife;" and he related the circumstances. Habermann tried to talk him out of his anger, but did not wholly succeed, for Bräsig was too much provoked. "Karl," said he, "he has shot the arrow, in his stupidity, but it was pointed by Zamel Pomuchelskopp, for he had been calling there. And you may say what you will, Karl,--your young Herr is downright stupid, and when you are hunted away, then I shall amuse myself coming over here, and place myself on the hill, where I can overlook the fields, and see what sort of performances your young Herr and your greyhound carry on together."

"Well," said Habermann, "you can see one of them, at this moment. Just look round!" and he pointed down the road, near which they happened to be standing, behind a thorn-bush. Bräsig looked, and stood stiff and stark with amazement, unable to utter a word; at last he said, "Karl, your greyhound is cracked. Apothecaries are often crackbrained, and it is natural their children should inherit it."

It really looked, as if Bräsig were right. Fritz came riding up, on the famous horse, on a gentle trot. He had taken off his hat, and was swinging it violently in the air, and shouting with all his might, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" and all this, entirely by himself; for he did not perceive the two behind the thorn-bush, until he had ridden up to them, and Habermann asked if he were clean out of his head.

"They are nothing but lies," said Fritz.

"What are lies?" asked Habermann, sharply.

"That the mare cannot hear hurrahs," and with that he began to cry "Hurrah!" again. "You see," and he sprang off the horse, and tied it to a willow, and going off a few steps, again cried "Hurrah!" "You see, she does not budge an inch. And *you*--he turned to Bräsig, who was half dead with laughter, "*you* told me so; but it isn't true!"

"Yes," said Bräsig, shaking all over, "but it is true, though. What I said, I say again: she cannot hear it, for the old granny has been, these five years that I have known her, *stone deaf*."

There stood Fritz Triddelsitz, the old clever, crafty Fritz Triddelsitz, wearing the most sheepish face imaginable.

"But," said he, at last, "Gust Prebberow is a good friend of mine, and he never told me that."

"Yes," said Bräsig, "you will know, after this, that friendship goes for nothing, in a horse trade."

"Well, never mind, Triddelsitz," said Habermann, "one can get along with a deaf horse; take care not to get a dumb one!"

"Oh!" said Fritz, quite relieved, "no fear of that! Just look at her, what a model of a horse! Full blood! And Herr von Rambow is going to buy all the colts, and when I have sold three or four----"

"Then you can buy an estate," interrupted Bräsig. "Yes, we know that, already. Now ride carefully up to the house, and don't upset your milk-pails, on the way, like the maiden. Karl, do you remember? In Gellert?"

Fritz rode off. "Good-for-nothing greyhound!" said Bräsig.

"Well, I don't know," said Habermann, "I cannot help liking the old fellow, he has such a contented disposition."

"That is because of his youth, Karl," said Bräsig.

"Well, perhaps so," said Habermann, reflectively. "See, there he goes, quite happy with his deaf, old, brood mare."

CHAPTER XXI.

And Fritz was happy, he was the happiest being at Pumpelhagen Court, for there was not much happiness there, and that which was painted as such was not in fast colors. Habermann became, from day to day, more and more conscious that his good times were over, for his young Herr meddled with business that he did not understand, and that merely by fits and starts, with a heat and haste, which spoiled the farming, and confused the people, and when things did not go as they should, and the cart got into the ditch, then the inspector had to bear the blame. The young Herr also was unhappy, he was tormented by debts, which he wished to keep secret from his wife, he was also tormented by letters from David and Slusuhr,--personally they no longer troubled him, he had settled that, on account of the secrecy he wished to maintain, and they were very willing to consent, for the more secret the business was so much the better could they shear him, and when they had him quietly by themselves in Rahnstadt, they could use quite other knives and pincers, than they could at Pumpelhagen, where he was host, and they were obliged to treat him with some degree of respect.

But, besides this, he was not happy; he wanted to play the master, and had not the stuff in him, for he who would command must have capacity as well as knowledge; he had knowledge enough, more than many people,--"but capacity! neighbor, capacity!" said old Flegel, the wheelwright, and he had reason; the unhappiest of men is he who will, and can not. And Frida? She also was unhappy; she observed that her husband's full confidence was not given to her, she noticed that upon many serious questions they differed widely in opinion, she noticed that the business he had taken as his life work was one for which he had no training, she felt that he was unfair enough to visit his own failings upon other people, and more than all,--and worst of all for a sensible wife,--she felt that he made himself ridiculous, and that Pomuchelskopp, who, against her wishes, came often to Pumpelhagen, must have other reasons than ordinary civility, for not laughing at the confused and inconsiderate opinions of her husband. She resolved to keep watch over him, but such an occupation did not increase her happiness.

Fritz Triddelsitz was the happiest creature in all Pumpelhagen, and, if we except the two little twin-apples, in the whole region; but we must except these, for in happiness and blessedness a bride goes beyond all other beings, even the bridegrooms themselves, for if old Gottlieb, who had taken a candidate's place, with a cheerful, brisk, burgher-like old proprietor, taught and flogged the boys with uncommon pleasure and fidelity, and if Rudolph also, with Hilgendorf at Little Tetzleben, strewed manure so that it was a pleasure to see him, and the Tetzleben soil looked like a velvet coverlid, and went to bed at night singing and piping, and regularly fell asleep, for weariness, in the middle of a verse,--in comparison with the little twin-apples' blessedness as they sat together and sewed, stitching on their trousseaux, and chatting, and joking with father and mother, and telling Louise, and showing their letters, all the bridegrooms' blessedness went for nothing.

But the old fellow was really very happy. The first thing in the morning, he went to the stable, where the young Herr's two riding-horses, and Habermann's old Gray stood, together with his treasure; he fed her, stealing the oats from the very mouths of the other horses, yes, although he had never been trained to the work, he groomed her, single-handed, for Krischan Däsel, who had charge of the riding-stable, did not give him satisfaction. On Sunday afternoons, when there was nothing else to do, he went to the stable, shut the door behind him, seated himself on the fodder-chest, folded his hands on his stomach, and thoughtfully contemplated the dear old creature, as she munched her oats and straw, and if she groaned from fullness he got up, stroked her back, and called her affectionately "his good old woman;" and three times a day he exercised her, for which devotion he should not be blamed, for upon her depended his future income.

But no happiness is perfect, a little annoyance always creeps in. And he had his share. In the first place, it went very much against him, that his chestnut mare should stand next Habermann's stiff old Gray: the company was not suitable; and secondly, he was in everlasting conflict with Krischan Däsel, about fodder and grooming.

"Herr Triddelsitz," said Krischan, once as they were disputing, "let me tell you, I feed the horses all alike, and groom them all alike; but I have often noticed that you take away the oats from the inspector's old gray, and give them to your mare. Now, don't take it ill of me, Herr Triddelsitz, but the gray is just as good a creature as the other, and has an equal right to a living. And what is this?" he asked, going up to the rack. "How? this is calf-hay; how comes this calf-hay here? I will have no vermin getting into the pelts, when the inspector comes round."

"I know nothing about it," said Fritz, and he really was ignorant.

"Well, it is all the same to me," said Krischan, "but if I catch any one bringing it into the stable, I will break his bones for him, for I won't be troubled with such things."

After that Krischan Däsel lay in wait, to catch the bringer of the calf-hay, and it was not long before he was successful. And who was it, who transgressed all law and order, for the love of

Fritz's chestnut mare? Who was so hard-hearted as to deprive the innocent calves of their food, for the sake of Fritz's chestnut mare? Who was so foolhardy, for the sake of the chestnut mare, as to risk the breaking of her bones by Krischan Däsel? Who was it? I must tell, but let no one repeat it. It was Marie Möller, who, every time she came from feeding the young calves, and passed the riding-stable, brought an armful of the sweet hay for Fritz's old woman.

Some one may turn upon me here,--hold! here you have blundered! How came they to have little calves in summer? I reply. Friend, that is my affair. I can skip over as much time as I please, and am now in the middle of winter, after the new year 1844. And if any one should inquire further. How came Marie Möller to do such a thing? I would answer, that is as stupid a question as the one about the calves; have I not a right to introduce good-hearted people, who forgive and forget, into my book, as well as the spiteful and venomous, who bear malice to all eternity?

Marie Möller could forgive and forget, and, since it was not suitable for her to throw herself openly upon Fritz's neck, she threw herself with her affection, and the calf-hay, upon the neck of the old mare, which was, just then, the dearest thing Fritz had in the world. And it was quite touching, and Fritz was really affected, when he learned the occasion of the quarrel between his old sweetheart and Krischan Däsel; he made his peace with his old love, and the pleasant ham-and-sausage relationship was resumed.

It was now winter, as I have said, And nothing remarkable had occurred in the region, only that Pomuchelskopp, late in the autumn, had taken his journey to the Landtag, causing a great excitement in his quiet, simple family. Häuning skirmished about the house, threw the kitchen utensils around,--that is to say, such as were not liable to break,--banged the doors, and said, openly, the Herr Proprietor had gone crazy; Malchen and Salchen took the other side,--although secretly, for they had heard that the lieutenant, who commanded the Landtag Guards, derived a great part of his income from a splendid ball which he gave, with tickets of admission a louis-d'or each. They had been to the Whitsuntide-fair ball, at Rostock, they had been to a cattle-show; but a Landtag's ball? That must go beyond everything! They teased their father so persistently, that he took courage to speak out to his wife.

"Klücken," said he, "I cannot do otherwise, I have promised Herr von Rambow, and he went yesterday, and will wait on me there."

"So?" said Häuning, "and his peacock of a wife, will she wait on me?"

"Klücking, that has nothing to do with it; and if I lose every opportunity of showing that I am a man who stands up for the nobility, how shall I get made a nobleman myself? See, I shall ride away to-day, with a black coat, we will talk about it again, when I come back with a red one."

"A pretty figure you will cut in it!" said the old woman, going out of the door.

"As good as any other nobleman," growled Pomuchelskopp, after her.

"Gracious! father, I know," cried Salchen, and she ran out, and came back with a scarlet flannel petticoat, which she threw over her father's shoulders, like a herald's mantle, and placed him before the mirror; and the Herr Proprietor turned about, and contemplated himself with great satisfaction, until the old woman came in again, and snatched off the petticoat: "If you will positively make a fool of yourself, you may do so at the Landtag, but not here in my house."

The Herr Proprietor took this for full permission to journey to the Landtag, and journeyed accordingly. But when he arrived at Malchin, and got down at Voitel's, his troubles began at once, for he had got into the wrong box; he should have stopped at the Bull, where the nobility resorted, and here he was among mere burgomeisters and burgher-proprietors, who could in no way aid his designs. He stood about in everybody's way, not knowing what to do with himself, and nobody else seemed to know, till at last he plucked up courage to inquire if any one had seen Herr von Rambow of Pumpelhagen, for he meant to pattern after Axel. Nobody had seen him; at last some one said that the Herr von Rambow had gone off that afternoon, with the Herr von Brulow, to Brulowshof, to see his blood horses. In his great embarrassment, he finally went up to a rather large and stately gentleman, who had something friendly in his appearance, but with a roguish gleam in his eyes as if he enjoyed a joke, when he had an opportunity.

"Begging your pardon," said he, "I am the proprietor Pomuchelskopp, of Gurlitz, and am here, for the first time, as a deputy. You appear to be a friendly man, and I want to ask you what I have to do here."

"Yes," said the stranger, taking a pinch of snuff, "what have you to do here? You have nothing further to do; you will have made the necessary visits already?"

"No," said Pomuchelskopp.

"Well, then, you must pay your respects to the deputy-governor, the land-marshal, and the landrath. Good evening, Langfeldt, where are you going?" he interrupted himself, and addressed this question to a man who was just going out with a lantern in his hand.

"To make the stupid old visits," said he, turning round in the doorway. "Do you stay here, Brückner? I will come back again, by and by."

"Don't wait too long, then," said the friendly Herr, and turned again to Pomuchelskopp. "So you have not made your visits yet?"

"No," said the Herr Proprietor.

"You should make them at once, then. The gentleman with the lantern has to make the same visits, you need only follow behind his lantern. That will do finely! But be quick, quick!" And Pomuchelskopp snatched his hat from the nail, rushed out of doors, and ran through the streets of Malchin, as fast as his stoutness and short breath would allow. The friendly Herr took a pinch of snuff, with his eyes full of mischief, and sat down quietly behind the table, laughing to himself, and saying, "I only wish I could see Langfeldt."

And it would really have been worth his while. When the burgomeister from Gustrow had gone in, to see the deputy-governor of Schwerin, and had given his lantern to the footman, something came puffing up the steps, and Pomuchelskopp made a low bow to the footman, and asked, "Herr Footman, where is the Herr whom one must visit here?" The man opened the door for him, and Pomuchelskopp bowed himself in, making his deepest reverences to Langfeldt, whom he took for the deputy-governor, for which he should not be blamed, since the Herr Burgomeister from Gustrow always held his head forward as if he were going to push through a wall with it, which would suit very well for a Mecklinburg deputy-governor. He turned Pomuchelskopp round, however, and showed him the right man, and since he was out of the fight, he went out, and took up his lantern. Pomuchelskopp feared that he would desert him, he made a couple of bows, and was off again, after Langfeldt's lantern.

At the land-marshal's, it was just so; the Herr Burgomeister had begun a courteous speech, when Pomuchelskopp came puffing in, behind him.

"What is that beast coming here again for?" said Langfeldt to himself, and quickly took leave, thinking to escape him; but the Herr Proprietor was persistent, the lantern was his only reliance, he rushed after him again. The performance was repeated at the landrath's; the burgomeister was getting very angry, and because he was well acquainted with the landrath, since they had sat together on the select committee, he did not restrain himself from speaking out:

"Herr, why do you run after me, so?"

"I-I-I-" stammered Pomuchelskopp, "I can make visits, as well as you!"

"Make them alone by yourself, then," cried the burgomeister.

The landrath endeavored to smooth matters, and Pomuchelskopp grew supercilious and obstinate; but when the burgomeister took leave, he followed him again, on account of the lantern. But the burgomeister's patience was wholly exhausted. "Herr!" said he, turning round on him in the street, "what are you running after me for?"

Pomuchelskopp, however, was no longer in distinguished company, he had found that he had only to do with a burgomeister, so he cleared his throat, and said:

"Herr, I am just as good a Fasan (pheasant) of the Grand Duke's as you are!" He meant to say Vasall (subject), but got it wrong. Even an angry man must have laughed at such a speech, and the burgomeister, who was an honest old fellow, quite forgot his vexation, and, laughing heartily, said:

"Come along then! Now I know what sort of a fellow you are."

"And where you can go," cried Pomuchelskopp, still in anger, "there I can go, any day!" and he trotted on again, after the lantern. He should not have done that, for Langfeldt had finished his visits, and was now going to his lodgings, to get his latch-key, and a little money for playing ombre. Pomuchelskopp followed him into his room. The Herr Burgomeister put down the lantern on the table,--the thing was getting to be very amusing,--turned round, and asked, laughing:

"Will you be kind enough to tell me what you want?"

"To make my visits as well as you," cried Pomuchelskopp, in great anger at being laughed at.

"To whom, then, here?"

"That is none of your concern," cried Pomuchelskopp, "the gentleman will come," and he sat down in a chair.

"Why, this is really a comedy," said the burgomeister, and he called out of the door: "Fika, bring a light!" and when Fika came he pointed to Pomuchelskopp, and asked her, "Fika, did you ever see a pheasant? See, this is a pheasant! This is the Grand Duke's pheasant!" and Fika shouted and laughed, and ran laughing out of the room, and the burgomeister's host came in, to take a look at the pheasant, and the host's children came in, and there was such a frolic, that Pomuchelskopp finally discovered whom he was visiting. He rushed out of the house, in great wrath, and the Herr Burgomeister went softly behind him, with the lantern.

"Langfeldt," inquired the friendly Herr, at Voitell's, taking a pinch of snuff, "have you made

your visits properly?" and his eyes were full of roguery.

"Let me tell you," cried the Herr Burgomeister, "now I know! I might have thought that it was you who sent that beast after me." And he told the story, and so it came about, for the gentlemen at the Landtag will have their jokes, that Pomuchelskopp was called the pheasant, and Axel, after whom he was continually trotting, was called the "pheasant's keeper," and when Malchen and Salchen came up to the Landtag's ball, in gorgeous array, they were the "pheasant-chickens." When Pomuchelskopp wrote his assent on a ballot, with a "Jah!" (instead of "Ja," yes,) there were some who were for calling him the Landtag's donkey; but it wouldn't go, the "pheasant" had got the start too thoroughly.

No, he did not enjoy himself very much, at the Landtag, for even the nobility, after whom he dawdled, and with whom he voted, would have nothing to do with him, lest they should make themselves a laughing-stock; but when he reached home, his real trials began, for his Häuning called him "Pöking," continually, and he knew what o'clock that was, and Malchen and Salchen did not stand by him, as they ought, for at the Landtag's ball they had sat, as if they were sitting on eggs. And they pricked and stung the poor, simple man and lawgiver, in his sofa corner, till a stone would have pitied him: "Pöking, what did you really do at the Landtag?" and "Father, are you going to be a nobleman soon?" and "Pöking, what do they *do*, any way, at the Landtag?"

"Oh, I don't know. They cut at each other."

"Pöking, who did you cut at?"

"Oh, I don't know. One cuts at one, and another at another."

"Father, what did they decide about the convent-question?"

"Oh, I don't know; you will find out soon enough, from the Rostock 'Times;'" and with that he went out to the barn and took refuge among the threshers.

CHAPTER XXII.

But--as I have said--the new year 1844 had come, and the winter was over, and spring stood at the door, with leaves and grass and flowers, only waiting a nod from the master of the house to begin her decorations; and, as the snow and ice disappeared from the earth, men's hearts were softened, and their eyes grew bright, like the sunshine that lay upon the world.

Old Habermann's eyes, also, grew clearer, and his heart became lighter, and as he worked in the fields in the spring sunshine, and sowed the summer seed in the dark ground, the Lord was sowing his sad heart with fresh hopes. His master had gone with his young wife to visit her relatives, so he could govern his realm after his own pleasure, and he could see his daughter more frequently than in the winter. This very morning he had spoken with her, when he went to church, and now he was sitting comfortably in his parlor, in the afternoon, thinking of various matters; no one disturbed him, for Fritz was in the stable with his mare, which was very agreeable for the old man, since he always knew where he was to be found, which, formerly, had not always been the case.

"Good day, Karl!" said Bräsigt, coming in at the door.

"What?" cried Habermann, springing up, "I thought you had the Podagra, and I was just wishing I could go over to see you to-day; but the Herr is not at home, and Triddelsitz is not to be depended upon in these days----"

"No, what ails him?"

"Oh, his old mare is going to have a colt."

"Ha, ha!" cried Bräsigt, "and it will be a thorough-bred, and the young Herr is to buy it."

"Yes, it is so. But have you had the Podagra, or not?"

"Karl, it is impossible to tell, in this confounded disease, whether it is the proper Podagra, or not. Really, it is all the same, so far as the torment is concerned; but in respect to the causes there is a great difference. You see, Karl, you get the Podagra by good eating and drinking, that is the proper kind; but if you get it only from these infamous, good-for-nothing, double-sewed wax-leather boots, that is the improper kind, and that is what I have."

"Yes, why do you always wear the old things, then?"

"Karl, I used to wear them because of my relations with the count, and I cannot throw them away. But what I was going to ask--have you been at the Pastor's to-day?"

"Yes."

"Well, how is it there?"

"Ah, it looks badly, the old Herr is very weak: when he came out of the pulpit the sweat ran down his cheeks, and it was a long time before he got rested, lying on his sofa."

"Hm! hm!" said Bräsigt, shaking his head, "I don't like that; but, Karl, he is getting into years."

"That is true," said Habermann, thoughtfully.

"How is your little girl?" asked Bräsigt.

"Thank you, Zachary, she is very well, thank God! She was here last week--I had no time to spare, I must be out sowing peas, but the gracious lady had seen her, and kept her, and she stayed here until evening.

"Karl!" cried Bräsigt, springing up, and walking back and forth, and biting off in his excitement, the knob from the point of his pipe, "you may believe me or not,--your gracious lady is the chief production of the whole human race."

Habermann rose also, and walked up and down, and every time that they met each other, they smoked more violently, and Bräsigt asked, "Am I not right, Karl," and Habermann replied, "You are right, Zachary." And who knows how long they would have ruminated upon this topic, if a carriage had not driven up, from which Kurz and the rector descended.

"Good day! good day!" cried Kurz, as he entered the room, "see there, see there, there is the Herr Inspector. Well, how goes it, old friend? Habermann, I came about that clover seed."

"Good day," said Rector Baldrian, to Bräsigt, drawing out the word "day," as if the day were to last forever, "how goes it with you, my honored friend?"

"Very well," said Bräsigt.

"Habermann," exclaimed Kurz, "Isn't it so? Capital seed!"

"Why, Kurz," said Habermann, "the seed wasn't quite ripe. I tried it on the hot shovel, and if it is the right kind, the kernels will spring up, like flies, from the shovel, but here many kernels lay still."

"You don't look quite so blooming, my honored friend," said the rector to Bräsigt, "as at the time when we drank punch together, at the betrothals."

"There is reason for that," said Habermann, throwing his arm over Bräsigt's shoulder, "my old friend has had a touch of Podagra again."

"Yes, yes," laughed the rector, growing quite merry:

"Vinum the father,
And cœna the mother,
And Venus the nurse,
Produce the Podagra."

"The seed is beautiful!" cried Kurz, "you will find no better between Grimmen and Greifswald."

"Ho, ho, Kurz," said Habermann, "not go fast! I have a word to say----"

"Listen to me!" said Bräsigt, across to the rector. "Don't come near me with your French! I don't understand it. What did you say about Fenus? What have I, and my cursed Podagra, to do with Fenus?"

"My honored friend and benefactor," said the rector, with unction, "Venus was, in antiquity, the goddess of love."

"It is all one to me," said Bräsigt, "she might be something very different, for all I care,--now-a-days, every stupid sheep-dog is called Fenus."

"No, Habermann," cried Kurz, again, "if the clover seed has the right lustre, and looks so violet-blue, then----"

"Well, Kurz," said Habermann, "yours didn't look like that."

"My benefactor," said the rector again, to Bräsigt. "Venus was, as I have said, a goddess, and

as a sheep-dog----"

"Eh, what?" said Bräsigt, "you must have imagined all that, about the goddess, Fenus means a sort of bird. Karl, don't you remember the stories we read, when we were children, about the bird Fenus?"

"Ah!" said the rector, as light dawned upon his mind, "you mean the bird Phoenix, which builds itself, in Arabia, a nest of costly spices----"

"That is an impossibility!" exclaimed Kurz. "How can the most skillful bird build a nest out of cloves, pepper-corns, cardamoms and nutmegs?"

"Dear brother-in-law, it is only a fable."

"Then the fable is a falsehood," said Bräsigt, "but I don't think you pronounce the word rightly; it isn't Phoenix, it is Ponix, and they are not birds, they are little horses, and they don't come from Arabia, but from Sweden, and Oland, and I know them very well, for my gracious lady the countess had two Ponixes, which she used to drive for pleasure."

The rector wanted to set him right, but Kurz interrupted: "No, brother-in-law, let it go! We all know that you are better informed than Bräsigt, in such learned matters."

"No," said Bräsigt, "let him come on!" standing before the rector, as if he had no objections to a contest.

"No, no!" exclaimed Kurz. "We didn't come out here, to quarrel about Venuses and clover-seed; we came merely to have a pleasant game of Boston."

"We can have that," said Habermann, beginning to clear the table.

"Hold, Karl," said Bräsigt, "I don't like to see you doing that, that is the house-steward's business." And with that he roared across the court, "Triddelsitz!" and Fritz came running in. "Triddelsitz, we are going to play Boston, get the table ready, and a sheet of paper to set down the winnings, and fill the pipes, and make a handful of matches."

And when Fritz had made ready, they sat down, and prepared to begin. They must first decide how high they would play. Kurz was for playing Boston grandissimo, for shilling points; but Kurz was always very venturesome; that was a little too high for the others, and Bräsigt declared that he wouldn't sit down to play, to get people's money out of their pockets. At last, through Habermann's interposition, they settled what the game should be, and were ready to begin.

"Who has diamonds?" asked the rector; "he deals."

"Kurz deals," said Bräsigt.

So now they could finally begin; but they did not begin, quite yet, for the rector laid his hand on the cards, and said, looking around the circle, "It is worthy of note! We are all pretty reasonable men, and we are going to play a game, namely the game of cards, which, according to authentic information, was invented for the entertainment of an insane king. King Charles of France----"

"Come, children," said Kurz, taking the cards out of the rector's, hand, "if we are going to play, let us play, if we are going to tell stories, we will tell stories."

"Go ahead!" cried Bräsigt, and Kurz dealt,--made a misdeal, however in his haste, so "Once more!" This time it was all right, and they began to look at their cards. "I pass," said Habermann, who had the lead. Then it came to the rector; they had to wait for him a little, because he had not yet arranged his cards, for he had a superstition that the cards were better if he took them up, one by one, and because he improved all his opportunities with great conscientiousness he arranged all his cards in order of rank and turned the sevens and fives so that he could see the middle spot, and not mistake them for the sixes and the fours. Kurz, meanwhile, laid his cards on the table, folded his hands over them, looked at him and sighed. "I pass," said the rector.

"I knew you would," said Kurz, for he knew that his brother-in-law must examine his cards closely, before he would commit himself, and, on the other hand, he was afraid of his assisting, because usually he either had nothing, or if he had something, he played it the wrong time.

"Pass!" said Bräsigt, whose turn came next.

"Boston grandissimo!" said Kurz. "Who assists?"

"Pass!" said Habermann.

"Dear brother-in-law," said the rector, "I--one trick--two tricks--well I shall find a third--I assist."

"Well," said Kurz, "but we don't pay together. Each pays for himself."

"Come, Karl," said Bräsigt, "Out with it! We will break their fiddle in two."

"Well," said Kurz, "don't talk about it."

"God forbid," said Habermann, and led the ten of hearts: "Duke Michael fell upon the land."

"Come, Herr Oberförster," said the rector, playing the knave of hearts.

"Herze mich und küsse mich, und krünkle meine krause nich,"^[5] said Bräsigt, playing the queen.

"That maid must have a man," said Kurz, playing the king, and, laying the trick aside, he led a low club (kreuz). "Kreuz Kringel und Zweibach!"^[6]

"Bite, Peter, they are lentils!" cried Bräsigt to Habermann.

"Hold!" cried Kurz, "no telling!"

"God forbid!" said Habermann, and played also a low club.

"A fine singer is our sexton," said the rector, playing the nine.

"A cross and strife, a wicked wife, the Lord hath sent upon me," said Bräsigt, and took the trick with the queen.

"Well," said Kurz, "that was a heavy cross, to be sure. What have you next?"

"Pay attention, Karl, now we begin our journey," said Bräsigt. "Herr," to Kurz, "I was whist. Here! Pikas was a pointer," and led the pik-as (ace of spades), and followed with the king,--"Long live the king!" and then the queen,--"Respect for the ladies!"

"Good heavens!" cried Kurz, laying down his cards, and looking at the rector, "what a hand! He can't have any more spades."

"Dear brother-in-law," said the rector, "I come yet."

"But too late," said Kurz, taking up his cards, with a deep sigh, as if the rector had treated him unworthily, but he would bear it like a christian.

"Karl," said Bräsigt, "how much have we in all?"

"Four tricks," said Habermann.

"Come," said Kurz, "that is not fair, no telling!"

"Is it telling," said Bräsigt, "when I merely ask a question? Now pay attention, Karl, I shall take one more, and if you take one, then we are out."

"I shall get mine," said Kurz.

"And I shall get mine, too," said the rector.

After a couple of rounds, Kurz laid his hand over his tricks: "So, I have mine." Diamonds were on the table, the rector ventured a cut with the queen, Bräsigt followed with the king, and the poor rector had lost his trick: "How that could happen, I cannot comprehend!"

"It wasn't a whist game!" cried Kurz.

"Karl," said Bräsigt, "if you had been careful, they would have lost another trick."

"You must blame yourself for that, you didn't play after me in hearts."

"Karl, did I have any? I had nothing but the queen."

"No, brother-in-law," cried Kurz, meantime, "you threw away the game, you had the king of clubs, and you played the nine. It lost the game."

"What would you have?" said Bräsigt, with great contempt. "Are you a dunce? Here I sit with a handful of spades, and a couple of queens besides; what would you have?"

"Herr, do you think, when I have said Boston, I am afraid of your trumpery queens?"

"Come, come!" cried Habermann, dealing the cards, "let it go, this old after-play is disagreeable."

In this fashion, they played on, and it seemed as if they would tear each other's hair, and yet they had the best feelings towards each other. The rector won, and he had the best prospect of winning, for he who loses the first game, as is well known, always wins afterward. Kurz sat disconsolate at his bad luck; but that also often finds compensation. "Ten grandissimo!" said he.

All were surprised, even he himself, and he looked his cards through once more. "Ten grandissimo!" said he again, laid the cards on the table, and walked up and down the room: "They play like that in Venice, and other great watering places."

In the midst of his greatest triumph, and the greatest distress of the others, Fritz Triddelsitz came to the door, looking quite disturbed and pale: "Herr Inspector, Herr Habermann, oh, do come out here!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Habermann, "what has happened?" and was springing up, but Kurz held him back.

"No," said he, "the game must be played first. It happened so to me, once before, at the time of the great fire, I had just put a grand on the table, and they all ran away."

"Herr Inspector," begged Fritz, "you must come."

"What is it?" cried Habermann, dropping his cards, and jumping up. "Is anything on fire?"

"No," stammered Fritz, "I--me--something has happened to me."

"What has happened to you?" said Bräsigg, across the table.

"My chestnut mare has a colt," said Fritz, in an anxious tone.

"Well, that has often happened," said Bräsigg, "but you make a face like a funeral; it is rather a joyful occasion, under the circumstances."

"Yes," said Fritz, "but--but--it is so queer. You must come with me, Herr Inspector."

"Why, is the colt dead?" asked Habermann.

"No," said Fritz, "it is well enough; but it looks so queer. Krischan Däsel says he should think it was a young camel."

"Well," said Habermann, "we can finish the game afterwards, we will go out with you."

And in spite of Kurz's remonstrances, they all went with Fritz to the stable.

"I never saw such a colt," said Fritz, on the way, "it has ears as long as that," measuring from the wrist to the elbow.

When they came to the stable, there stood Krischan Däsel by the enclosure, where the mare was looking fondly at her little one, and whinnying over it, and the little one was making its first attempts at springing about; he shook his head, and said to Bräsigg, who came and stood by him, "Now tell me, Herr Inspector, did you ever see the like of that?"

"Yes," said Bräsigg, looking at Habermann, and said with emphasis, "I will tell you, Karl, what sort of an animal it is. Fullblood's colt is a mule."

"That is it," said Habermann.

"A mule?" cried Fritz, and he sprung over into the enclosure, and succeeded, in spite of the whinnying of the old mare, in grasping the colt by the neck, and examined his face and eyes and ears, and as the fearful truth flashed upon him he exclaimed, in fierce anger, "Oh, I could wring the creature's neck, and Gust Prebberow's, into the bargain!"

"For shame, Triddelsitz," said Habermann, seriously, "just see how pleased the mother is, even if it isn't a thorough-bred."

"Yes," cried Bräsigg, "and she is the nearest to it, as the Frau Pastorin says. But you may wring Gust Prebberow's neck, for all I care, for he is an out-and-out, double-distilled rascal."

"How is it possible!" said Fritz, as he slowly stepped out of the enclosure, and his wrath had given place to a great melancholy; "he is my best friend, and now he has cheated me with a deaf horse and a mule. I will sue him."

"I told you before, there was no friendship nor honesty in horse-dealing," said Bräsigg, taking Fritz under the arm, and drawing him out of the stable, "but I am sorry for you, in your just retribution. You have bought your experience in horse-dealing, and that is what every one must do, but let me warn you against a horse lawsuit, for long after the mule is dead such a lawsuit will be far from ended. You see," he went on, leading Fritz up and down the court, "I will tell you a story, for an example. You see, there was old Rütebusch, of Swensin, he sold a horse to his own brother-in-law, who was inspector here before Habermann's time, an infamous creature of a dapple-gray, as a saddle-horse. Good, or, as you are in the habit of saying, 'Bong!' Three days after, the inspector wishes to try his new acquisition, so he climbs on to the creature, which was very high; but scarcely was he seated, when the old schinder ran off to the village pond--no stopping him!--and there he stood, up to the neck in water, and would move neither back nor forward.

"It was fortunate, both for the dapple-gray and the inspector, else they might both have been drowned; the inspector roared mightily for help, for he couldn't get down there, and he couldn't swim, and old Flegel the wheelwright had to come to his rescue in a boat. Well, then the lawsuit began, for the inspector said the horse was a stupid, what we farmers call a studirten (scholar), and Rütebusch must take him back, for stupidity protects from everything, in horse-dealing as in other matters. Rütebusch wouldn't do it, and the two brothers-in-law first had a falling out, and then quarrelled so bitterly, that they wouldn't go within three miles of each other.

"The lawsuit went on, all the time. All Swensin was called up to testify that the creature was in its right mind when they knew it, and the Pumpelhagen people had to swear that it appeared to them like a studirten. So the lawsuit went on, into its fifth year, and the creature stood quietly in its stable, eating oats, for the inspector never got on it again, since he considered it such a dangerous animal; he dared not kill it, either; for it was the *corpus delicti* of the whole concern, as they call it. They brought the most learned horse-doctors to see it, but it did no good, for they were not agreed, three said it was clever, and three said it was stupid. The lawsuit was going on, slowly, all the time, and a whole brood of new lawsuits was hatched out of it, for the learned horse-doctors charged each other with maliciousness and ill-breeding, and sued each other for libel. Then they wrote to a celebrated horse-professor, in Berlin, to see what he thought of the business. He wrote back that they must cut off the old schinder's head, and send it to him, till he could examine the brains; it was hard enough to tell whether a reasonable being was clever or stupid, but it was harder, with an unreasonable beast, because the poor creature had nothing to say for himself.

"Well, that might have been done, but old Rütebusch and his lawyer opposed it, and carried their point, and the suit went on again. Then old Rütebusch died, and six months afterwards, his brother-in-law died also, and they never were reconciled, even on their death-beds, and went into eternity, each obstinate in his own opinion, the one that the old schinder was clever, the other that he was stupid. The lawsuit was suspended, for the time, and soon died out of itself, for the old gray kicked the bucket, three weeks later, out of pure idleness and over-feeding. Then they salted his head nicely, and sent it to the professor, at Berlin, and he wrote back, clearly and distinctly, that the old horse had, all his life, been as little of a studirten as himself, and he only wished that every one of the lawyers had as much intelligence as the beast, so very reasonable had his brains appeared. And the man was right; for I afterwards had the infamous rascal of a boy, who brought out the horse for the inspector, for a servant, and he confessed to me that he had tied a piece of burning tinder under the poor creature's tail, out of pure deviltry, because the inspector had given him a beating the day before. And I ask any reasonable being, how intelligent must not that poor beast have been, to run into the village pond, to extinguish the fire! And so the great lawsuit came to an end; but the little lawsuits, between the learned horse-doctors, are still going on. And now, let me tell you something: Habermann is a good friend of old Prebberow, the rascal's father, and he shall speak to him, and get justice done you. And now you may go, and don't cherish any hatred against the innocent little beast, or against the mother, for they couldn't help it, and the mother is a poor, deceived creature, as well as you."

With that, he followed the others, who had returned to the card-table.

"Come, come!" said Kurz, "so; ten grandissimo! I play myself."

"Karl," said Bräsig, "you must talk with old Prebberow, and not let your confounded greyhound get into difficulties."

"I will do so, Zachary, and it shall all be made right; but I am sorry for the poor boy, that he should be so disappointed. Who would have thought of a mule!" (maulesel.)

"I observe," said the rector, laying the cards, which he had arranged in order of rank, upon the table, "that you all speak of this little new-born animal as a maulesel, while according to the natural history use of language, it should be called a maulthier. The difference is----"

"Don't bore us with your natural history!" cried Kurz. "Are we playing natural history, or are we playing cards? Here, ace of diamonds lies on the table!"

Well, there was no help for it, they suited and suited, and Kurz won the game, and with it the right to boast, for four weeks, of his ten grandissimo.

So they played on, in friendly excitement, until the rector, looking over the account, became aware that he had won, in all, three thalers and eight groschen, and since the luck was going rather against him of late, he resolved to stop; so he rose, and said his feet were getting cold, and put his winnings in his pocket.

"If you suffer from cold feet," said Bräsig, "I will tell you a good remedy; take a pinch of snuff every morning, on an empty stomach,--that is good for cold feet."

"Eh, what!" cried Kurz, who had been winning lately, "how can he get cold feet?"

"So?" said the rector, hotly, for he was determined to retain his winnings, "haven't I as good a right to cold feet as you? Don't you always get cold feet, at our club, when you have had good luck?" and he carried it out, he kept his cold feet, and his winnings, and after a little while the two city people drove off, taking Bräsig with them.

Habermann was just going to bed, when there was a loud talking and scolding before the door, and Fritz Triddelsitz and Krischan Däsel came in.

"Good evening, Herr Inspector," said Krischan, "it is all the same to me."

"What is the matter now?" asked Habermann.

"Herr Inspector," said Fritz, "you know how it has gone with--well, with the mule, and now Krischan won't have the beast in the stable."

"What has happened?" said Habermann.

"Yes, Herr, it is all the same to me. But this isn't all the same, I have been used to horses and colts, and not to camels and mules. Why, Herr Triddelsitz might as well bring bears and monkeys into the riding-stable!"

"Well, but if I tell you so, the beast *shall* stand in the stable, and you shall take just as good care of it as of any other colt."

"Yes, if you command me, then it is all the same to me, and then it shall always be so. Well, good night, Herr Inspector, and don't take it ill of me," and he went off.

"Herr Habermann," said Fritz, "what will Herr von Rambow say to this accident? and the gracious lady too?"

"Make yourself easy, they will not trouble themselves much about it."

"Well," said Fritz, and went out of the door, to go to bed, "it is too provoking, that this should have happened to my mare."

When the Herr came home from his journey, he got the story of the chestnut mare fresh from Krischan, and because he was a good-natured man, and liked Fritz, since in some respects they were a good deal alike, he comforted him and said, "Never mind! This does not interfere with our bargain. You must think that it is only the natural result of a *mésalliance*. We will put the mare and the colt into the paddock, by and by; and you will see they will give us a great deal of pleasure."

It was really so; every one found amusement in the little beast. When the village children strolled through the fields, on Sunday afternoons, they would go to the paddock, and gaze at the little mule: "See, Joching, there he is." "Yes, that is a nice one! See, how he pricks up his ears!" "Now look, see him kick!"

When the maids passed the paddock, on the way to the milking shed, they also stopped: "See, Stina, there is Herr Triddelsitz's mule!" "Come, Fika, let us go round that way." "Not I, what a horrid-looking creature!" "You need not call him horrid, he gives you the least trouble of any of them."

And through the whole region, the mare and the mule and Fritz were renowned, and wherever the latter showed himself he was asked after the welfare of the mule, to his great annoyance. The little old donkey, however, was not at all troubled, he ran about in the paddock all summer, with the other well-born and high-born colts, and, if any of them came too near him, he knew how to stand up for his rights.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This was a very favourable year for Pumpelhagen; and when the harvest came, and the prices of grain went up, Axel von Rambow was relieved from all his anxieties and embarrassments.

He made calculations, and was quite sure, reckoning the rape at such a figure, and the profit of the sheep and of the dairy-farm at so and so much, that, with the quantity of wheat he should have, he could pay the last dollar of his debts. The devil must be in it, if he didn't finish this year, completely out of debt. There was good reason why this year should be prosperous, he had been himself at Pumpelhagen, he had concerned himself in the management of affairs, and every one knows that the eye of the master is for husbandry what the sun is for the world, everything grows and ripens in its light, and the grass grows green beneath the master's tread. So Axel took the gifts and mercies of the Lord coolly out of his hands, and gave himself the credit of the blessed year,--even the high price of grain seemed to him a deserved reward for his industry.

So he sat on his high horse, and although he found it for the moment a little difficult to meet the necessary expenses of the estate, and to pay the notes held by David and Slusuhr, as they fell due, yet it gave him no uneasiness, for he had gained great credit, in the region, for his intelligent and industrious management, as he inferred from the fact that Pomuchelskopp had several times taken occasion to offer him money. He had accepted it, without reflection, to satisfy David and Slusuhr, and he paid them with Pomuchelskopp's money, and they paid it again to Pomuchelskopp, and he again to Axel, and so it went round the circle. This arrangement would have been very fine, if he had not been the only one to suffer by it, and if Pomuchelskopp had not had the inconvenience of unpacking the rouleaux, every time, lest Axel should notice that he got his own money again. But this was unavoidable, unless Pomuchelskopp would come out from his cover, under which he lay in wait for Pumpelhagen; so he yielded to the necessity, especially since he found the business so amusing.

Axel also took pleasure in this business, for he always had money to supply his necessities, and the amount that he gave for it seemed to him quite insignificant, since it had never occurred to him to reckon the interest for a whole year. He also thought seriously of introducing great improvements upon the estate. It is an old story, though a sad one, that these young masters, who understand nothing properly about farming, are always introducing improvements, whereby they ruin themselves in the speediest manner. I mean, particularly, with the live stock. Why is this so? I think it is mainly because the young masters have very little trouble in procuring a new bull or a pair of new-fashioned rams, and because the laws of cattle-breeding are so plainly laid down, that the stupidest person can discourse wisely about them. They need only to shove aside the experience of years, and that is not hard for them, and then they stand there, with their young heads, as important as the old people with their gray ones.

Upon the Pumpelhagen estate, there was a dairy-farm, of Breitenburg cows, which the old Kammerrath had purchased with Habermann's assistance, and upon Habermann's recommendation. Something new must be done here, so Axel journeyed to Sommersdorf, in Pomerania, where there was a cattle-auction, and bought, upon Pomuchelskopp's advice, a wonderful Ayrshire bull. Why? Well, firstly, because he was handsome, secondly, because he came from Scotland, and, thirdly, because he was something new. There was a flock of sheep on the estate, of the Negretti-stock, which yielded a great deal of wool, and were always profitable, but Pomuchelskopp, *as he said*, had got a thaler and a half more the stone, at the wool-market, so the young Herr let himself be persuaded into buying of his neighbor, for ready money, a pair of very fine Electoral rams. That he could estimate the value of them and reckon it against Pomuchelskopp, to his great advantage, did not occur to him; he had enough else to think of.

Habermann strove, with all his might, against these new arrangements, but in vain; in the eyes of his young Herr he was an old man, who had fallen astern and could not keep up with the times; and although the old man based his opposition on very strong and reasonable arguments, he had always the same answer: "But, good heavens! we can at least try it;" not thinking that, in some things, trying and ruining are the same. The inspector could do nothing, and was only thankful his master had not taken to raising thorough-bred horses, which was the business he detested, of all others. The young wife also, could prevent nothing; she did not know the manner in which Axel relieved himself from his difficulties,--without being an indifferent observer, she must judge by what she saw, and this was just at present with Axel great contentment and golden prospects.

In Gurlitz, also, Pomuchelskopp and his Häuning were in a state of great, though not strictly speaking, family contentment; but this they did not expect, in their modesty, no, they were contented with the smooth progress of the money business, And their prospects became, literally, more and more golden, for the boundary between Pumpelhagen and Gurlitz was growing more and more undefined, and Pomuchelskopp, meanwhile, had only the unpleasant task of clipping his Häuning's wings, lest she should positively fly over the hedge, and scratch for worms on the other side.

In Jochen Nüssler's house, the old lady Contentment had established herself comfortably on the divan, and, if one had spoken of golden prospects there, it must have been in the sense in which the poets speak of the "golden morning sky," not because they think that the glow of the morning sky is like the glitter of gold, but only that they know nothing more beautiful than the latter, possibly because they see it so seldom. Gottlieb was getting rid of his long-haired, Pietistic ways, and beginning to look at the world with his natural eyes, instead of through the blue spectacles he had acquired at Erlangen, or elsewhere.

To Bräsig's joy, he played Boston--very badly; he had been on horse-back once, and had fallen off, without getting hurt, and when he came to Jochen Nüssler's harvest feast, though he did not exactly dance, that is to say, openly, before all the people, he had practised a Schottische with Lining in the parlor, and, at its close, had sung with a clear though rather plaintive voice, "Vivallera!"

But Rudolph? Well, we will only repeat what Hilgendorf himself said to Bräsig about him: "He, Bräsig? Just as I was, true as I live! Bones like ivory! Just looks at a thing, and knows how, just as I used to! And books? Won't touch 'em! Just like me!"

Frau Nüssler was happy in the happiness of her children, and young Jochen and young Bauschan sat together peacefully, for hours, without saying a word, and thought of the time when

they should have a new crown-prince, young Jochen Rudolph, and young Bauschan the seventh. That was not exactly a morning sky, but for moderate people, like Jochen and Bauschan, an evening sky often looks golden.

So in every house, in the whole region, there was happiness for each after its kind, but in one house, where Peace had long been an inmate, and had sat in his own place by the warm stove, in winter, and under the lindens before the door, or in the arbor in the garden, in summer, like a good old grandfather, and had kept a watchful eye upon little Louise's joyous bounds, and had guided the Frau Pastorin's duster, and kept the Herr Pastor's papers in order, the good old grandfather was no longer there,—he had silently taken his leave, and had shut the door softly behind him, and was gone to the place whence he came; and, in his stead, unrest and anxiety had entered, for the good old Pastor was daily growing weaker. He was not confined to a sick-bed, and had no particular disease, and Doctor Strump, of Rahnstadt, with the best intentions in the world, could find, out of the three thousand, seven hundred, seventy and seven diseases which humanity is subject to, by good rights, no single one which suited him. So he must minister to himself, and he did so, for good old grandfather Peace, when he took his departure, had laid his hand on the Pastor's head, saying, "I go, but only for a short time; then I will return to thy Regina. Thou dost not need me, for I entered thy heart years ago, in the solemn hour when thou didst choose between God and the world. Now sleep, for thou mayest well be weary."

And he was weary, very weary. His Regina had placed him on the sofa, under the picture-gallery, according to his desire, that he might look out of the window; his Louise had covered him warmly, and they had both gone out on tiptoe, that they might not disturb his repose. Out of doors, the first snowflakes of the winter were falling from the sky, gently, ever gently; and it was as quiet without as within, as within his heart; and it seemed to him as if the outstretched hands of Christ beckoned and pointed,—no one saw it, but so his Regina afterwards explained the matter,—and he got up, and opened his old chest of drawers, which he had from his father, and which his mother had always polished, herself, and had seated himself in the arm-chair before it, wishing once more to look over things which he had valued so much.

The chest was his cabinet of curiosities, for everything that had been important or remarkable in his life had its memento here; it was his family medicine chest, in which he stored his remedies for the troubles and cares of this world, which he used when he was sick at heart; simple remedies, but they always answered the purpose. They were not put up in vials and bottles and boxes, and no labels were fastened on them; they were merely plucked by his hand, in happy hours, and preserved for use. Everything, by which he could recall to his memory the purest joys of his life, was gathered here, and whenever he was sad, he refreshed his soul with them, and he never closed the old chest without deriving strength from his remedies, and expressing gratitude for them. There lay the Bible, which, when a boy, he had received from his father, there was the beautiful crystal glass, which his best friend had given him, when he left the University, there was the pocket-book, which his Regina had embroidered for him, when they were betrothed; there were sea-shells, which a sailor, whom he once directed into the right way, had sent to him, years after; there were little Christmas and New Year notes, from Louise and Mining, and Lining, which they had indited with infinite labor, and also their first attempts at needlework; there was the withered bridal-wreath worn by his Regina on their wedding-day, and the great silver-clasped, pictorial Bible, Habermann's gift, and the silver mounted meerschaum pipe, Bräsig's gift, upon his seventy-fifth birth-day. In the cupboard underneath, were old shoes; the shoes which Louise and Regina and himself had worn, when they first entered the Pastor's house.

Old shoes are not beautiful, but these must have been very dear to him, for he had taken them out, and placed each pair by itself, and looked long at them, and thought much, and then he had taken his first Bible upon his lap, and opened at our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and read therein. No one saw him, to be sure, but it must have been so; his Regina knew very well how it all happened. And then he grew weary, and laid his head back against the chair, and fell softly asleep.

So they found him, and the little Frau Pastorin sat down by him in the chair, and put her arms around him and closed his eyes, and laid her head against his, and cried silently, and Louise threw herself at his feet, and folded her hands upon his knees, and looked, with tearful eyes, at the two dear, still faces. Then the little Frau Pastorin folded down the leaf in the Bible, and took it gently out of his hand, and she rose up, and Louise rose also, and clung about her neck, and they both broke into loud weeping, and sought protection and comfort in each other, until it grew to be twilight. Then the little Frau Pastorin took the Pastor's boots and her shoes, and put them back into the cupboard, saying, "I bless the day, when you came together into this house;" and Louise put her little shoes beside them, saying, "And I the day, when you first crossed the threshold," and then they locked up the chest, with all its joys.

After three days, good Pastor Behrens was buried, in his churchyard, in a place which he had selected, during his life, which one could see, through the clear panes of glass, from the living-room of the parsonage, and upon which fell the first beams of the morning sun.

The funeral guests had departed, Habermann also had been obliged to go; but Uncle Bräsig had explained that he should spend the night at the parsonage. Through the day, he had lent a helping hand, and now, as he saw the two women standing at the window, arm in arm, lost in sorrowful thoughts, he stole softly out of the room, up to his sleeping-chamber, and looked, through the twilight, over to the churchyard, where the dark grave lay in the white snow. He

thought of the man who lay beneath it, how often he had extended the hand, to help and to counsel him, and he vowed to repay the debt he owed him, with all his might, to the Frau Pastorin. And underneath, in the living-room, stood the two bereaved women, also looking over at the dark grave, and vowing silently, in their hearts, each to the other, all the love and friendship, which he had so often enjoined, and so constantly practiced. And the little Frau Pastorin thanked God and her Pastor that she had so sweet a comforter in her sorrow as she held in her arms, and she stroked Louise's soft hair, and kissed her again and again; and Louise prayed to God and her other father, that she might be endowed with all that was good and lovely, that she might lay it all in her foster-mother's lap.

Fresh graves are like hot-beds, which the gardeners plant; the fairest flowers spring out of them; but poisonous toadstools shoot up, also, from these beds.

That same evening, two other people in Gurlitz, were standing at a window, and looking through the panes, in the twilight,--not at the God's acre, that was far from their thoughts, no, at the Pastor's acre,--and Pomuchelskopp said to his Hänning, now they could not fail, now the field fell out of the lease, now they would have it, he would speak to the new Pastor about it, before his appointment.

"Muchel," said Hänning, "the Pumpelhagen people will never allow it, they will not let that field slip out of their fingers."

"Häuning, out of their fingers? I hold it in my own hands."

"Yes, if the young Herr must accommodate you; but how if we should get a young priest here, who will farm it himself?"

"Klücking, I don't recognize you, my dear Klücking! We have the choice; we will choose a Pietist. That kind are all taken up with their Bibles and Psalm-books and tracts, and have no leisure for farming."

"Yes, but you don't choose alone, there are Pumpelhagen, and Rexow, and Warnitz."

"Klücking, Warnitz and Rexow! What can they do against. Pumpelhagen and Gurlitz?--If the Pumpelhagen people and my people agree----"

"Don't trust to your people, you will get nothing but vexation. Don't you know how the Pastor's wife treated you? and she can do anything she pleases with the villagers, they stick to her like burs."

"Can't I get her out of the way? She shall move out of the village! There is no Pastor's-widow-house here, and am I likely to build one? Make the most of your meal, Frau Pastorin, you will have to go further!"

"Kopp, you are a great blockhead! The election of the new Pastor comes first." With that she left him.

"Klücking," he called after her, "I promise you, dear Klücking, I will make it all right."

Yes, many a poisonous weed grows out of a fresh grave, when the heirs reach out impatient hands for the money and goods of the silent man, when a neighbor profits by the distress of the widow and orphan to make his own house and garden and fields larger and finer, and when the coarse fellow sits in his comfortable sofa corner, and grumbles at it, as a great trial, that he must go out to water a new milch cow.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Bräsig had remained at the parsonage through the week. He made all the arrangements rendered necessary by such a change; he made out the inventory, wrote whole heaps of the drollest mourning letters, and carried them to the post himself, in spite of snow and cold and podagra; he settled with the tailor and shoemaker at Rahnstadt, and now, on the Monday after the funeral, he was sitting with the Frau Pastorin and Louise at the breakfast-table, intending to leave immediately after, when a carriage stopped before the door, and Franz von Rambow jumped down, and soon after, healthy and joyous, entered the room. But how his face changed when he saw the black mourning dresses of the two women. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, in his first surprise, "what has happened? Where is the Herr Pastor?"

The little Frau Pastorin rose from her chair, and going up to the young Herr she gave him her hand, and said, with an effort, "My Pastor has gone a journey to his last home, and he left greetings for all, all"--here she was overcome, and put her handkerchief to her eyes, "all whom he once loved, you also."

And Louise came up, and gave him her hand, without speaking. The color had risen in her face, when she first saw and recognized him, but now she was composed again, and seated herself. And Bräsig shook hands, and talked of this and that, to turn their attention to other subjects, and away from their fresh grief; but Franz did not listen, he stood like one thunderstruck, the news was so unexpected, and fell so heavily upon his joyous hopes.

He had spent two years at the academy in Eldena, had been industrious, and had stored his mind with all the sciences which he would need in the widest field of agriculture, or which could assist him in his chosen calling; the practical part of it he had already acquired, under Habermann's instruction; he was now of age, and could take possession of his property, nothing stood in the way of his establishing a household, but his own consideration. This, and the late Pastor's quiet, sensible letters, which had carefully avoided the remotest question or allusion, and with all their joyous heartiness had showed so much intelligence and reason, had kept him from hasty steps and rash actions. He had not a cold heart, it beat as hotly in his breast as that of any other young man, who falls over head and ears in love at first sight, and at once offers his heart and his hand; but, from his childhood, he had been thrown upon his own judgment, and been accountable for his own actions, and had decided the smallest matters after much reflection,--some said too much reflection,--but it did no harm! In this matter he was right, he would take this important step in life with a warm heart, but with a cool head. He had restrained his heart, had locked all his sweet dreams of joy and happiness in his own breast, like the sweet kernel in a hard nut; he would not crack the nut for his mere pleasure, he would wait patiently, till favorable circumstances, like the sun and rain, should make the shell open gently of itself, and the green sprout should come to light, and a tree should grow from it, beneath whose shade he and his Louise might sit happily together. And when his heart beat faster, and urged him to visit her, and see her again, he strove against it, with a right feeling toward his maiden, she should not be troubled till she had time to learn and to comprehend herself; and he had a feeling of pride, that he would have no match-maker meddling with his happiness. And when his heart often bled in the conflict, he called to it, fresh and strong; "Hands off! We are playing no lottery, here! Such a gain is too easily won, and too easily lost. The reward shall pay for the trouble. No bitter, no sweet!"

But now he was of age, now he was in all respects a man, now his own pride and his honor toward the dearest, sweetest maiden in the world were to receive their reward, now the tender green of the sprouting kernel pushed through the softened shell, and through the dark earth, up to the light, and it was time to care for it, that the tree might grow; and it was not time, merely, it was also duty. Now he threw himself into his carriage, the strife between the cool judgment and the warm heart was at an end, the former he left at home, safely stowed away, so that it might not be lost, for he might need it afterwards, and the latter he took with him, and comforted and soothed it, and sung it sweet song all the way, as if it were a child in the cradle, and he the mother.

And now all this joy was gone, the songs of happiness and love had been sung in vain, between these two sorrowful, black-robed forms, his heart throbbed as restlessly as before, and though he had left his judgment at home, his kind feelings, his reverence for so great a sorrow, and his remembrance of the worthy, silent man, were too strong for him, and against such a power, no honest heart could strive; it surrenders, although with wounds and suffering. Love is full of selfishness, and knows no consideration for others, people say,--and there is truth in it! It is a world for itself, and goes its own way, as if it had no concern for anything else; but if it comes from God, its path is marked out by eternal laws, that it should do no injustice, nowhere give offence, and beam upon other worlds with its sweet, gentle light, like the evening star, when it sheds peace upon the weary heart.

Such was Franz's love, it could not offend, could not bring trouble upon others, it must comfort and heal; so he restrained his heart, and was silent, and when he took his leave of the parsonage, he felt like a wanderer, who has come, with labor and weariness, to the church tower, which beckoned to him in the distance, and when he reaches the first houses in the village, he finds that this is not the right place, and that the end of his journey lies far beyond; he takes one deep, refreshing draught, and travels sturdily on.

It was a lovely, bright winter's day as Franz walked towards Pumpelhagen, letting the carriage follow slowly behind him; Bräsig went with him. The young man was absorbed in his own thoughts, Bräsig quite the contrary, so they did not accord well together. Bräsig should have held his tongue instead of telling all the stories which haunted his brain, but it was one of Uncle Bräsig's happiest peculiarities, that he never observed when he was troublesome. At last, however, he became aware that the young Herr gave him no replies; he stood still, as it happened, in the very place where Axel had treated him so shabbily, and asked, "How? Am I perhaps an inconvenience to you? It has happened to me before, in this very place, with your gracious Herr Cousin; I can go on by myself, as I did then."

"Dear Herr Inspector," said Franz, grasping the old man's hand; "you must not be offended with me; the death of the good Pastor, and the sad change in the dear old parsonage, have

affected me very deeply."

"So?" said Bräsig, pressing his hand, "if that is it, then I am not at all offended, and I always said also, to the Frau Pastorin and the little Louise, that you were an educated farmer, like the man in the book, since you keep kind feelings in your heart, and can look out for the good-for-nothing farm-boys; and I have always told Rudolph he should take you for a model. Do you know Rudolph?" And he began to tell about Rudolph and Mining, and Gottlieb and Lining, and brought the whole region into the story, and Franz compelled himself to listen attentively, so that before he reached Pumpelshagen, he knew all about everybody, even about Pomuchelskopp and his Häuning.

"So," said Bräsig, when they reached the court-yard, "you go now to your gracious Herr Cousin, and I to Habermann, and what I have said to you about Pomuchelskopp, and his secret projects must remain *præter propter* between us, and you may rely upon it, I will keep watch of him, and if he attempts any more scurvy tricks I will let you know."

But Franz did not go into the manor house, he ran before Bräsig into the farmhouse, into the room where he had spent so many quiet, happy hours with his good old instructor, and he fell upon the old man's neck, and old and young lay in each other's arms, as if the time and the years between the two had been blotted out, and the old eyes grew moist, and the young cheeks took a fresher color, as if age were giving its dew and its blessing that youth might grow fresher and brighter. So it was, and so shall it ever be!

Then Franz went up to Fritz Triddelsitz, and offered his hand: "Good-day, Fritz!"

But Fritz had his pride, also, his burgher-pride, and he had also his revenge, the revenge which he had stamped into the pease-field, after the ditch-rendezvous, so he said, coldly, "How do you find yourself, Herr von Rambow?"

"Fritz, have you no sense?" said Franz, and turned away and left him, as if Fritz were an inexplicable riddle, and he would turn to something else; he shook hands with the two old men, and went to his cousin.

"Karl," said Bräsig, sitting down to the table, where the dinner stood ready, "an excellent young man, this Herr Von! And what a beautiful piece of roast pork you have here! I have seen no such roast pork, in seven cold winters."

The reception given Franz, by his cousin Axel, was cordial, and the joy he expressed was sincere, as might well be supposed, for the two cousins were the only male descendants of their race. Frida, whom Franz had previously met at her wedding, was particularly pleased with the kind-hearted, sensible young man, and did everything in her power to make his visit agreeable, and as Habermann, having given Bräsig his company a little way after dinner, was returning across the court, she sent out, and invited him in to coffee, believing rightly that it would please Franz. Upon this occasion, it came out that Franz had gone already to the farm-house, and had made his first call on the inspector. This annoyed Axel a little, he wrinkled up his forehead at the intelligence, and his wife, at least, noticed before long that he began to put on the master. This would have been a matter of indifference, if he had not been so unreasonable and unjust as to punish Habermann, by a cold, ceremonious manner, for the fault of Franz,--if it were a fault.

The company was not quite harmonious; every friendly word, which was exchanged between Habermann and Franz, disturbed Axel; he became stiffer and colder, and the whole conversation, in spite of the lovely warm sunshine which the young wife always diffused around her, was dropping to the freezing-point, when Habermann suddenly sprang up, went to the window, and, without a word, ran out of the room. Axel's face turned a dusky red with the anger that rose in him; "That is very strange behavior!" cried he, "the Herr Inspector seems to consider himself exempt from the ordinary rules of politeness.

"It must be something very important," said Frida, going to the window. "What is he doing to that laborer?"

"That is the day-laborer, Regel," said Franz, who was also looking out of the window.

"Regel! Regel!" said Axel, springing up, "that is the messenger that I sent to Rostock yesterday, with two thousand thalers in gold; he cannot be back so soon."

"That must be what has disconcerted the old man so," said Franz. "Only see, he is laying hands on the fellow! I never saw him so excited!" and he ran out of the door, and Axel after him.

As they came out the old inspector had seized the young, strong day-laborer in the breast, and shook him till his hat fell off into the snow.

"Those are lies!" cried he, as he shook him, "those are miserable lies! Herr von Rambow, this fellow has lost the money!"

"No, they took it from me!" cried the laborer, standing there, pale as death.

Axel also turned pale; the two thousand thalers should have been paid in Rostock, long ago,

but he had delayed till the last moment, and then borrowed the sum of Pomuchelskopp,--and now it was gone.

"They are lies!" repeated Habermann, "I know the fellow. They took the money away from you by force? No ten fellows could take even a pipe of tobacco from you by force!" and he attacked him again.

"Hold!" cried Franz, coming between them. "Let the man just tell his story, quietly. How was it about the money?"

"They took it from me," said Regel. "As I was beyond Rahnstadt, this morning, near the Gallin wood, two fellows came toward me, and one of them asked me for a little fire for his pipe, and while I was striking it, the other seized me behind, by the belt, and pulled me off, and they took the black package out of my pocket, and then they ran off into the Gallin wood, and I after them, but I could not catch them."

"What is that?" interrupted Axel, "how did you come to be near the Gallin wood this morning? It lies only half a mile beyond Rahnstadt. Did I not charge you expressly, to get a pass from the burgomeister at Rahnstadt, and ride all night, so that the money might be in Rostock at noon today?" (This was the last day on which the note could be paid, it would otherwise be protested.)

"Yes, Herr," said the laborer, "I got the pass, and here it is," and he pulled it out of his hat band, "but to ride all the winter night was too much, and I stayed with my friends in Rahnstadt, thinking I could get to Rostock in time."

"Krischan Däsel!" called Habermann, across the courtyard. He had become perfectly composed, for it was merely the conviction that the laborer was lying to his face, which had roused the old man to such a state of excitement.

"Herr von Rambow," said he, as Krischan came up, "don't you wish the justice to be sent for?" and as Axel assented, he said, "Krischan, take two of the carriage horses, and put them to the chaise. You must bring the Herr Burgomeister from Rahnstadt; I will give you a letter to him. And you, Regel, come with me, I will show you a quiet place, where you can recollect yourself." With that, he went off with the day-laborer, and locked him into a chamber.

When Axel returned to the house with his cousin, he had an excellent opportunity to make the young man acquainted with his pecuniary embarrassments; but, although he knew that Franz could easily and willingly help him, he was silent. It is a strange but indisputable fact, that people who run in debt will turn sooner to the hard heart of the usurer, for assistance, than to the soft ones of friends and relatives. They are too proud to acknowledge their debts, but not too proud to beg and to borrow of the most good-for-nothing Jew money-lenders. But it is not pride, it is nothing but the most pitiable cowardice, which is afraid of the reasonable and well-meant remonstrances of friends and relatives.

So Axel was silent, and walked restlessly up and down the room, while Frida was talking with Franz over this singular occurrence. The business was a very serious one for him, the money must be procured, or he would be sued for it,--his note was probably already protested. He could no longer endure it; he ordered his horse, and, although it was growing dark, he went off for a ride,--so he said, at least,--but he went to Pomuchelskopp.

Pomuchelskopp listened to Herr von Rambow's troubles with a great deal of sympathy, and lamented the wickedness of mankind, and expressed the opinion that Herr von Rambow might as well have no inspector at all as one who had not understanding enough to choose a safe messenger on such an important business,--he would not say anything but there must be something behind; he would say nothing prematurely, but this much he would say, Habermann had always looked out sharply for his own interests, for example, there was the Pastor's acre; he had advised the late Herr Kammerrath to rent it, so that his own salary might be increased; but it was certainly an injury to the Pumpelhagen husbandry, as he could convince the Herr, and he inflicted upon Axel a long chapter of calculations which the latter did not attempt to follow, for, in the first place, he did not understand calculations, and secondly, he was absorbed, for the moment, in thoughts of his troubles. He said "Yes" to everything, and at last came out with the request that Pomuchelskopp should advance another two thousand thalers.

Pomuchelskopp hesitated a little at first, and scratched behind his ear, but at last said, "Yes;" on condition that Axel would not rent the Pastor's acre again, of the new Pastor. This might well have startled the young Herr, and Muchel was conscious of the danger, so he proved to him again, with figures, that it would be much better that the Gurlitz farm should undertake this lease, and that in this way both would be gainers. Axel gave but little attention, and finally consented to give the desired promise in writing; his difficulty was pressing, he must meet the first necessity, and he was just the sort of man to kill his milch cow, in order to sell her skin.

The business was now settled; Axel wrote his bond, and Pomuchelskopp packed up the two thousand thalers, and sent it, with a letter from Axel, by his own servant, to Rahnstadt, to the post. That was the best way; no one in Pumpelhagen need know anything about it. As Axel rode home, he repeated two lies to himself, until he really believed them; first, that Habermann alone was properly to be blamed for the loss of the money, and second, that he ought to be glad to get

CHAPTER XXV.

Meanwhile, the Rahnstadt burgomeister, who was Axel's magistrate, had arrived at Pumpelhagen, bringing Herr Slusuhr, the notary, as his recording clerk.

The man had acted very discreetly; as soon as he had read Habermann's letter, he had sent policemen round to all the alehouses and shops, where laborers resorted, to inquire whether and when the day-laborer Regel, of Pumpelhagen, had been there, and in this way he found out enough to assist him in the examination. The laborer had come to him, yesterday afternoon, about four o'clock, and had got his pass made out; he had showed him the package of money,--the gold was sewed in black-waxed cloth,--and the burgomeister had looked at it closely enough, to see that the seal had not been tampered with. The man had told him,--he was on the whole, rather talkative,--that he should travel all night; it was pretty hard, to be sure, at this time of year; but the man was a strong, hearty fellow; it would be no darker, for the snow made it light, and, towards midnight, the moon rose; so he had advised him to set off immediately. This however, as he had ascertained, he had not done, he had gone into several ale-houses, and treated himself to liquor; even by nine o'clock he was not out of Rahnstadt, he had stopped before a shop, and drank brandy, and bragged, and talked of his great sum of money, had also showed the packet to the shopman. Where he had stayed, afterwards, he did not know; but so much seemed to be certain, the man was grossly intoxicated; and the justice now asked Axel and Habermann, whether the fellow were in the habit of drinking.

"I do not know," said Axel; "in these particulars, I must rely upon my inspector."

Habermann looked at him, as if this speech seemed to him a very strange one, and he would have said something about it; but he merely remarked to the burgomeister that he had never noticed anything of the kind, or even heard of it; Regel was always the soberest fellow on the place, and in that respect he had no complaints to make of any of the people.

"May be," said the burgomeister, "but it wasn't quite right with the man; there is always a first time,--he had certainly been drinking before he came to me. Let his wife come in."

The wife came. She was a young, pretty woman; it was not long since she had been running about, a young girl, as fresh and bright as only our Mecklenburg country girls can be, but now sickness had washed off the maiden roses from her cheeks, and household labor had made the soft, rounded outlines a little angular,--our housewives in the country grow old early,--moreover she wore mourning, and was trembling all over, with anxiety.

Habermann pitied the poor woman, he went up to her, and said, "Regelsch, don't be afraid; just tell the truth about everything, and it will all come right again."

"Good Lord, Herr Inspector, what is this? What does it all mean? What has my husband done?"

"Just tell me, Regelsch, does your husband often drink more brandy than he can carry?" asked the justice.

"No, Herr, never in his life, he drinks no brandy at all, we don't keep it in the house; only at harvest time, he drinks a glass, when it is sent down from the manor house."

"Had he drank any brandy, yesterday, when he left home?"

"No, Herr! He ate something first, and then he started off, about half past two. No, Herr,--but wait, wait! No, I did not see him, but yet--oh, Lord, yes! Last evening, when I went to the cupboard, the brandy-bottle was empty."

"I thought you didn't keep any brandy in the house," said the burgomeister.

"No, we don't; but this was a little of the funeral brandy; we buried our little girl last Friday, and there was some left over. Ah, and how he grieved! how he grieved!"

"And do you think your husband drank it?"

"Yes, Herr, who else should have done it?"

The evidence was recorded, and Regelsch was dismissed.

"So!" said Slusuhr in an insolent way to Axel, and winked towards the burgomeister, "we have got at the brandy, if we could only get at the money!"

"Herr Notary, write!" said the burgomeister, quietly and with dignity, and pointed with his finger to his place: "The day-laborer, Regel, is brought in, admonished to tell the truth, and gives evidence."

"Herr Burgomeister," said Axel, springing up, "I don't see what this brandy story has to do with my money. The fellow has stolen it!"

"That is just what I want to find out," said the burgomeister, very quietly, "whether he has stolen or, more properly, embezzled the money, and whether he was altogether in a condition to do such a thing," and going up to the young Herr he said, very kindly, but also very decidedly, "Herr von Rambow, a thief, who intends to steal two thousand thalers, does not begin by getting drunk. Moreover, I must tell you, that as a magistrate, I have to consider not only your interests, but also those of the accused."

The day-laborer, Regel, came in. He was deadly pale; but the distress which he had shown in his whole manner, before the old inspector, in the afternoon, had left him, he looked almost like old oaken wood, into which no worm ventures.

He acknowledged that he had drunk the brandy at home, more yet in Rahnstadt, and that he had been with the shopkeeper, about nine o'clock; then he had spent the night with his friends, in Rahnstadt, and about six o'clock had started for Rostock; but there he stuck to his story: by the Gallin wood, two fellows had attacked him, and taken the money by force. While the last of his deposition was being taken down, the door opened, and the laborer's wife rushed up to her husband,—for police-laws are not very strict, in our primitive Mecklenburg tribunals,—and grasped his arm: "Jochen! Jochen! Have you made your wife and children unhappy forever?"

"Marik! Marik!" cried the man, "I have not done it. My hands are clean. Have I ever, in my life, stolen anything?"

"Jochen!" cried the wife, "tell the truth to the gentlemen!"

The laborer's breast throbbed and his face flushed a deep red, but in a moment he was as deadly pale as before, and he cast a shy, uncertain glance at his wife: "Marik, have I ever, in all my life, stolen or taken anything?"

The wife let her hands fall from his shoulder: "No, Jochen, you have not! You have not, truly! But you lie, you have often lied to me." She put her apron to her eyes, and went out of the room. Habermann followed her. The day-laborer, also, was led away.

The burgomeister had not disturbed the interview between the man and wife,—it was not in order, but it might furnish him a clue, by which he could draw the truth to light. Axel had started up at the woman's words, "You lie, you have often lied to me," and walked hastily up and down the room; his conscience smote him, he did not exactly know why, this evening, he only knew that he also had never stolen or taken anything, but he had lied. But so it is with the soul of a man who is not sincere, even at the moment when his conscience troubles him, he lies again, for his own advantage. *His* case was quite a different one from the laborer's; he had only told a few falsehoods, for the benefit of his wife, that she might not be disturbed, the laborer had lied to conceal his guilt. Yes, Herr von Rambow, only keep on like that, and the devil will surely, in time, reap a fine harvest!

Slusuhr had finished his writing, and again went boldly up to Axel:

"Yes, Herr von Rambow, he who lies will steal."

That was an infamous speech, to a man in Axel's present humor, and when he knew, also, how near Slusuhr's business came to stealing; he was not merely astonished, he was terrified at the fellow's impudence. He might not have been so, if he had known what people said about the notary.

People used to say, that the Herr Notary's father had wished to sell him, when a little boy, to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, as a runner, and with this design had taken him to the Herr Doctor and Surgeon Kohlman, at New Brandenburg, to have his spleen cut out, so that he could run the better; but the Herr Doctor, who knew everything else, and claimed to have been appointed by the Lord Minister of the Supreme Wisdom for New Brandenburg, had, in an unfortunate moment, when his eyes were a little dim, cut out the conscience, instead of the spleen, so that Slusuhr had to journey through life, with a spleen, and without a conscience, and not as a runner, but as a notary.

There was nothing more for the magistrate to do at present; the witnesses, and the friends of the laborer, who had last seen him, were not at hand, and the burgomeister gave orders that the prisoner should be kept under guard, for this night, at Pumpelhagen, and taken to Rahnstadt the next day.

"He shall be put under the manor house, in the front cellar," said Axel to Habermann, who had

come in again.

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann, "Isn't it better to leave him in the chamber at the farm-house? There are iron bars--"

"No," said Axel, sharply, "there are iron bars in the cellar, too; I wish to avoid collusions, which might take place at the farm-house."

"Herr von Rambow, I am a very light sleeper, and if you wish it, I can have another person to watch at the door."

"What I have ordered, I have ordered. The business is of too much importance, for me to trust to your light sleep, and to a comrade of the rascal's."

Habermann looked at him inquiringly, and said, "As you command," and went out.

It was nearly ten o'clock, the supper table had long been waiting, Marie Möller was scolding because the baked fish would be cooked to death, Frida was also annoyed over the long delay of the supper, and only through her conversation with Franz was able to muster a little patience, when the gentlemen came in, after the trial. Frida went up to the burgomeister, in her bright way: "Isn't it so? He hasn't stolen the money?"

"No, gracious lady," said the burgomeister, with quiet decision, "the day-laborer has not stolen it, but it has been stolen from him, or he has lost it."

"Thank God!" cried she, out of a full heart, "that the man is no thief! The thought that we had dishonest people on the place, would have been dreadful!"

"Do you think that our people are better than all others? They are just such a set as on any other estate, they all steal," observed Axel.

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann, who had also come in to supper, "our people are honest, I have been here long enough to be fully convinced of it. No thieving has occurred, during the whole time."

"Ah, so you have always said, and now we have this,--now we have this! My foolish credulity had cost me two thousand thalers. And if you knew the people so well, why did you send this particular man?"

Habermann looked at him in astonishment. "As it seems," said he, "you wish to put the blame upon me; but if there has been a fault in the matter, I do not take it upon myself. It is true," he added hastily, and his face flushed with anger, "I sent this man; but only because you had employed him constantly as a messenger, in carrying money; he has already been sent by you more than ten times to Gurlitz, and the Herr Notary, here, can testify how often he has been to him on such errands."

Frida looked hastily over to Slusuhr, upon these words, and the Herr Notary had turned his eyes towards her; they said nothing, but, different as their thoughts were, it seemed as if each had read the very soul of the other. Frida read, in the secret, malicious joy in the notary's eyes, that he was the chief enemy of her happiness, and the notary read, in the dear, sensible eyes of the young wife, that she was the chief obstacle in the way of his and Pomuchelskopp's plans. Axel would have given a hasty answer to Habermann's words, but he held his peace when he saw the old man's steadfast gaze, and then Frida's questioning glance resting upon him. Slusuhr was also silent, and lay in wait; he was the only one who could see through the thorn-bush, which was growing in this garden, and now he lay behind the thorn-bush, and watched, to see if a hare would not run in his direction.

The justice and Franz were the only ones who had no suspicion of the disturbance caused by Habermann's hasty words, and they alone carried on the conversation at table. When the company rose from the table, they separated; the justice remained through the night.

All were asleep in Pumpelhagen, only two married couples were still waking; one couple was the Herr von Rambow and his wife, the other was the day-laborer, Regel and his wife. The one pair sat close together, in a warm room, and the night was so silent about them that one might well have a desire to open his heart, and find courage to speak the truth. But it was not so. Frida begged her husband earnestly to confide in her, she knew already that he was in great pecuniary embarrassment; they would retrench, but the dealings with Pomuchelskopp and Slusuhr must be given up; he should talk with Habermann, he would show him the right way.

Everything went by halves with Axel, he did not exactly lie, but neither did he tell the truth. That he was in temporary embarrassment, he would not deny; when a man had two thousand thalers stolen, he might well be embarrassed; he had exchanged nothing as yet, had also been able to sell nothing,--that he had sold a fine crop of wheat, in anticipation, and got the money for it, he did not tell her. His dealings with Pomuchelskopp and Slusuhr--he said nothing about David--could do him no harm, those were old, made up stories,--he did not speak of the new loan from Pomuchelskopp,--and the people were prejudiced against him; as for Habermann,--and here he became excited for the first time,--he could not consult about money matters with his

inspector, it was not suitable for him, as master. Axel did not exactly tell falsehoods, and when he put his arm around her, and said that it would all come right again, he said what at the moment he believed to be the truth. She left him with a heavy heart.

The other pair were not sitting in a warm room; the laborer lay in the cold cellar, and his wife crouched on her knees outside, before the cellar-window, in the fine, cold November rain; they were not close together, an iron grating divided them. "Jochen," whispered she, through the broken window-panes, "tell the truth."

"They took it from me," was the reply.

"Jochen, who?"

"Eh, do I know?" said he, and it was the truth; he did not know who the woman was who had taken the black packet, in broad daylight, and on the public road, out of his waistcoat pocket, as he, not yet recovered from the intoxication of yesterday, and having just taken a couple of glasses on an empty stomach, was tumbling along towards Gallin. He did not lie, but he could not tell the truth; how could he confess that from him, a young, strong fellow, a woman had taken the two thousand thalers, on the open street? He could not do that, if it should cost him his life.

"Jochen, you are lying. If you will not tell me the truth, tell it to our old inspector."

No, to him, of all others, he could not tell the truth, for he had promised him he would not lie any more, and he had admonished him so earnestly,--he could not tell him.

"Marik, get me my chisel, and a couple of thalers in money."

"Jochen, what are you going to do?"

"I will go away."

"Jochen, Jochen! and leave me here, with the poor little ones?"

"Marik, I must go; it will never go well with me here again,"

"Jochen, tell the truth, and it will be all right."

"If you don't bring me the chisel and the money, I will take my life, this very night!"

And here, also, there was much begging and pleading and talking, as there was upstairs in the warm room, but the truth would not come out, no more here than there, it was kept back, here as there, by the shame of confessing inconsiderate and disreputable actions, and here, also, the wife left her husband with a heavy heart.

The first thing next morning came the news, setting all Pempelshagen in an uproar, that the day-laborer, Regel, had broken out, and run away. The justice made preparations to have him arrested again, and rode off, homewards, with the Herr Notary. Axel was in a rage,--no one knew why; but it was with himself; and because he could shove the blame upon nobody else, for he himself had given orders that the man should be locked up in the cellar.

After breakfast came Pomuchelskopp, to inquire about the matter, of which he had heard, as he said. Franz greeted him coldly, but so much the warmer was Axel's reception. He knew well how to talk of the matter, the laws were too easy towards these low fellows, and the burgomeister at Rahnstadt was much too good to the rascals; he told thief-stories, out of his own experience and that of his acquaintances, and finally said that he believed, like Habermann, that the fellow had not done it. "That is to say," he added, "not of his own accord, he can merely have been the tool of another, for no day-laborer would venture to steal two thousand thalers which had been entrusted to him; there must be a cleverer rogue in the background. And therefore," said he, "I advise you, Herr von Rambow, to have an eye on the people who may have assisted his flight, and especially on those who take his part."

Axel's feelings, through the loss and through his anger, were like freshly prepared soil, and whatever seed fell therein, even were it darnel and cockles, must sprout up finely. He walked up and down the room; yes, Pomuchelskopp was right, he was a practical old fellow, who knew the world, that is to say, the agricultural world; but who could have been concerned with Regel in such a business? He knew of no one. Who had taken Regel's part? That was Habermann, he had said expressly, from the first, that he must have lost the money. But he had been so angry with the fellow, at the first news. Well, that might all have been acting! And why had he been so anxious to have the laborer close by his room, in the chamber? Perhaps that he might have intercourse with him, perhaps that he might be better able to help him off.

For an intelligent man, these were very stupid thoughts, but the devil is a cunning fellow, he does not seek out the prudent and strong, when he wishes to sow darnel and cockles in the fresh furrow, he takes the foolish and weak.

"What is the Herr Inspector doing with that woman?" asked Pomuchelskopp, who had stepped to the window.

"That is Regelsch," said Franz, who stood near him.

"Yes," said Axel, hastily, "what has he to do with her? I must find out."

"That is very singular," said Pomuchelskopp.

Habermann stood in the yard, with the laborer's wife, apparently persuading her to something; she resisted, but finally yielded, and came with him towards the manor house. They entered the room.

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann, "the woman has confessed to me that she helped her husband away in the night."

"Yes, Herr," said the woman, trembling all over, "I did it, I am guilty; but I could not do otherwise, he would have taken his life else," and the tears started from her eyes, and she put her apron to her face.

"A pretty story!" said Axel, coldly,--and he was usually so kindhearted--"a pretty story! This seems to be a regular conspiracy!"

Franz went up to the woman, made her sit down, and inquired, "Regelsch, didn't he confess to you what he had done with the money?"

"No, young Herr, he told me nothing, and what he said was false; I know that; but he hasn't taken it."

"How came you," said Axel roughly to Habermann, "to be questioning this woman without my orders?"

Habermann was startled at this question, and still more at the tone in which it was expressed; "I believed," said he, quietly, "that it would be well to find out how and when the prisoner got away, in order to obtain some hint of his present place of concealment."

"Or perhaps to give some!" exclaimed Axel, and turned quickly about, as if he had done something which might cost him dear. The result was not quite so bad as he had reason to fear, for Habermann had not understood the meaning of his words, he heard merely the tone, but that was enough to lead him to say, with serious emphasis, "What you mean by your words, I do not know, and it is a matter of indifference to me; but the manner and tone in which you have spoken to me, last evening and this morning, are what I will not take from you. Yesterday I was silent, out of consideration for the gracious lady, but in the present company"--here he glanced at Pomuchelskopp--"I need not exercise such consideration," and with that he left the room. The laborer's wife followed him.

Axel was going after him; Franz stepped in his way: "What are you going to do, Axel? Recollect yourself! You are in fault, you have bitterly wronged the old man, as he evidently thinks."

"That was a bold move," said Pomuchelskopp, as if he were talking to himself, "that was a bold move, for an inspector," but he must be going home, he said, and called, out of the window, for his horse. He had got things started finely.

The horse was brought, Axel accompanied his Herr Neighbor out of the door; Franz remained in the room. "Certainly a very good man, your Herr Cousin," said Pomuchelskopp, "but he does not know the world yet, does not know yet what is proper for the master, and what for the servant." With that, he rode off. Axel came back into the parlor, and threw the cap, which he wore because the morning was cold, into the sofa corner, exclaiming, "Infamous cheats! The devil take the whole concern, if one can no longer rely upon anybody!"

"Axel," said Franz, going up to him kindly, "you do your people great wrong, you do yourself wrong, dear brother, if you cherish such an unjust hatred in your benevolent heart."

"Unjust? What? Two thousand thalers have been stolen----"

"They are lost, Axel, through the inconsiderate fault of a day-laborer."

"Oh, what, *lost!*" exclaimed Axel, turning away, "you come with the same story as my Herr Inspector!"

"Axel, all intelligent people are of this opinion, the burgomeister himself said--"

"Don't talk to me of that old nightcap! I should have conducted the examination myself, then we should have come to quite a different conclusion, or if I had only got hold of the woman first, this morning, her story would have been quite another thing; but so? Oh, it is all a contrived plot!"

"Listen to me, Axel, you have made that allusion once before," cried Franz sharply and decidedly; "fortunately, it was not understood; now you make it for the second time, and I, for my part, must understand."

"Well, then you may understand that it is not made without sufficient grounds."

"Can you make such a declaration to your own conscience? Would you, in your unjust excitement and with wanton cruelty, cast such a stain upon sixty years of honorable life?"

This touched Axel, and cooled him off a little, and he said peevishly, for his unnatural excitement was wearing off, "I have not said that he has done it; I only said he might have done it."

"The suspicion," said Franz coldly, "is as bad as the other, as bad for *yourself* as for the old man. Remember, Axel," said he, impressively, laying his hand on his cousin's shoulder, "how long the old man has been, to your father and yourself, a faithful, upright steward! To me," he added, in a lower tone, "he was more, he has been my friend and teacher."

Axel walked up and down, he felt that he was wrong,--at least, for the moment,--but to confess, freely and fully, that he had endeavoured to shove off the blame of his own foolishness and untruthfulness upon another was too much, he had not the clear courage to do it. He began to chaffer and bargain with himself, and availed himself of the expedient which the weak and dishonest are always ready to employ,--he carried the war into the enemy's camp. In every age, up to the present time, truth is yet sold, in a weak human soul, for thirty pieces of silver.

"Oh, to *you!*" said he, "he would like to be still more to you."

"What do you mean?" asked Franz, turning round on him sharply.

"Oh," said Axel, "nothing more! I only mean you may call him 'Papa,' by and by."

There was an unworthiness in this speech, in the intention to offend the man who had been firm enough to tell him the truth. Franz flushed a deep red. His deepest, holiest secret was brought to light, and in this insulting manner! The blood rushed to his face; but he restrained himself, and said, shortly:

"That has nothing to do with the matter."

"Why not?" said Axel. "It at least explains the warmth with which you defend your Herr Habermann."

"The man needs no defence of mine, his whole life defends him."

"And his lovely daughter," said Axel, striding up and down, in great triumph.

A great passion rose in Franz's soul, but he restrained himself, and asked, quietly, "Do you know her?"

"Yes--no--that is to say, I have seen her; I have seen her at the parsonage, and she has often been here, with my wife, and my wife also has visited her. I know her merely by sight; a pretty girl, a very pretty girl, 'pon honor! I was pleased with her, as a child, at my father's funeral."

"And when you learned, that she was dear to me, did you not seek a nearer acquaintance?"

"No, Franz, no! Why should I? I knew, of course, that nothing serious could come of such an attachment."

"Then you knew more than I."

"Oh, I know more still, I know how they set traps and snares for you, and were always contriving ways to catch you."

"And from whom did you learn all this? But why do I ask? Such childish gossip could have been hatched in but one house, in the whole region. But since we have mentioned the matter, I will tell you frankly, that I certainly do intend to marry the girl, that is, if she does not refuse me."

"She would better beware! She would better beware!" exclaimed Axel, springing about the room, in his anger. "Will you really commit this folly? And will you give me this affront?"

"Axel, look to your words!" cried Franz, whose temper was getting the upper hand. "What business is it of yours?"

"What? Does it not not concern *me*, as the oldest representative of our old family, if one of the younger members disgraces himself by a *mésalliance*."

Yet once more Franz restrained himself, and said:

"You yourself married from pure inclination, and without regard for subordinate matters."

"That is quite another thing," said Axel, with authority, believing now that he had the advantage. "My wife's family is as good as mine, she is the daughter of an old house; your beloved is the daughter of my inspector, adopted out of pity and kindness, by the Pastor's family."

"For shame!" cried Franz, passionately, "to make an innocent child suffer for a great misfortune!"

"It is all the same to me," roared Axel, "I will *not* call my inspector's daughter cousin; the girl shall never cross my threshold!"

All the blood which had rushed through Franz's veins and flushed his face, a moment before, struck to his heart; he stood pale before his cousin, and said in a voice, which trembled with intense excitement:

"You have said it. You have spoken the word which divides us. Louise shall never cross your threshold, neither will I."

He turned to go; at the door he was met by Frida, who had heard the quarrel in the next room: "Franz, Franz, what is the matter?"

"Farewell, Frida," said he, hastily, and went out, towards the farm-house.

"Axel," cried Frida, running up to her husband, "what have you done? What have you done?"

"I have showed a young man," said Axel, striding up and down the room, as if he had fought a great battle with the world-out-of-joint, and made everything right again, "I have showed a young fellow, who wanted to make a fool of himself over a pretty face, his true standpoint."

"Have you dared to do that?" said Frida, sinking, pale, into a chair, and gazing with her great, clear eyes at her husband's triumphal march through the room, "have you dared to thrust your petty pride of birth between the pure emotions of two noble hearts?"

"Frida," said Axel, and he knew very well that he had done wrong, and his conscience smote him, but he could not confess it, "I believe I have done my duty."

Any one may notice, if he will, that the people who never in their lives do their duty always make the most use of the word.

"Ah!" cried Frida, springing up, "you have deeply wounded an upright, honest heart! Axel," she begged, laying her folded hands on his shoulder, "Franz has gone into the farm-house, follow him, and repair the injury you have done! Bring him back to us again!"

"Apologize to him, in the presence of my inspector? No, rather not at all! Oh, it is charming!" and he worked himself again into a passion, "my two thousand thalers are stolen, my inspector finds fault with me, my Herr Cousin stands by his dear father-in-law, and now my own wife joins herself to the company!"

Frida looked at him, loosened her hands, and, throwing a shawl over her shoulders, said, "If you will not go, I will," and went out, hearing him call after her, "Yes, go! go! But the old sneak shall clear out!"

As she crossed the court, they were bringing round Franz's carriage, and as she entered the inspector's room Habermann had just been saying to the young man, "Herr von Rambow, you will forget it. You have spent your life hitherto, in our small circle; if you travel,--as I should think advisable,--then you will have other thoughts. But, dear Franz," said the old man, so trustingly, in his recollection of earlier times, "you will not disturb the heart of my child?"

"No, Habermann," said Franz, just as the young Frau entered the room.

"Good heavens!" cried Habermann, "I have forgotten something. You will excuse me, gracious lady!" and he left the room.

"Always considerate, always discreet!" said Frida.

"Yes, that he is," said Franz, looking after the old man. The carriage drove up, but it was kept waiting; the two had much to say to each other, and, when at last Franz got into the carriage, Frida's eyes were red, and Franz also dashed away a tear.

"Greet the good old man for me," said he, "and greet Axel, also," he added, in a lower tone, as he pressed her hand.

The carriage drove off.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Young Jochen sat in his chimney-corner smoking. Young Bauschan lay under his chair, but with his head far enough out to look at young Jochen. Young Jochen looked at him, but said nothing, and Bauschan said nothing.

It was very quiet and peaceful, in the Rexow house, on this December afternoon; there was only one thing which rattled and creaked, that was Frau Nüssler's arm-chair, in which she sat by the window; and every time that she took up a stitch, it made a note of it; for which it should not be blamed, for she squeezed it without mercy, since she had become, with time, what one calls a stout woman. But, to-day, the old chair creaked more than usual, for Frau Nüssler had been knitting, in deep thought, and her thoughts became more and more earnest, and oppressed her soul, and the chair and its creaking became louder and louder. "Dear heart!" said she, laying her knitting in her lap, "why must it be so, in this world, that one's misfortune should be another's happiness! Jochen, do you know what I have just thought of?"

"No," said young Jochen, and looked at Bauschan; Bauschan didn't know, either.

"Jochen, what would you think, if Gottlieb should offer himself for the Gurlitz parish? Gottlieb is but a farthing candle, compared with our old Herr Pastor; but somebody must get the parish, why not he as well as another?"

Jochen said nothing.

"If Pomuchelskopp is against him, and our people and the Warnitzers in his favor, it will depend merely on the Pumpelbogen Herr. What do you say, Jochen?"

"Yes," said Jochen, "it is all as true as leather;" and, because the matter interested him uncommonly, he spoke further, and said, "what shall we do about it?"

"Ah," said Frau Nüssler, "there is no use in talking to you. I wish Bräsig were only here, he could give us advice," and she resumed her knitting.

"Well," she exclaimed, half an hour later, "speak of the wolf, and he is not far off; there comes Bräsig, driving up the yard. And who has he with him? Rudolph,--now just think of it, Rudolph! Why should Rudolph come to-day? Jochen, now do me a single favor,--the old fellow is doing so nicely,--don't go and distress him with your foolish chatter!" With that she ran to the door, to receive her guests.

But she had delayed too long over her preface, for, as she came out, Mining lay in Rudolph's arms.

"Preserve us!" cried Frau Nüssler, "softly, Mining!" and she led Rudolph into the living-room.

"Well," said Jochen, "Bräsig, sit down a little! Rudolph, sit down, too!"

But that was not so easily done. Rudolph had too much to arrange with Mining and Lining, to be in haste to sit down, and Bräsig's head was going round like clock-work, and he trotted up and down the room, as if his legs were the pendulums, to keep the machinery running.

"Young Jochen," said he, "have you heard the news? They haven't caught him."

"Whom," asked Jochen.

"Good gracious, Jochen," said Frau Nüssler, "let Bräsig tell. You are always interrupting people so; let him speak! Bräsig, whom haven't they caught?"

"Regel," said Bräsig; "they tracked him to Wismar, but there they found themselves too late, since he had gone off a week before, on a Swedish oakum ship, and is up in the Baltic sea."

"What a trouble this is for my brother Karl!" sighed Frau Nüssler.

"Frau Nüssler, you are right there; Karl is hardly to be recognized, for he has completely insulated himself, and is surrounded with gloomy thoughts. The business troubles him dreadfully, not on his own account,--no! only on his young Herr's account, for you shall see, the young man must, sooner or later, declare himself insolvent."

"That would kill Karl!" cried Frau Nüssler.

"How can you help it?" said Bräsig. "The young nobleman is ruining himself with his eyes open; he is beginning now the higher style of horse-breeding. For, as I learned from old Prebberow, he has become intimate with Lichtwark, and has bought an old thorough-bred horse, which has got spavin, and swelled sinews, and in short, the whole band in his legs, and he has bought a thorough-bred mare, and he is going to buy Triddelsitz's old, deaf granny, and establish a complete horse-hospital. He has got the little mule too, and I am glad of that, for it is the only sensible creature in the whole company."

"Well, never mind him, Bräsig, he must run his risk," said Frau Nüssler; "but Jochen and I

were just talking about the young Herr--Mining, you can take Rudolph out a little while! And Lining, you can go with them!"--and when they were gone she said, "Bräsigg, it is about the Gurlitz living. If Gottlieb could only get it!"

"Frau Nüssler," said Bräsigg, bringing his pendulums to a stop, and standing before Frau Nüssler, as if the clock had struck, "what you have said is an idea, and nobody in the world is so quick at conceiving ideas as the women folks. Where did you get this idea?"

"Entirely by myself," said Frau Nüssler, "for Jochen does not agree with me, as he used to; he is always contradicting."

"Jochen, keep perfectly quiet!" said Bräsigg. "You are wrong, for this opinion of your dear wife is a reasonable one. I will answer for Warnitz; the people will choose my candidate, even if the gracious count and countess should oppose; you for Rexow, young Jochen; Pomuchelskopp won't do it, out of spite; but no matter, it depends on Pumpelbogen. Who shall talk to the young nobleman about it? Habermann? He stands on his apropos with him, just at present. I? Worse, if anything, for he has insulted me. Young Jochen himself? I wouldn't trust young Jochen, he has got into the way of talking too much lately. Gottlieb? A good fellow, but a sheep's-head. Then who? Rudolph! An infernal scoundrel, as Hilgendorf has just written me. Rudolph must go, and you, Frau Nüssler, must go with him, on account of the family connection, that the young fellow may leguminiren."

"Good heavens!" cried Frau Nüssler, "shall I go to see the young Herr!"

"No," said Zachary Bräsigg, "you go to the young Frau, and Rudolph to the young Herr. Where is Rudolph? Rudolph must come in immediately."

Rudolph was quite ready to undertake the errand for his cousin Gottlieb, and it was settled that, the next day, he should drive with his aunt to Pumpelbogen.

It so happened; but when the deputation drove up to the manor house, Herr von Rambow was not at home, he had gone out riding; so they were announced to the gracious lady, and met with a very friendly reception.

"Gracious lady," said Frau Nüssler, going up to the young Frau, in her truehearted way, without many compliments, "you will not take it unkindly, if I speak Platt-Deutsch; I know a little High German; but it is almost nothing. We are old-fashioned people, and I always say a bright tin plate pleases me better than a silver one which is tarnished."

Frida herself took off the good Frau's wrappings, and pressed her to sit down by her on the sofa; she motioned Rudolph to a chair, and would have seated herself again, but she was held back by Frau Nüssler, who said to her, quite confidentially:

"You see, gracious lady, this is a nephew of mine, who is going to be my son-in-law; he is a son of Kurz the merchant, in Rahnstadt, with whom you have traded."

Rudolph bowed, as was his place, and the young Frau, with her bright ways, soon made an end of the introduction, and got Frau Nüssler seated on the sofa.

"Yes," said the stout lady, "he has studied too, but he didn't go very far; but now that he has become a farmer, he is doing finely, as Hilgendorf has written to Bräsigg."

That was all very fine for Rudolph; but it annoyed him to be talked about, so he interrupted Frau Nüssler.

"But, dear aunt, you don't want to tell about me, you want to tell about Gottlieb."

"Yes, gracious lady, that is properly my errand; you see, I have still another, who is also to be my son-in-law, also a nephew, Rector Baldrian's son, in Rahnstadt, who has studied regularly, and learned everything that he ought, and can be a pastor any day. Now our good old Herr Pastor has gone to heaven,--ah gracious lady, what a man he was!--and you cannot blame me, if I have the wish to keep my Lining in the neighbourhood, and that Gottlieb should get the parish."

"No, dear Frau Nüssler," said Frida, "I do not blame you, and if it depended on me, your future son-in-law should, by all means, have the presentation, on our side; I have heard so much good of you and your daughters."

"Have you really?" asked Frau Nüssler, warmed to the heart. "Yes, they are dear, good little girls!" she exclaimed.

At this moment, footsteps were heard outside, and Herr von Rambow, who had returned from his ride, came in. The young wife undertook the introductions, and Axel looked uncommonly grave, at the names. Rudolph was not disconcerted, however; he had a fine trump to play, which he did not mean to stake for nothing; he went up to the Herr, and said:

"Herr von Rambow, may I be allowed a few words with you in private?"

Axel went with him into the next room.

"Herr von Rambow," said Rudolph, "the week before last, you lost two thousand thalers in gold,--as you have said, all in Danish double louis-d'ors; the day-laborer made his escape, and it seems that he will not be easily retaken; but they are on the track of the money."

"What?" cried Axel. "How do you know that?"

"Since yesterday afternoon, I know that the trial-justice, the burgomeister, at Rahnstadt, has obtained a very clear indication in this direction. I was with my father, in his shop, when a woman came in, a weaver's wife, who is suing for a divorce from her husband, and wanted change for a Danish double louis-d'or. I know the woman, she is miserably poor, and the burgomeister knows also, from the divorce suit, that she has nothing, nothing at all. My father and I gave information of this occurrence, and in the examination it came out that, besides the gold pieces alluded to, she had other money, of which she could give no account, and it also came out--which is the principal thing--that she had gone on the same road with the messenger, on the same morning."

"How is it possible!" cried Axel; "then didn't the fellow steal the money himself?"

"It seems," said Rudolph, "as if it had been stolen from him. Our prudent old burgomeister has had the woman arrested, on other minor charges of theft, and has forbidden my father and me to mention the matter; to yourself, on the contrary, when he heard that I was coming this way, he expressly allowed me to speak of it. You will certainly hear from him, by letter, very soon."

"Herr Kurz," said Axel, "I am extremely obliged to you, for riding over to give me this information," and he gave the young man his hand. Rudolph laughed a little, and said finally, "If this had been all, I should have come alone, but you have noticed my aunt, she has something very much at heart."

"If I can serve you in any way----" said Axel, courteously.

"Come, I will say it right out, a cousin of mine, a theological candidate, proposes himself, through my aunt, for the presentation to the Gurlitz living."

"A cousin? I thought you were a theologian yourself."

"Was! Herr von Rambow, was!" cried Rudolph briskly. "I believe I am not sufficiently highly organized, as they call it now-a-days, and I preferred to become a farmer, and I can tell you," he went on, looking joyously in the young Herr's eyes, "since then, I have been a very happy man."

It must have been a terribly churlish fellow who would not have warmed at contact with such fresh life, and Axel was still, on the whole, a good apple, bruised a little here and there, on the outside, and a little soiled, but inside, yet sound at the core; he exclaimed heartily:

"That is right? That is right! That has been my experience. The life of a Mecklenburg farmer shall yet be worth one's while. Where are you staying, Herr Kurz?"

"With the greatest farmer of the age, with Hilgendorf, at Little Tetzleben," laughed Rudolph.

"A very capable man!" said Axel, "thorough-bred too! that is to say, his horses."

And now they began to talk of Gray Momus, and Herodotus, and Black Overshire, and Hilgendorf received his share of attention, and when Rudolph finally stood up, and offered his hand to Herr von Rambow, it was very kindly pressed, and the Herr said:

"Rely upon it, no other than your cousin shall get the presentation from me."

As they came back into the parlor, Frau Nüssler rose from the sofa, and said to Frida, "He would give his life for you, and for the Herr," and going up to the Herr, she said, "isn't it so? you will do it, Herr von Rambow? It will make me so happy if I can keep my Lining in the neighborhood."

Axel was not disposed to like such a free, off-hand reception, nor was he--though of course without any reasonable ground--disposed to like the Nüssler ways; but the news that there was a possibility of recovering his two thousand thalers, the "thorough-bred" talk with Rudolph, and the really impressive, simple, true-hearted manners of Frau Nüssler, had their effect; he went up to his wife and said:

"Dear Frida, we have a prospect of recovering our two thousand thalers."

"The dear God grant it!" said Frau Nüssler. "Rudolph, have you spoken to the gracious Herr?"

"Yes," replied Axel for him, "the business is settled, he shall have the presentation from me; but--I should like to see him first."

"That is nothing more than right and proper," said Frau Nüssler; "who would buy a cat in a bag? And you shall see, if he is appointed, and preaches, you shall see that he *can*; but, dear heart! stupid? Well, everybody is stupid about something; I cannot promise for that."

And so they rode off. Gottlieb would have the presentation.

"So," said Bräsigt, "the business is well started; now Gottlieb has only his last execution at Pomuchelskopp's and then the election! But he must strike while the iron is hot, and since neither God nor man can help him with Zamel Pomuchelskopp, he must run his risk, and that quickly."

The opinion was reasonable, and Gottlieb got a letter containing a positive command that he should report himself at Rexow, next day, there to receive further instructions.

He arrived, and, when Bräsigt had briefly explained the business, he was ready to undertake the dangerous errand. Krischan the coachman drove the Phantom up to the door, Lining brought a foot-sack and cloak and shawls, and tucked her future husband warmly in.

"That is right," said Bräsigt; "wrap him up, Lining, so that he may not freeze, and that the catarrh may not run away with his fine voice; it is showery weather to-day."

Suddenly Jochen Nüssler rose up from his chimney-corner, and said, "Mining, my cloak!"

"Well, this is a fine time of day!" said Bräsigt.

"Jochen, what do you want?" asked Frau Nüssler.

"Mother," said young Jochen, "you went with Rudolph, I will go with Gottlieb. I will do my share of the business," and he made such a decided motion of the head, and looked at them all with so much expression, that Bräsigt cried out, "May you keep the nose on your face! I never saw the like, in all my life."

"Ah, Bräsigt," said Frau Nüssler, "he is always like that lately; but lei him go, there is no use talking."

And Jochen rode on with him. Lining, however, went up to her little chamber, and prayed as earnestly for Gottlieb, on his difficult, errand, as if he were really going to execution.

Jochen and Gottlieb rode on through the deep mud, in silence; neither spoke a word, for each had his own thoughts, and the only remark made was when Krischan looked round over his shoulder, and said, "Herr, if one should drive here in the dark, and slip, he might turn over very conveniently." So, about four o'clock in the afternoon, they arrived at Pomuchelskopp's.

Pomuchelskopp lay like a lump of misfortune on his sofa, rubbing his eyes, for Gustaving had startled him out of his afternoon sleep, when he came in for the key of the granary, for it was Saturday, and he wanted to give out the grain.

"Gustaving," he cried spitefully, "you will be an awkward fellow all your days, you are a regular dunce! Blockhead! I will put you on a pole, for all the people to see what a dunce you are!"

"Yes, father----"

"Eh, what? yes, father! How often have I told you not to make such a clattering with the keys, when your father is trying to rest! What carriage is that, driving up the yard?"

"Good gracious!" cried Gustaving, "that is our neighbor Nüssler, and another Herr."

"Blockhead!" exclaimed Pomuchelskopp. "How often have I told you, you should not call everybody neighbor! The day-laborer, Brinkmann, will be my neighbor next, because he lives near my garden; I will not be neighbor to everybody," and with that he went to the door, to see what was going to happen.

Jochen and Gottlieb, meanwhile, had got down from the carriage, and Jochen came up to him: "Good day, neighbor!" Pomuchelskopp made him a very ceremonious bow, such as he had learned to make at the Landtag, and showed them into the parlor. It was very still in the room, if one excepts the little creaking of the chairs; Jochen thought Gottlieb ought to speak, Gottlieb thought Jochen ought to speak, and Pomuchelskopp thought he ought not to speak, lest he should commit himself to something. Finally, however, Gottlieb began:

"Herr Pomuchelskopp, the good, brave Pastor Behrens has gone to God, and if it seems hard, and almost unchristian, that I should offer myself, so soon after his death, as a candidate for the vacant parish, yet I do not believe that I offend against the common feelings of humanity, or the duty of a true Christian; because I am conscious that I take this step only to satisfy the wishes of my own parents, as well as those of my future father and mother-in-law."

That was a fine speech for Gottlieb, and he was right, in every respect; but Pomuchelskopp had the right of it, also, when he made no other reply than to say to Gottlieb, all that might be, but he wished to know with whom he had the honor of speaking. Jochen motioned with his head to Gottlieb that he should tell him frankly, and Gottlieb said that he was the son of Rector Baldrian, and a candidate. Jochen lay back comfortably in his chair, after this announcement, as if the business were settled, and he could smoke his pipe in peace. But since Muchel had offered

him no pipe, he had to content himself with going through the motions, with his mouth, puffing away like a Bohemian carp, when it comes up for air.

"Herr Candidate," said Pomuchelskopp, "there have been several of your sort, already, to see me about this business,"--this was a lie, but he knew no other way of managing a parish business, than if he were selling a lot of fat swine to the butcher,--"but I have let them all go, because the matter with me turns upon one point."

"And that was?" asked Gottlieb. "My examina----"

"That is nothing to me," said the Herr Proprietor, "I mean the Pastor's acre. If you will consent to rent the field to me,--of course for a good, a very good price,--then you shall have my vote, otherwise not."

"I think I have heard," said Gottlieb, "that the field is rented to the Herr von Rambow, and I should not like----"

"You may set your mind at rest on that point, Herr von Rambow will not rent the field again," and Pomuchelskopp looked at Gottlieb in an overbearing way, as if he had sold his fat swine at the highest price. Jochen said nothing, but stopped his puffing for a moment, and looked at his candidate son-in-law, as if to ask, "What do you say now?"

Gottlieb was beyond his depth, for he was very ignorant of worldly affairs, but he reflected, and his honorable nature was strongly opposed to entering upon his clerical office by means of such a bargain; he said, therefore, frankly:

"I cannot and will not give such a promise; I do not wish to procure the living by such means. It will be time enough to settle that business when I am in the living."

"So?" asked the Herr Proprietor, grinning at Gottlieb and Jochen, "then, let me tell you, the fox is too wise for you; what comes after, the wolf seizes, and if Herr von Rambow should not change his mind about the field, you can rent it to your Herr father-in-law. Isn't it so, to your Herr father-in-law?"

That was an infamous speech of Pomuchelskopp's. Jochen rent the field! Jochen, who from morning to night bore such a heavy burden, should take this also on his shoulders! He sprang quickly to his feet, and said, "Herr Neighbor, if a man do what he can do, what can he do more; and what can I do about it? If the Pumpelhagen Herr will not have the field, neither will I, I have enough to do."

"Herr Nüssler," said Pomuchelskopp, craftily, "will you give me that in writing, that you will not rent the field?"

"Yes," said Jochen readily, and he sat down again comfortably in his chair, and smoked on. Pomuchelskopp walked up and down the room, and calculated: Herr von Rambow gave up the lease, Jochen would not take it, they were the only ones who could use it, the field was too small to rent as a farm by itself, and he, as the proprietor, need not allow it; it came to this, whether Gottlieb could farm it himself, and Pomuchelskopp examined him with reference to that question, looking at him sideways, as he walked back and forth.

There are all sorts of men in the world, and every one has his peculiar talents, and most people have a good deal of one kind of talent, and other kinds in much smaller proportions; in Gottlieb's case, however, nature seemed to have made a little mistake, she sent him into the world, at least to all appearance, without the slightest trace of agricultural talent. Bräsig had done his utmost to educate Gottlieb a little in these matters, but all in vain; what isn't *in* a man cannot be brought out of him. Gottlieb could not tell the difference between oats and barley, he did not know which was ox and which was bull, and Bräsig finally gave him up in despair, sighing, "Good heavens, how will the poor fellow ever get through the world!"

Pomuchelskopp, the practical old fellow, detected this failing of Gottlieb's, and was much pleased. "He knows nothing whatever of farming," said he to himself, "that is my man. But I mustn't let him know it!"

"Herr Candidate," said he aloud, "I am pleased with you, you are a very sensible man, and a man of morality--you will not comply with my request--good! neither will I promise to grant yours. But if Herr Nüssler will give me a written statement that he will not rent the Pastor's acre, we need talk no further about the business; for, as I said, I am pleased with you."

So then Jochen signed his name, and the two old dunces rode off, very well satisfied with the transaction. They had got nothing, nothing at all, but a partial promise from the Herr Proprietor, and for that Jochen had been obliged to give his signature; but they were quite contented. Jochen was strongly of the opinion, and remained so till his death, that he had obtained the parish for his son-in-law by his signature.

Jochen and Gottlieb would have been glad to stop a little while at the parsonage; but Krischan the coachman opposed it violently, saying it would never do, it was pitch dark already; so the old Phantom labored along, in the night and the mist, through the deep country roads. To night and

mist and a phantom, sleep is appropriate, and whoever finds this four-leaved clover, has the prospect of all sorts of good fortune. Sleep was not long absent. Jochen slept before they were fairly put of Gurlitz, and if it had been daylight, one could have seen, from the way Krischan dragged his whip, that he was beginning to doze, and though Gottlieb did not sleep he was farther off, in his thoughts, than the others; for he was dreaming of his Lining, and his parish, and his election sermon, and his entrance sermon. And when they came to the place where Krischan had made his intelligent remark, as they were going, and as the influences of sleep and darkness combined with its dangers, and Gottlieb had come in his dream to the last election vote, which gave the decision in his favor, the confounded old Phantom began to totter, the fore-wheel was up, high and dry, on the shore, and the hind-wheel, over which Gottlieb sat, fell into a deep hole; so, two steps further, and splash! the whole company lay in the ditch.

I see, from my window, a great many farmers of the Grand Duke's lands getting down from their carriages, at my Frau Neighbor's, the landlady Frau Lurenz, at the "Prince's Arms," but I never in my life saw any one get down so quickly as Jochen; he shot out, in a great curve, over Gottlieb, who was lying beneath him, directly, in the soft mud, and Krischan, old, honest, faithful soul, who could not think of deserting his master in such a crisis, also shot head-foremost from his seat, and lay at his master's side.

"Purr--Oh! Herr, just lie still!" cried the honest old fellow, "the horses will stand!"

"You blockhead!" cried Jochen.

"Praise God!" exclaimed Krischan, getting on his feet, "I am all right. But Herr, just lie perfectly still, I will hold the horses."

"You blockhead!" said Jochen again, scrambling up, while Gottlieb splashed and waded about in the deep mire, "how could you turn us over here?"

"Yes, it is all as true as leather," said Krischan, who, in his long years of service, had caught his master's expressions, "what could a body do, on such a road, in such pitch darkness?"

Since Jochen's words were taken out of his mouth in this way, he didn't know what to say for himself, so he asked, "Gottlieb, are your bones whole?"

"Yes, uncle," said the candidate, "and yours too?"

"Yes," said Jochen, "except my nose, but that seems clean gone out of my face."

The carriage had been righted by this time, and, as they got in again, Krischan turned half round and said:

"Herr, didn't I tell you, this afternoon, this was the place to tip over?"

"Blockhead!" cried Jochen, rubbing his nose, "you were asleep."

"Asleep, Herr, asleep? In such pitch darkness, it is all the same whether one sleeps or wakes; but I said so before. I know the road by heart, and I said so."

And when he afterwards related the story to the other servants, he always said that he had prophesied it, but the Herr would not listen to him; holding up Jochen in the light of a venturesome fellow, who would risk his neck for nothing, against all opposition.

They arrived at the house, and Gottlieb first got down from the carriage. Lining had been sitting all this time on thorns and nettles of impatience, and had listened, through the darkness, for every sound which could bring her certainty of happiness or misfortune. Now she heard something--that must be--no, it was only the wind in the poplars; but now! yes, that is a carriage, it came nearer, it drove up,--she sprang up, she ran to the door, but must stop to press her hand against her throbbing heart,--how it beat, with hope and fear I would Gottlieb bring happiness or misfortune? She opened the door.

"Don't touch me!" cried Gottlieb, but it was too late, Lining, although the oldest, was still very thoughtless, she threw her arms around Gottlieb, and pressed him to her warm heart; but such a chill struck through her, that she felt as if she had taken a frog in her arms, she let him go, exclaiming,--

"Good heavens! what has happened?"

"Overturned," said Gottlieb, "we were, by God's gracious help, overturned; that is to say, Krischan took care of the overturning, but God's gracious help preserved us from serious injury."

"How you look!" cried Bräsigg, who came out with a light, just as Jochen entered the door.

"Yes, Bräsigg," said Jochen, "it is all as, true as leather; we were tipped over."

"Eh, where?" said Bräsigg, "how could a reasonable man, of your years, get tipped over, on his own roads? You were asleep, Jochen!"

"Good gracious, Jochen!" cried Frau Nüssler, "how you look!" and she turned him round, before the light, as if he were a piece of roast veal, on the spit, which she had just finely basted with gravy. "Gracious, Jochen! and your nose----"

"And how does the clerical gentleman look?" inquired Bräsig, holding the light to Gottlieb, in front and rear. "Well!" he said, leaving him, "and now Lining! Why, Lining, you were not tipped over! Frau Nüssler, just look at her! She has half the road from here to Gurlitz upon her clothes!"

Lining blushed deeply, and Mining wiped off the mud from her, and Frau Nüssler did the same for Jochen.

"Gracious, Jochen, how you have muddied yourself! Now, just look at it, the nice new cloak!" Jochen had purchased it for his wedding, some twenty years before. "Well, it can't be helped; I must rip it all out, and to-morrow the whole thing must be washed in the brook."

Orders were issued accordingly, and, after a little while, the two travellers were seated, in dry clothes, at the table, in the living-room. Now, for the first time, Frau Nüssler saw her Jochen's nose, in a clear light.

"Jochen," said she, "how your nose looks!"

"Yes, they said so," replied Jochen.

"Jochen," said Bräsig, "I must be an infamous liar, if I ever said that your nose was particularly handsome; but--may you keep the nose on your face!--what a nose you have on your face!"

"For shame, Bräsig, how can you wish he should keep such a nose as that? Preserve us! it grows bigger and bigger! What can be done for it?"

"Frau Nüssler," said Bräsig, "he must go to the water-cure."

"What?" said Frau Nüssler, "my Jochen go to the water-cure, because he has bumped his nose?"

"You don't understand me," said Bräsig, "he need not go, wholly and entirely, body and bones, to the water-cure; he shall only send his nose there; we must make him cold bandages. Or, Jochen, could you bleed a little from the nose? It would refresh you very much."

But Jochen could not do that, so they prepared the cold bandages, and Jochen sat there, very stately and contented, with his nose wrapped up in wet linen, and, under his nose, his pipe of tobacco.

"But," said Bräsig, "no mortal knows yet how you succeeded with Zamel Pomuchelskopp."

"Yes," said Lining, "how was it, Gottlieb?" So Gottlieb described their interview with the Herr Proprietor, and when he had finished, Jochen said,--

"Yes, it is all settled, I have signed my name."

"Jochen, what have you signed your name for?" asked Bräsig, angrily.

"About the Pastor's acre, that I will not rent it."

"Then you have done something very foolish. Oh, the Jesuit! *He* wants the Pastor's acre. Nightingale, I hear thee singing, from the little brook wilt drink. That was his great end and aim! But--but"--he sprang up, and stalked about the room, "I will spoil your game. Hear to the end, says Kotelmann. Zamel Pomuchelskopp, we will talk about this! What does the celebrated poet say, about David and Goliath? I consider myself David, and him Goliath. 'He took the sling into his hand, and smote him on the brow, headlong he fell.' And how finely the same celebrated poet says, in his grand concluding words, 'So ever does the boaster fall, and when he thinks he firmly stands, then lies he in the ditch.' And so it shall be with you, Zamel! And, Frau Nüssler, now I have got myself angry, and can eat no supper, so I will say 'Good night,' for I have all sorts of things to think about."

He took his candle and departed, and after supper they all went early to bed, and Lining lay a long time, wakeful through care and anxiety, and listened to the wind in the trees, and the steps in the room beneath, which went back and forth, back and forth, in the same measure; for there Uncle Bräsig lodged, and--as he said next morning--was planning campaign that night.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The year 1845 had arrived, and the world went on in its old course, and turned itself over, as usual. Day and night, and joy and sorrow, succeeded each other, just as they have done since time began, since the Lord appointed day and night, and placed man in the garden of Eden, and then expelled him from it. How many days and nights, and how much joy and sorrow! The day always dawns, and the night always comes; there is no difference. But is it even so with joy and sorrow? Are they as impartially divided? I think so! The Lord's hand stretches over all, and from his hand falls happiness and unhappiness, comfort and anxiety, upon the world, and every one has his share; but men are perverse, they will call their misfortunes happiness, and their happiness they take for misfortune; they push aside the cup of comfort, as if it were filled with gall, and they laugh away their anxieties.

The people, whom I have written about in this book, were no better than others, they did just like the rest; but there are two things which the Lord sends into the world as joy and sorrow, and no gall can embitter the one, and the other cannot be laughed away,—these are birth and death, beginning and ending. In my little world also, there was beginning and ending, birth and death; the fair, young Frau sat in Pempelhagen, and held a little child, a little daughter, upon her lap, and the door of her heart stood wide open, for God's clear sunlight to shine in. She could not help it. The dark shadows which had been closing around her were no longer visible to her eyes,—she must rejoice! and before the parsonage at Gurlitz, lay a grave, and two figures in black went silently back and forth, and when spring came, they planted flowers upon it, and when the linden leaved out, before the house, and the lilacs blossomed, they sat together on the bench, and leaned against each other, as in the old time, when the Frau Pastorin had wrapped the little Louise in her shawl. Now it was reversed, now Louise threw her shawl around the little Frau Pastorin. And so these two mourners sat together, and looked over at the churchyard, and when Habermann came, there were three, and they sat patiently in the shadows, and did not push aside the cup of comfort, and when they separated, the evening star was shining.

The first, violent grief was gone from the parsonage, but its marks were yet to be seen, beautiful marks, which the death-angel leaves upon human faces. He had kissed Louise upon her clear, high forehead, and the kiss remained there, lighting her face like an earnest thought; he had embraced the little, round Frau Pastorin, at his departure, and had taken away almost all her own quick, eager vivacity, and had left in its place only loving thoughts of her Pastor. She lived entirely in these. All must remain as it had been in his life; in his study, the arm-chair stood before the writing-table, the last sermon which he had written lay upon it, and the pen by its side, and the Bible of his childhood lay open, where she had turned the leaf at his death. Every morning she went first into this room, with her duster, and dusted and put everything in order, and stood long in thought, and looked at the door, as if he must come in, in his dressing-gown, and give her a kiss, and say, "I thank you, dear Regina." And at dinner, Louise put plates for three; and her Pastor's chair was always in its place, and it seemed to her as if he were sitting opposite, and talking in the most cheerful manner, and the remains of her own vivacity, which grief had left, reappeared at these times, for she did not push aside the cup of comfort.

But how long could this last? The parish must be supplied with a new pastor, and then she must leave the house, she must leave the village, she must sever herself from the grave; for there was no widow's house, and Pomuchelskopp would not build one, for he had no occasion for one.

For the last time she watched the blooming of the fruit-trees, which her Pastor had planted, for the last time she sat under the fragrant lilacs, where she had sat so happily with him, for the last time came the spring, and wound its wreath around the peaceful dwelling, for the last time came the summer, and strewed its golden blessing upon it: "Louise, when the swallows fly, in the autumn, we must be flitting too," she said, sadly, and she felt that it would be like another death.

Habermann was her truest friend, and she gave herself wholly into his hands, what he did must be right. He thought and thought, but could think of no way to spare them the removal; but he would make it easier. Kurz the merchant had a roomy house, near his own, with a garden attached, which could be altered to resemble the parsonage. And Louise must secretly measure the rooms at the parsonage, how large the parlor was, and how long the wall, and then drive with her father to Rahnstadt, and Schultz the carpenter was sent for, to draw a plan after Louise's measurements. But he wouldn't do it, for "in the first place," said he, "I couldn't draw a plan after a woman's ribbon and apron-string measuring, and, secondly, it is not necessary; plan-drawing is plan-drawing. I don't believe in plan-drawing, I carry my plans in my head." And Kurz said, if it were arranged differently it would be much better, but Habermann was firm; it should be so, and if it could not be made so, the business was settled; and Schultz the carpenter said there was no sort of difficulty, and, if it could only be managed, he would go over, and take the measurements himself. This was arranged, and he came before daylight while the Frau Pastorin was still sleeping, and measured the rooms, talking to himself the while: "Seven--seven--five and twenty, five and twenty,—Kurz--Habermann--Kurz--Habermann--awkward, awkward,—here there must be a projecting beam,—too great a strain, a bolt carried through,—so, so,—all right,—so, now out! out!"—and he went out to his brown ponies, and drove softly away, with the finest building-plan in his head that ever a man could make. The building began immediately, and Habermann, who took a diligent supervision, was, on the whole, very well satisfied, only he did not quite understand the projecting beam, but he yielded, when he observed that Schultz himself felt strongly about the matter, and when he came to know that that architect never in his life put up a building without a "projecting beam." Kurz also yielded his opposition, and so the removal was made as easy as it

was possible for him to make it.

At Pumpelhagen, as I have said, there was great joy: the clear eyes of Frida rested on her little daughter, and before these clear eyes, mother-love had woven a light, sweet veil, as if it would conceal from the mother the future of the little one, and leave her undisturbed to dream and create. And there was nothing in her way, one happy dream succeeded another; and now again the clear sunlight beamed from her heart to Axel, when she held up to him her child. Axel's heart was also full of joy, he came continually to inquire after mother and child; but yet he had a slight feeling of disappointment; he had wished for a son, an heir of his ancient name. It is a horrible thing that a little innocent girl, from the first moment she opens her eyes to the daylight, should have to contend with the unjust wishes and prejudices of other people, and suffer on account of them. If any one had said this to Axel, he would have been very angry, for he was really glad, in spite of his disappointment; he had seated himself directly, and announced the "happy event" to all his acquaintances, even his horse-acquaintances, and Pomuchelskopp; three people only, he had intentionally omitted; his cousin Franz,--"that stupid boy,"--the Frau Pastorin at Gurlitz,--"that matchmaker,"--and Frau Nüssler,--"that uncultivated old woman." And when he laid the letters on his wife's bed, and she wondered that these three were forgotten, he said coldly, he had nothing to do with these people, if she wished to do it, she must do it on her own responsibility.

She did it, accordingly; and after a few days came Louise, to offer congratulations, in the name of the Frau Pastorin, and Axel came into the room, and seeing the inspector's daughter said, "Ah, Mademoiselle Habermann! I beg you will excuse me," and went quickly out of the room. And again after a few days, Frau Nüssler came, with Krischan and the Phantom, driving into the yard, and Axel went off to the fields, when he saw them coming; and when he returned, and learned from Daniel that Frau Nüssler was still with the gracious lady, he exclaimed impatiently: "I do not comprehend my wife, how she can take any pleasure in the society of such uneducated people!"

That was a very droll thing for him to say, for only a few weeks before, in a company of horse-raisers, he had pronounced his friend, Herr von Brulow, of Brulowshof, a very cultivated man of science, and when a young doctor, who was accidentally present, had remarked that his education and science were not carried to a very great extent. Axel rose up, and said, over his shoulder, to the mistaken young man, if one had, in any direction whatever, such an experience as the Herr von Brulow in raising thorough-bred horses, and especially in the management of colts, he must be allowed, by the most envious person, the name of an educated and scientific man, even if he understood nothing else; for that business was one of the greatest importance. And yet in his eyes, this good woman was uneducated, though nobody in the world was better qualified to advise his wife in the nursing and management of his own little infant. Pomuchelskopp also had come, in his blue dress-coat, with gilt buttons, and the coach with the coat of arms, and the four brown horses, and had brought his congratulations. That was another thing, that was a genteel equipage! And he was very cordially received by Axel, and must stay for luncheon, and afterwards Axel showed him his thorough-bred mares with their colts, and Pomuchelskopp was highly delighted, and laying his hand impressively on Axel's arm, and looking up in his eyes, he said, "All very fine, Herr von Rambow, very fine for a beginning, but if you want to do something worth while, in horse-raising, you should have paddocks. The young animal should naturally be brought up in the open air. Freedom, freedom, Herr von Rambow! That is the first condition, if you mean to do anything of importance. And, you see, you have here the finest opportunity, if you take off four paddocks here, behind the park, for your thoroughbred mares, and let the field, up as far as the hill, be sowed with grass and clover, instead of grain; there is the brook down there, and you have the finest water. Something can be done. Of course," he added, as Axel looked a little thoughtful, "your inspector will not like the idea."

"My inspector has nothing to say, if I command anything," said Axel hotly.

"I know that," said Pomuchelskopp, pacifying him, "he knows nothing about such matters."

"But the meadow will be too small, if I take off this corner of the best soil," said Axel.

"Yes," said Pomuchelskopp, and shrugged his shoulders, "you must make a change with the meadow, for you have had the pastor's acre, hitherto, for meadow land, and the lease is out; and a little more or less will not signify."

"That is true," said Axel, with some hesitation, for what he had promised in an emergency had often annoyed him since, and it always puts a man out of humor, when he must give up something from which he has derived advantage and pleasure. But Pomuchelskopp was so friendly, so well-meaning and upright; he gave him so much good advice,--and--this he said by the way--if things didn't go right, he was always at hand,--that Axel shook hands with him cordially, as he took leave, and sat down to his reflections, with his head full of paddocks.

Habermann was crossing the courtyard; Axel opened the window, and called to him: "Herr Habermann," said he, "how far have you gone with the barley-sowing, behind the park?"

"I think we shall finish the meadow day after to-morrow; to-morrow we begin down here, by the brook."

"Good! From there up to the hill--I will tell you about the rest afterwards--you may sow Timothy, rye-grass, and white clover, with the barley. Send Triddelsitz to Rahnstadt, in the

morning, to get the seed from David."

"But pasture grass does not follow barley."

"Do you hear me? I wish this piece of ground sowed for a pasture. I am going to put up paddocks there, for the brood-mares."

"Paddocks? paddocks?" asked the old man, as if he could not believe his ears.

"Yes, paddocks," said Axel, preparing to close the window.

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann, laying his hand on the window-seat, "this is the finest soil in the whole meadow, if you take it away, there will not be enough for grain. That was the very reason the late Herr Kammerrath rented the pastor's acre."

It was the very thing which Axel had said to himself, and he knew very well that the inspector was right; but it is very irritating for a master, to acknowledge his inferior in the right.

"I shall not rent the pastor's acre again," said the young Herr.

The old man let his hands fall to his sides.

"Not rent the Pastor's acre again?" said he, "Herr, the field has brought us--I have kept a special book for it---"

"It is all one to me! You hear me, I shall not rent it again."

"Herr von Rambow, it cannot be possible----"

"Did you hear me? *I shall not rent it again!*"

"But Herr, I beg of you, reflect----"

"Eh, what!" exclaimed Axel, and closed the window. "A tedious old fellow!" he exclaimed, "an old foggy!" and he went back to his chair, and thought about his paddocks; but the fine pictures which his fancy had painted would not return, he must first get rid of the thought that he had again committed an injustice.

And the old man? How deeply grieved he went back to the meadow! How his attachment and gratitude to the late Kammerrath struggled against the mortification he had so often endured from the only son of his old master! And of what use was this struggle? Of what use was he to the young Herr? None at all! Step by step, the young man went forward to his destruction, and his hand which could save him, and so gladly would, was thrust aside, and his heart which was brimful of love and friendliness to the young Herr, and his whole household, was treated as if it beat in the breast of an unfaithful servant, who thought merely of his own reward.

"Triddelsitz," said he, when he came to the meadow, "this corner, between the brook and the hill, the Herr will have sowed with grass; he will come out himself, and show you about it; let them sow the barley a little thinner."

"What is he going to do with it?" asked Fritz.

"He will tell you himself, when he sees fit. There he comes, from the garden," said the old man, and went out of his master's way.

"Triddelsitz," said Herr von Rambow, "this piece of ground, up to the hill, is to be sowed with grass; you shall get the seed from David to-morrow; I am going to have paddocks here."

"Famous!" cried Fritz. "I have always thought of that, whether we couldn't have paddocks, or something of the kind."

"Yes, it is necessary."

"To be sure, it is necessary," said Fritz, fully convinced. For no one must think that he was a flatterer; he really meant what he said, and if he had known what an expense and what trouble these paddocks would cost, he would certainly not have expressed this opinion; but--as I have said before--in all such crazy performances, he was united, with his whole soul, to his master.

"Have you a measuring-rod here?" asked Axel.

"A measuring-rod? No," said Fritz, laughing, in a rather contemptuous and yet shamefaced manner, "I have myself invented a measuring instrument. If you will allow me, I will show you," and he ran to the nearest ditch, and brought out a great barrel-hoop, which was all entangled with strings; into the midst of these strings he put his walking-stick, as in the axle of a wheel, and let the machine run.

"The circumference of the hoop is just the length of the rod," said Fritz, "and this hammer strikes on the board, when it has turned completely round."

"See! see!" cried Axel, his old delight in inventions reviving. "And did you invent that, all by yourself?"

"All by myself," said Fritz, but he should have said his laziness invented it, for he had a great dislike to stooping his long body.

"Well, you can measure the land for me," said Axel, and went back to the house, saying to himself, Triddelsitz was a skilful farmer, and a wide-awake fellow, he would rather have him for a manager than Habermann.

After a while, the old inspector returned to Fritz, very much out of humor.

"Triddelsitz," said he, "what are you doing? You have let them sow the barley much too thick."

"God forbid!" said Fritz, "I arranged the machine just as you ordered, I measured the land myself."

"It isn't possible!" cried Habermann, "then my eyes must deceive me. Where is your measuring-rod?"

"I haven't a measuring-rod," said Fritz, "and don't need one either," he added, spitefully, for the great approbation of the young Herr had gone to his head. "I measure everything with my instrument," pointing to his invention which lay at his feet.

"What?" cried Habermann, "what is that?"

"An invention of mine," said Fritz, looking as proud as if he had set up the first steam-engine.

"Ah!" said Habermann, "well, take the trumpery, and measure me ten rods."

Fritz took his invention in hand, and let the thing run. Habermann walked by his side, and asked:

"How much have you?"

"Ten rods," said Fritz.

"And I have nine, and two feet," said the old man.

"It isn't possible," said Fritz, "you must have counted wrong, my instrument is right."

"Five of my steps are a Mecklenburg rod," said the old man hotly, "but because you are a fool you have spoiled the whole field of barley. How can such trumpery measure in the fresh furrow, when it could hardly do upon perfectly even ground. Oh, laziness, laziness! Go in directly, and bring me out a proper measuring-rod!" and he took his knife out of his pocket, and cut Fritz's invention into little pieces, and then went to the machine, and arranged it differently.

Fritz stood there, looking first at him, and then at his invention, which lay about him, in little bits; it is really a hard thing for a man, who wishes to accomplish something in the world, to be so taken down, at his first attempt. He had such benevolent intentions,--of course towards himself first, but also towards all his colleagues, and all the clerks in Mecklenburg,--that that infamous stooping might go out of fashion, and now his good intentions lay in fragments at his feet.

"I must bring the measuring-rod," said he, "there is no help for that; but I would a thousand times rather manage with the gracious Herr, than with old Habermann." And as he went up to the house after the rod, a great bitterness came over him towards Habermann, and he forgot all that he had promised him in a happy hour,--the best rooms in his house, two carriage horses, and a saddle horse,--and as he was speaking, for a moment, with Marie Möller, who had again taken possession of his vacant heart, and learned from her that the young Herr had spoken sharply to Habermann at the window, he comforted himself, and went off with the rod over his shoulder, and a bit of sausage in his hand, saying:

"Well, the old man will not do for us much longer; he is getting too old; he has no capacity for new ideas."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Seed-time passed, and summer came; the young Frau went out but little, and the comfort

which the old inspector would have taken from her bright eyes and cheerful disposition he must do without, for she had something dearer, something of more importance to do, even if all this importance lay wrapped up in a bundle of flannels; she knew how precious were the hopes and wishes which she cradled in her arms, and, for the time, all other duties were sacrificed to these.

Over Axel also, came with his fatherhood a vague, undefined feeling, as if it were his sacred duty and obligation to labor for his child; he began to manage his estate with great diligence; instead of superintending matters, in a general way, as he had hitherto done, like a sort of field-marshal, he conducted himself more like a corporal, who concerns himself about all the little details of his corporalship, and he stuck his nose into everything, even into the tar-barrel. He might have done that, and it is very well for a master to be interested in everything, but he should have left the commanding alone, for he didn't understand it.

He took hold of the management in the most unintelligent way, broke up the old man's arrangements, and when he had brought everything into confusion, he went into the house, and scolded the old man: "The old man has not the least *method!* He is too old for me. No, we cannot go on so any longer!" And Krischan Segel said to Diedrich Snäsel: "Well, what shall we do now, the Herr says *so*, and the inspector says *so*?"

"Well, neighbor," said Diedrich, "if the Herr says----"

"Yes, but it is all stuff and nonsense."

"Then you need not do it, and if he has said it, it is no matter."

So the harvest ripened, and the blessing of the fields must be gathered into barns, the rye was cut, and had stood three days in sheaves.

"Herr Inspector," called Axel from the window, and as Habermann came up he said, "tomorrow, we will bring in the rye."

"Herr von Rambow, it will not do yet, yesterday and to-day it has been cloudy, and it has not dried; the grain is still soft, and some stems are quite green."

"Well, it will do. How will you bring it in?"

"If it must be brought in, we should begin right behind the village, and go with two gangs, one to drive into the great barn, the other into the barley barn."

"Begin behind the village? With two gangs? Why?"

"The nearer we begin to the village the more we can get in in one day and the weather looks suspicious; and we must bring it in in two gangs, and into two barns, or the people will get in each other's way, and the wagons will interfere."

"Hm!" said Axel, closing the window, "I will think about it." And he thought, and came to the conclusion that he would get in this harvest with Fritz Triddelsitz alone; Habermann should have nothing whatever to do with it, and they would show him that he was the fifth wheel of the coach. They would begin at the other end of the field, and bring it in with one gang. What one gang or two gangs were, he was not quite clear in his own mind, but they were only subordinate matters, probably nothing more than some whim of the old inspector's, and he would have nothing to do with these, he meant to free himself from them entirely.

The next morning, at six o'clock, he was on his feet, and went up in a very friendly way to the old man, who was busy in the yard.

"Dear Herr Habermann, I have considered the matter,--you must not take it unkindly,--but I have decided to get in this harvest, with young Triddelsitz, quite by myself, and to give all the necessary orders in person."

The old man stood before him, confounded and dismayed. At last came, heavily and constrained from his breast, the words: "And I, Herr, am I merely to look on? And do you prefer the help of a stupid apprentice to my help?"

He held his walking-stick in front of him, and looked at the young man with eyes which shone in his old face with as much youthful fire, as if all the energy and activity of his long life were concentrated in them, and said frankly:

"Herr, you were a little boy, when I devoted my whole abilities to your good father,--he thanked me, on his dying bed he thanked me! but you? You have filled my cup to the brim, with your ingratitude, and now you wish to disgrace me!"

Then he went off, and Axel called after him:

"Dear Herr Habermann, it is not so intended. I only wanted to try myself." But it was so intended, as he knew very well; he did not want the old man in his way, he looked after him too sharply, and he felt ashamed before him.

The old inspector went to his room, opened his desk, and seated himself before it; but it was long before he could think and begin anything, and meanwhile there was great commotion in the yard. "Triddelsitz!" "Herr von Rambow!" "Where are you going, Jochen?" "Eh, I don't know, nobody has told me." "Fritz Päsel, what are you doing with the plough?" "Eh, what do I know? I was going to plough in the field." "Blockhead!"--this was Fritz's voice--"we are going to get in the rye." "It is all the same to me, if I am not to do it, I will not,"--and he tumbled the plough out of the wagon,--"what the inspector tells me, I do."

"Flegel!" called the young Herr. "Fritz Flegel!" repeated Triddelsitz, after him.

"What do you want?" roared a voice from the workshop.

"Where are the harvesting straps?" asked Fritz Triddelsitz. "There, where you stand," said the wheelwright; "and nobody has said anything to me about them."

"Well, what shall we do?" asked the day-laborer Näsel. "Lord knows," replied Pegel, "nobody has told us." "Flegel!" cried Fritz again, "we are going to bring in the rye; the wagons must be greased." "For all me," called Flegel from his shop, "the tar-barrel stands there."

"Herr von Rambow," said Fritz, "where is Habermann? shall I not call the inspector?"

"No," said Axel slowly, turning to go away.

"Well," said Fritz, who was growing distressed, "we cannot do anything about it this morning."

"It isn't necessary, we can begin this afternoon."

"But what shall the day-laborers be doing meanwhile?"

"Good gracious, the day-laborers!" said Axel, "always the day-laborers! The men can employ themselves usefully here, about the yard. Do you hear?" and he turned round, "you can help grease the wagons."

Meanwhile the old inspector sat at his desk, trying to write something, something difficult, which clutched at his inmost heart, he was going to separate himself from his master, to break down the bridge, which, between the late Kammerrath and himself, had united heart to heart; he would give notice to quit. He heard,--though not distinctly,--the stupid commotion outside, once he sprang to the window, as if he would give an intelligent order; no; that was all over, he had nothing more to do with it! He tore up the letter which he had written, and began another, but that also did not suit him, he pushed aside his writing materials, and closed his desk. But what now? What should he begin? He had nothing to do, he was superseded; he threw himself into the sofa-corner, and thought and thought.

When the afternoon came, by the help of the old wheelwright and a couple of intelligent old laborers, the wagons and the barns were so far ready that the harvesting could begin; and it began accordingly. Axel was on horseback, commanding the whole; Fritz, by his master's order, must also be on horseback; because his old, deaf granny was lame, he rode the old thorough-bred Wallach, which was also a springer; he himself was a sort of adjutant.

Now they could begin. Six spans of horses were fastened to six harvest wagons, and driven in a row, up to the yard,--order is the principal thing,--on one side stood the pitchers and stackers for the barns, on the other the pitchers, loaders and rakers for the field, and, on a given sign, the stackers marched off to the barns, and the field people climbed into the wagons; Axel and Fritz rode on, the wagons followed, and never in the world had there been such order, in the Pumpelshagen farm-yard, as on this fine afternoon; and we must have order.

The old wheelwright, Fritz Flegel, stood in his workshop, and looked at the procession: "What is all that for?" said he, scratching his head, for he had no appreciation of this beautiful order. "Well, it is none of my concern," he said and went back to his work, "but where is our old Herr Inspector?"

He was sitting in his room thinking; the first heat had passed, he stood up and wrote a brief letter, resigning his post at the next Christmas, and asking leave of absence, during the harvest, since he was superfluous under these circumstances; then he took his hat and stick, and went out, he could stay in doors no longer. He sat down on a stone wall, under the shade of a lilac bush, and looked along the road to Warnitz, from which the harvest wagons must come; but they came not, only Bräsig came along the road.

"May you keep the nose on your face, Karl, what sort of performances are you carrying on here? How can you get your rye in yet? it is green as grass! And how can you bring it in with six wagons in one gang? and what keeps the loaded wagons down there in the road?"

"Bräsig, I don't know, you must ask the Herr and Triddelsitz."

"What?"

"Bräsig, I have nothing more to say."

"What? How? What did you say?" cried Bräsig, elevating his eyebrows.

"I have nothing more to say," said Habermann quietly, "I am shoved aside, I am too old for the young Herr."

"Karl," said Bräsig, laying his hand on his old friend's shoulder, "what is the matter? Tell me about it!"

And Habermann told him how it all happened, and when he had finished Bräsig turned round, and looked savagely at the beautiful world, and ground his teeth together, as if he had the world between his teeth, and would crack it, like a tough hazelnut, and called, with a voice half-choked with rage, down the Warnitz road: "Jesuit! Infamous Jesuit!" and turning back to Habermann said, "Karl, in this Triddelsitz also, you have warmed a snake in your bosom!"

"Bräsig, how can he help it? He must do as he is told."

"There he comes racing along, and the six wagons behind him, making a procession--of loaded wagons! This is a comedy, this is an agricultural comedy! Go ahead! and when you get to the old bridge turn over!" cried Uncle Bräsig, dancing around, recklessly, on his poor gouty legs, as if they had brought about the whole mischief, and must be punished accordingly, for his fierce anger had given place to malicious joy.

"Here we have it!" he exclaimed, in great delight, for it happened just as he had said, as the first full wagon came up to the bridge, at a slow trot, it overset. "Stop!" they cried, "thunder and lightning, stop!" Fritz looked round,--well, what, now? He had not the slightest idea what to do; fortunately, he saw Habermann and Bräsig, on the stone wall, and rode up to them hastily.

"Herr Inspector----"

"Herr, you have crumbled your bread, and now you may eat it!" cried Bräsig.

"Dear Herr Inspector, what shall we do? The wagon lies right across the bridge, and the others cannot get by."

"Ride quickly----"

"Karl, hold your tongue, you are laid aside as a sheep for the slaughter, you have nothing to say," interrupted Bräsig.

"Ride quickly"--said Habermann, "no, let them alone, the servants are more intelligent than you are, they will soon get the sheaves out of the way."

"Herr Inspector," said Fritz anxiously, "it is not my fault. Herr von Rambow has ordered it all so, the wagons should drive in a row, and the men should drive quickly with the full loads."

"Drive on then, till your tongues hang out!" cried Bräsig.

"And he is on horseback, on the hill, overseeing and commanding the whole."

"Has he a sperspective in one hand, and a commander's staff in the other, like old Blücher, in the Hop-market, at Rostock?" said Bräsig mockingly.

"Ride up to the court," said Habermann, "and see that the first loaded wagon drives out again quickly."

"I must not do that," said Fritz, "the Herr has expressly commanded that the wagons should drive in again in a row, he says he will have order in the business."

"Then you may tell him the finest donkey I ever saw in my life----"

"Bräsig, take care!" cried Habermann.

"Was--was your little mule, Herr Triddelsitz," concluded Uncle Bräsig, with great presence of mind.

Fritz rode up to the court.

"Karl," said Bräsig, "we might go too, and observe the beautiful order from your window."

"Well, it is all the same," said Habermann, and sighed deeply, "here or there."

They went; the wagons drove into the yard, the first up to the barn-floor, the others waited behind, in a row. The men who unloaded were scolding that they must work themselves to death, the day-laborers were scolding about the damp rye and asking who should thrash it, in the winter, the servants were laughing and cracking jokes, in idleness, and Fritz rode up and down with an uncommonly easy conscience, for he was doing his duty, and following his master's orders. When all was finished he placed himself again at the head of the empty wagons, and the procession moved off. The pitchers and stackers came round into the shade of the barns, laid themselves down, and took a nap; they had time enough now.

"A very fine, peaceful harvest, Karl," observed Bräsigt, "the whole court is as still as death, not a leaf stirs. It is very pleasant for me, for I never saw such an one before."

"It is not very pleasant for me, Bräsigt," said Habermann, "I see trouble coming. Two or three more such pieces of stupidity, and the people will lose all respect for their master; when they see that he orders things that he does not understand, they will do what they please. And the poor, unhappy young man! and especially, the poor, poor young Frau!"

"There comes your gracious lady, just now, out of the house, and the nursemaid follows, with the baby-carriage, in which lies the little sleeping beauty. But Karl! come quick to the window! What is this?"

And it was really worth his while to go to the window, for Fritz Triddelsitz, who led the procession again, came galloping across the court, on old Bill, and about ten rods behind him raced Axel, and shouted, "Triddelsitz!"

"Directly!" cried Fritz, but raced out of the other gate, and Axel after him.

"What the devil is this?" inquired Bräsigt, and had scarcely time to express his astonishment, when Fritz and Bill and Axel came in again, at the water-gate, and raced again across the yard: "Triddelsitz!" "Directly!"

"Herr, are you crazy?" cried Bräsigt, as Fritz rode past the farm-house, but Fritz gave no reply, and sat, all bent up, on his horse, laughing, amid the distress and sorrow around him, and would have greeted the gracious lady, but merely took off his cap, for the young Frau was asking anxiously, "Axel, Axel, what is this?" but got no answer, for Axel was very busy. And, all at once, Bill took the hurdle, before the sheepfold, and Fritz shot off headforemost, into a heap of straw, and Axel turned his horse, and called again, "Triddelsitz!" "Directly, Herr von Rambow," said Fritz, out of the straw-heap.

"What devil rides you?" cried Axel.

"He didn't ride me," said Fritz, as he stood--thank God!--on his own feet again, "I rode him; I believe Bill took a leap with me."

"He was trained for that," said Krischan Däsel, who came running out of the stable; "you see, gracious Herr, the Herr Count used to ride Bill to steeple-chases, and when he takes the notion he runs until he comes to some sort of hedge or gate, and then he springs over, and whenever he has done that trick, he stands like a lamb. You see, there he stands."

"Axel," said the young Frau, coming up, "what does all this mean?"

"Nothing, my child, I had given an order to the steward, and, when he had ridden off, something better occurred to me, and I wished to recall my order, and so followed him; his horse took a leap with him, and I rode back again."

"Thank God," said she, "that it is all right. But will you not come in and take luncheon?"

"Yes," said he, "I have rather fatigued myself to-day. Triddelsitz, everything goes on in the usual order."

"To command!" said Fritz, and Axel went into the house with his wife.

"Axel," she asked, as they sat at the table, "what does it mean? With us, at home, in the harvest, only one loaded wagon came into the yard at a time, and here you had six at the same time."

"Dear Frida, I know the old method well enough, but in that way, disorder is unavoidable; we have much better order, by having all the wagons driven in a row."

"Did Habermann arrange it so?"

"Habermann? No, he had nothing to do with it; I felt the necessity of emancipating myself finally from the supervision of my inspector, and I have signified to him that I would get in this harvest without his help."

"Axel, what have you done! The man cannot suffer that."

"He *must*, though! He must become aware that I am the master of the estate."

"He has always recognized you as such. Dear Axel, this will be a source of bitter sorrow to us," and she leaned back in her chair in deep thought, looking straight before her. Axel was not in a good humor: then the door opened, and Daniel Sadenwater brought a letter: "With the Herr Inspector's compliments."

"There it is!" said Frida.

Axel read the letter: "The Herr Inspector gives notice to leave at Christmas. May go at once. I need no Inspector. Can get a hundred for one. But it provokes me that he should give me notice, and that I did not get the start of him!" and with that he sprang up, and ran up and down the room. Frida sat still, and said not a word. Axel took that for a reproof, for he knew very well that he was in a dangerous path; but he would not allow himself to confess it, he must lay the blame of his fault upon other shoulders, and so he said, in his injustice:

"But that comes from your prejudice in favor of the old, pretentious hypocrite!"

Frida said not a word, but she rose quietly, and left the room.

She sat that evening, by the cradle of her little daughter, and rocked her darling to sleep. Ah, if thoughts could only be rocked to sleep! But a child comes from our Lord, and has yet a bit of heaven's own peace in itself, which it has brought from above; human thoughts come from the earth, and care and sorrow dog their uncertain, weary feet, and an over-wearied man can not sleep. Yes, Axel was right, he could get another inspector, a hundred for one. But Frida was also right: a true heart was to leave her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

In Jochen Nüssler's house, there was great joy and pleasure: Gottlieb was elected, was really chosen to be a pastor, and whom had he especially to thank for it? Who else, but our good, old, simple Pomuchelskopp; he gave the decisive vote. "Häuning," said our old friend, in the church, while the three young candidates, in anguish and fear, were taking their turns in the pulpit, contending for the parish; "Häuning," said he, as Gottlieb concluded, and wiped the sweat from his pale face,—"Klücking, we will choose this one, he is the stupidest."

"If you are only sure of it," said his dear wife, "how can you tell one blockhead from another?"

"Klücking," said Pomuchelskopp, taking no notice of his wife's pleasantry, perhaps because he was so accustomed to it, perhaps because Gottlieb's sermon had touched him, for Gottlieb had preached from the text, "Forgive your enemies,"—"Häuning, the first, the one with the red face, is a son of old Pächter Hamann, and like goes to like, you should see, he would farm it himself; and the second, see! he is a sly one, Gustaving saw him looking at the field, a little while ago, and he asked the Pastor's coachman who took care of the Pastor's barn, the thing was tumbling to pieces. Neither of them would do; the rector's son is our man."

"He who reckons wrong, reckons twice," said Häuning.

"I am not reckoning wrong," said Pomuchelskopp, "the Herr von Rambow and Nüssler have declined the business, in writing; the young man cannot farm it himself, he is too stupid, and I need not allow an under-pächter; he must rent the field to me, and I have it in my own hands, I can say, 'So much, and not a shilling more!'"

And so Gottlieb was elected, for nearly all the votes were given for him, only a couple of day-laborers from Rexow voted for their master, Jochen Nüssler. It was merely a mistake, for they believed it was all the same, and it was done in friendship.

And in Jochen Nüssler's house, there was great joy and pleasure, and the two little twin-apples were floating in bright sunshine, down a clear brook, and nestled close to each other, and Mining floated joyously with her sister, although her own prospects were not so brilliant. But she had a little personal ground of rejoicing; her father, young Jochen, had come in from the field one day, and said this everlasting working was too hard for him, he wished Rudolph were there; and Mother had said he ought to be ashamed of himself, he was still a young fellow; and father had said, "Well, he would manage a little longer;" but it was the beginning of the final blessedness, and the thing was a little hook for her hopes to hang upon.

With Lining, however, all was settled and arranged, and the outfit was purchased, and Frau Nüssler's living-room looked like a spinning-room and cotton factory; here was spinning, and there was knitting, there was sewing and embroidering, and twisting and reeling, and skeins were wound on and wound off, and every one had his share, even young Jochen, and young Bauschan. Young Jochen was employed as yarn-winder, and sat up stiffly, with his pipe in his mouth, and held out his arms with a skein of yarn, and his wife stood before him and wound it off, and when he believed he was to have a little relief, there came Lining, and then Mining, and he was a conquered man; but young Bauschan had his share, also, they were always treading on his toes, and no one had so much reason to curse this wedding as young Bauschan, till, at last, he

retired from the business altogether, esteeming the rubbish-heap in the farm-yard a more comfortable place than a room where an outfit was being prepared.

"So," said Frau Nüssler one evening, folding her hands in her lap, "Bräsig, for all I care, they may be married to-morrow, I am ready with everything."

"Well," said Bräsig, "then make your preparations, for the Pietist and Lining are sure to be ready too."

"Ah, Bräsig, how you talk! The principal thing is still wanting, the government has not given its assent to the parish--What do you call the thing?"

"Ah yes, I know. You mean the vocation, as it is generally called, but I think vocations is the right word, because the blessed Pastor Behrens, in my younger days, always said vocations."

At this moment, Krischan the coachman came in at the door: "Good evening, Madam, and here are the papers."

"Are there no letters?" asked Frau Nüssler.

"Yes," said Krischan, "there was a letter."

"Why didn't you bring it then?"

"Well," said Krischan, tossing his head, as if such stupidity could not be laid to his charge, "there was some trespass-money charged for it, and I hadn't so much by me."

"What did it cost?"

"Now just think of it, eight thalers! And they said there was a post-express or a post-payment, or something of that sort,--perhaps it was brought with post-horses,--and it was for a young Herr, who is our bridegroom."

"Good gracious, Krischan, such an expensive letter as that! From whom could it be?"

"I know something," said Krischan, "but I daren't say it," and he looked at Bräsig.

"Before the Herr Inspector, you may say anything," said Frau Nüssler.

"For all I care!" said Krischan. "It was from some woman-creature, but I have forgotten the name."

"From a woman!" exclaimed Frau Nüssler, "to my son-in-law! and eight thalers to pay!"

"Everything comes to light!" said Bräsig, "even the Pietists get found out!"

"Yes; it all comes out!" said Krischan, going out of the room.

"Krischan," Frau Nüssler sprang up, "you must go to Rahnstadt to-morrow with the rye; ask particularly about the name, and I will give you eight thalers, I must have the letter."

"Good, Madam," said Krischan, "I will get it."

"Bräsig," cried Frau Nüssler, throwing herself into her arm-chair, so that the poor old thing groaned with her weight, "what has my son-in-law to do with a woman?"

"I don't know," said Bräsig. "I am wholly unacquainted with his affairs, since I don't trouble myself about secrets. Hear to the end, says Kotelmann, to-morrow we shall know."

"But this Gottlieb, this quiet man!" exclaimed Frau Nüssler.

"The Pietists are not wholly to be trusted," said Bräsig. "Never trust a Jesuit!"

"Bräsig!" cried Frau Nüssler, and the old chair shrieked aloud, as she sprang up, "if there is something concealed here, I shall take back my child. If Rudolph had done it, I could have forgiven him, for he is a rough colt, and there is no secrecy about him; but Gottlieb? No, never in my life! One who can set himself up for a saint, and then do such a trick--don't come near me! I want nothing to do with such people!"

And when Gottlieb came to the table that evening, his future mother-in-law looked at him askance, as if she were a shop clerk, and he were trying to cheat her with a bad groschen. And when he asked Lining, after supper, if she would take a glass of fresh water up to his room, she told him Lining had something else to do, and when Gottlieb turned to Marik, the waiting-maid, she told him he might go to the pump himself, he could do it as well as Marik. And so she speedily drew a magic circle around him, over which no woman might pass.

As they sat at table next morning, Krischan came to the door, and beckoned to Frau Nüssler; "Madam, Oh, just a word." And Frau Nüssler motioned to Bräsig, and the two old lovers went out with Krischan into the hall.

"Here it is," said Krischan, pulling out a great letter, from his waistcoat pocket, "and I know the name of the woman, too."

"Well?" asked Frau Nüssler.

"Yes," whispered Krischan privately into Frau Nüssler's ear. "Mine is her own name, and Sterium is her father's name."

"What? Is her name Mine Sterium?"

"Hoho!" cried Bräsig, snatching the letter from Frau Nüssler's hand, "that comes from ignorance of outlandish names, that is the vocation of the Ministerium," and he opened the door, and shouted into room: "Hurrah! You old Pietist, you! Here it is, and next week is the wedding!"

And Frau Nüssler fell upon old Gottlieb's neck, and kissed him, and cried, "Gottlieb, my dear Gottlieb, I have done you a great wrong: never mind, Gottlieb, Lining shall take up water for you, every evening, and the wedding shall be whenever you please."

"But what is it?" asked Gottlieb.

"No, Gottlieb, I cannot tell you yet; it is too shameful, but when you have been married three years, I will tell you all about it."

The wedding was celebrated, and a great deal might be told about it, how Mining and her sister Lining wept bitterly after the ceremony, how Gottlieb looked really handsome, since Lining had cut off the long locks, like rusty wheel-nails, out of his neck. But I will tell nothing about this wedding, but what I saw myself, and that was, the next morning, at half-past three, the two old friends young Jochen and young Bauschan, lying on the sofa, arm in arm, asleep.

Habermann was at the wedding, very silent, his Louise was there also, her inmost heart full of love for her little Lining, but she was also silent, quietly happy; Frau Pastorin had declined her invitation, but when the guests were crowding about the bride and bridegroom, and Jochen, afterwards, was trying to say a word also, the door opened, and the Frau Pastorin came in, in her widow's mourning, into the bright marriage joy, and she threw her arms around Lining's neck saying:

"I bless you, I bless you from my heart, and may you be as happy there as I have been. You are now the nearest to him." and she kissed and caressed her, and then turned quickly away, and went, without greeting any one, to the door; there she said, "Habermann!"

But she need not have spoken, for he stood by her already, and when she was in the carriage, he sat by her side, and they drove back to Gurlitz.

At Gurlitz, they got out of the carriage, the pastor's coachman, Jürn, must wait,--and went to the churchyard, and they held each other by the hand, and looked at the green grave, on which bright flowers were growing, and as they turned away, she said with a deep, deep sigh, as when one has drained a full cup, "Habermann, I am ready," and he placed her in the carriage, and drove with her to Rahnstadt.

"Louise is discreet," she said, "she took charge of everything for me, this morning."

They went together through the new house, and the little Frau Pastorin thanked him, and kissed him, for his friendship, that he had arranged everything just as it was in Gurlitz, and she looked out of the window, and said, "Everything, everything, but no grave!"

They stood for a long time at the window, then Habermann pressed her hand, and said, "Frau Pastorin, I have a favor to ask, I have given notice to Herr von Rambow, and shall leave next Christmas; can you spare me the little gable room, and will you take me at your table?"

At a less agitated moment, she would have had much to ask, and much to say; but now she said merely.

"Where Louise and I live, you are always the nearest."

Yes, so it is in the world, what is one's joy is another's sorrow, and weddings and graves lie close together, and yet the distance between them is wider than between summer heat and winter cold; but there is a wonderful kind of people in the world,--if one seeks one can find them,--who can throw a kind of wonderful, heaven-climbing bridges, from one heart to another, over the gulfs which the world has torn open, and such a bridge was built between the little, round Pastors' wives, Lining of Rexow, and Frau Pastorin of Rahnstadt; and when the key stone was dropped into place, exactly over the parsonage at Gurlitz, they fell into each other's arms, and held so fast together that to their life's end they were never parted.

And our old Gottlieb! He did his share, he brought stones and mortar,--he had but a brief experience in the pastoral office; but I must say that, when he preached his entrance sermon, he thought less of himself than of his faithful predecessor, the old Pastor Behrens.

"He sticks to common sense," said Bräsig, as he came out of the church, and he patted

Lining's cheek, and gave Mining a kiss. "The pietists often become very reasonable people; but they think too much of the devil. I have a very good pietist acquaintance, that is the Pastor Mehlsack, a really clever man, but he is so taken up with the devil that he says scarcely anything about the Lord; and there is the pastor in the beautiful Krakow region, who has paddagraphically discovered that there are three hundred, three and thirty thousand different devils running about the world, not counting the regular devil and his grandmother. And you see, Lining, what an inconvenience it is for us: you sit down in Rahnstadt with your good friends around a punch bowl, and you drink to this one, and to that one, and then to another, and at your side sits a gentleman in a brown dress-coat,--for the devil always wears a brown dress-coat, he must, that is his uniform,--and he talks, the whole evening, very friendly things to you, and when you wake up next morning there he stands before you, and says, 'Good morning! you signed yourself to me last evening,' and then he shows you his cloven foot, and if he is polite he takes out his tail, and slaps you over the ears with it, and there you are, his rightful property. So it is with the honest Pietists, the others are a great deal worse."

And so Gottlieb and Lining were settled in the pastor's house, and Mining was naturally much with them, and it often happened that good old Gottlieb embraced Mining, in the twilight, and gave her a kiss, instead of Lining; but it was all in friendship, he had no other design.

But Pomuchelskopp had a design, when he came with his wife and Malchen and Salchen to make their first call on the young Herr Pastor. And this design was the pastor's acre, and the blue dress-coat with the gilt buttons said to the black coat he would take the field, and offered him just half the sum which the Herr von Rambow had given, and our old Häuning stood up and said, that was all it was worth, and it could not be otherwise disposed of, for Jochen Nüssler had declined it, and old Gottlieb stood there bowing to the blue dress-coat, and was going to say "yes," when Lining sprang up like a ball, out of the sofa-corner, and said, "Hold! In this business, I have a word to say. We must consult other people," and she called, from the door, "uncle Bräsigg, will you come in, a moment?"

And he came, placing himself audaciously in a linen frock, before the blue dress-coat, and asked, "How so?"

And Lining sprang towards him saying, "Uncle Bräsigg, the field shall not be rented. It will be my chief pleasure."

"So it shall not, my dear Frau Pastorin Lining," and he bent down, and gave her a kiss, "I will farm it for you my personal self."

"I am not obliged to allow an under-pächter," cried Pomuchelskopp.

"Nor shall you, nor shall you, Herr Zamel! I will merely manage it as inspector for the Herr Pastor himself."

"Herr Nüssler gave it to me in writing."

"That you are a blockhead!" said his Häuning, and drew him angrily out of the room.

"My dear Herr Pastor," said uncle Bräsigg, going with Gottlieb into the garden, "you have not to thank me for this arrangement, but only your dear wife, Lining. It is really worthy of notice, how positive these innocent little creatures become, after they are married. Well, never mind, perhaps they know best. You, from your Christian stand-point, about the blows on the right and left cheeks, you will read me a lecture about hatred, but hatred must be,--where there is no hate, there is no love, and the story of the blows is all nonsense to me. I have a hatred, I hate Zamel Pomuchelskopp! Why? How? What? He says 'Sie' to you, and wouldn't you hate him?"

"My dear Herr Inspector, this wicked axiom----" and he would, in his new office of pastor, have preached the old man a sharp sermon, as he had before about fishing if, Lining had not fortunately come along, and throwing her arms around his neck cried, "uncle Bräsigg, uncle Bräsigg, how shall we repay you for giving up your leisure for us?"

"Don't trouble yourself about that, Lining, where there is hate there is also love; but did you notice how I called him merely Herr Zamel, although he was christened by the more distinguished name, 'Zamwel?'"

"You mean Samuel," interrupted Gottlieb.

"No, Herr Pastor, 'Samuel' is a Jew's name, and although he is a real Jew,--that is, a white one,--he was baptized by the Christian name of Zamwel, and his wife by the name of Karnallje."

"Uncle Bräsigg," cried Lining, laughing heartily, "how you mix things together! Her name is Cornelia."

"It is possible, Lining, that she lets herself be called so now, because she is ashamed of it, but I have seen it with my very eyes. The old pastor at Bobzin had died; and the sexton had to keep the church books, and there it stood; 'Herr Zamwel Pomuchelskopp to Fräulein Karnallje Klätterpott,' for she is a born Klätterpott, and she is a Karnallje too. But, Lining, let her go; they shall not trouble us, and we two will have a pleasant time together, and you shall give me the

little corner room, that overlooks the yard, and the devil must be in it, if in a year and a day, our young pastor isn't in a condition to farm his land himself. And now, adieu," and he went off, the old heathen, who could not give up his hatred.

But he who will hate, must expect to be hated in turn; and nobody was more hated that day than uncle Bräsig. When the Pomuchelskopps had reached home, Häuning stroked the quiet, simple father of a family, and Mecklenburg law-giver, the wrong way, and stung his poor knightly flesh with thorns and nettles, and the constant conclusion of her satirical remarks was: "Yes, Kopp, you are as prudent as the Danish horses, that come home three days before it rains!"

At last, our old friend could bear it no longer, he sprang up out of his sofa-corner, and cried:

"Malchen, I beg of you, have I not always cared for you as a father?"

But Malchen was as deep in the Rostock Times, as if her own betrothal were recorded there.

"Salchen, is it my fault that the world is so bad?"

But Salchen embroidered earnestly on the flesh of a little cupid, and sighed, as if it were a pity that her dear father were not the little cupid; and to fill his cup, Gustaving came in, and rattled the keys on the board, as if he was attempting to set this lovely family scene to appropriate music.

But too much is too much! Human nature can bear only a limited amount; our old friend must show his refractory family that he was master in his own house, so he ran out of the room, and left them alone; he ran into the garden, as far as the sundial, but what good did it do? He had exercised his rightful power on his own flesh and blood, but he himself was no happier, for before his eyes lay the pastor's acre, the beautiful pastor's acre. And beyond lay Pumpelshagen, fair, fair Pumpelshagen, which rightfully belonged to him, for he had given for the Pastor's acre two thousand thalers, payment in advance, and how much more to Slusuhr and David, and that beggar, the Herr von Rambow! He could not bear the sight, he turned away, and looked up into the blue harvest heaven, and asked, was there no righteousness left in the world?

Then came Philliping, and tugged at his blue dress-coat,--for out of spite to his Häuning, he had kept it on, against all law and order,--and said the Herr von Rambow was there, and wished to speak to him.

The Herr von Rambow? Come, wait! now he had one whom he could torment in turn, upon whom he could avenge the sufferings his family had caused him; the Herr von Rambow? wait! he was going in, but there he came himself, towards him.

"Good morning, my respected Herr neighbor, how are you? I wanted to learn how it has gone about the pastor's acre."

So? Pastor's acre? No, wait, don't let him see it! Pomuchelskopp looked down at the little bit of a nose which nature had given him, and said not a word.

"Now, how has it been?" asked Axel. But Pomuchelskopp said neither good nor bad, and looked along his nose, as if it extended for miles.

"My dear Herr Neighbor, what is the matter? It is all right, I hope?"

"I hope so," said Muchel, stooping to pull a weed out of the potatoes; "at least your note for the two thousand thalers is all right."

"What?" asked Axel, astonished, "what has that to do with it?"

Wait, Axel! that is all coming right; keep still! he only wants to tease you a little. What must be, must.

"You, Herr von Rambow," said Muchel, still plucking weeds, and turning a red face up to the young Herr, "you have the two thousand thalers, and I the Pastor's acre,--that is to say, I haven't it."

"But, Herr Neighbor, you were so sure"----

"Not nearly so sure as you, you have the two thousand thalers--haven't you? You got them? and I"--and he shook his left leg, and thrust the words out from his chest, "and I--I have--the devil!"

"But----"

"Ah, let your 'Buts' alone, I have heard 'Buts' enough this morning; our business is about these notes," and he felt in his pocket, "So! I have another coat on, and have not the pocket by me where they are. One was due three weeks ago."

"But, my dear Herr Neighbor, how came you to think of it just to-day? It is not my fault, that you have not been able to rent the acre."

It does you no good, Axel, keep still! He'll not do anything, only torment you a little. Pomuchelskopp had heard too much already to-day, about that cursed field, to trouble himself about it any longer, so he passed by Axel's remark, and took another turn at the screw.

"I am an amiable man, I am a friendly man; the people say, also, that I am a rich man, but I am not rich enough to throw my money into the street, I cannot afford that yet. But, Herr von Rambow, I must see something, I must see something. I must see that the soul stays in a gentleman, and when one has signed a note, then he must also see----"

"My best Herr Neighbor," interrupted Axel, in great distress, "I had clean forgotten it. I beg you--I had not thought of it at all."

"So?" asked Muchel, "not thought of it? But a man *should* think, and"--he was going on, but his eye fell upon Pumpelhagen; no I don't let him notice! why should he shake the tree, the plums were not yet ripe. "And," he continued, "I owe all this to my friendship for that miserable fellow, that Bräsigt. So he has repaid the kindnesses I did him in his youth. I lent him money when he wanted to buy a watch, he has worn trousers of mine when his were torn, and now? Ah! I know well how it all hangs together,--that old hypocrite, Habermann, is behind."

Give the devil a finger, and he soon takes the whole hand, and then he leads you whither he will, and if it suits his humour, he holds you before him, and you must pray in distress and sorrow, in anguish and pain.

So it was with Axel; he must agree, in a friendly way, with the Herr Proprietor, he must hew at the same timber, against his honor and conscience, he must slander Bräsigt and Habermann. Why? Because the devil, with his note in his hand, pressed him down on his knees. And he did it, too; the gay, careless lieutenant of cuirassiers lay on his knees before the devil, and talked all sorts of malice and detraction concerning Bräsigt and Habermann, to appease his old Moloch, in the blue dress-coat; he was a traitor to his best friends, he was a traitor to his God. But when he came to himself sufficiently to be aware of what he had done, he was full of self-contempt, and rode hastily away from the house, where he had left a great part of his honor.

He rode home, and as he came to the boundary of his fields, he saw Habermann, in the oppressive heat of the sun, following the sowing-machine, and preparing everything for the seed-time, and for whom? For *himself*, he must answer, and the coals of fire burned his head. And when he had ridden a little farther, a linen frock appeared before him, and Uncle Bräsigt came toiling up, shouting across the field, "Good day, Karl! I am on the right apropos, that is to say on a preliminary cow business and it is all right; we are going to farm it ourselves, and Zamel Pomuchelskopp may go hang;" and then he heard Axel's horse, and turned round, and the worm, that was gnawing in Axel's breast, made him a little more friendly to the old fellow, and he said:

"Good day, Herr Inspector! What? always on your legs?"

"Why not, Herr Lieutenant? They still hold out, in spite of the Podagra, and I have undertaken to procure an inventory for the young pastor people, and am on my way to Gulzow, to Bauer Pügal; he has a couple of milch cows, that I want to acquire for the Herr Pastor."

"You understand all the details of farming, Herr Inspector?" asked Axel, in order to be friendly.

"Thank God," said Bräsigt, "I am so well acquainted with all the details, that I don't need to learn them at all. One of our kind needs only to cast an eye at anything, and he knows just how it is. Do you see, I was yesterday," and he pointed over to Axel's paddocks, "down by your Podexes, and I saw that the mares and the colts were all down in the lowest one, and why? They steal the oats out of the crib, and if you want them to come to anything, you must put a padlock on."

Axel looked sharply at him: was this a piece of pure malice on the old fellow's part? Of course! He gave his horse the spur: "Adieu!"

"If the blockhead won't take it, he need not!" said Bräsigt, looking after him. "I meant it well enough. It looks to me as if the young nobleman--well, take care! You will yet come, on your hands and feet, to your senses. Karl," he cried, across the field, "he has pushed me off again!" and he went away, on his cow business.

CHAPTER XXX.

Winter had come again, and the world must open to the rough guest.

When he comes properly, let him come in, and welcome; but when he comes at Christmas, with a wet shaggy coat, and fills one's room with mud, and his boots smell of train-oil, he may stay away for all me.

But this time he came differently. He came, as he has often come to my door, with ringing bells, and a snapping whip, and two gray horses before the sleigh, stamping their feet, and he sprang from the sleigh exactly like Wilhelm of Siden Vollentin, and rubbed his blue, frosty cheeks, and thrashed his arms about his body, once--twice--thrice. "Good morning, Herr Reuter, I have come for you. Compliments of the Herr and of the Frau, and you need only step into the sleigh, for there are heaps of foot-sacks and wraps there, and to-morrow is Christmas eve, and little Hans charged me to drive fast."

Yes, when he comes like that, we both sing, my wife and I, "Come in, come in, thou welcome guest!" and we treat the old fellow to a glass of wine, and then get into the sleigh, and off we go,--ten miles an hour,--and when old Winter sets us down at the door of Vollentin, Fritz Peiters says, "Why the devil have you been so long on the road?" and the Frau kisses my wife, and takes off her wrappings, and says to me, "Uncle Reuter, I have got you short kale and long sausage," and the two girls, Lising and Anning, whom I have so often carried in my arms when they were tiny little things, come and give their old uncle a kiss, and then hang about my dear wife, and Fritz and Max come, who are now at the great Anclam gymnasium and greet us with a hearty shake of the hand, and little Hans, who has been waiting his turn, comes, and jumps and frolics around me, and climbs on my left knee, and there I must hold him, the whole evening. And then little Ernest, the nestling, is presented, and we stand about this little wonder of the world, and clap our hands at his wisdom and understanding, and then comes *grandmother*. And then begin the winter and Christmas pleasures, the tree blazes, and the yule raps are rapped, and then comes a yule rap from my dear wife, with a poem, the only one she ever wrote in her life: "Here! sit, and here I sing, and ask for nothing more"--and the melody goes no further, but it is enough of the kind.

And then comes the first Christmas day, and all is so solemn and still, and our Lord strews the white snow flakes, like down, on the earth, that no noise may be heard. And the second Christmas day comes, and then come the Herr Pastor Pieper, and the Frau Pastorin, and the Herr Superintendent and his wife, and then comes Anna, who is my darling, for she used to be my scholar; and then comes the Frau Doctor Adam, and the Frau Oberamtmann Schönermark, and Lucia Dolle, she sits on the left hand of the Adam and on the right of the Schönermark, that is between them,--and then! yes, then comes a round ball driving up, and the Herr Doctor Dolle sits beside the ball, and rolls it out of the sleigh, and gives it to a couple of maids who stand ready,--for they have experience in the matter--and they unwind from the ball furs and cloaks and comforters and foot-sacks, until the Herr Justizrath Schröder comes to light. But he is not finished yet, by a great deal. He must sit down in a chair, and Fika takes one foot, and Marik the other, and they pull off his great fur boots, while I hold him by his shoulders, lest they should drag him off the chair.

Then comes another sleigh!--and out springs Rudolph Kurz, jumping clear over the coachman's whip, and behind him comes Hilgendorf. Do you know Hilgendorf? Hilgendorf, our Rudolph's principal? No? Let me tell you, then, in a word, Hilgendorf is a natural curiosity, he has ivory bones,--"pure ivory," and so strongly is this proprietor put together by nature, that one who ventures to slap him on the shoulder or the knee gets black and blue spots, merely on account of the ivory.

Then we drink coffee, and the Herr Justizrath tells stories, wonderful stories, and he tells them with *much fire*, that is to say, he is always lighting fresh matches, because he is constantly letting his pipe go out, and before long he has smoked up the whole cupful of lighters, and Max is stationed beside him, for the express purpose of keeping him supplied. And then we play whist, with Von der Heyt and Manteufel, and all the old tricks and dodges, for otherwise the Herr Justizrath will not play. Then comes supper, and over the rabbit and roast goose, the Herr Justizrath makes the finest poetry, with the drollest rhymes, and there is great applause, and when we rise from table, we press each other's hands, and separate in peace and joy, each happy face saying, "Well, next year, again!"

But in Pumpelhagen, this year, there was no such merry Christmas; winter had come, fine and clear; but that which makes it welcome, the close meeting of heart with heart, had stopped outside, instead of coming in, bringing joy by the coat-collar. Each sat with his own thoughts, no one exchanged his love for another's, Fritz Triddelsitz and Marie Möller excepted, who sat together, the afternoon of the second holiday, and eat gingernuts, until Fritz said, "No, I cannot eat more, Marik, for to-morrow I shall have to ride to Demmin, to deliver three tons of wheat; and if I should eat any more gingernuts, it might make me sick, and I should not like that; and then I must pack up our books for the circulating library, to exchange them in Demmin, so that we may have something to read, in the evenings," and then he got up, and went to look after his mare, and Marie Möller had a misgiving that the heart could not wholly belong to her, whose affections she shared with a horse.

In another room, Habermann sat, alone with his thoughts, and they were serious enough, when he reflected that his working on this earth had come to an end, and that he might henceforth fold his hands in his lap; and they were sad enough, when he reflected what an end it was, and how the seed he had sowed for a blessing seemed to have sprung up as a curse. In still

another room sat Axel and Frida, together indeed, yet each was lonely, for each had his own thoughts, and was shy of exposing them to the other. They sat in silence, Frida quietly thoughtful, Axel out of humor; then sleigh bells were heard in the court, and Pomuchelskopp drove up to the door. Frida took up her needle-work, and left the room; Axel must receive the Herr Neighbor alone.

A regular agricultural talk, about horse-raising and the price of wheat, was soon in progress between the two gentlemen, and the holiday afternoon would have passed innocently and peacefully enough, if Daniel Sadenwater had not brought in the mail-bag. Axel opened it, and finding in it a letter to Habermann, was about handing it to Daniel to deliver, when he saw his own arms on the seal and, as he looked nearer, recognized his cousin's handwriting.

"Is that confounded affair still going on, behind my back?" he exclaimed almost throwing the letter in Daniel's face: "To the inspector!"

Daniel went off, astonished, and Pomuchelskopp inquired, very compassionately, what had happened to vex the young Herr.

"Isn't it enough to vex one, when my blockhead of a cousin obstinately persists in his silly romance, with this old hypocrite and his daughter?"

"Oh!" said Pomuchelskopp, "and I thought that was at an end, long ago. I was told that your Herr Cousin, upon hearing the report, which is in everybody's mouth, had broken off the business suddenly, and would have nothing more to do with them."

"What report?" asked Axel.

"Why about your inspector and the day-laborer, Regel was his name, and the two thousand thalers."

"Tell me, what do the people say?"

"Now, you know already. I thought you had given the old man notice because of it."

"I know nothing of it, tell me!"

"Why it is universally known. People say, Habermann and the day-laborer made a compromise; the inspector let the fellow get off, and had half, or more, of the stolen money, and he gave him a recommendation, upon which he got taken on as a sailor, in Wisman."

Axel ran about the room. "It is not possible! I cannot have been so shamefully betrayed!"

"Ah! and the people say, also, that the two had planned it all out, beforehand; but that I do not believe."

"And why not? What was the old sinner contriving with the woman, behind my back? The fellow, who had always been sober before, must be intoxicated, at this particular time!"

"Yes, but the burgomeister of Rahnstadt himself noticed that."

"Oh, the burgomeister! What could one do, with such a trial-justice? Now he thinks it was a poor weaver's wife who stole the money from the laborer on the highway. And why? Merely because she tried to get change for a Danish double louis-d'or, which she had found; for she sticks to that story, and the wise Herr Burgomeister has been obliged to let her go."

"Yes, and the one who saw the louis-d'or, Kurz, the shop keeper, is a connection of Habermann's."

"Ah!" cried Axel, "I would give a thousand thalers more, if I could get to the bottom of this meanness."

"It would be a hard task," said Pomuchelskopp, "but, in the first place, I would--when does he go?"

"Habermann? To-morrow."

"Well, I would examine his books with the greatest care; there is no knowing but they may be wrong, also. Look particularly at the money account; one often finds out something in that way. He seems to be in pretty good circumstances; he is going to live in Rahnstadt, on his interest. Well, he has been in a good place, for many years; but I know for a certainty, that he had old debts to pay which were not insignificant. Lately, as I have learned from Slusuhr, the notary, he has done a considerable money business at high rates of interest, with his few groschen, perhaps also with money belonging to the estate."

"Oh!" exclaimed Axel, "and once when I asked him"--he stopped abruptly, not wishing to betray himself, but a feeling of hatred arose in him, as he thought that Habermann might have helped him then, and would not, because he did not offer him high enough interest.

Nothing of importance was said, after this, for each had enough to occupy him in his own thoughts; and when Pomuchelskopp drove home, well satisfied with his management, he left the young Herr von Rambow in such a bitter, venomous state of mind, that he was angry with himself and everybody else, and could not sleep the whole night, for hateful thoughts.

In a third room, at Pumpelhagen, was another lonely man; Habermann sat before his desk, with his books lying open, and was going over the last month's accounts once more. Ever since he had managed for his young Herr, he had brought in his accounts, every quarter, for examination; but at one time the young Herr was too hurried to attend to them, and at another he said; "Yes it is all right;" but scarcely looked at them, and again he said it was quite unnecessary for him to examine them. Habermann, however, had not taken advantage of this neglect; he kept his books very carefully, as he had always been in the habit of doing, and insisted that Fritz Triddelsitz should put down his grain account regularly, every week, and on this point, if anything was wrong, he scolded Fritz much more sharply, than about other things.

As the old man sat at his work, Fritz came in, and asked about one thing and another connected with his journey to Demmin, and when Habermann had given him his instructions, and he was going out, the old man called after him, "Triddelsitz, have you made out your grain account?"

"Yes," said Fritz, "that is, I have begun it."

"Well, I wish you to finish it, this evening, and take care that it balances better than the last."

"All right," said Fritz, and went out. Daniel Sadenwater came in, and brought the inspector a letter; the old man got up, and seated himself by the window, and when he recognized Franz's hand, his heart beat quicker, and as he read and read, his eyes grew bright, a great joy beamed upon his heart and thawed all the frost and ice which had lately gathered there, just as the sun melts the snow from the roofs, and it falls in drops to the ground. He read and read, and his eyes grew moist, and tears dropped softly on the paper.

Franz wrote him how he had heard that Habermann was to leave Pumpelhagen, and was now, therefore, free; that, under the circumstances, the consideration he had hitherto exercised toward Axel must give way to Franz's own earnest wishes, which left him no peace, and drove him, though in spite of her father's request, to write to Louise herself; and he enclosed a letter which he begged Habermann to deliver to his daughter, and which he hoped might make three people truly happy.

The old man's hands trembled, as he laid the letter to his child in his pocketbook, his knees shook, as he walked up and down, so much was he agitated by the thought that upon the step which he was about to take depended the happy or unhappy future of his child; he seated himself in the sofa-corner, and it was long before he was composed enough to look at the matter with deliberation. So the morning sea rages in wild waves, and at noon, they are less boisterous, but it still looks dark and threatening over the water, and at evening the smooth mirror reflects the blue heavens, and the light summer clouds drift across it, and the setting sun frames the picture in his golden rays.

So it was with the old man; as the waves of emotion subsided, grave thoughts came over him; he asked himself, earnestly and carefully, whether it would be right for him to yield, whether he would violate his obligations, if he said, "Yes," against the will of his young master.

But what obligations had he, to a man who had rewarded him with ingratitude, who had driven him away, almost with shame and disgrace? None at all. And the pride rose in him, which one in a dependent position must so often repress, and which he only knows, who has a clear conscience; he would no longer sacrifice his best, most sacred feelings, to the ingratitude of an unreasonable boy, or the happiness of his child to an unjust, aristocratic prejudice. And when he had reached this conclusion, out of the tranquil sea shone the reflection of a lovely evening sky, and he sat long, gazing at the future of his two children, as at bright summer clouds drifting over it, and out of doors the setting sun was shining on the white snow, and its beams fell upon his white hair.

While he sat, absorbed in these happy thoughts, the door opened hastily, and Krischan Degel rushed in: "Herr Inspector, you must come, the Rubens mare has a dreadful colic, and I don't know what to do for her." The old man sprang up, and went in haste to the stables.

Scarcely had he gone, when Fritz Triddelsitz came in, carrying his travelling-bag, and the books for the circulating library, with some shirts and his proprietor's uniform, in which he meant to cut a figure at Demmin, and depositing them on a chair by the window, was about to begin packing when his eye fell upon Habermann's account-book, for the old man, in his agitation, had forgotten to put his book away.

"That just suits me," said Fritz, and took the book to enter his grain account, but he must carry it to the window, for it was growing quite dark.

He had not quite finished, when Krischan Degel rushed in again.

"Herr Triddelsitz, you are to go immediately--quick! to the granary, and bring a wrapping

cloth, we are going to pack the mare in wet sheets."

When Fritz heard some one coming, he thrust Habermann's book behind him in the chair, and as Krischan hurried him off, thrusting the key of the granary into his hand, he left the book lying there, and ran out. At the door of the granary, he met Marie Möller, who had just come from milking. "Marie," said he, "do me the favor just to pack my things in the bag,--they are all on the chair by the window, and don't forget the books!"

Marie did it, and in the twilight, and lost in her loving reflections, she packed up Habermann's account book with those which were to go back to the library.

When Habermann returned from the stables he locked up his desk without any premonition of evil, and the next morning Fritz Triddelsitz was off at cock-crowing, with his load of wheat, and his travelling-bag, also without any premonition of evil. When the old inspector had given the day-laborers their instructions, for the last time, he thought of his own affairs, and began to put up his luggage, that he might be ready to leave in the afternoon. He was not quite ready, when Daniel Sadenwater came in, and called him to the Herr von Rambow.

Axel had passed a very restless night, his best thorough-bred mare, on which he had set great hopes, had been sick, the flea, which Pomuchelskopp had put in his ear, had stung him, he was annoyed at his unaccustomed position of managing for himself, and he must pay Habermann his salary, and also for the outlays which he had made in paying the laborers' wages, and he did not know how much it would be, or whether his cash would hold out. He could not humble himself however before the inspector, who had given him warning, so he must try to make some difficulty in the business, and discover some reason for refusing to pay him immediately. Such a reason would be hard to find; but he could pick a quarrel, and that might answer for a reason. A pitiable means, although a very usual means; and that Axel should resort to it, shows how rapidly his pride as a man and a nobleman was declining; but nothing drives a weak man to underhand ways quicker than the need of money, when he must keep up appearances, and "poor and proud" is a true proverb.

As Habermann entered, he turned to the window, and looked through the panes.

"Is the mare well again?"

"No," said Habermann, "she is still sick, I think it would be best to send for the horse doctor."

"I will give orders. But," he added, sitting down, and still gazing stiffly out of the window, "that comes from there being no proper supervision of the stables, from feeding the spoiled musty hay."

"Herr von Rambow, you know, yourself, that the hay got wet, this summer, but it isn't musty. And you yourself undertook the oversight of the blood-horses, for, a few weeks ago, when I had ordered a slight alteration in the stable, you forbade it, with hard words, and said you would take the horses under your own supervision."

"Very well! very well!" exclaimed Axel, leaving the window, and walking up and down the room, "we know all that, it is the old story."

Suddenly he stopped before Habermann, and looked him in the face, though a little unsteadily: "You are going to-day?"

"Yes," said Habermann, "according to our last arrangement----"

"I am not really obliged," interrupted the young Herr, "to let you go before Easter; you must at least stay till the day after New-Year's."

"That is true," said Habermann, "but--"

"Oh, it is all the same," said Axel, "but we must settle our accounts first. Go and get your books."

Habermann went.

Axel had already laid his plans, that he might not be embarrassed about his money affairs; when Habermann came with his books, he would say he had not time to examine them, and if Habermann insisted, he could mount his high horse, and say, the day after New Year's would be time enough. But he was to get off more comfortably, Habermann did not come back. He waited and waited, but Habermann did not come; at last, he sent Daniel after him, and with him there came the old man, but in great excitement, very pale, and crying, as he entered the room: "My God! what has happened! How is it possible, how can it be!"

"What is the matter?" inquired Axel.

"Herr von Rambow," cried Habermann, "yesterday afternoon, I balanced my grain and money accounts, and locked up the book in my desk, and now it is gone."

"Oh, that is admirable!" cried Axel, mockingly, and the seed which Pomuchelskopp had

yesterday planted in his soul began to sprout and grow, and shoot up, "Yes, that is admirable! So long as no one wanted the book, it was there safe enough, but as soon as it is wanted, it is missing!"

"I beg of you," cried Habermann in anguish, "do not judge so rashly, it will be found, it must be found," and with that, he ran out again.

After a while, he returned, saying, in a weak voice: "It is not there; it has been stolen from me."

"Oh, that is charming!" exclaimed Axel, working himself into a passion. "At one time you say there is never any stealing here,--you know, about my two thousand thalers,--and another time it must have been stolen,--just as it suits your convenience."

"My God! my God!" cried the old man, "give me time, Herr!" and he clasped his hands. "Before God, my book is gone!"

"Yes!" exclaimed Axel, "and the day-laborer Regel is gone, too, and the people know *how* he got away, and my two thousand thalers are also gone, and people know *where* they have gone. Were they down in your book?" asked he, walking up to Habermann, and looking sharply in his face.

The old man looked at him, he looked around him to see where he was, his folded hands fell apart, and a fearful trembling went through his limbs, as when a great river breaks up its covering of ice, and the blood shot through his veins into his face, like the water in the great river, when it is free, and the blocks of ice tower up and the dam gives way: 'Ware children of men!

"Rascal!" he cried, and sprung at Axel, who had stepped back, as he saw the passion he had roused. "Rascal!" he cried, "my honest name!"

Axel reached towards the corner where a gun was standing.

"Rascal!" cried the old man again, "your gun, and my honest name!" and there ensued a struggle and a wrestling for the weapon, Habermann had caught it by the barrel, and tried to twist it out of his hand. Bang! it went off. "Oh, Lord!" cried Axel, and fell backwards towards the sofa; the old man stood over him, holding the gun in his hand. Then the door was torn open, and the young Frau rushed in, through the powder-smoke, to Axel: "Good Heavens, what is this!" and all the love which she had formerly cherished for him broke, like a ray of sunlight through the clouds which had obscured it, she threw herself down by him, and tore open his coat: "My God! my God! Blood!"

"Let it be!" said Axel, trying to raise himself, "it is the arm."

The old man stood motionless, the gun in his hand; the stream had gone back to its bed, but how much human happiness had it ruined in its overflow! and the meadows and fields of fertile soil were covered with mud and sand, and it seemed as if nothing could ever grow there again.

Daniel came running in, and one of the maids, and, with their help, Axel was lifted to the sofa, and his coat removed; his arm was dreadfully torn by the small shot, and the blood streamed to the floor.

"Go for the doctor!" cried the young Frau, trying to stanch the blood with cloths, but what she had at hand was not enough, she sprang up to fetch more, and must pass Habermann, who still stood there silent and pale, gazing at his master.

"Murderer!" cried she, as she went out, "murderer!" she repeated, as she came in again; the old man said nothing, but Axel raised himself a little and said: "No, Frida, no! he is not guilty of that," for even an insincere man will give his God the glory, when he feels His hand close to his life; "but," he added, for he could not avoid the old excusing and accusing, "he is a traitor, a thief. Out of my sight!"

The blood shot into the old man's face again, he would have spoken, but he saw that the young Frau turned away from him, he staggered out of the door.

He went to his room; "He is a traitor, a thief," kept ringing through his head. He placed himself at the window, and looked out into the yard, he saw all that was passing, but saw it as in a dream; "A traitor, a thief," that was all he understood, that alone was real. Krischan Degel drove out of the yard, he knew he was going for the doctor, he opened the window, he wanted to call to him to drive as fast as possible; but--"a traitor, a thief," he spoke it out, involuntarily; he closed the window. But the book! The book must be found. The book! He opened the chests and boxes which he had packed, he scattered his little possessions all about the room, he fell upon his old knees,--not to pray, for "he is a traitor, a thief," but to feel with his cane under his desk, under his chest of drawers, under his bed; he must find the book, the book! But he found nothing. "A traitor, a thief." He stood at the window again, he looked out; but he had his cane in his hand, what did he want of his cane? Would he go out? Yes, he would go out, he would go away, away from here!--away! He put on his hat, he went out of the door, and the gate. Whither? It was all

one! it made no difference; but, from old habit, he took the path to Gurlitz. With the old way, came the old thoughts; "My child! my child!" he cried, "my honest name!" He felt in his breast pocket, yes, the pocket-book was there, he had his daughter's happiness in his hands. What should he do now? He had ruined this letter for his child, it was destroyed forever with his honest name and by this cursed shot! and the first bitter tears were wrung from his tormented soul, and with them his good conscience came back, and its soft hand made room in his constrained breast, so that he could draw breath again; but his honest name, and his child's happiness, were gone for ever. Oh, how happy he was yesterday, sitting in his room, with the letter in his hand that Franz had written to his daughter, what blessedness that letter was to bring her, what happiness would bloom from it, what a bright future he had painted! and now it was all gone and lost, and the brand which was impressed upon him must burn into the heart of his only child, and devour and consume it.

But what had his child to do with it? Why should it stand in the way of her happiness? No, no! The curse and disgrace of the father was visited upon the children, to the fourth generation, and the same thorny hedge, which would sever him now from all honest people, would interpose between his child and happiness. But he was innocent! Who would believe him, if he said so? Those whose white garments of innocence the world has once soiled with filth must walk in them through life; no one can wash them clean, even if our Lord should come down from heaven, and do signs and wonders, that innocence should be brought to light,--the world would not believe. "Oh!" he cried, "I know the world!" Then his eye fell upon Gurlitz, upon Pomuchelskopp's manor house, and out of a corner of his heart, which he had believed forever locked, rose a dark spirit and spread her black wings over him, so that the bright winter sunlight no longer fell upon him; this was hate, which sprang up in his heart. The tears of compassion, which he had wept over his child, dried in his eyes, and the voice which had spoken in him, against his will, called again. "A traitor, a thief!" and the dark spirit moved her wings, and whispered thoughts to him, which flashed out like flames: "It is his doing, and we are enemies once more!" He went through Gurlitz, looking neither to the right nor the left, all which he had held dear had disappeared for him, he was merely conscious of his hatred, and that drove to a single aim, and in a definite path.

Bräsig stood in the way, near the Pastor's barn, he went to meet his old friend: "Good morning, Karl. Well, how is it? But what ails you?"

"Nothing, Bräsig. But leave me, let me alone! Come to-morrow to Rahnstadt, come to-morrow" and he passed on.

As he came to the elevation, beyond Gurlitz, from which Axel had first shown his young wife his fair estate of Pumpelshagen, and where her warm heart had throbbed with such pure joy, he stood still, and looked back; it was the last point from which he could see the place where he had lived so many happy years, where he had suffered such fearful anguish, and where his honor and happiness had been turned to disgrace and misery. A tempest raged in his soul. "Miserable wretch! Liar! And she? 'Murderer,' she called me, and yet again, 'murderer!' and when she had spoken the shameful word she turned herself away from me. Your unhappiness will not wait long,--I could, and would, have turned it aside, I have watched over you, like a faithful dog, and like a dog, you have thrust me out; but"--and he walked on toward Rahnstadt, and hate hovered over him, on her dark wings.

CHAPTER XXXI.

In Rahnstadt, in the Frau Pastorin's house, there was great running up and down stairs, the day after Christmas, for Louise was putting the last touches to the arrangement of her father's room: and when she would think, now it was all ready, there was always something more that she must do for his comfort. Noon came; but her father had not yet arrived, although they expected him to dinner; she put a plate for him, however, for he might still come.

"I don't know," she said to the Frau Pastorin, "why my heart is so heavy today."

"What?" cried the little Frau, "only three months in the city, and already having premonitions, like a tea-drinking city lady? What has become of my fresh little country girl?" and she patted her daughter's cheek, affectionately.

"No," said Louise, taking the friendly hand, and holding it fast in her own, "I do not mind such vague presentiments, mine are unfortunately very definite misgivings, whether my father will feel contented here, in the loss of his usual occupations, and will accustom himself to city life."

"Child, you talk as if Rahnstadt were a Residence; no,--thank God! the geese go barefoot here,

as well as in Pumpelhagen, and if your father takes pleasure in agricultural industry, he can see our neighbor on the right carting manure with two horses, and our neighbor on the left with three; and if he enjoys conversation about farming he has only to turn to our landlord, Kurz, who will talk to him about renting fields, and such matters, till he is as weary of them as we are."

Louise laughed, and as they rose from dinner, she said, "So, mother, now lie down and rest a little, and I will walk along the Gurlitz road, and perhaps I shall meet my father."

She wrapped her cloak around her, and tied a warm hood over her head, and went along the road, where she was constantly in the habit of walking, for it brought her nearer to the place where she had been so happy, and when she had time she walked as far as the little rising ground from which she could see Gurlitz, with the church, the parsonage, and the church-yard, and if she had still more time, she went on to see Lining and Gottlieb, and to talk with them of old and new times. She walked on and on, but her father came not, the east wind blew in her face, and colored her cheeks rosy red, till her lovely countenance looked out of the dark hood like a bright spring day, when it shines out of dark rain-clouds, filling the world with joy and hope. But the water stood in her eyes; was that because of the east wind? Was it because she was looking so sharply along the road for her father? Was it because of her thoughts? No, it was not the east wind, for she had stopped, and was looking towards the west, and yet her eyes were full of tears; it was not from looking for her father, for she was gazing in the opposite direction, where the sun, like a ball of fire, was just sinking behind the black fir-trees; it must have been her thoughts. Such thoughts as, in joy and grief, play around a young heart, entwining it as with a wreath of roses, so that it rejoices in utter gladness, and again weeps bitterly, when the thorns of the rose-wreath wound it to bleeding. But why was she looking westward? Ah, she knew that he was there, who sent her from thence the dearest greetings.

"Westward, oh, westward fly, my keel,
Westward my heart aspires,
My dying eyes will look to thee,
Thou goal of my desires!"

The old rhyme whispered itself in her ear, and she stood there flushing rosy-red, full of sweet unrest over the secret power that spoke in her heart, like a bright spring day when it goes to rest, and the glowing clouds promise another fair day for the morrow.

She went farther, to the elevation where her father had stood, a couple of hours before, and tasted the bitterness with which his fellow-men had filled his cup; she stood there, looking towards Pumpelhagen and Gurlitz, and the love which she had received from her fellow-creatures, in these places, overflowed her heart, and the curses uttered in hatred and misery, by that poor old heart, were washed away from the tablets of the recording angel, by the daughter's prayers, and her tears of love and thankfulness.

It was a mile from Rahnstadt to Gurlitz, and the winter sun was near its setting; she must go home. Then she saw a man approaching from Gurlitz, it might be her father, she stood still awhile, looking; no, it was not her father! and she went on, but turned round again to look, and now perceived that it was Uncle Bräsigt, who was hurrying up to her.

"God bless you, Louise! How? Why are you standing here, on the open road, in this bitter wind? Why don't you go in, and see the young folks at the parsonage?"

"No, Uncle Bräsigt, not to-day. I merely came out to meet my father."

"What? Karl Habermann? Why, isn't he with you?"

"No, not yet."

"But he went through Gurlitz, this morning, about half past twelve."

"He has been here? Oh, where can he be?"

Bräsigt remembered Habermann's agitated appearance, and, seeing the anxiety of his child, he tried to comfort her: "It is often the case with us farmers, we have one thing here, and another there, to attend to; possibly he has gone over to Gulzow, or possibly he may be already in Rahnstadt, attending to some business there. But I will go with you, my child," he added, "for I have business in Rahnstadt, and shall stay all night, and get back my three thalers from that sly rogue of a Kurz, the syrups-prince, which he won from me at Boston. It is our club-day."

When they had gone a little way, they were met by a chaise from Rahnstadt. It contained Krischan Däsel and Dr. Strump. The doctor stopped, saying, "Have you heard? Herr von Rambow has met with an accident, with a fowling-piece; he has shot himself in the arm. But I have no time, the coachman was obliged to wait for me a great while; I was not at home. Go ahead!"

"What is this?" cried Louise. "Has my father left Pumpelhagen, when such an accident has just happened? He would not have done that."

"It may have occurred since he left," said Bräsigt, but when he thought of Habermann's

appearance that morning, he did not believe his own excuse. Louise grew more and more anxious, and hastened with quicker steps. Between her father's delay and the accident at Pumpelshagen she could find no probable connection, and yet it seemed to her that they must have something to do with each other.

Meanwhile, Habermann had arrived in Rahnstadt, at the Frau Pastorin's. He had turned off from the direct road, and made a circuit, until he could collect himself, that he might not appear before his child in such fearful excitement. As he entered the Frau Pastorin's door, he had indeed controlled himself, but the terrible conflict he had just fought out in his heart left a lassitude and weariness, which made him look ten years older, and could not but strike the little Frau immediately. She sprang up, letting the coffee boil over, which she was taking off, and cried:

"Good heavens! Habermann, what is the matter? Are you sick?"

"No--yes, I believe so. Where is Louise?"

"She went to look for you, didn't you meet her? But sit down! Bless me, how exhausted you look!"

Habermann sat down, and looked about the room, as if to see whether he were alone with the Frau Pastorin.

"Habermann, tell me, what ails you?" said the little Frau, grasping his cold hands in her own.

"It is all over with me; I must go through the world, henceforth, as a useless and dishonored man."

"Oh, no! no! Don't talk like that!"

"That the opportunity of working should be taken from me, I can bear, though it is hard; but that I should also lose my honest name, that pierces me to the heart, that I cannot bear."

"And who should take that from you?" asked the Frau Pastorin, looking him trustfully in the eyes.

"The people who know it best, the Herr von Rambow and his wife," said the old man, and began to tell the story with a weak, and often broken, voice; but when he came to the end, how the young Frau had also deserted him, had turned her back upon him, and let him go out of the door, as a thief and a traitor, then his anger broke out, he sprang from his chair, and walked up and down the room, with gleaming eyes and clenched fist, as if he were ready for combat with the wicked world.

"Oh," he cried, "if that were only all! But they have injured me more cruelly than they know, they have ruined my child's happiness along with mine. There! read it, Frau Pastorin!" and he gave her the letter from Franz. She read, the sheet trembling in her hand, so greatly had the story excited her, while he stood before her, and looked at her, without once turning away his eyes.

"Habermann," she said, grasping his hand, when she had read it, "don't you see the finger of God? The injury which one cousin has done you, shall be made up to you by the other."

"No, Frau Pastorin," said he sternly, "I should be the scoundrel which the world will henceforth deem me, if I could let a brave, trustful man take to his house a wife with a dishonored name. Poor and honest! For all I care! But dishonest? never!"

"Dear heart!" cried the little Frau, "where is my Pastor, now? If my Pastor were only here! He could help and counsel us.

"That he could," said Habermann, to himself. "I cannot do it," he cried, "my child must decide for herself, and you must help her, you have done more to educate her sense of right and wrong, than I alas! have been able to do. If my child considers it right and honourable, in spite of everything, to accept his offer, if you yourself agree with her, then let it be! I will exert no influence in the matter, I will not see her, until she has decided. Here is a letter from Franz to her, give it to her, telling her, beforehand, what has happened; just as I have told you, is the truth. I will go up to my room; I cannot, I dare not touch a finger." He left the room, but came back again; "Frau Pastorin, consult her happiness only, have no regard for mine! Forget what I said before. I will do what I can to keep my dishonoured name in concealment."

He went out again, saying to himself as he mounted the stairs, "I cannot do otherwise, I cannot do otherwise." As he threw himself down on the sofa, in his little room, and everywhere about him saw the hand of his daughter, how she had arranged and ordered everything for his comfort, he put his hand over his eyes, and wept. "Shall I lose all this?" He sighed deeply. "And why not? why not? If it is for her happiness," he cried aloud, "I will never see her again!" The house-door opened, he heard Bräsig's voice, he heard the bright greeting of his child. All was still again, he listened for every sound. Now Frau Pastorin was telling what had happened, now his darling's heart was torn. Slowly there came steps up the stairs; Bräsig came in, looking as silent and composed as if death were walking over his grave, his eyebrows, which he generally raised

so high when anything unusual occurred, lay deep and heavy over his eyes, he said nothing but "I know, Karl, I know all," and sat down by his friend, on the sofa.

So they sat long, in the half-twilight, and neither spoke; at last Bräsig grasped Habermann's hand: "Karl," said he, "we have known each other these fifty years. Don't you remember, at old Knirkstädt's? What a pleasant youth we had! always contented and joyous! and, excepting a couple of foolish jokes that we played together, we have, upon the whole, nothing to reproach ourselves with. Karl, it is a comfortable sort of feeling, when one can look back upon old days, and say, 'Follies, to be sure, but nothing base!'"

Habermann shrank back, and drew his hand away.

"Karl," said Bräsig again, "a good conscience is a fine thing, when one is growing old, and it is noticeable, quite noticeable, how this good conscience stands by us when we are old, and will not leave us. Karl, my dear old boy!" and he fell upon Habermann's neck, and wept bitterly.

"Bräsig," said Habermann, "don't make my heart heavy, it is heavy enough already."

"Eh, how, Karl! How can your heart be heavy? Your heart is as pure as Job's; it should be as light as a lark, which mounts in the clear heavens; for this story of the infamous--no, I won't talk about that; I would say--- Why, what were we talking about? Yes, so! about the conscience. It is a wonderful thing, about the conscience, Karl! For instance, there is Kurz, with his, for he has one, as well as you and I, and I suppose he will stand before God with it sometime; but before me he stands very badly, for he peeps at the cards, when we play Boston; he has a sort of groschens-conscience; for, you see, in great things, he is quite correct, for example, in renting the house to the Frau Pastorin; but ell-wise, and pot-wise and pound-wise, he takes what he can get, he isn't at all ashamed, that is when he can get anything; when he don't get anything he is ashamed of himself. And let me tell you, Karl, if you live here, you must have a good deal of intercourse with him, and that pleasure will be a good deal like his conscience, for he is fond of discoursing about farming, and it is as if he were taking a drive for pleasure in a manure-cart. It will be no pleasure to you, and so I have thought, when I have seen our young pastor through his spring seed-time, and everything is in train, I will come over here to you, and we can cheer each other up a little; and then in harvest time, we can go out to Gurlitz, to keep the poor fellow from getting into difficulties; and he will not, for Jürn is a considerate fellow, and he himself begins,--thank God,--to do all sorts of useful things, with Lining's assistance. And when he has finished his first year, you shall see, he will be quite rid of his Pietistry, but we must let him struggle a little sometimes, that he may learn to know himself and the world, and find that there is something more in human life than to read psalm-books. Yes, and then I will come to you, Karl, and we will live as they do in Paris, and you shall see, Karl, this last quarter of our lives shall be the best piece of the whole ox."

And he embraced him again, and talked of past times and future, alternately, like a mother trying to divert her child to other thoughts. The moon shone in at the window, and what can better heal a torn heart, than its soft light, and the love of an old, tried friend, who has been true to us? I always think that the bright, warm sunshine is more suitable for love, but with friendship, the moonlight harmonizes best.

While they were sitting thus, the door opened, and, with light step, a slender form entered the room, and remained standing, in the full moonlight, the arms crossed on her breast, and the white face gleaming in the moonshine, as if it were a statue of white marble, against a dark wall of yew-trees: "Was hat man Dir, Du armes Kind, gethan?"^[7]

Bräsig left the room, without speaking. Habermann covered his eyes with his hand as if something pierced him to his inmost heart. The slender form threw itself at his side, the folded arms opened to embrace him, and the white face pressed itself to his. For a long time, there was silence, at last the old man heard light, soft words breathed in his ear: "I know what you think right; I am your child--am I not? Your darling child."

Habermann threw his arm about his darling child.

"Father, father!" she cried, "we will not part! My other father, who is now with God, has told me how you would not be separated from me, when you were in the deepest trouble and sorrow, when the good laborer's wife wanted to keep me; now you are again in trouble and sorrow, would you be parted from me *now*? should I leave you *now*?" and she pressed him to her heart, saying softly, "thy name is my name, thy honor is my honor, thy life is my life."

Much was spoken, in the sweet moonlight, in the cozy little room, but of all this nothing shall be betrayed, for when a faithful father and a loving child talk thus together, talk for their whole lives, our Lord himself is with them, and it is not for the world, 'tis for the two alone.

Down-stairs, in the Frau Pastorin's living-room, it was quite different. Frau Pastorin sat in her arm-chair, and cried bitterly; the dear, good Frau was quite beside herself,--Habermann's misfortune had moved her deeply,--but when she must rouse this fearful conflict in the breast of her dear child, when she saw the struggle going on, and afterwards saw confidence and courage getting the mastery in that dear heart, in spite of wounds and sorrow, she felt as if she had maliciously destroyed the happiness of her child, and her poor heart was torn with self-reproach

and sorrow and compassion, till she broke out into bitter weeping. Bräsig, on the contrary, had used up his compassion, he had done his utmost, when with Habermann, to keep back his wrath against the wretchedness of mankind, and when he came down to the Frau Pastorin, and, in the darkness, was not aware of her distress, he broke loose:

"Infamous pack of Jesuits! What? Such a man as Karl Habermann, would you destroy his honor and reputation? It is like Satan himself! It is as if one held the cat, and the other stabbed it. Curses on them----"

"Bräsig, Bräsig, I beseech you," cried the little Frau Pastorin, "stop this unchristian behavior!"

"Do you call that unchristian behavior? It seems to me like a song of the holy angels in Paradise, if I compare it with the scurvy tricks of this pack of Jesuits."

"Bräsig, we are not the judges of these people."

"I know very well, Frau Pastorin, I am not the magistrate, and you are not in the judge's chair, but when a toad hops across my path, you cannot expect me to look upon it as a beautiful canary bird. No, Frau Pastorin, toads are toads, and Zamel Pomuchelskopp is the chief toad, who has spit his venom upon us all. What do you say to his chicanery that he has contrived against me? You see, in the one foot-path, which has led to the pastor's acre, for this thousand years, so far as I know, he has had a stake put up, so that we cannot go there, and he sent word to me that if I went there, he would have my boots pulled off, and let me go hopping about in the snow, like a crow. Do you call that a Christian disposition? But I will complain of him. Shall such a fellow as that liken me to a crow? And Pastor Gottlieb must complain of him. How can he forbid him the foot-path? And young Jochen must complain of him, for he has said openly, young Jochen was an old blockhead, and young Jochen is not obliged to put up with that. And you must complain of him, because he would not build a widow-house, since all the people have told me there must be Acts about it. And Karl Habermann must complain of the young Herr. We must organize revolution against the Jesuits, and if I can have my way, we will all drive to-morrow, in a carryall, to Gustrow, to the court of justice, and complain of the whole company, and we will take along five advocates, so that each may have one, and then, hurrah for a lawsuit!"

If he had known that Louise had suffered most from the Jesuits, he might have proposed taking another advocate for her; but as yet, he had no suspicion of her troubles. Frau Pastorin tried to pacify him, but it was not an easy task, he wanted to turn everything topsy-turvy, and the misfortunes of his old friend had so agitated his heart, that the troubles which usually lay in its depths, the farm-boy angers, and the card-playing vexations, all came to the surface. "I came over here," said he, "to amuse myself, since it was club-day, and to win back my three thalers from that old toad of an evil-doer, that Kurz, which he got out of me with his infamous cheating, and now the devil must hold his confounded spy-glass before my eyes, and bring all the wickedness of the world right into the neighborhood. Well, I call that amusing! And Frau Pastorin, if you don't think ill of it, I might spend the night here with you, for this stupid game of Boston will come to nothing, and it would be a good thing for me to sleep with Karl, because he needs somebody to cheer him up."

Frau Pastorin said she should be glad to have him stay, and the evening was spent in maledictions on his side, and efforts at pacification upon hers. Habermann and Louise did not appear, and when Bräsig went up to his old friend, Louise was no longer there.

The next morning Bräsig took leave of his old friend, with these words:

"Rely upon it, Karl, I will drive to Pumpelhagen, myself, and look after your affairs. You shall get everything, though it makes me creep all over, to cross a threshold where you have been thrust out so infamously."

The same morning, Habermann sat down and wrote to Franz; he told him truly and circumstantially what had happened lately in Pumpelhagen, he wrote of the dreadful conclusion the matter had arrived at, and informed him of the shameful suspicions which had fallen upon him, and finished with the statement that he and his child were of one mind, they must refuse his offer. He wanted to write warmly and heartily of the friendship which he felt for the young man, but he could not speak freely, as before, he seemed constrained. At last he begged him earnestly, to leave him and his child to themselves; they two must bear their fate, alone.

Louise wrote also, and when, towards evening, the Frau Pastorin's maid took the letter to the post, she stood at the window, and looked after her, as if she had taken leave of her dearest friend in the world forever. She looked at the sun, which was going down in the west, and murmured, "My dying eyes shall look to thee, thou goal of my desires." But she did not turn red as yesterday, she stood there pale, and, as the last rays of the sun disappeared behind the houses, a deep sigh rose from her oppressed heart, and as she turned away bitter tears flowed down her pale cheeks. The tears flowed not for her lost happiness, no, for his.

As Bräsig came to the parsonage, the young Frau Pastorin met him at the door; "God bless you, Uncle Bräsig, I am glad you have come here,--no, not here, in Pumpelhagen there are dreadful stories. Dr. Strump has been here,--our Jürn was taken sick suddenly, last night, he was delirious,--and I ran for the doctor, who had been at Pumpelhagen, to speak to him as he passed

through the village,--and he told me dreadful things,--not he, properly speaking, he only let himself be questioned, but his coachman told me that--ah, come in, it blows so out here!" and she drew him into the house. Here she told him all that the people said, that her dear Uncle Habermann had shot Axel, and had gone off, nobody knew where, but probably to take his own life. Bräsigt comforted her with news that Habermann was alive, and told her about the shooting, then inquired how it was with the young Herr, and learned that Dr. Strump did not think it a dangerous case. He then went to see Jörn, who apparently had an attack of pneumonia. By this time, it was noon, and he must pursue his journey to Pumpelshagen, to attend to Habermann's affairs, and must also look out for another coachman. He inquired about in the village, but nobody would go to drive, and help him to load the goods; one had this, another that excuse, and finally he resolved to play coachman himself, when old Ruhrdanz, the weaver, said, "Well, it is all one to me, what he says to it; if he wants to chicaner me, he may. I will drive you, Herr Inspector."

Bräsigt made no objections, being very glad to find some one to help him with the loading, and they drove off.

"Ruhrdanz," asked Bräsigt, "what did you mean by chicaning?"

"Why, Herr, he has forbidden us all to do anything for the folks at the parsonage; we must not even take a step for them."

"Who has forbidden you?"

"Eh, he, our Herr Pomuchelskopp."

"Infamous Jesuit!" said Bräsigt to himself.

"If we did so, he told us, we might fodder our cows next winter on sawdust, he wouldn't give us a handful of hay or straw, and we might build with bricks, for he would give us no wood or turf."

Bräsigt turned dark with anger, but the old man was fairly launched, and went on, under full sail:

"And we must be always ready for him, night or day. I was out for him, the whole holiday, and got home last night, at ten o'clock."

"Where did you go?"

"Eh, to Ludswigslust, to the old railroad."

"What had you to do there."

"Eh, I had nothing to do there."

"But you must have had business there."

"Why, yes, I had business; but it came to nothing, for he had no papers."

"Well, what was it, then?"

"You see, he sent down from the Court, I should drive a ram down to the old railroad; well, I did so, and we got there all right. There was a fellow standing at the station; he let me pass, and I said to him, 'Good morning,' says I, 'here he is.' 'Who?' he asked. 'The ram.' says I. 'What of him?' says he. 'Well, I don't know,' says I. 'Has he any papers?' asked he. 'No,' says I, 'he hasn't any papers.' 'Blockhead,' says he, 'I asked if *he* had any papers.' 'No,' says I, 'I told you before, the ram has no papers.' 'Thunder and lightning!' says he, 'I asked if *he himself* had any papers.' 'What?' says I, 'if I? What do I want of papers? I was to deliver him here.' You see, the fellow was undecided, and first he turned me out, and then he put out the old ram after me, and there we both stood by the train. Huiüü! said the old thing, and then it went off, and we stood there, he had no papers, and I had no papers, and what should I do about it? I loaded him in again, and drove back home. And when I went up to the house, last evening, there was a great uproar, and I thought our Herr would eat me up, he flew at me so. But what did I know? If he must have papers, he should have given them to somebody. But so much I know, if our Herr were not such a great Herr, and if he hadn't such a stiff backbone, and if we all held together, we would try a tussle with him. And his old Register of a wife is a thousand times worse than himself! Didn't she beat my neighbor Kappingsten's girl half dead, last spring? She beat the girl three times with a broomstick, and shut her up in the shed, and starved her, and why? Because a hawk had carried off a chicken. Was it her fault that the hawk carried off the chicken, and was it my fault that he had given me no papers?"

Bräsigt listened to all this, and, though yesterday he wanted to start a revolution against Pomuchelskopp, to-day he kept perfectly still, for he would never have forgiven himself, if he had, by a thoughtless word, excited the people against their master.

They came to Pumpelshagen, and drove up to the farm-house door. With a great leap, Fritz Triddelsitz came out of the house to Bräsigt: "Herr Inspector, Hen Inspector! I truly could not help

it, Marie Möller packed the book up, through an oversight, and when I went to change my clothes, in Demmin, there was the book."

"What book?" asked Bräsig hastily.

"Good gracious! Habermann's book, that all this uproar has been about."

"And that book," said Bräsig, catching Fritz by the collar, and shaking him, till his teeth chattered in his head, "you infamous greyhound, did you take that book to Demmin with you?" and he gave him a push towards the door: "In with you! Bring me the book!"

With fear and trembling, Fritz brought out the book; Bräsig snatched it from his hand. "Infamous greyhound! Do you know what you have done? The man who in his kindness and love has tried to make a man of you, who has covered all your stupidities with a silken mantle, you have ruined, you have brought into this shameful quarrel."

"Herr Inspector, Herr Inspector!" cried Fritz, deadly pale, "Oh, Lord! it wasn't my fault, Marie Möller packed up the book, and I rode from Demmin to-day, in two hours, to bring it back again as soon as possible."

"Marie Möller!" cried Bräsig, "what have you to do with Marie Möller? Oh, if I were your Herr Father, or your Frau Mother, or even your Frau Aunt, I would lash you till you ran like a squirrel along the wall. What have you to do with that old goose of a Marie Möller? And do you think to make up for your stupidity by galloping over the public road? Shall the innocent beast suffer for your fault? But come now, come before the board! Come before the judgment seat, to the gracious Frau! You shall tell her how it has all happened, and then you can go and parade with Marie Möller."

And with that, he went off, and Fritz followed slowly behind, his heart full of misgivings.

"Announce me, with the young man, to the gracious Frau," said Bräsig, to Daniel Sadenwater, when they came to the porch, and he pointed to Fritz. Daniel made a sort of half-grown bow, and went. Fritz stood there, like butter in the sun, making a face, which came very readily to him, since his days at Parchen, because he used to make it when there was a conference of teachers, and his misdeeds came up for judgment. Bräsig stood bent up in the corner, with the book under his arm, and tugged alternately at his left and right boot-straps, that his yellow tops might appear to the best advantage. When the gracious Frau came, and went into the living-room, he followed her, quite red from the stooping and his excitement, and Fritz, very pale, went in behind him.

"You wished to speak to me, Herr Inspector?" asked the young Frau, looking now at Bräsig, and now at Triddelsitz.

"Yes, gracious Frau, but I would first beg you graciously to hear what this Apothecary's son, this--infamous greyhound,"--he was going to say, but restrained himself--"young man has to say, he has a fine story to tell you."

The young Frau turned a questioning glance upon Fritz, and the old fellow began to stammer out his story, growing first red, and then pale, and told it pretty much as it happened, only that he left out Marie Möller's name, ending with, "And so the book came, by an oversight, into my travelling bag."

"Out with Marie Möller!" cried Bräsig, "the truth must finally come to light!"

"Yes," said Fritz, "Marie Möller packed it up; I had so much to do that day."

The young Frau was greatly disturbed. "So it was all only an unhappy accident?"

"Yes gracious Frau, it was so," said Bräsig, "and here is the book, and here, on the last page, is Habermann's account, and there are four hundred thalers due him, beside his salary, and it is right, and balances, for Karl Habermann never makes mistakes, and when we were boys he used to excel me myself, in the accuracy of his reckoning."

The young Frau took the book with trembling hand, and as she, without thinking of it, noticed the sum total on the last page, the thought shot confusedly through her mind, Habermann was innocent of this charge, why not of the other, in which she had never believed? Fritz's story could not be an invention, and she had done the man the bitterest injustice; but he had shot her husband! In that, she found a sort of excuse, and she said, "But for God's sake, how could he shoot at Axel?"

"Gracious Frau," said Bräsig, raising his eyebrows very high, and putting on his most serious expression, "with your favor, those are abominable lies; the young Herr took aim at him, and as Habermann was trying to wrest the gun from him, it went off, and that is the whole truth, and I know all about it, because he told me himself, and he never lies."

Dear heart, she knew that, and she knew also, that so much could not be said of her husband; at the first, in his first excitement, he had said, "He is not a murderer," but since then, he had constantly affirmed that Habermann had shot him. She sat down, and laid her hand over her

eyes, and tried to take counsel with herself; but it was of no use; she collected herself with an effort, and said, "You have come, I suppose, to receive the money for the inspector; my husband is suffering, I cannot disturb him now, but I will send it."

"No, gracious Frau, I did *not* come for that," said Bräsigg, drawing himself up, "I came here to tell the truth, I came here to defend my old friend, who was my playmate sixty years ago."

"You have no need to do that, if your friend has a good conscience, and I believe he has."

"I see, by this remark, gracious Frau, that you know human nature very poorly. Man has two consciences, the one inside of him, and that no devil can take from him, but the other is outside of him, and that is his good name, and that any scamp may take from him, if he has the power, and is clever enough, and can kill him before the world, for man lives not for himself alone, he lives also for the world. And these wicked rumors are like the thistles, that the devil and his servants sow in our fields, they stand there, and the better the soil is the bigger they grow, and they blossom and go to seed, and when the top is ripe, then comes the wind,--no man knows whence it cometh or whither it goeth, and it carries the down from the thistle-top all over the field, and next year the whole field is full of them, and men stand there and scold, but no one will take hold and pull up the weeds, for fear of getting his fingers pricked. And you, gracious Frau, have also been afraid of pricking your fingers, when you let my old friend be driven out of your house, as a traitor and a thief, and I wanted to tell you that, and to tell you that *that* hurt my Karl Habermann the worst of all. And now farewell! I have nothing more to say." With that, he left the room, and Fritz followed him.

And Frida? Where was the bright young wife with her clear eyes and sound understanding, who looked at everything so sensibly and quietly? This was not the same woman, the cool, intelligent composure had changed to restless agitation, and before the clear eyes lay a shadow, which hindered her from looking about her. "Ah," she exclaimed, "untrue again! All these suspicions are merely the progeny of lies, of self-deception and the most unmanly weakness! And my distress for him, my love for him, must make me a sharer in his wrong, I must give a deadly wound to this honest heart that loved me so truly! But I will tell him!"--she sprang up,--"I will tear away this web of lies!" but she sank down again, in weakness; "no, not yet; I cannot; he is too ill." Ah, she was right; insincerity and falsehood surround in a wide circle even the most upright heart, and come nearer and nearer, and draw it into the whirlpool, till it no longer knows whether it is out or in, when cool composure is lost, and considerate thought is absorbed in fear or hope.

When Bräsigg came to his wagon, Ruhrdanz, with the help of Krischan Däsel and others, had packed nearly all the goods, and what was left soon found a place. Bräsigg was getting into the wagon by Ruhrdanz, when Fritz Triddelsitz held him fast: "Herr Inspector, I beg of you, tell Herr Habermann that I am innocent, that I couldn't help it."

Bräsigg would have made no answer, but when he saw Fritz's sorrowful face, he pitied him, and said, "Yes, I will tell him; but you must reform." Then he drove off.

"Herr Inspector," said Ruhrdanz, after a little while, "it is none of my business, and perhaps I should not speak of it; but who would have thought it--I mean about Herr Habermann."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing,--I only mean that he should go off so suddenly, and then this shooting."

"Eh, that is all stuff and nonsense," said Bräsigg, in vexation.

"So I said, Herr Inspector; but the groom Krischan, he stood there, as we were packing, and he said that the whole disturbance came from the confounded papers, because Herr Habermann had no regular papers to show. Yes, so I say, the confounded papers!"

"Habermann's papers are all right."

"Yes, so I say, Herr Inspector, but about the shooting! Our young Herr Gustaving was telling about it this morning, all over the village."

"Gustaving," cried Bräsigg in his wrath, "is a rascal of a puppy! a puppy who has not yet got his eyes open."

"So I say, and don't take it evil of me, Herr Inspector; but he is the best of the lot, up at the Court. For, you see, there is the old--well, Orndt's nephew was here last week, and he came from Prussia to Anclam, and he said that our Herr always had human skin on his stick, he banged the people about so; but the Prussians wouldn't put up with him, and the people went to the Landgrafenamt, or to the Landrathenamt,--I don't know what the old thing is called,--and complained of him, and the Landgraf turned him out in disgrace. I wish we had such a Landgraf in our neighbourhood, for the court of justice is too far off."

"Yes," said Bräsigg hastily, "if you had such a Landrath as that, you would have something rare."

"So I say, Herr Inspector, but once he went rather too far, for he beat a woman who was in the

family way, and injured her severely, and, you won't take it ill of me, Herr Inspector, but I think that was a great crime. Then they complained of him to the king, and he commanded that he should be imprisoned in Stettin for life, and drag balls after him. Well, then, his old woman went to the king, and fell down on her knees to him, and the king let him out, on condition that he should wear an iron ring round his neck, all his life long, and every autumn he should drag balls, for four weeks, in Stettin,--he was there this last autumn,--and that he should leave the country; and so he came here; but now tell me, Herr Inspector, if he should be driven away from here, where could he go?"

"Where the pepper grows, for all I care," said Bräsig.

"Yes, so I say, Herr Inspector; but don't take it ill of me, I don't believe they would take him there; for, you see, he has money enough to buy a place, but how about his papers? For when the king comes to see his papers, and he reads that he must wear an iron ring on his neck, and that that is the reason he always wears such a great thick neck-cloth, then they will have nothing to do with him."

"Eh, then you will have to keep him," said Bräsig.

"Well, if there is no other way, then we must keep him; he is, so to speak, married to us. Get up!" he cried, and drove at a trot, through Gurlitz; and Bräsig fell into deep thought. How strangely things went in the world! Such a fellow, who had such a reputation, was yet in circumstances to ruin an honest man's good name; for he was quite certain that Pomuchelskopp was at the bottom of all the stories, and that he had taken pains to set them in circulation was evident from Gustaving's share in the matter.

"It is scandalous," he said to himself, as he got down, in Rahnstadt, at the Frau Pastorin's, "but take care, Zamel! I have taken one trick from you, with the pastor's acre, I shall get another; but first I must complain of you, about the 'crow!'"

CHAPTER XXXII.

New-Year's day, 1846, had come, and brought its kind wishes, and the Rahnstadters congratulated each other, in the cold streets, or in the warm parlors, just as it happened, and some people slept until noon, and ate pickled herrings, because it was Sylvester's eve, and there was much talk among the young people of this and that, which had happened at the ball, yesterday, and the old folks sat together, and talked of what had happened, not indeed at the ball, but in the world. And the story of Habermann and Herr von Rambow was a chief dish, which was served up at all tables; and as every house had its own cookery, so it had also its own gossip, one believed the story so, and another so, and each suited it to his own palate, and invited his neighbor as guest, and Slusuhr and David went everywhere, as unbidden guests, and the one added his pepper, and the other his garlic to the dish. And so, for the city of Rahnstadt and the region round about the story and the slander became richer in its process, as each seasoned it with his favorite spice: Habermann had for years been cheating his two masters, and had accumulated a great pile of money, which was the reason why the young Herr von Rambow was always in pecuniary embarrassment; he had gone halves with the lay-laborer Regel, in his robbery, and had helped him off and given him a recommendation. Whether Jochen Nüssler had assisted in the conspiracy, people were not definitely informed. But at last the apothecary Triddelsitz's son, who was an uncommonly wideawake and discreet young man, had come upon the track, by secretly examining Habermann's books, in which he discovered the whole imposition, word for word. He had told it to the housekeeper, Marie Möller, and they both agreed that Triddelsitz must take the book till Habermann had gone, and the considerate young man did so, and carried it with him to Demmin, intending to deliver it afterwards to Herr von Rambow. But, the next day, Habermann had missed the book, and was persuaded that Herr von Rambow had taken it, so he went to him, and told him he was a rascal, and demanded his book again, and when the young Herr could not give it him, he aimed a rifle at his breast. The young Herr would not bear that, and grappled with him for the rifle, and it went off, and the Herr von Rambow was now lying at the point of death. Habermann was doubtless in concealment, somewhere in the city. This was pretty nearly the story which the Rahnstadters had pieced together, and everybody wondered that the burgomeister did not have such a dangerous man put in prison.

There were, fortunately, two intelligent beings in the city, who would not bite at the story; one was Moses, who, when David told him of the affair, said merely, "David, you are too stupid!" and went about his business, the other was the burgomeister himself, who shook his head and also went about his business. The Rector Baldrian did not go about his business, for he had a vacation, and he said if the whole city said so there must be something in it, but so much he would say, and

he would go to the sacrament upon it, his Gottlieb's father-in-law, Jochen Nüssler, was not in the conspiracy. Kurz said it was possible, but he would never have suspected it of old Habermann; but no one could read the heart of another. Meanwhile, he must say, one thing seemed to him improbable, that Fritz Triddelsitz could have acted with much discretion, and he believed that part of the business must have happened differently. Just for the reason that his Fritz had distinguished himself, the apothecary believed in the story, and told it all over the city, that he might increase his dear son's celebrity.

And so strangely does destiny play with us. At this very moment when Fritz's renown was spread through the whole city, he himself stood before that dreadful criminal, Habermann, in the guise of a penitent sinner, begging him earnestly to forgive his share in the trouble, he had not done it intentionally. Habermann stroked his chestnut hair, and said, "Let it go Triddelsitz! But notice one thing; many a good action has evil consequences in the world, and many an evil one has good; but we are not responsible for the consequences, those lie in other hands, and the consequences do not make an action either good or bad. If you had not done wrong, in deceiving me about your grain-account, your conscience would not trouble you, and you need not have stood before me thus. But I forgive you; and now take the receipt for the money, and be a good, steady fellow! And now, good-bye!"

He gave him a receipt, for the gracious Frau had sent him his salary, and this money he had paid out, by Fritz.

Fritz went to the inn, when he had left his horse. There were many people there and they flocked around him: "Well, how is it? You did that well!" "Is the Herr von Rambow dangerously hurt?" "Then he is still living!" "Do let Herr Triddelsitz speak!" "Just tell us----" "No, just tell us, have you got Habermann?"

Fritz was in no mood for narration, he had no desire to expose his own stupidity; he pushed through the crowd, with a few general remarks, and mounted his horse, and the Rahnstadters said, with one accord, he was a very discreet young man, he would not sound his own praises.

If the Rahnstadters gathered about Fritz, in their curiosity, as if he were a bottle of syrup, and they the flies, they were to have a still richer treat; this New-year's day was to be a real news-day. Scarcely had Fritz, outwardly so proud and reserved, inwardly so dejected and penitent, ridden away from the door, when a carriage drove up to the inn,--the gentleman driving himself, and the coachman sitting behind,--and the Rahnstadters flattened their noses against the window panes; who could that be? "He looks wonderfully familiar to me," said one. "Yes, I have surely seen him before," said another. "Is it not----" began a third. "Eh, what? No, it isn't the one you think," said Bank, the shoemaker. "I know him," said Wimmersdorf the tailor, "I have made him many a coat, that is the Herr von Rambow who lives beyond Schwerin, at Hogen-Selchow, the cousin of the Pumpelshagen Herr." "The tailor is right, it is he." "Yes, it is he." "Probably he comes on account of this story." "That must be it, for the Pumpelshagen Herr lies so low, he can attend to nothing. You shall see, he will take the business in hand." And as Franz came in to lay off his furs, the Rahnstadters all stood with their backs against the windows, with their backs against the stove, with their backs against the walls, and all looked to the middle of the room, where Franz stood, as it were, surrounded by a web of curiosity, from which all the threads ran to the middle, where he was caught, like a helpless fly.

Franz went out, spoke a couple of words to the servant, and went off towards the market. "Johann," asked one from the window, "what did he say to you?" "Ah," said Johann, "he only asked after the burgomeister, if he was at home." "Did you hear? he asked after the burgomeister; he is going to work in earnest." "Johann," said another, "did he say nothing else?" "Yes, he asked where the parson's wife lived, who has moved here lately, near Kurz the shopkeeper." "Ha, ha! Do you notice that? The inspector is probably stowed away, with the parson's wife. Well, good-bye."

"Gossip Wimmersdorf, where are you going?" "Oh, I shall drop in at Kurz's." "Wait, I will go too." "That is so," said another, "at Kurz's, we can see everything finely." "Yes, let us go to Kurz's," and it was not long before Kurz's shop was fuller of customers than he had seen it for a long time, and every one took a dram, and some two, and Kurz said to himself, "Thank God! the new year begins finely."

After a while, Franz came back from the market, and went past Kurz's shop, directly up to the Frau Pastorin's door.

"How? He has no policeman with him!" said one.

"Yes, Hoppner is not at home, he has gone to get a pig to-day, from the farmer at Prebberow."

"Oh, that is all right, then."

"How Habermann will feel, when he finds himself caught!" said Wimmersdorf.

"Children, my feet are getting cold," said Bank, the shoemaker, "I am going home."

"What? You may as well wait till the business comes to a head," said Thiel, the cabinet-maker.

"What do you know about it?" said Bank. "It seems to me as if there was'nt a word of truth in the whole story."

"What? You told me the story, yourself, this morning," said Thiel.

"Yes, that is so, but morning talk is not evening talk. I have considered the matter since then."

"That is to say, you have got cold feet over it," said the tailor. All laughed.

"That is a stupid joke," said the shoemaker, "and the whole story is a stupid joke; the old inspector has traded with me all these years, and has always paid his accounts honestly, and is he likely, in his old age, to take to cheating and stealing?"

"Eh, you may talk! But when the whole city says so?"

"Eh, the whole city! Here stands Herr Kurz, ask him if he has'nt always paid honestly! Ask the man what he says to it!"

"What I say to it? I say nothing," said Kurz, "but I don't believe it, and I have my own reasons."

"There, do you hear?"

"Yes, it may possibly be so."

"Yes, I said, all along, the matter looked very strange to me."

"Well," said Wimmersdorf, "he never traded with me, and I don't see why I should'nt believe it."

"Eh, tailor, don't let yourself be laughed at!"

"Yes, children, laugh at the tailor!"

"Now, I will tell you something," said Bank, smiting with his fist on the counter. "Come here, all of you,--Herr Kurz, fill the glasses once more! Now let us all drink to our brave, old, honest inspector!"

And they did so, and went home with a stronger belief than ever in Habermann, and with all of them, except Wimmersdorf the tailor, the old man was reinstated in his good name. Why? Because Bank the shoemaker had cold feet.

Upon such little things often depends good or evil opinion. Here, the good prevailed; but what availed the good opinion of a few insignificant mechanics against that secret, invisible power which determined the fate of the children of men in this little city, and held the entangled threads of happiness and misery in its hand, and pulls them, so that one must dance on the string, at its will? I mean that secret tribunal which the women folks hold, in the quiet evening hours, to the terror of all evil-doers, over their knitting and tea. There, every sinner gets his deserts, he is pricked with the knitting-needles, pinched with the sugar-tongs, burned in the spirit-lamp, and every biscuit or muschüken^[9] soaked in the teacups gives a faithful picture of the condition of his terrified soul, if he were standing before this tribunal. What did this Rahnstadt Female Assembly care for Hans Bank's good opinion, or his cold feet? What for Habermann's well-paid accounts? These judges went seriously to work; they first took account, in an intelligent manner, of the antecedents,--as jurists say,--and they found the case very weak, for Habermann, for Louise, for the Frau Pastorin, even for Bräsigt. Malchen and Salchen Pomuchelskopp had circulated all the particulars, here a little drop and there a little drop, Salchen had gathered those precious pearls together, and arranged them in proper order, and even David had helped a little, and so the Female Assembly had a very correct representation of Franz's attachment to Louise, of Habermann's and the Frau Pastorin's match-making, and of Bräsigt's scandalous tale-bearing, which they were qualified to make use of, in the best possible manner.

The preliminaries had just been disposed of, when the wife of the city Syndic, (Recorder,) and the merchant's wife, Madam Krummhorn, came in together, and received a friendly scolding from the hostess, because they were so late. They defended themselves, in rather a condescending way, saying nothing of importance, but they sat down with such a swing, and took out their knitting with such significant shaking of heads, that the high tribunal must have been excessively stupid, if it had not observed that they had something special on their minds. It did its duty, beginning to feel round, by degrees, but the Frau Syndic and the Frau Krummhorn were prepared for resistance, and pinched their lips together, like live oysters, and the knives applied by the high tribunal were not successful in opening the shells. With sighs, the assembly took up its knitting-work, and soaked a couple of fresh muschüken in its tea, and with horror the two oysters became aware that their fast-locked news was stale, and that the best juice had run out from it; they opened, therefore, of their own accord, and the Frau Syndic asked the burgomeisterin, if a young gentleman had not called on the Herr Burgomeister that afternoon. Yes, said the Frau Burgomeisterin, the cousin of Herr von Rambow had been to see her husband, they had just been speaking of it.

"And what did he want?" asked the Frau Syndic.

"To inform himself how the examination about the stolen money had resulted, and he also asked whether the stories in Pumpelshagen--you know, the shooting--had any connection with that affair."

"And what else?" inquired Frau Syndic, looking down at her knitting.

"My husband has told me nothing more," said the burgomeisterin.

"And do you believe that?" asked Frau Syndic. Now it is a shame, before any tribunal, especially before such as this, to expect it to believe any simple, natural story. The burgomeisterin felt the accusation, which was implied in this question, and said sharply:

"If you know it better, dear, tell it yourself."

One oyster looked at the other, and both laughed aloud. Well, when such a fat oyster--for the Frau Syndic was fat, and Frau Krummhorn was also well-to-do--laughs so at another, it makes a great impression upon people, and as a natural consequence the company laid their knitting in their laps, and looked at the oysters.

"Good heavens!" cried the hostess, at last, "what do you know?"

"Frau Krummhorn may tell," said Frau Syndic, coolly. "She saw it as well as I."

Frau Krummhorn was a good woman, she could relate well and skilfully; but her gift of the gab had one failing, it was like Protonotary Scharfer's legs,--rudderless; and just like the protonotary, she was obliged to call out to one and another, "Hold me fast!" or "Turn me round!" She began: "Yes, he came right across the market-place."

"Who?" asked a stupid little assessor, who could not comprehend the business.

"Keep still!" cried everybody.

"So, he came right across the market-place. I knew him again directly, he had bought himself a new suit, of my husband, a black dress-coat, and blue trousers, eh, what do I say! a blue dress-coat and black trousers: I can see him, as if it were yesterday, he always wore yellow-leather breeches and boot-tops,--or was that Fritz Triddelsitz? I really am not quite sure. Yes, what was I saying?"

"He came right across the market-place," said a chorus of three voices.

"Exactly! He came right across the market-place, and into the Frau Syndic's street, I had just gone into Frau Syndic's, for she wanted to show me her new curtains, they came from the Jew Hirsch's,--no, I know,--the Jew Bären's, who has lately become bankrupt. It is remarkable, my husband says, how all our Jews become bankrupt, and yet grow richer all the time, no Christian merchant can compete with these confounded Jews. How far had I got?"

"He came into the Frau Syndic's street."

"Ah, yes! The Frau Syndic and I were standing at the window, and could look right into the parlor of the Frau Pastorin Behrens, and the Frau Syndic said her husband had told her, if the Frau Pastorin would go to law about it,--no, not the Frau Pastorin, it was the Church, or else the Consistory,--then Herr Pomuchelskopp, or somebody else, must build a new parsonage at Gurlitz, and the Frau Syndic----"

But the Frau Syndic could contain herself no longer,--in putting up Frau Krummhorn to tell the story, she had prepared a fine rod for her own impatience, so she interrupted her, without ceremony:

"And then he went into the Frau Pastorin's and, without waiting, right into the parlor, and the old Frau rose from the sofa, and made such a motion of the hand, as if she would keep him away from her, and looked as distressed as if a misfortune had happened to her, and that might well be the case; and then she placed a chair, and urged him to sit down; but he did not sit down, and when the Frau Pastorin went out, he walked up and down the room, like--like----"

"Frau Syndic," said Frau Krummhorn, "you repeated a fine couplet this afternoon."

"Why, yes. 'King of deserts is the Lion, when he strides along his path.' Well, he strode up and down like such a king of deserts, and when the old inspector and his daughter came in, he rushed up to them, with the bitterest reproaches."

"But, good gracious!" said the little assessor, laying her knitting in her lap, "could you hear, then?"

"No, dear," said Frau Syndic, laughing at the stupidity of the little assessor, "we did not *hear* it; but Frau Krummhorn and I both *saw* it, saw it with our own eyes. And the old inspector stood before him, like a poor sinner, and looked down, and let it all go over his head, and his daughter threw her arm about his neck, as if she would protect him."

"Yes," interrupted Frau Krummhorn, "it was just so, as when old Stahl, the cooper, was arrested, because he had stolen hoops. His daughter Marik sprang between him and the policeman, Hoppner, and would not let her father be taken to the Rath-house, because of his white hair; but he had stolen the hoops, I am sure of it, for I had him put three new hoops about my milk-pail, and my husband said it was all the same to us, whether they were stolen or not, and for the milk also, it would not turn sour, on account of the stolen hoops; but I have noticed----"

"Right, Frau Krummhorn," said Frau Syndic, stopping her, "you noticed, also, how pale the girl looked, and how she trembled, when the young Herr turned to her, and released himself."

"No," said Frau Krummhorn, honestly, "she looked pale, but I did not see that she trembled."

"I saw it," said the Frau Syndic, "she trembled like *that*," shaking herself back and forth in her chair, as if it were a warm summer day, and she were shaking off the flies,--"and he stood before her, like this,"--here she stood up--"The last link is broken,' as my son, the student, sings, and he looked at her *so*," and here she looked so angrily at the little assessor, that the latter grew quite red, "and then the old Frau Pastorin thrust herself between them, and tried to quiet her, and soothed him, and talked so much, and perhaps succeeded in a measure, for he gave them both the hand, at parting; but when he left the house, it was clearly to be read in his face, how glad he was that he had broken off with this company. Wasn't it so, Frau Krummhorn?"

"I didn't see that," said the merchant's wife, "I was looking at the young girl, how she stood with her arms crossed on her breast, and so pale. God bless me! I have seen pale girls enough,--only lately, my brother's daughter, she has the pale sickness, and the doctor is always saying, 'Iron! iron!' but she has iron enough, her father is a blacksmith. He might have been something very different, for our late father----"

"Ah, the poor girl!" cried the stupid little assessor, "she is such a pretty girl. And the poor old man! I cannot believe that, with his white hair, he has done such dreadful things."

"Dear," said the Frau Syndic, with a look at the little assessor, which, interpreted into ordinary language, meant "You goose!"--"dear, be careful of such indiscriminate compassion, and beware how you associate with people who are connected with criminals."

"Yes, he has done it," went from mouth to mouth, from stocking to stocking, from cup to cup. The little assessor was silenced; but all at once, a couple of gray, old, experienced advocates stood up for her, who usually in the tea-fights were retained as state-attorneys for the prosecution, but, to-day, undertook the defense. They had looked at each other and nodded, during the Frau Syndic's speech; they would let her tell it all out quietly, and then they would free their minds. And the Frau Syndic had done a stupid thing, she had forgotten the relationship, for the two old advocates were Frau Kurz, and Frau Rectorin Baldrian, and now was their time, and they took the Frau Syndic by the collar:

"Dear, how do you know that Habermann is a criminal?"

"Darling, didn't you know that Habermann is brother-in-law to my brother?"

"Dear, you should be careful of your sharp tongue."

"Darling, you have often got into trouble on account of it."

So they shot each other, with "Dear" and "Darling," back and forth across the table, and the tea-spoons clattered in the cups, and the cap-ribbons fluttered under the chins, the innocent knitting-work was bundled together, and stuffed into bags; the Frau Burgomeisterin took sides with the two advocates, for she had not forgotten the Frau Syndic's sharp words; the hostess ran from one to another, and begged by all that was holy, they would not disgrace her so sadly, as to break out into such a quarrel at her tea, and the little assessor began to cry bitterly, for she believed that she was the cause of the whole disturbance. But the mischief was done; half went away, the other half stayed, and Rahnstadt was divided into two parties.

And the people, about whom all the fuss was made, were sitting, if not peacefully, yet quietly, in their room, with no suspicion how much trouble and breaking of heads they had caused to their next neighbors, and how much strife and hatred. They had no idea that the stern look, which the Frau Syndic shot across the street from her red face signified anything to them, and the little Frau Pastorin remarked more than once, "From her looks the Frau Syndic must be a very determined and energetic person, who would keep good order in her household." And Louise had no suspicion that the pretty young girl, who went back and forth past their house, and cast many a stolen glance at her window, was filled to the depths of her heart with sympathy for her, and that this was the foolish little assessor, who had taken her part at the tea-fight.

Ah no, these people had something quite different to think of, and to care about; Louise must keep her sick heart still, and conceal it from the world, that her father might not see its bleeding wounds, which the visit of Franz had torn open afresh; Habermann was more quiet and profoundly thoughtful, after this visit than before; he had neither eyes nor thoughts for anything but his child. He sat lost in reflection, only, when his daughter looked paler and more absent-minded than usual, he would spring up, and run out into the little garden, and walk up and down, till he became composed. Ah, where was his hatred, when he saw his child's love! Where was his

anger against the world, when, in the world nearest him, he saw only kindness and friendliness? Hate and anger must disappear from such a heart; but sadness remained, and the most pitiful compassion, for the destiny of his only child. The little Frau Pastorin thought no longer of her duster, she had something else to care for than tables and chairs. She must clear away the rubbish from two hearts, which had grown fast to her own, and she polished away at them, with her efforts to comfort, till they should be bright and clear again: but her labor was in vain, at least with Habermann. The sinews of the old man's strength were cut, with his good name, every joy and hope of life was gone, and the unwonted quiet and inaction made him more and more depressed, so that his case would have been a lamentable one, if the sweet voice of his child had not sometimes banished the evil spirit, as the singing of the youthful David the evil spirit of King Saul. All that Franz had urged so impressively, that the chief difficulty was removed by the finding of the book, that he must know what a weak, inconsiderate creature his cousin Axel was, and that his judgment could not harm him, that *he* should believe in him, though all the world were against him, for he had another world in his own breast; all this, which the Frau Pastorin repeated, he put aside, and remained firm in his resolve that, so long as his innocence was not fully established about the stolen money, so long his name was branded with disgrace, and he must hold back the young man, even against his will, that his own reputation might not be injured.

This was now, seen by daylight, sheer nonsense, and many a one might here ask, with reason, Why did he not, with his good conscience, go freely and boldly before the world, and scorn their lying rumors? And I agree, the question is reasonable; he should have done it, and he would have done it, if he had still been the *old* Habermann. But he was so no longer, through provocations, injuries and neglect, he had grown morbid, and now came this open accusation, and the dreadful scene with his master, and the young Frau had deserted him, for whom he would have given his life, and all this happened at a time when his heart had just opened to the hope of a happy future. The frosts of winter do no harm; spring will yet come; but when everything is fresh and growing, and the snow falls upon our green hopes, then there is snow and trouble, and all the little song-birds, who were building and pairing with the spring, are chilled and frozen in their nests, and the blighted groves are silent as death. The old man had prepared a great feast in his heart, and would welcome to it the fairest hopes, and now dark forms crowded in, and turned everything to confusion, and took away the only treasure, which he had laid up in his whole life; that gave him a blow, from which he could not recover. Take away a miser's treasure, which he has been scraping together for sixty years, and you take his life with it, and that is but a treasure which rust can devour; what is it to an honest name?

So the Frau Pastorin's only comfort lay in the last words of Franz: he could wait, and he should come again.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

So Habermann kept himself to himself, and sat in his room, or went into the garden, when the Frau Pastorin had visitors; and that was often the case, for one half of Rahnstadt believed they were causing great annoyance to the other half, who had put the Frau Pastorin's house under the ban, if they visited her frequently. So it came to pass, that the Rector Baldrian and Kurz the merchant were continually dropping in at the Frau Pastorin's; for their wives had discoursed to them so impressively, at home, over Habermann's innocence, that it was impossible for them to retain any doubt of it. From outside the city, came young Jochen, and his wife, and Mining, and also Pastor Gottlieb and Lining, often, of an afternoon; but Bräsig came at all times, and made the Frau Pastorin's house his dove-cote, where his innocent old heart flew in and out, with a crop full of news, which he had gathered in Rexow, and Pumpelhagen, and Gurlitz, for his old friend. He informed him that the earth was dry,—that is to say, the fields,—but he did not always bring the olive-branch in his beak; when the talk was about Pomuchelskopp and Axel, he let it fall, in his anger, and the dove became a veritable raven. He was not to be brought back, when he had flown away, and he told Habermann to his face he came to divert him to other thoughts, and if it did not please him, he did not take it ill; but would come again the next day, with much to tell about the weather and the farming.

And in the spring of 1846, there was much to tell about these subjects. The winter had been warm and moist, and the spring came so early, that scarcely any one could remember the like; in February the grass was green, and the winter wheat was up and the clover sprouting, and the ground was wonderfully dry, and the farmers went about, considering if it were not time to plant peas. "Karl," said Bräsig, "you shall see, it will be a pitiful story, the spring is too early, and when a bird sings too soon in the morning, the cat catches him before night; you shall see, we shall look sad enough, at the harvest. The devil take such early springs!" And on Palm-Sunday, he

came into Habermann's room, with an open rape-blossom in his hand, and laid it on the table before him. "There, you see, it, is just as I told you! I picked that from your rape in Pumpelhagen. You shall see, Karl, in a week the lousid'ors will be out; but it is of no good, full of bugs from top to bottom."

"Eh, Zachary, we have often had it so, and yet had a good crop of rape."

"Yes, Karl, the *black*; but the *gray*--I have brought you the proof for your entertainment," and he reached to the table and picked out a little chrysalis; but when he opened it, there was nothing in it.

"That is what I say, Karl! These old skulking gray chafers are such sly old dogs, they are not to be reckoned on, and no more is the mischief they do. You shall see, Karl, this whole year will be a spoiled omelet, everything is going contrary to nature. How? Usually you will see crows in the rye, by May-day; this year you will see half-grown turkeys there! No, Karl, the world has turned round, and in some places the pastors are already preaching from their pulpits that the moon has crowded in between the sun and the earth, and that then the sun comes too near to the earth, and everything will be destroyed, that this is the beginning of the last day, and that people must repent."

"Ah, Zachary, that is all stuff and nonsense."

"So I say, Karl, and the repenting has turned out badly, in some places, for at Little Bibow, the day-laborers have struck work, and sold their bits of possessions to the Jews, and drink from morning to night, because they want to enjoy their property here. My Pastor Gottlieb would have preached something of the kind, but I stood by Lining, and she talked him out of it. But no good will come of such a year, Karl."

"I think, myself, that we shall have a bad harvest; but Kurz was here yesterday, and he talked so much about the fine winter wheat, which is standing in the fields----"

"Karl, I thought you had more sense. Kurz! I beg of you. Kurz! He knows what a salt herring ought to be, he understands *that*, for he is an experienced merchant; but when he talks about winter wheat, he should get up earlier in the morning,--that belongs to farmers, experienced farmers. And this is just what I say, Karl, everybody thinks he may meddle with our business, and these old city folks are as wise as the bees. Well, if any one practices farming pour paster la tante, just for his own amusement,--a la boncœur! I have no objections; but if he sets himself as a judge--well! Kurz! In syrup casks and cards, he can see straight enough; but when he looks at a rye-field, there is a veil before his eyes. But what I was going to say is, next week I am coming to you, bag and baggage."

"No, Bräsigg, no! If this proves a bad year, you will be necessary to the young people, and the young pastor knows too little of farming to be able to get on without you."

"Yes, Karl, he is stupid, and if you think so,--for I have quite given myself up to you,--then I will stay with him. But now, good-bye. I don't know what ails me, but my stomach feels badly: I will see if Frau Pastorin hasn't a little kümmel for me."

With that he went out, but put his head in again to say, "I had almost forgotten about Pumpelhagen, they have a management there, now, that you could warm your hands and feet at. Yesterday I met your Triddlesitz, at the boundary, and although he is such an infamous greyhound, he almost cried. 'Herr Inspector,' said he, 'you see I lay all night, thinking about the management, and not able to sleep, and when I had planned it all out, in the nicest way, and given the people their orders, in the morning, do you see, the Herr comes out with his arm in a sling, and spoils my plans, and sends one laborer here, and another there, running about the fields like hens with their heads cut off, and I run after them and get them together again, and get things in order, and then, in the afternoon, he tears it all to pieces again!' Karl, it must be a great satisfaction for you,--that is, to see that they cannot get on without you." Then he shut the door, and went off, but, after a little while, made his appearance again: "Karl, what I was going to say--half the horses in Pumpelhagen are used up; a couple of days ago, there stood a loaded manure-cart, and the poor beasts stood there so forlorn, head and ears down, just like the peasants in church. And it is not because they are overworked, but because they have not enough to eat, for your young Herr has no superfluity in his barns, and he has sold this spring three tons of oats and two tons of peas to the Jews, and now his granary is as bare as if the cattle had licked it. And now he must buy oats; but the poor screws that earn his bread don't get it, most of it goes to the old thorough-bred mares who do nothing but steal a living from others. There is great injustice in the world! Well, good-bye, Karl!" and this time he really departed.

That was a sad picture, which Bräsigg had drawn of the situation at Pumpelhagen; but in truth, matters were much worse, for he had said nothing of the influence which Axel's constant need of money had upon his temper, and this was the saddest. Continual embarrassment not only makes a man out of humor, it makes him hard towards his inferiors, and our Axel fell into the old fault; he believed he was so badly off because his people fared too well, and Pomuchelskopp was always telling him so. He took from them one thing here, and another there, and when his natural good-nature got the upper hand, he gave them again something here and there; but everything capriciously,--and that has a bad effect. At first, the people had laughed at his confused

management, but that is always the beginning, and the laughing soon became a grumbling, and the grumbling broke out into accusations and complaints. Under Habermann's rule, the day-laborers had always received their grain and money at the right time; now they must wait, until there was something to give them; that was bad. And if they went to their master with complaints they were snubbed; that was worse. Discontent was universal.

Axel comforted himself with the new, harvest, and with the new receipts; but, unfortunately, Bräsig proved a true prophet; when the harvest was ripe it was very thin, and when it was garnered, the barns were only half full, and the old experienced country people said to the new beginners: "Take care! Spare in time, and you will have in need! The grain will not hold out." The advice was good, but of what use was it to Axel? He must have money, so he had most of his grain thrashed out, for seed-corn and for sale. And grain was for sale at a fine price, for the Jews saw how it must turn out, and bought up on speculation, and so to the natural scarcity was added an artificial. The old day-laborers, at Pumpelshagen, shook their heads, as the loads of rye were driven from the Court: "What will become of us! What will become of us! We have got no bread-corn." And the housewives stood together, wringing their hands: "See, neighbor, that little heap! Those are all my potatoes, and all poor, and what are we to live on this winter?" And so the scarcity was universal, and it had come over this blessed land like a thief in the night, no one had thought of it, no one had prepared for it, since no one knew what to expect. But it was the worst in the little towns, and there it was the hardest for the poor mechanics,--for laboring men, there was still labor, and their children went about begging from door to door, and afterwards there were soup-kitchens organized; but the poor mechanics? They had no work,--no one employed them,--and they did not understand begging, nor did it suit their honor and reputation. Ah, I went once into the room of a right clever, industrious burgher's wife, when the dinner stood upon the table, and the hungry children stood around it, and as I entered the room the Frau threw, a cloth over the platter, and when she had gone out to call her husband, I lifted the cloth, and what did I find? Boiled potato-skins. That was their dinner.

At such times, our Lord sits in the heavens, and sifts the good from the bad, so that every one may clearly distinguish between them; the good, he keeps by himself, in his sieve, that he may take his pleasure in them, and that they may bear fruit, the bad fall through with the tares and the cockles and the nettles,--these are their unrighteous wishes, their wicked intentions, and their bad thoughts,--and when one looks to see if they bear fruit, the weeds are growing rapidly, and the blossoms make a fair show before the world, but when the harvest comes, and the sickle goes through the field, then their grain falls light on the soil, and the master turns away from the field, for it stands written, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Many a one stood firm in this trial, and gave with full hands, in spite of his own necessities, and the Landrath von O---- and the Kammerath von E---- and the Pächter H---- and also our old Moses, and many others, remained in the Lord's sieve, and bore good fruit in these bad times, but Pomuchelskopp fell through, and Slusuhr and David, and lay among the tares and the nettles, and they sat together at Gurlitz, and planned how they might fatten their swine upon other people's misfortunes. And David and Slusuhr knew well enough how to do it, if they only had money enough, they would lend it out to the poor and the distressed, to the hungry and the freezing, at high interest; but the capital which they had at their command, for the time being, was all embarked in this fine business, and they came now to the Herr Proprietor to get him to advance money and he should share in their profits. But the far-sighted Herr would not do this, it would be in everybody's mouth, and he should be blamed; so he said that he had nothing to spare, and must keep the little he had to bring his cattle and his people through.

"As for your cattle," said Slusuhr insolently, "I give in; but for the people? Do me the favor to say nothing about them! Your people are begging all over the country, and just as we drove by the parsonage, your housewives and their children were standing in the parson's yard, and your old friend Bräsig stood by two great pails of pea soup, and the young Frau Pastorin ladled it into their kettles.

"Let them! let them!" said Pomuchelskopp, "I wouldn't hinder any body in a good work. *They* may have it to spare; I haven't, and I have no money either."

"You have the Pumpelshagen notes," said David.

"Yes, do you think he can pay them? He has had a poorer harvest than the rest of us, and the little he had he has threshed out and sold."

"That is just it," said Slusuhr, "now is your time. Such a fine opportunity may not come again, and he cannot take it unkindly of you, for you are yourself pressed for money, and must pay the notes to David. Now don't make any objections, but shake the tree, for the plums are ripe."

"How high is the sum total?" inquired David.

"Well," said Pomuchelskopp, going to his desk, and scratching his head, "I have his notes here for eleven thousand thalers."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Slusuhr, "it must be more than that."

"No, it isn't more than that,--I lent him eight thousand on security, a year and a half ago, when

he asked me."

"Then you have done a stupid thing, but you must first give him notice, and then you can sue him," said the notary; "but never mind! Give me the eleven thousand thalers, we can distress him finely, in these hard times."

Muchel would not consent, at first; but Hanning put her head in at the door, and he knew very well what she wanted, so he gave the notes to Slusuhr and David.

Then the old game was played over again in Pumpelbogen, Slusuhr and David came, and set Axel burning, as if with fever, and attacked him more sharply than ever, and this time there was no talk of extension. He must and should pay, and he had'nt a shilling, not even the prospect of getting any money. It came over him like Nicodemus in the night, and for the first time the dark thought rose in his mind that this was a concerted plan, that his friendly neighbor at Gurlitz was the real cause of his embarrassment, and that he must have some special design in sending the notes to be cashed through these two rascals; but what it could be, remained hidden from his eyes. But what availed thinking and grumbling, he must have money, and from whom? He knew no one, and in spite of the suspicion which had risen in his mind, his thoughts returned to his neighbor Pomuchelskopp. He must help; who else was there? He mounted his horse, and rode over to Gurlitz.

Muchel received him with uncommon friendliness and cordiality, as if neighbors should be drawn nearer together, in these hard times, and stand by each other faithfully, in their troubles. He told great stories of his bad harvest, and complained sadly of his pecuniary embarrassments, so that Axel was quite taken aback in his purposes, and feel almost ashamed to come to a man who was in such distress, to ask for assistance. But need breaks iron, and he asked him, finally, why he had served him so as to give up his notes to those two bloodsuckers; and Pomuchel folded his hands on his stomach, and looked very mournfully at the young man, saying,--

"Ah, Herr von Rambow, in my great need! Do you see!" and he opened his desk, and showed a drawer, in which a couple of hundred thalers were lying, "There is all I have, and I must take care of my people and my cattle, and I thought perhaps you might have money lying idle."

"But," said Axel, "why not come to me yourself?"

"I did not like to," said Muchel; "you know the old proverb, 'Money joins enemies, and severs friends,' and we are such good friends."

Yes, that was true. Axel said; but these two had distressed him grievously, and he was in the most dreadful embarrassment.

"Did they do that?" exclaimed Pomuchelskopp, "but they ought not! I gave it to them on condition that my dear Herr Neighbor should not be distressed. You will of course want the note extended, it will cost you a little something, perhaps, but that can be no objection under the circumstances."

Axel knew that, but he did not let himself be so easily persuaded, his condition was too desperate, and he begged earnestly that if the Herr Proprietor had no money to spare, he would help him with his credit. "Good heavens! gladly," said Muchel, "but with whom? Who has any money now?"

"Could not Moses help?" asked Axel.

"I don't know him at all," was the reply, "I have no dealings with him. Your father did business with him, and you know him yourself. Yes, I would go and see him."

That was all the comfort Axel got; smoothly as an eel, the Herr Proprietor slipped through his fingers, and when he got on his horse, and rode home, all was dark around him, but it was darker still within.

David and Slusuhr came again, they beset him in the most shameless manner, and whatever he might say of Pomuchelskopp's later intentions, they would know nothing about them, they only knew that they must have their money.

He rode hither and thither, he knocked here and there; but there was nothing to be had anywhere; and weary and discouraged he came home, and there he was met by the quiet eyes of his wife, which said, clearly enough, that she suspected everything, but her mouth was silent, and her lips closely compressed, as if a fair book, in which stood many a word of comfort, must remain forever closed to him. Since the time when Habermann had been sent off in such a disgraceful manner, and she had become aware of the great injustice she had done him, out of love to her husband, she had said nothing more to him about his difficulties; she could not help him, and she would give him no occasion to betray himself and other people with new falsehoods. But this time he was, for the moment, in great anxiety, and his excitable, vexed, hasty demeanor betrayed his distress more fully than usual, and when she retired that night, and looked long at her child, the thought flashed through her head and heart, he was yet the father of her dearest on earth, and he seemed to her so pitiable that she wept bitterly over him, and she promised herself to speak to him with friendliness, the next morning, and to take upon herself, willingly,

her share of his self-imposed burdens.

But when morning came. Axel come down stairs, with singing and piping, and called Triddelsitz, and gave him instructions, and called for Krischan Däsel, and ordered him to put the horses to the carriage, and prepare for several days absence, and came in to his wife with a face which was not merely free from distress but full of security, so that she was astounded, and took back her promise.

"Are you going a journey?" she asked.

"Yes, I must travel on business, and shall probably go as far as Schwerin. Have you any commands for the sisters?"

She had merely greetings to send, and after a little while Axel said good-bye, and got into the carriage, and drove to Schwerin. He had told his wife but half the truth; he had no other business but at Schwerin, and with his sisters. It had occurred to him, during the night, that his sisters had money; his father had left them a little house, with a garden, and fifteen thousand thalers, and their capital was invested at four and a half per cent., and they lived on the interest; to be sure, in rather slender circumstances, but the Kammerrath could not do better for them, and had reckoned that the brothers-in-law, and especially Axel, would be able to assist them a little. This capital had occurred to Axel in the night, he could use it at once, it would help him immediately, and he could pay them interest for it, as well as strange people, but he would give them five per cent., and, though he was hard up for the moment, the devil must be in it, if he could not pay them again. This prospect was what had so enlivened him.

When the young Herr came to Schwerin, and explained his business to the sisters, and complained of the bad year, the poor old creatures became very soft-hearted and comforted him, as if the whole world had gone against him, and when Albertine, who was the cleverest of them, and who looked after the money matters, began to speak very gently of securities, the other two, and especially Fidelia, interrupted her. That would be very narrow-minded, their brother was in need, and so were many people in the country, and their brother was their pride, and their only dependence, so their blessed father had said, shortly before his death; and when Axel readily promised to give them security on the estate Albertine surrendered, and the three old maidens were greatly delighted that they could help their dear brother. He was also fortunate, in getting hold of the money; a couple of Jews had it, and he found them, and a little interest was due on it, and this he took likewise, for he intended, of course, that his sisters should receive their full fifteen thousand thalers again, and from this time get five per cent, interest on it.

He returned to his house, in the week after New Year, 1847, and a couple of days later, when David and Slusuhr came again, expecting to torment him, he counted out the money on the table, paid his notes, and made a bow to their long faces, which both translated into the words: "A good riddance, gentlemen!"

"What is this?" asked Slusuhr, as they got into their carriage.

"God bless me!" said David, "he has money. Did you see? He had still a great packet of money."

"Yes, but how did he get it?"

"Well, we must ask Zodick."

Zodick was a poor cousin of David's, whom he always took with him, as coachman, but his real business was to listen to the people on the estate.

"Zodick, did you see, did you hear where he has been?"

"The coachman told me he had been to Schwerin."

"To Schwerin? What business had he at Schwerin?"

"He got the money there."

"In Schwerin? It is what I have always said to my father, these nobility stand by each other. He must have got it from the rich one, from the cousin."

"So?" asked Slusuhr, taking a packet of money out of his pocket, and holding it under David's nose. "Smell of that! Does that smell of nobility? It smells of garlic; he got it from your confounded Jews. But it is all one,--we must go to Pomuchelskopp. Ha, ha, ha! How the crafty, little beast will hop about with anger!"

And in that he was right, Pomuchelskopp was beyond all control, when he learned that his blow had not succeeded: "I said so, I said so; it was not yet time; but, Häuning, Häuning! you crowded me so!"

"You are a blockhead!" said Häuning, and left the room.

"Take hold again," said Slusuhr; "never mind this, now you can give him notice, for St. John's

day, for the eight thousand which you have let him have."

"No, no," whispered Pomuchelskopp, "that is the only foothold I have in that fine estate; if he should pay me, my plans are all spoiled. And he has still more money?" he asked of David.

"He had a large packet and a small packet."

"Well," said Slusuhr, "you will have your way, like the dog in the well; but he must be an uncommon blockhead if he doesn't suspect, now, that you are at the bottom of the whole affair; and, if he has smelt a rat, it amounts to the same thing, whether you give him notice now, or a couple of years later."

"Children, children!" cried this dignified old proprietor, stamping and puffing up and down the room, like a steam-engine, "if he has really suspected it, he cannot do without me; I am the only friend that can help him."

"Well, don't help him, then. St. John's day is the best time, then he has no money coming in."

"Hasn't he though? He has the wool-money, and the rape-money."

"Yes, but then he has interest to pay, and most of it will have been spent beforehand."

"No, I cannot do it, I cannot do it; the foot which I have once planted in that fine estate, I can never draw back," said our old philanthropist.

"It is a great pity for a man to set himself about something, and then be afraid of the means," said the Herr Notary to David, as they drove home. "Our fine business in Pumpelhagen is at an end. I shall merely have to deal with the old woman, instead of him, the old woman will put it through."

"A dreadfully strong, clever woman," said David.

"Well, there is no help for it. Our milch cow at Pumpelhagen is dry. And it would all have gone well enough, David, if you had not been such a dunce. Why couldn't you make your father give notice for his seven thousand thalers? Then we two could have stripped him finely."

"Good heavens!" cried David, "he wouldn't do it. There he goes to old Habermann, and there they sit and talk, and when I say, 'Father, dear, give notice!' then he says, 'Give notice of your own money, I will take care of mine.'"

"He is getting childish then, and a man whose judgment is not worth more should be put under guardians," said Slusuhr.

"Well, you know, I have thought of that; but, you know,--it is so--well, so--so--and then, you know, the father is too clever!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Axel, by the help of what remained of his sisters' money, slipped along through the spring and half the summer of 1817, and, as he at last came to the bottom of his purse, he preferred to sell his wool in anticipation, rather than apply to his honest old neighbor. He saw, at last, the thick knuckles of Pomuchelskopp behind the whole affair, and his suspicion grew more and more lively that he had been sheared like one of the sheep, and that his dear old neighbor had kept the wool, though of what his chief aim might be he had not the least conception. He grew colder and colder towards Pomuchelskopp, he no longer visited him, he went out through the garden into the fields, when he saw from the window the Herr Proprietor coming to call, and his wife rejoiced silently at the change. We might rejoice, also, if he had acted intelligently and with consideration, and had broken off the intercourse with a cool head, but he worked himself up into such an opposition to Pomuchelskopp, that he wished never to set eyes on him again, and when the opportunity occurred, at the patriotic union at Rahnstadt, and the Herr Proprietor pressed up to him in a very friendly way, he not only snubbed him, but treated him in the most contemptuous manner, and used such bitter words that all the people who were assembled there took it for a reproach against Pomuchelskopp for his money-lending. This was, if not dishonorable, certainly extremely foolish, for he still owed Pomuchelskopp eight thousand thalers, which he was not ready to pay, and, if he had known the Herr Proprietor as well as he said, he must also have known what the effect of such treatment would be. Pomuchelskopp could swallow a considerable dose of rudeness, but this, in the presence of all the people, was too much for him, and his vengeance lay

too close at hand for him not to avail himself of it. He said nothing, but he went round to Slusuhr the notary: "You can give the Herr von Rambow notice on St. John's day, to pay my eight thousand thalers on St. Anthony's. I know, now, where I am; we shall get him in our fingers again, and he shall smart to pay for it."

"If only Moses would give notice too!" cried Slusuhr, and this pious wish was destined to fulfilment, but later. A change had also come over young Jochen, although no one but Frau Nüssler had thought of it; she, indeed, had long suspected that her Jochen would come to a bad end, and that, at last, he would not allow himself to be ruled by any one. And the time had now come. Jochen had, from the first, laid by money every year: at first indeed, only a couple of hundred thalers; but afterwards the hundreds became thousands, and though he did not trouble himself to count the money, his wife told him, every New-Year's morning, how much they had saved the past year, and his soul rejoiced in it, though he scarcely knew why; but he had been accustomed to it now for many years, and custom and life were, for Jochen, the same thing. When the bad year came, Frau Nüssler said to Jochen at the harvest: "This will be a bad year, you shall see we shall have to use some of our capital."

"Mother!" said Jochen, looking at her with astonishment, "you wouldn't do it!"

But this New-Year's morning his dear wife came and told him she had, this year, taken up three thousand thalers, and God grant they might get through with that! "We cannot let our people and our cattle starve," she added.

Jochen sprang to his feet, a very unusual thing, trod on Bauschan's toes, another unusual thing, looked stupidly in his wife's face, but said nothing, which was not unusual, and went silently out of the room, Bauschan following him. Noon came, Jochen was not there, a fine spare-rib was smoking on the table, Jochen did not appear; his wife called him, but he did not hear; she sought him, but he could not be found; for he was standing in the dark cow-house, in one hand the tar-bucket, in the other, the tar-brush, with which he was marking crosses on his cattle; Bauschan stood beside him. After a long time, his wife discovered him at this occupation.

"Good gracious, Jochen, why don't you come to dinner?"

"Mother, I have not time."

"What are you doing here in the cow-stable, with the tar-bucket?"

"I am marking the cows, that we must sell."

"God forbid!" cried Frau Nüssler, snatching the brush out of his hand. "What is this? my best milk-givers!"

"Mother," said Jochen quietly, "we must get rid of some of our people and our cows, they will eat us out of house and home." And it was fortunate he had begun on the cattle, and not on the people, otherwise the boys and girls might have been running about Rexow, that New Year's day, with tar crosses marked on their backs.

With great difficulty Frau Nüssler coaxed him away from this business, and got him into the house, but then Jochen announced it as his positive decision, he would manage no longer, and he *could* manage no longer, and Rudolph must come, and marry Mining, and undertake the management. Frau Nüssler could do nothing with him, and sent for Bräsig. And Mining, who had heard enough, for her share, fled to her little gable-room, and held her little heart with both hands, and said to herself that was wrong, why should not her father take his ease, and why should not Rudolph carry on the farm, he was able, Hilgendorff had written so; and, if Uncle Bräsig was opposed to her in this matter, she would tell him, once for all, she would no longer be his godchild.

When Bräsig came, and the matter was explained to him, he placed himself before young Jochen, and said to him, "What are you doing, young Jochen? Painting your cows with tar crosses, on the blessed New-Year's morning? and going to sell your wife's best milk-givers? and going to give up the management?"

"Bräsig, Rudolph can manage; why should not Mining get married, when Lining is married? Is Mining any worse?" And he looked sideways at Bauschan, and Bauschan shook his head.

"Jochen," said Bräsig, "that is all right. You have spoken a very clever word in your foolishness,"--Jochen looked up--"no, Jochen, it is no special credit to you, it is only because it suits my ideas, for I am of the opinion that Rudolph must manage here. Keep still, Frau Nüssler," said he, "just come here, a moment." And he drew Frau Nüssler into another room, and put the case before her. Until Easter, he should stay with Pastor Gottlieb, and till then, he could look after matters here; but, after Easter, Rudolph must manage, "and that will be good for you," he added, "for he will make no tar crosses on your cows, and it will be good for him too, he will get used to managing, by degrees, and then, a year from Easter, we, will have joyful wedding."

"But, Bräsig, that will never do, how can Mining and Rudolph live in one house, what will people say?"

"Frau Nüssler, I know people have a very bad opinion of their fellow-creatures when they are betrothed; I know, when I had three,—eh, what was I saying? Well, Mining can go to Pastor Gottlieb's at Easter, I shall go to Rahnstadt, to Habermann, and then my room will be empty."

"Well, that would do," said Frau Nüssler.

And so it was all arranged. Rudolph came at Easter, but Mining must go, and as she sat in the carriage with bag and baggage, she wiped the tears from her eyes, and thought herself the most unfortunate being in the world, because her mother had thrust her out of her father's house among strangers,—by which she meant her sister Lining,—and that without any reason; and she clenched her little fist, when she thought of Bräsig, for her mother had let it out that Bräsig had advised it. "Yes," said she, "and now I am to go into his room, which he has so smoked up with tobacco, that one can write his name with his finger, on the walls."

But how she opened her eyes, when she entered the room! In the middle of the room stood a table, covered with a white cloth, and on it stood a pretty glass vase with a great bouquet of such flowers as the season afforded; snow drops and blue violets, yellow daffodils and hyacinths, and under it lay a letter to Mining Nüssler, in Uncle Bräsig's handwriting, and as she opened it she was almost frightened, for it was a copy of verses, and this was the first time she had received such homage. Uncle Bräsig had borrowed an old verse-book from Schultz the carpenter, and found a couple of verses to suit him, and added another out of his own head, and this was the letter:

"TO MY DEAR GODCHILD!

"The room is mine
And yet not mine,
He who was before me
Thought it his own.

"He went out
And I came in,
When I am gone
It will be so again.

"Yes, parting and leaving are sad,
But next year, we shall be glad,
Be good and contented here,
And the wedding shall be next year!"

Mining turned red a little, over the last line, and fell upon Lining's neck, laughing and scolding Bräsig; but in heart she waved him a friendly kiss. And so Mining was here, Rudolph at Rexow, and Bräsig with the Frau Pastorin and Habermann at Rahnstadt.

There was not much change in Habermann, he still kept by himself, although many troubled themselves about him; the rector preached him a little sermon now and then, Kurz entertained him with agricultural conversation, and old Moses hobbled up the stairs, and asked his advice about his business; but this did not cheer the old man, he tormented himself, day and night, with thoughts of his child, and with the long-deferred hope that the day-laborer Regel might return, and by a full confession free him from these shameful suspicions. The laborer had sent letters, and also money, to his wife and children; but never let himself be seen. The little Frau Pastorin had a secret anxiety lest her old friend should become incurably morbid, and she felt truly thankful, when Bräsig finally came. Bräsig could help her, and Bräsig would; if any one could, he was the man. His restless and yet good-natured disposition left his Karl no peace, Karl must do this, and do that, he must go walking with him, he must listen to all the stupid books that Bräsig got out of the Rahnstadt Circulating Library, and if nothing else would rouse him, Bräsig would make the most extravagant assertions, till he had stirred Karl up to contradict him, and engaged him in a dispute. In this way, there seemed a real improvement in Habermann; but if the conversation turned upon Pumpelhagen or Franz, it was all over, and the evil spirit came upon him again.

Louise was much better off, she was not one of the woman who believe that if their love is blighted they must doctor themselves all their lives, and must show the world, through a weary, dreamy behavior, how sick their poor hearts are, that death alone can heal them, and that they are of no more use in the world. No, she did not belong to this species, she had strength and courage to bear a great grief by herself, she needed not the compassion of the world. Deep, deep at the bottom of her heart lay her love, like pure gold, and she granted no one a sight of it, its very shining was locked up from the world, and when she went into this secret place, in quiet hours, and looked at her treasure, she changed it into little money for every-day use, and gave it out, here and there, to all with whom she had to do; and *this* love the world perceived, but not the other. When our Lord sees such a heart striving bravely against misfortune, and trying to turn it into good, then he helps it, and sends many a chance to its help, of which no one thinks. Chances men call them, but, rightly viewed, they are the consequences of many other consequences, of which the first cause is hidden from our sight.

Such a chance befell Louise, in the Spring after the Female Vehmgericht. She was coming

home from Lining's at Gurlitz, and going between the Rahnstadt gardens, along a footpath, when a garden gate opened, and a pretty little maiden stepped out, blushing rosy red, and put into her hand a nosegay of lilacs and tulips and narcissus. "Ah, take them," said the little assessor,--for it was she,--and as Louise stood, rather astonished, not knowing how she came there, the tears ran down the little assessor's cheeks, and she covered her hand over her eyes, and said, "I should be so glad to give you a pleasure."

Well, that was so kind and friendly! Louise threw her arm about her, and kissed the little assessor, and the latter drew her into the garden, to the arbor, and then they sat under the blossoming lilacs, and Louise and the innocent little girl conceived a warm friendship for each other, for from the coals of love friendship is easily kindled, and from this time the little assessor was a daily guest at the Frau Pastorin's, and all in the house rejoiced at her coming. When Habermann heard the first tone of the Frau Pastorin's old piano, he came down stairs, and sat in the corner, and listened, while the little assessor brought sweet music out of the old instrument, and when that was over, the Frau Pastorin had her diversion, for the little assessor was a doctor's daughter, and doctors and doctors' children always have something new to tell, and although the Frau Pastorin was not exactly inquisitive she was very glad to know what was going on in the world, and since the time she had lived in the city this little peculiarity had developed in her, and she said to Louise, "I don't know; but it seems as if one was glad to know what is going on around one; but when my sister Triddelsitz tells me anything, it all sounds so sharp, but when little Anna tells anything it sounds so innocent and gay; she must be a good little child."

But the real significance of this friendship first appeared when the bad year came, and its consequences entered the little city,--poverty and hunger and misery. Little Anna's father was a doctor, and he had no title at all; but he had something better, he had a compassionate heart, and when he had told of this and that, at home, the little assessor would go to the Frau Pastorin and Louise, and tell it over again, and the Frau Pastorin would go to her store-room, and into the pantry, and down into the cellar, and pack a basket,--she always did that herself, nobody else must meddle with it,--and the two little maidens carried it off, in the half-twilight, and when they came back, they gave each other a kiss, and the Frau Pastorin one, and Habermann one, and that was all. And when the soup-kitchen was to be started, the ladies of Rahnstadt held a great "perpendicular," as Bräsig called it, to decide what it was best to do, and the Frau Syndic said, "It should be something noble," and when she was asked what she meant by that, she said it was all one to her; but it must be noble, otherwise she would have nothing to do with it. And the old Vehmgerichters said there must be a distinction made between the wicked and the good poor, the wicked might go hungry; and a young lady, who was just married, said they ought to have gentlemen at the head; but that was a great mistake, all were opposed to her, and the Frau Syndic said, so long as she had lived--and that must be a good many years, interjected Frau Krummhorn--cooking and nursing had come under the rule of the ladies, what did men know about such things? but the business must be noble. And the conventicle separated, as wise as it had been when it came together, and when the soup-kitchen was started, two pretty little maidens, in white aprons, served together at the fire, and put the gifts for the poor into the soup-kettles, and sat down with the wicked and the good poor, on the same bench, and peeled potatoes for the next day, and scraped turnips, and this was the small money into which Louise had changed her golden treasure, and the little assessor added her groschens to the sum.

Now came Bräsig, and relieved the little assessor of the out-door errands, for he was peculiarly fitted for such duties, and when he had not the confounded Podagra, he ran about the city, saying to Habermann, "Karl, Dr. Strump says Polchicum and exercise, and the water-doctor says cold water and exercise; they both agree on the exercise, and I find that it is good for me. What I was going to say--Moses sends his regards to you, and is coming to see you this afternoon."

"What? Has he got back from Doberau, from the baths? I thought he was not to come back until August."

"Yes, Karl, it is St. James' day, to-day, and August is almost here. But--what I was going to say,--the old Jew has quite renewed his youth, he looks really well, and he ran about the room, just to show me how spry he was. But I must go to old widow Klähn, she is waiting in her garden for me, because I promised her some turnip-seed, and then I must go to Frau Krummhorn, she wants to show me her young kittens, to see which one she shall keep for us, for, Karl, we need a good mouser; and then I must go to Risch, the blacksmith, to see about the shoes for Kurz's old saddle-horse. The old thing has wind-gall, as bad, I tell you, Karl, as Moses' David's corns. You don't know, perhaps, if your young Herr has got a horse with a wind-gall, he might like to buy the old thing from Kurz, for the completeness of his lazaretto. And, towards evening, I must go to the Frau Burgmeister, for they have three or four bushels of rye, and I shall have a sort of feast, since it was cut to-day, and I shall of course have Streichelbier, so that it will seem quite like farming. Well, good-bye, Karl, this afternoon I will read to you, for I have brought home an amusing book." And so he ran off again, up street and down, like a Jack of all trades, toiling for other people; for since in our little Mecklenburg towns the chief interests turn upon farming matters, he advised here and prophesied there, helped this one and that, and was soon the oracle and errand boy of the whole city. After dinner he sat down by his Karl, with a book in his hand, to read to him out of it, and if we peep over his shoulder we may read the title; "The Frogs of Aristophanes, translated from the Greek." We open our eyes; but how would the old Greek have opened his eyes over the cultivation of the Rahnstaders, had he, after two thousand years,

peeped over uncle Bräsig's shoulder, and perceived, from the stamp, that his confounded Frog-nonsense was ranged with the various "Blossoms" and "Pearls," and "Forget-me-nots" and "Roses," in the Rahnstadt Circulating Library. How the rogue would have laughed! Uncle Bräsig did not laugh, he sat there very sober, he had on his horn spectacles with the great round glasses, which shone like a pair of coach-lanterns, he held the book as far from his body as his arm would reach, and began:

"The Frogs of Aristop-Hannes--I read 'Hannes,' Karl, for I think 'Hanes' must be a mistake in the printing; for it told about 'Schinder-Hannes,' in a book I read once, and if this is only half as dreadful, we may be well contented, Karl." Then he began, and read on, in Schoolmaster Strull's style, and Habermann sat there, as if he were paying close attention, but soon his old thoughts slipped in, and when Bräsig moistened his finger, to turn over the fourth leaf, he saw, with righteous anger, that his old friend had closed his eyes. Bräsig stood up, and placed himself before him, and looked at him. It is an old story, that the miller wakes when the mill stops grinding, and the listeners wake when the sermon is at an end, and so it was with Habermann; he opened his eyes, took a couple of puffs at his pipe, and said, "Fine, Zachary, very fine!"

"How? you say 'fine,' and you are fast asleep."

"Don't take it unkindly," said the old man, coming, for the first time, to full consciousness, "but I havn't understood a word. The book must be very dry, or do you understand any of it?"

"Not much, Karl, but I have paid a groschen for it, and when I pay a groschen, I want to get my money's worth."

"Yes; but if you don't understand it?"

"People read for other things than understanding, Karl; people read *pour paster la tante*, with the books. Just see," and he was going to explain this remark, when some one rapped at the door, and Moses came in.

Habermann went up to him: "This is good, Moses! And how fresh you look, really handsome!"

"So my Blümchen tells me, but she has said that for these fifty years."

"Well, how did you like it, at the bath?"

"Do you want to hear some news, Habermann. One is pleased twice at the bath, first, when one arrives, and secondly, when one goes away. It is just as it is with a horse and a garden and a house, one is glad to get them, and glad to get rid of them."

"Yes, you are not used to being idle, you had too much business in your head."

"Well, what is business? I am an old man. My business is not to get into new affairs, and to get my money out of the old. And I came to talk to you about that; I am going to give notice of my seven thousand thalers at Pumpelhagen."

"Oh, Moses, not yet! You would throw the Herr von Rambow into great embarrassment."

"Well, I don't know, he must have money, he must have a great deal of money. David and the notary and Pomuchelskopp have been at him, and wanted to clear him out of his nest, this last New-year, but he paid them eleven thousand thalers, at one time. I made it out from David. I also heard it from Zodick. 'Where did you go yesterday?' I asked him. 'To the court,' he said. 'Zodick, you lie,' I told him. Then he swore it, till he grew black in the face. But I kept saying 'Zodick, you lie.' At last I said, 'I will tell you something,' said I. 'The horses are mine, and the carriage is mine, and the coachman is mine; if you don't tell the truth, I will send you away, and then you will be a beggar.' Then he thought better of it, and told me about the eleven thousand thalers, and yesterday he told me Pomuffelskopp had given him notice of the eight thousand thalers, on St. Anthony's day. Now, Pomuffelskopp is a shrewd man, he must know how he stands."

"God bless me!" cried Habermann, and his hatred was forgotten, and the old attachment struck through him, without his being conscious of it himself, "and do you mean to give notice, too? Moses, your money is safe."

"Well, suppose it is safe. But I know many places where it would be safer," and, looking sharply at the two old inspectors, one after the other, he added, with a singular expression, "I have seen him, I have also spoken with him."

"Whom? the Herr von Rambow? Where then?" asked Habermann.

"At Doberau, at the gaming-table I saw him," said Moses, venomously, "and I spoke with him at my lodgings."

"Good heavens!" cried Habermann, "he never did that in his life before. How has the unhappy young man come to that?"

"I always said," remarked Bräsig, "this Herr Lieutenant was going to the devil with his eyes open."

"Just heavens!" exclaimed Moses, "how they threw the gold about! They had great heaps of louis-d'ors before them, and put them down here, and put them down there, and shoved them here, and shoved them there, and is that a business? and do you call that an amusement? A thing to make one's hair stand on end! And there he was among them. 'Zodick,' said I,--for Zodick had come with my carriage, I was going away the next day,--'Zodick, place yourself here, and pay attention to the Pumpelwagen Herr, how it goes with him,'--it made me sick to look on. And in the evening Zodick came, and he said he had lost, and in the morning the young Herr came to me, and wanted a thousand thalers. 'I will tell you something,' I said, 'if you want me to be like a father to you, then come with me; my Zodick is waiting with the carriage before the door, I will take you with me; it shall not cost you a shilling.' But he would'nt do it, he stayed there."

"The poor, unhappy man!" cried Habermann.

"This boy!" exclaimed Bräsig, indignantly, "who has a wife and child! Oh, if you were mine, I would teach you a lesson!"

"But, Moses, Moses!" cried Habermann, "I beg you, by everything in the world, don't demand your money. He will come to his senses, and your money is safe."

"Habermann," said Moses, "you are a shrewd man, too, but listen to me: when I began the money business, I said to myself, when a man comes cutting a great swell, with carriage and horses, and costly furniture, then lend money, the man has something to pay it with; when one comes, gay and merry and drinking champagne,--now, young folks will be young folks! what they spend to-day, they can earn tomorrow,--then lend, too; but when one comes with cards in his pocket, and bills in his pocket, and throws his money by heaps into the gutter,--take care, I said, the gambler doesn't get his money again out of the gutter. And then, Habermann, what would the people say? The Jew, they would say, has laid in wait for the young man, he has advanced him money for his play, that he should ruin himself, and the Jew can find good fishing in the troubled waters." And Moses rose to his feet: "No, the Jew, also, has his honor! and no one shall come, and point to my grave, and say, 'They tell bad stories about him.' And I am not going to lose my good name, in my old age, for the sake of a young puppy like this. Has he not stolen your honest name from you? and yet you are a good man, and a sure man. No, sit down," said he, as Habermann sprang up, and strode up and down the room, "I am not going to talk about that; but people are different; you suffer it, and you have your reasons; I will not suffer it, and I also have my reasons. And now, adieu, Habermann, adieu, Herr Inspector,"--going out of the door,--"but I shall give him notice on St. Anthony's day."

So from this side also, a storm was rising in Axel's sky, of which he little dreamed; dark clouds gathered round him, and when the storm should burst, who could tell if a shower of hail might not fall, which should destroy all his springing hopes for ever. He, indeed, never allowed himself to think that he might be playing a losing game, he comforted himself with the good harvest, with the advances he should receive from the grain and wool dealers, and also with other unforeseen happy chances, which might possibly occur. But if such chances sometimes come to a man's help, unfortunate chances often come, which tax the courage of the strongest, and make him feel as if he were the plaything of destiny. And so it happened in the year 1848.

CHAPTER XXXV.

This is not the place, of course, to describe what the year brought with it, of good or evil, for the world, every one may do that, after his own fashion; nor shall I undertake to relate the consequences, or investigate the causes of its events in the rest of the world; but only to tell what it brought with it for the company with whom I have especially to do, is more than I can do off-hand; or my book would come to an end in a very unsatisfactory way.

When the uproar broke out in Paris, in February, it was as far off from Mecklenburg as Turkey itself, and was to most people rather amusing than otherwise; they were pleased to have something going on in the world. A great taste for politics was developed in Rahnstadt, and the postmaster said, if it went on like that, it would be too much for them, he had been obliged to order eleven new papers,--four Hamburg-Correspondents, and seven "Tanten-Vossen,"--and this proportion was itself a bad sign, for the "Tanten-Vossen" had a tendency to undermine all the conditions of society; they might not *mean* any harm by their nonsense, but they *did* it.

So four and forty Rahnstadt politicians were provided for, since at least four, on an average, read the same newspaper, and the juvenile offspring of the Rahnstadt grandes ran about the streets with the papers, and took them punctually from house to house, as if their worthy parents were training them for post-boys. But what were eleven papers, in such a town as Rahnstadt? The

majority of the citizens had nothing of the sort, and some provision must be made for them, and so there was.

"Johann," said Hanne Bank's wife, "where are you going again?"

"Eh, Dolly, over to Grammelin's a little while."

"You go to the ale-house altogether too much, of late."

"Eh, Dolly, only one glass of beer! Rein, the advocate is going to read us the papers again this evening; a man must know what is going on in the world."

And Hanne Bank and fifty others went after their beer. The advocate Rein sat by the table, holding a newspaper in his hand; he looked along the table once or twice, and cleared his throat. "Quiet!" "Quiet!" "Grammelin, another glass of beer!" "Karl, hold your tongue! he is going to read." "Thunder and lightning! can't I be served with a glass of beer first?" "Well, now keep still!" and the advocate began to read. He read about Lyons and Milan and Munich; revolutions were breaking out everywhere, and spreading all over the world. "Come, here is something," said he. "Island of Ferro, the 5th inst. The island is in great excitement; they intend taking away our meridian, which we have had over three hundred years, and transferring it to Greenwich, in England. Great animosity to the English. The people take up arms; our two regiments of hussars are ordered to the defence of the Meridian."

"Just think of that, how they are going on!" "Yes, neighbor, that is no small matter; when one has had a thing three hundred years, it must be hard to do without it." "Neighbor, do you know what a meridian is?" "Eh, what should it be? It must be something the English can make a good use of. You see, you wouldn't believe me, yesterday, that the English were at the bottom of the whole trouble, now you hear it for yourself."

Advocate Rein laid the paper on the table, and said, "The business is getting serious; one may well feel anxious and disturbed."

"Good heavens, what is the matter now?" "Has anything serious happened?"

"Serious? I should think so! Just listen! 'North pole, 27th February. An extremely dangerous and serious outbreak has occurred among the Esquimaux; they obstinately refuse to turn the earth's axis any longer, and they pretend there is a lack of train-oil, for greasing, since the whale-fisheries have been so bad, during the last year. The consequences of this disturbance, for the whole world, are not to be reckoned.'"

"Thunder and lightning! what is that? Will the whole concern stand still?"

"Eh, the government must do something about it!"

"Eh, neighbor, the nobility will not suffer that."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Hanne Bank.

"You don't believe it? Well, as a shoemaker, you should know something about it. Hasn't train-oil gone up since last year?"

"Well, children," said Wimmersdorf, the tailor, "so much I say, no good can come of it."

"Well," cried another, "it is all one to me! If the skies fall, the sparrows will drop dead. But so much I say, we have to work, and shall those lazy dogs at the north pole sit with their hands in their laps? Grammelin, another glass of beer!"

From these stories one may perceive three things; first, that the advocate, Rein, read not merely out of the papers, but occasionally out of his head, and that he was a waggish fellow, and, secondly, that the Rahnstadt burghers were not yet quite ripe for the newspapers, and, thirdly, that men, as a general thing, look at a matter very coolly, when it does not affect their own interests.

But it was coming nearer to us. One fine day, the Berlin post did not arrive, and the Rahnstaders stood in a great crowd before the post-office, asking themselves, what was the meaning of this? and the grooms who had come to fetch the post-bags for the country places, asked themselves whether they should wait or not; and the only contented man, in all this disturbance, was the Herr Postmaster, who stood before the door, with his hands folded on his stomach, twirling his thumbs, and saying, for thirty years he had not had such a quiet time, between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning, as to-day. The next day, instead of the little newsboys, came the grandees themselves, and instead of the grooms the gentlemen themselves rode in, but that did not help the matter, for still the post did not come; but instead, it began to be whispered about that a revolution had broken out at Berlin. One knew this, and another that, and old Düsing, the potter, who lived by the gate, said he had heard cannon firing distinctly, all the morning, which all the people honestly believed, although Rahnstadt is twenty-four miles from Berlin. Only his neighbor, Hagen, the wheelwright, said, "Gossip, that cannon firing was done by me; I have been splitting beechen-logs all the morning in my wood-shed."

The third day a post came; but not from Berlin, only from Oranienburg; and they brought along a man, who could have told everything, since he was himself in Berlin at the time, if he had not talked himself so hoarse that by the time he reached Rahnstadt he could not speak a loud word. He was a clerical candidate belonging in the region, and the Rahnstadters knew him and nourished him with egg-nog to clear his throat; he drank a considerable quantity of the stuff, but it did no good; he pointed to his throat and chest, shook his head and was going away. But it was asking too much of the Rahnstadters to expect them to submit to such a disappointment, they wouldn't let him off, and the candidate was obliged to give a representation of the Berlin revolution, in pantomime. So he constructed a couple of barricades,--in the air, so to speak, for, if he had taken hold of the Rahnstadt paving stones literally, the police would have been after him,--he shot, with his cane, behind the barricades, he stormed them,--still with his cane,--from in front, he ran about wildly among the people to represent the dragoons, and succeeded in imitating the thunder of the cannon, for he was just able to say "Bumm!"

So the Rahnstadters knew, now, how a revolution looked, and how it should be conducted, and they sat together and drank beer and disputed, and things began to look so serious that even our friend Rein did not try to get off any more of his North pole stories. Sometimes, now, also, the grandees would come and drink beer, to earn popularity against the time when the revolution should begin here.

And it was seriously thought of. There were wide-awake people in Rahnstadt, as well as in other places, and although the citizens had no great common grievance, each had his little individual difficulty upon which to hang his discontent, one had this, another that, and Kurz had the stadtbullen. So it came about that all were united in the opinion that things must be different, and it would come to no good, if they did not have their revolution also,--that is to say, a little one.

Out of the indefinite reading of newspapers, came a definite Reformverein, with a president and a bell; and the irregular running up and down became regular, and the number of visitors became so large that the company adjourned, one evening, from the beer-house to the hall; but they took their beer-mugs along with them. All this happened in the greatest order, which is rather astonishing when one considers that the company was made up of discontented people, for the only contented member of the union was the landlord, Grammelin. They had speech-making in the hall, at first from the tables and benches; but that was to be altered. Thiel, the joiner, made a round sort of thing, which should serve for the speaker's stand, and the first speech made from it was by Dreiern, the cooper, against Thiel himself, since he considered the thing to be rather cooper's work than joiner's work, and begged of the assembly protection for his trade. He did not carry it through, however, although it was apparent to all that the thing bore a striking resemblance to a cooling-vat for a brandy-still. The old stout baker, Wredow, also failed in carrying his motion that the cask should be made larger, since there was no room to move about in it; for, as Wimmersdorf the tailor told him, the thing was not made for stout people; they had had enough of folks who cared merely for their own comfort. The thing was meant for those who had nothing on their ribs, and it was large enough for them. And so it happened that only the lean people got a chance to speak, and the stout folks in their anger and vexation stayed away, at which the others declared themselves to be well pleased. But it was a mistake, for in this way they expelled "the quiet element"--as it was called--from the union, and in their stead the day-laborers crowded in, and now they were ready for the revolution. The only two people of comfortable dimensions who still remained in the Reformverein, were Schultz the carpenter and Uncle Bräsig.

No one could be more contented, in these restless times, than Uncle Bräsig; he was always on the street; he was like a bee, or rather a humble-bee, and looked upon every house-door and every window in Rahnstadt as a flower whence he could suck news, and when his appetite was satisfied he flew back to his place, and fed his friend Karl with his bee-bread: "Karl, they have driven away Louis Philippe."

"Is that in the papers?"

"I read it myself. Karl, he must have been an old coward. How is it possible a king could let himself be driven away?"

"Eh, Bräsig, such things have happened before. Don't you remember about the Swedish Gustavus? When a people are all united against him, a king stands entirely alone."

"You are fight there, Karl; but yet I wouldn't have run away. Thunder and lightning! I would sit on my throne and put the crown on my head, and kick and thrash with my arms and legs, if any one touched me."

He came later, saying, "Karl, the post has not come again from Berlin, to-day, and your young Herr rode in splashing through the streets, up to the post-office, to make inquiries himself, and why not? But it came near going badly with him, for some of the burghers were already plotting together there, and asking themselves, by way of example, whether they ought to allow a nobleman to go splashing through the mud like that. Well, he rode off, afterwards, in quite a different manner, towards Moses' house, and then the matter was dropped. I had a word to say to Moses, and went there shortly after, and as I came up he was just coming out of the door; he looked at me, but did not know me; not that I take it unkindly of him, for his head was full of his

own affairs, for I could hear Moses saying, 'What I have said, I have said: I will lend no money to a gambler.' Moses is coming here, this afternoon."

So, in the afternoon, Moses came. "Habermann, it is correct, it is all correct about Berlin."

"What? has it broken out there?"

"It has broken out,--but don't say anything about it; this morning the son of Manasseh came to me from Berlin, travelling post; he is going to make a business of buying up old flint-locks, he has got some thirty thousand, left from the year '15."

"What can he do with his flint-locks?" cried Bräsigg; "every educated person uses percussion locks, now-a-days."

"What do I know?" said Moses. "I know a good deal, and I know nothing at all. He thinks, when it begins, there will be a demand for the old muskets with the flint-locks, too, and he told me at Berlin they shot with flint-locks and sabres and pistols and cannon on the people, and it went 'Puh! puh!' the whole night, and the cuirassiers rode through the streets, and the people threw stones, and shot out of windows, and from behind the barricades. Terrible! terrible! but don't say anything about it."

"So there was a regular cannonization?" inquired Bräsigg.

"Good heavens!" cried Habermann, "what times these are! what dreadful times!"

"Why, what do you call dreadful times? It is always bad times for the foolish, and always good for the wise. When we had good times, I had no reason for drawing in my money, and giving notice here and there. For an old man like me, these are good times."

"But, Moses, have you no anxiety, when everything seems going to destruction? You are well known to be a rich man."

"Well, I am not afraid; my Blümchen came and whispered to me, and David came,--he trembled like that,--and said, 'Father, what shall we do with our money?' 'Do with it?' said I, 'do as we have done. Lend, where it is safe, do business where it is safe; we can be "people" too, if it is necessary. Let your beard grow, David,' I said, 'the times require it.' 'Well, and when other times come?' he asked me. 'Then you can cut it off again,' I said, 'the times will not require it then.'"

The talk then turned upon Axel, and his difficulties, and the fact that money and credit were nowhere to be had, and there was much to say on that point, for if credit fell property must fall with it, and many a one would not be able to keep his estate. And when Moses was gone the two old farmers sat together through the evening, with the Frau Pastorin, and the talk wandered sadly, hither and thither, and the Frau Pastorin clasped her hands, once and again. Over the wicked world, and, for the first time, thanked her Creator that her pastor had been taken away before these evil times, and had not lived to see such unchristian behavior; and Habermann felt like a man who has given up a fine business, which had grown very dear to him, and now sees his successor going to destruction. Bräsigg, however, did not allow himself to be dismayed; he held up his head, and said these agitations, which were spreading over the whole world, were not merely the result of human invention, our Lord had his hand in the business as much as ever; at least. He had allowed it, and after the storm the air would be clear again. "And, Karl," he added,--"I say nothing about you, Frau Pastorin,--but if I may advise you, Karl, you should come with me, tomorrow evening, to Grammelin's, for we are not mere rebels, and do you know how it seems to me? Just as it is in a stormy day; if you stand in the house and look out, you shudder and shrink, but once out in the midst of the rain, you scarcely notice it."

So Bräsigg attended the Reformverein at Rahnstadt, and every evening came back to the house, and told what had happened there. One evening, he came home later than usual: "They have gone crazy, today, Karl, and I have drunk a couple of glasses more beer than usual, merely on account of the great importance of the matter. You see, the day-laborers have all become members of the union, and why not? we are all brothers. And the cursed fools have been planning that the whole limits of the town of Rahnstadt must be measured over again, and cut up into equal sections, and every one is to have just so much land, and every one is to have the right to cut down a beech-tree, from the town forest, for the winter; then there will be regular equality among men. Then all who owned land got up; they were for equality, but they wished to keep their property, and Kurz made a long speech about fields and meadows, and introduced the stadtbullen into them; and when he had finished they reviled him for an aristocrat, and turned him out. And then the tailor, Wimmersdorf, stepped up, and discoursed about the freedom of the trades, and the other tailors attacked him, and belabored him unmercifully, they wanted equality, they said, but they must have guilds for all that. And a young man got up, and asked, mockingly, how it should be with the tailoresses? Should they be admitted to the guilds, or not? And the old master tailors would have nothing of the kind, and then the young people declared themselves for the tailoresses, and turned out the old tailors, and there was a great uproar outside; and, in the hall, Rector Baldrian made a long, long speech, in which there was a great deal about the emanzipulation--or something else--of the female sex, and he made the proposition, that if the master tailors would not admit the tailoresses into their guild, the tailoresses should establish a guild of their own, for they were as good human sisters as any other guild; and that was passed,

and the tailoresses are a guild now, and I was told, as I was going out, the tailoresses would be out to-morrow, in white dresses, with their forewomen at the head. Karl, that old, yellow old maid who goes by here every day, that they always call a Tartar, should lead them to the rector's house, and thank him, and in token of gratitude for his speech should present him with a woolen under-jacket and drawers, on a cushion."

"Bräsigt! Bräsigt!" exclaimed Habermann, "what nonsense you are talking! One would think you had nobody above you, and that you could decide everything for yourselves."

"Why not, Karl? Who is to hinder us? We make our resolutions, as well as we know how, and if nothing comes of it, why, nothing comes of it; and nothing ever will come of it, in my opinion, for you see, Karl, the whole story comes to one point; all will have something, and nobody will give up anything."

"So it is, to be sure, Zachary, and I do not think, in this little city, there will be much harm done, for one party will always oppose the other; but, just think, if the day-laborers, in the country, should get the idea of dividing the estates, what would become of us then?"

"Eh, Karl, but they won't do it!"

"Bräsigt, it lies deep in human nature, this desire to call a little bit of our earth one's own, and they are not the worst men who care the most for it. Look around you! When the mechanic has laid up something, then he buys himself a little garden, a little field, and has his pleasure as well as his profit in it, and the laboring man in the city may do the same, for he has the possibility; and for that reason, I do not believe the discontent of the laborers, here in the city, is of much consequence. But it is different with the laborers in the country; they have no property, and, with all their industry and frugality, can never acquire any. If these opinions should spread among them, and ignorant men should attempt to carry them into effect, you would see, the consequences would be bad. Yes," he cried, "at first, it would begin merely among the bad masters, but who will be security that it shall not extend to the good also?"

"Karl, you may be right, Karl, for this evening Kurz told me,—that is to say, before he was turned out,—that, last Sunday, a couple of Gurlitz laborers used very singular expressions at his counter."

"Do you see," said Habermann, and took up his candle to go to bed, "I wish no evil to any one, though many may have deserved it, but it is sad that the good masters should suffer with the bad, and that the punishment, which falls justly here and there, should fall upon the whole country."

With that he went off, and Bräsigt said to himself, "Truly! Karl may be right, in the country it might go badly, I must go immediately to look after young Jochen and Pastor Gottlieb. Well, there is no danger about young Jochen, he has never said a word to his laborers, and they will say nothing to him, and the pastor's Jörn is decidedly no rebel."

Habermann's opinion of the people, with whom he had so long been connected, was just; through the whole country spread a restlessness, like a fever. The most well-founded complaints, and the most unreasonable and shameless demands went from mouth to mouth, among the people, and what was at first lightly whispered was soon loudly spoken out. The masters were mostly to blame for it, themselves; they had lost their heads, each one acted on his own hook, and selfishness became very evident, when each cared merely for his own interests, and, provided he could live in peace with his people, did not trouble himself about his neighbor. Instead of going forward, with a good conscience, in the old, friendly intercourse with the people, some masters cringed before their own laborers, and granted all their unreasonable demands; others mounted the high horse, and would compel them with sword and pistol, and I have known some who would not ride about their own fields without a couple of rifles in the wagon. And why? Because they had not a good conscience, and had long ceased to have any friendly feelings towards their people. Of course, this was not true of all masters, nor was it true of Axel; he had never been unkind to his people, nor was he generally hard, but he could become so, if he believed his position as master to be in danger. Under such circumstances as the present, every one showed his true character, and it required a very cool and experienced head to look over the whole tumult and trouble, hold oneself in readiness for action, and decide what was good and what was evil, and how one should steer his ship safely through these swelling waves.

This was not the case with Axel, he sat in the midst of the whole confusion, and groped blindly about him for resources which he should have found in himself, and so it happened, that he committed both follies of the masters, now he would yield unwisely, and again the lieutenant of cuirassiers would get the ascendancy, and he would seize his pistols and sabre. The people were not what they had been, and that was his own fault; for at one time he would deprive them of little things, which, from old custom, were dear to the heart of the small folk, and again, in a fit of good nature, he would give liberally all sorts of favors, and that made the people greedy, for he did not understand human nature, especially that of the small folk, in the country. He would praise the people when they had been idle, and scold them when they had been industrious, for he did not know how much they could bear. In short, he had not treated them in accordance with right and justice, but merely according to his own caprices, and because these had not lately been favorable, discontent had increased among the day-laborers, and against such solid old oaks as would not easily burn, or let the flame kindle, was piled one dry fir-branch after another, until,

at last, they begin to take fire.

Every one knows that only diseased firs afford such dry branches, and in Axel's neighborhood stood such a diseased fir-tree, which was full of splinters, and that was Gurlitz. This tree had formerly been quite sound; but, in spite of all Pastor Behrens could do to preserve it, it had decayed, for each of the several masters, whom they had exchanged for another, had taken away branch after branch, and the old tar-barrel, Pomuchelskopp, was really glad that it was diseased, and thought merely of the fat he could roast out of it; for there are masters,--sad to say,--who prefer a bad state of things, among their day-laborers, to a sound one, and rejoice when they have their people at a disadvantage, because they can skin them the better. But Pomuchelskopp had not taken it into account that, when the lightning strikes such a dry tree, it will burn quicker and brighter than a sound one; and the neighbors of our Herr Proprietor, who knew very well that the Gurlitz people were in a bad way, and often jested about it, never thought that the fire which Pomuchelskopp--of course without meaning it--had kindled for his own destruction, might also happen to scorch themselves, and Gurlitz might be the bonfire, from which the whole region should be kindled. The Gurlitz laborers had taken to drinking brandy, because there was a distillery at the court, and they could have brandy on credit, through the week, to be deducted from their wages on pay-day, and they were in the habit of running to the city, to spend every shilling--spare or not,--at the shops in Rahnstadt, and here they had learned what was going on in the world, and the shopmen had also instructed them how it ought to go on in the world, and then they came home, and put their besotted ignorance together, and kindled it with their greedy wishes, till it rose up in blue flames, and their half-starved wives and children stood behind them, like ghosts, and they thrust in the splinters of the dry fir-tree,--that is, their poverty and distress,--and ran with them about the neighborhood, and so they had kindled even the honest, tough old oaks.

It did not blaze out openly, at first, there was much opposition to be overcome; there were well-meant words of intelligent people, there was the old dependence, there was the recollection of former benefits, there was the eternal justice, which holds out long, even in a diseased soul, and presses its sting into the conscience, and all this fell like cold rain on the glowing embers, and kept the fire from blazing out, even in Gurlitz. Had they been able to read the souls of their masters, however, it would have blazed up merrily, for in Pomuchelskopp's heart the common hatred and the most pitiable cowardice strove for the mastery, for his good conscience had long ago taken leave of him, and he could not rely upon his former kind treatment. At one moment he would cry out in rage, "Oh, these wretches! I should only--- There must be new laws made! What have I to do with a government that has troops, and will not let them march? What! My property is in danger, my government must protect my property." And the next moment he would call his Gustaving in from the yard: "Gustaving, you blockhead, why are you running about among the threshers, let them thresh as they please, I will have no quarrel with my people," and he turned to his Häuning, who sat there, stiff as a stake, her sharp nose and her sharp eyes turned steadily in one direction, and not even shaking her head, "Häuning," he said, "I know what you think, you mean I should let them see that I am the master; but it won't do, it really won't do, Klücking! we must be careful, we must be careful, with great caution we may possibly pull through."

Häuning said nothing to this advice, but she looked as if, for her part, she had no intention of acting upon it, and Pomuchelskopp turned to Malchen and Salchen: "Children, I beg of you, not a word of what is spoken here! Not a word to the servants! and be friendly to the people, and beg your dear mama to be friendly also. Lord knows, I have always been for friendliness!"

And then Malchen and Salchen began upon Häuning: "Mama, you have'nt heard, you don't know what is going on everywhere. Johann Jochen told in the kitchen how the laborers' wives have scourged the proprietor Z. of X. with nettles. Mama, we must give in to them; it won't do."

"You are all fools," said Häuning, going out of the room. "Shall I be afraid of such a pack?" and she closed the door. But in this condition of supernatural, heroic courage, she stood quite alone, and without other help it was quite useless, for Muchel in his distress for the future, would neither stir nor move, and the remaining members of this simple family, for once, sided with their father.

"Children," cried the father, "every one must be treated kindly. The confounded wretches! Who would have thought of this, three months ago? Philippping and Nanting, you must not beat the village children any more, and don't draw an ass's head on the back of old Brinkman's coat again! These rascals! But they are set on by that cursed Rahnstadt Reformverein, and by the Jews and the shopkeepers; but wait a bit!"

"Yes, father," said Salchen, "and Ruhrdanz the weaver has already joined the Reformverein, and the rest of the villagers will all follow his example; and it may be a bad thing."

"Good heavens, I should think so! But wait, I must get the start of them, I will join it myself."

"You?" cried the two girls, in one breath, as if their father had proposed to sit fire to his house and home, with his own hands.

"I must, I must! It will make me popular among the burghers, so that they will not excite the canaille against me; I will pay up the tradesmen's bills, and--yes, it must be done,--I will advance something to my day-laborers."

Malchen and Salchen were astonished, never in their lives had they heard father talk like that; but they were still more astonished when father went on to say, "And let me tell you one thing, you must be very civil to the Herr Pastor and the Frau Pastorin,--good heavens, yes! Mother won't do it--Häuning, what trouble you make me! The parsonage people can do us a great deal of good, or a great deal of harm. Ah, what can not a proprietor and a pastor accomplish, if they stand faithfully by each other, in these bad times! We must send them a friendly invitation; by and by, when it is quiet again, we can drop the intercourse, if it does not suit us."

And sure enough! After a few days Pastor Gottlieb received a note containing the compliments of the Herr and the Frau Pomuchelskopp--for old Häuning had given in on this point--to the Herr Pastor and the Frau Pastorin, and requesting the honor of their company to dinner. The man waited for an answer. Bräsig happened to be there, having come over to look after things a little. When Gottlieb read the invitation, he stood there, looking as if he had received a summons to the Ecclesiastical Consistory, to answer to charges of false doctrine, or immoral conduct. "What?" he exclaimed, "an invitation from our proprietor? Where is Lining? Lining!" he called, out at the door. Lining came, read the letter, and looked at Gottlieb, who stood before her without a word, then she looked at Bräsig, who sat in the sofa-corner, grinning like a Whitsun ox. "Well," she said at last, "we cannot go, of course?"

"Dear wife," said Pastor Gottlieb,--he always called her "dear wife," when he wished to throw the weight of his clerical dignity into the balance, at other times he said merely "Lining,"--"dear wife, you should not refuse the hand that your brother offers."

"Gottlieb," said Lining, "this is not a hand, it is a dinner, and the brother is Pomuchelskopp. Am I not right, Uncle Bräsig?" Bräsig said nothing, he only grinned, he sat there like Moses' David, when he had staked a louis-d'or, and waited to see whether clerical dignity, or good, sound common sense would turn the scale.

"Dear wife," continued Gottlieb, "it is written, 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,' and 'If thy brother smite thee on one cheek,'----"

"Gottlieb, that does not apply to this affair; we have no wrath against him, and as for smiting on the cheek, I am of Bräsig's opinion. God forgive me the sin! it may have been different in old times, but if it were the fashion now, there would be a great deal of grumbling in the world, for we should all go about with swollen cheeks."

"But, dear wife----"

"Gottlieb, you know I never interfere in your clerical affairs; but a dinner is a worldly affair, and one at the Pomuchelskopps is more than worldly. And then, you quite forget, we have company. Isn't Uncle Bräsig here? And wouldn't you rather dine here to-day, with Uncle Bräsig, on pea soup and pigs' ears than at Pomuchelskopp's grand dinner? And they have not invited Mining either," she added, as Mining entered the room, "and they know that Mining lives with us."

This decided Gottlieb, he liked pea soup and was particularly fond of pigs' ears; and I must say that he thought highly of Uncle Bräsig, who had helped him so much and stood by him so faithfully, and one of his greatest clerical grievances was that such a man as Uncle Bräsig, whose life was so honest and honorable, had yet so little the outward demeanour of a Christian and churchman. So he declined Pomuchelskopp's invitation, but when they had sat down to their pea soup, and Bräsig came out recklessly with the information that he was really a member of the Rahnstadt Reformverein, Pastor Gottlieb sprang to his feet, regardless of the pigs'-ears, and delivered a regular sermon against the Reformverein. Lining pulled him by the coat, now and then, telling him that his soup would be cold; but Gottlieb was not to be diverted: "Yes," he cried, "the vengeance of God has come upon the world; but woe to the men whom he chooses as the instruments of his vengeance!"

Since they were not in church Bräsig ventured to interrupt him, inquiring whom the Lord had chosen for the purpose.

"That is in the hand of the Lord!" cried Gottlieb. "He may choose me, he may choose Lining, he may choose you."

"He will not choose Lining and me," said Bräsig, wiping his mouth, "Lining fed the poor, in the year '47, and I have, for several weeks, declared for equality and fraternity in the Reformverein; I am no avenger, I wouldn't harm any man; but if I could get hold of Zamel Pomuchelskopp, then----"

Gottlieb was too excited to listen longer, and went on with his discourse: "Oh, the devil is going about the world like a roaring lion, and every speaker's stand, in these cursed Reformvereins, is an altar, on which sacrifice is offered to him; but I will oppose to this altar another; in the House of God I will preach against this sacrificing to devils, against these Reformvereins, against those false gods and their altars!"

With that, he resumed his seat, and ate, hastily, a couple of spoonfuls of pea-soup. Bräsig left him in quiet for a while; but when he saw that the young clergyman had come back to worldly affairs sufficiently to attack the pigs' ears, he said, "Herr Pastor, you are right in one point, the

speaker's stand at Rahnstadt looks uncommonly like a devil's altar, that is to say, a cooling-vat from a distillery; but I can't say that sacrifices are offered to him upon it, unless Wimmersdorf the tailor does it, or Kurz, or your respected father, for he always makes the longest speeches,--no, don't interrupt me!--I was only going to say, so far as I am acquainted with the devil, and that is now a good many years, he would not meddle with the Rahnstadt Reformverein, for he is not so stupid."

"Gottlieb," said Lining, "you know I never interfere with your clerical affairs, but you would surely not bring such a worldly matter as the Reformverein into the pulpit?"

Yes, he would, Gottlieb said.

"Well, then, go ahead!" said Bräsig, "but what people say, that of all men the pastors understand their business the best, is not true, for, instead of preaching in the people who don't go to church, you will preach out those who do go."

And Uncle Bräsig proved to be in the right, for when Gottlieb, one Sunday, preached with terrible zeal against the new times--of which, by the way, he understood about as much as if he had come into the world yesterday,--and against the Reformverein, and, the next Sunday, was going on with the business, only Lining and Mining and the sexton were there to hear him, for a few old spinning women, who sat here and there, were not to be reckoned in the audience, since they did not come on account of the sermon, but only for the soup, which they got on Sunday noons at the parsonage. So he went home, with his sermon and his womenkind, the old women followed with their soup-kettles, the sexton locked up the church, and Gottlieb felt like a soldier, who in his zeal has thrust his sword into the thick buckler of his enemy, and stands there without defence.

So the times were bad, all over the country, every one's hand was against his neighbor, the world was turned round, those who had something and had been boasters were become humble, those who had been counted wise were now thought foolish, and fools grew into wise men over night; the distinguished were of no account, noble men gave up their nobility, and day-laborers were called "Herr."

But two things ran like a thread through all this confusion of cowardice and insolence, which had power to comfort and cheer. One thread was gay-colored, and when one came near enough, and could free himself from the common anxiety and the common greediness, he could find much amusement in it, that was the ludicrous side of human nature, which turned up so clearly; the other thread was rose-colored, and upon it hung everything with which one human being could make others happy, pity and compassion, sound common sense and reason, honest labor and self-denial, and this thread was love, pure human love, which is woven through the dull gray web of selfishness by helpful hands, as a token from God, that shall remain in the worst of times; and who knows but this stripe may grow broader and broader till the whole gray web turn rosy red, for this thread,--thank God!--is never cut off.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Rexow was quiet. That means the day-laborers, Frau Nüssler and Rudolph; young Jochen and young Bauschan were not so well off. Young Bauschan had taken a stroll through the cow-shed, and had observed there, under the care of old Flasskopf, the cow-herd, a droll little beast, which seemed to him almost like a photograph of himself, and was also named Bauschan; he could remember, from his childish years, the circumstances under which he had succeeded Bauschan the sixth upon the Rexow throne, and he at last came upon the gloomy thought that this copy of himself, so carefully brought up on sweet milk, by Jochen Flasskopf, was in training for some high destiny, and might possibly, under the name of Bauschan the eighth, be his own successor; it would be in accordance with the times. He was greatly troubled, and could not decide what to do, whether, under the pretext that he could not accommodate himself to the times, and preferred to associate Bauschan the eighth with himself, under the title of co-regent, he should share with him the rule of Rexow; or whether he should treat him as a pretender, eat up his sweet milk, put fleas in his skin, and drive him out of the Rexow country, in short, declare war against him.

He kept watch of Jochen, to see what should be the upshot of the matter; but young Jochen, in these days, had enough to think about in his own affairs, he also was in the greatest agitation, and the times were so bad, that these two old friends were no longer united, but were agitated from wholly different causes; Bauschan looked upon a pretender to the crown as a great nuisance, Jochen positively wished for one; Bauschan looked with great disgust upon a private condition, with gnawed bones, which he could no longer bite; Jochen looked upon it as a golden

cup, which Mining should fill for him with coffee in the morning, mother with strong beer at noon, and chocolate in the evening, and, when Bräsig was there, with punch; he wished to be rid of the sovereignty, especially in such times as these, when one could not smoke his pipe in peace. He always read the "Rostock Times," but always threw it aside with vexation, saying to his wife, "Mother, they say nothing yet about the geese."

He imagined he was counted all over the country as a hard-hearted master, because, upon Rudolph's advice, he had exchanged the geese his day-laborers were accustomed to raise for a good piece of money, and he considered it the sacred obligation of the "Rostock Times," which he had read now for over forty years, to take his part on the goose question. And in my opinion, the "Rostock Times" might very well have done so, but they may have forgotten the matter, or possibly never heard of it at all. But he came near going distracted over it; if two girls stood together chattering about their cap-ribbons, he believed they were talking about the fact that no goose-eggs had been set in Rexow that year, and if two day-laborers, threshing oats on the barn-floor, talked about their wages, he thought they were grumbling, because they had no geese at harvest-time, to eat the oats. He could not accommodate himself to these new times, and new methods of farming, and was positively decided to rule no longer; Bauschan, on the contrary, was quite unwilling to abdicate, and so, between these two old friends, the egg was broken, and the bond was severed.

Frau Nüssler was, in spite of these wild times, very quiet, as I have said; but Jochen's condition made her anxious, and she often looked out for Bräsig. "I cannot imagine," she said to Rudolph, "why Bräsig does not come. He has nothing in the world to do, yet he does not look after me at all."

"Well, mother," said Rudolph, "you know what he is; if he has nothing to do, he makes something to do. However, he is coming to-morrow."

"How do you know that?"

"Well, mother," said Rudolph, hesitating a little, "I was over in our rye this morning, near the Gurlitz boundary, and I ran over to the parsonage a minute; he was there, and he will come to-morrow."

"Rudolph, you are not to go running over there so, I will not have it; when I go with you on Sundays, that is another thing. There you go chattering and chattering, and putting all sorts of nonsense about weddings and marriage into Mining's head, and nothing can come of it yet."

"Eh, mother, if we don't get married before long, we shall both be old and cold."

"Rudolph," said Frau Nüssler, as she left the room, "what is to become, then, of Jochen and me? We are still young, and able to work, shall we be laid on the shelf?"

"Well," said Rudolph to himself, when she had gone out, "you are not so very young, after all. These old people can give themselves no rest! The old man might be willing, but the old woman would work three young ones dead. Well, Bräsig is coming to-morrow; I will have Bräsig on my side."

And Bräsig came. "Good morning! Sit still, Jochen! Well, have you had a little rebellion here, already?"

"Eh!" said Jochen, smoking furiously, "what shall I do about it, Bauschan?" for he must ask Bauschan, since Bräsig was already out of the room, and calling after Frau Nüssler.

"Good gracious, Bräsig!" said she, drying her hands on her apron, for she had washed them hastily, not wishing to offer him a pair of doughy hands, for she had just been kneading bread, "why do you never come near us, and in these dreadful times? How is my brother Karl?"

"'Bonus!' as the Herr Advocate Rein says, or 'bong' as the greyhound says, or he is doing well, as I say; only that he is always thinking of the destruction of his honest name, and the separation of his little Louise from Franz, and these inward wounds injure him, in every relation, so that he will have nothing to do with the Reformverein, and Parliament, and political matters."

"Thank God!" said Frau Nüssler, "I know my brother Karl well enough to be sure he would have nothing to do with such fool's play."

"Frau Nüssler," said Bräsig, drawing himself up before his old sweetheart, "you have spoken a very serious word, as Rector Baldrian said, lately, when we were talking about the potato-land of the day-laborers; but one must look well to his words, in these days,--they have already turned Kurz out,--and I am really a member of the Reformverein at Rahnstadt, and have no pleasure in 'fool's play.'"

"Well, I believe you will turn me out of my own kitchen yet!" said Frau Nüssler, putting her hands on her sides.

"Did I say that?" asked Bräsig. "They have turned out Ludwig Philippe, they have turned out the Bavarian Ludwig, they have turned out Ludwig Kurz; is your name Ludwig? No, I came here

to look after you, and if anything breaks out here, then I will come with the Reformverein, and with the Burgher-guard,--we have all got pikes, and some of us flint-locks,--and we will protect you."

"Do you think I will have people coming into my house, with pikes and muskets?" cried Frau Nüssler. "You may tell your infamous pack, they must first provide themselves with an extra set of arms and legs, for those they have now would get broken here."

With that, she turned away, went into her buttery, and locked the door behind her. Yes, it was a sad time! even between this honest old pair, the devil had sowed his weeds, and when Bräsigt had stood a little while before the buttery door, as Bauschan often did, he felt very much like Bauschan when he was turned out, and he went back to the living-room with a downcast air, and said to Jochen, "Yes, these are truly bad times! And you sit there, and never stir hand nor foot? And the rebellion has broken out in your own house!"

"Yes, Bräsigt, I know," said Jochen. "That is on account of the geese; but what can I do about it? Bräsigt, help yourself to a little kümmel!"--and he pointed with his foot to the lowest shelf in the cup-board,--"there is the bottle."

Bräsigt approved of a little kümmel. Then he placed himself at the window, and looked out at the weather, and as the spring wind drove the April showers across the sky, and then the sun shone out again, so all sorts of dark stormy thoughts chased through his head: "How?" said he, "shall all that come to an end? She thrusts me away, when I would help her?" and then again the sun shone out, but with a brief and mocking glance, which gave no warmth, and he laughed: "Ha, ha! I wish I could see her fighting against the Rahnstadt Burgher-guard, with the tailor Wimmersdorf at the head, and the shrewd old dyer, with his 'Meins wegens;' how they would scatter!"

Rudolph passed through the yard, and seeing Bräsigt at the window, came in, as he wished to speak to him.

"Good day. Uncle Bräsigt!"

"Good day, Rudolph. Well, how goes it? I mean with the day-laborers. All quiet?"

"Oh, yes! Nobody has made any disturbance as yet."

"You shall see, about the geese," interposed young Jochen.

"Eh, father, never mind the geese!" said Rudolph.

"What is it about the confounded geese?" inquired Bräsigt.

"Oh, nothing," said Rudolph. "You see, last year, I got so provoked, first with keeping them in bounds, then with their plucking the grass in the meadow, and afterward they got into the grain, so I called all the laborers together, and promised every one four thalers, at harvest, if he would give up the goose business, and they accepted the offer, and now father has got it into his head that the people consider him a tyrant, and that a rebellion will break out, on account of the old geese."

"You shall see, Rudolph, the geese----"

"Good gracious!" cried Frau Nüssler, coming into the room, "always at the geese!" and, throwing herself into a chair, she put her apron to her face, and began to weep bitterly.

"Good heavens, mother, what is the matter?" exclaimed Rudolph, running up to her. "What has disturbed you so?"

"What shall I do about it?" asked Jochen, and he also stood up.

Bräsigt was going to say something, but restrained himself, for he knew better than the others what was going on in Frau Nüssler's heart; he turned to the window, elevated his eyebrows, and stared out stiffly at the April weather. Frau Nüssler sprang up, dried her eyes, pushed Rudolph and Jochen aside,--rather hastily,--went right up to Bräsigt, throw her arms about him, and said, "Bräsigt, I know you meant it all right; I won't break anybody's arms and legs."

"Oh, Frau Nüssler!" cried Bräsigt, and the April showers and sunshine were reflected in his eyes, for his whole face laughed, while his eyes were dropping tears, "Tailor Wimmersdorf and the old crafty dyer, 'Meins wegens,' may get their deserts from you, for all I care."

"What does this mean?" cried Rudolph.

"I will tell you," said Bräsigt, gently freeing himself from Frau Nüssler's arms, and taking her by the hand. "It means, that you have a real angel for a mother-in-law. Not one of the kind that you see at the balls, and promenading the streets of Rahnstadt. No! but an actual angel, out of the Old Testament, such a valiant, brave old angel, who is not afraid of the devil himself, contending in a good cause, and can put you, sir, in her pocket, three times over!" and he looked at Rudolph, as if he was the cause of all Frau Nüssler's distress.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Rudolph, "I have done nothing!" and he looked at Jochen, and Jochen looked at Bauschan; but Bauschan didn't know, and Jochen didn't know, and Rudolph cried out, "I truly have not the least idea----"

"There is no necessity that you should," said Bräsigg, and turned abruptly to Jochen; "and you, young Jochen, with your confounded goose-business, you will bring your whole household into a dangerous revolution. You had better sit down, and keep quiet, and you, Rudolph, come with me, I will make a brief examination of your management, and see what you have learned with Hilgendorf."

That was a suitable employment for Jochen, and Rudolph obtained a fine opportunity to urge Uncle Bräsigg's assistance in his plans for a speedy marriage. It is possible that both of these reflections had occurred to Bräsigg.

In the afternoon, Fritz Triddelsitz came riding up the yard. This time, he was mounted on a dapple-gray, which had a most singular gait, in front, he stepped out like a man, and as a general thing, went on only three legs; from which one may perceive, that nature, in her intelligent way, often creates superfluities; for instance, the tail of a piuscher,^[10] the ears of a mastiff, and the left hind-leg of a schreiber koppel. Fritz's dapple-gray was not handsome to look at, particularly when he was in motion; but he was a courteous beast, he bowed all along the street, and he harmonized with Fritz, for *he* had grown very courteous, with his nobleman, and when some of his comrades joked him about his dapple-gray, he laughed in his sleeve: "You blockheads! I have profited finely by my trading, with the chestnut mare for the black, the black for the brown, and the brown for the dapple-gray; I have made money every time by the bargain." The dapple-gray came very courteously up the Rexow yard, Fritz dismounted courteously, entered the house courteously, and courteously said, "Good day!"

"Mother," said young Jochen, "help Herr Triddelsitz,"--for they were just sitting down to coffee.

"God preserve us!" thought Bräsigg, "and is he called 'Herr' already?"

Fritz took off his overcoat, pulled something out of his pocket, and sat down to the table, laying down by his coffee-cup a pair of revolvers, which were just coming into use.

"Herr," cried Bräsigg, "are you possessed with a devil? What are you doing with those infernal shooting-machines among the coffee-cups?"

Frau Nüssler got up quietly, took the two pistols in one hand, and the tea-kettle in the other, poured hot water into the barrels, and said, very considerately:

"So! they won't go off, now!"

"For God's sake!" cried Fritz, "the only protection that we have----"

"Herr," interposed Bräsigg, "do you think you are in a den of robbers, here at young Jochen's?"

"The whole world is a den of robbers now," said Fritz, "the Herr von Rambow said that very distinctly yesterday, in his speech to the day-laborers; and therefore I have been obliged to go to Rahnstadt, and buy these two revolvers,--one is for him,--we will defend ourselves to the last drop of our blood."

Frau Nüssler looked at Bräsigg, and laughed a little bashfully; Bräsigg laughed heartily: "And with these things, and with a speech from Herr von Rambow, you expect to stop the mouths of the day-laborers, and turn them to other thoughts?"

"Yes, we mean to do it; my gracious Herr has spoken well to the people; he will govern them mildly, but firmly, they may rely upon that."

"Well, it is all as true as leather," interrupted Jochen.

"You are right, this time, Jochen; the tanning must be according to the leather, but the young nobleman is not the man, you shall see, to treat the timid with mildness, and the fainthearted with firmness."

"And he has made another speech?" asked young Jochen.

"A capital one!" cried Fritz. "How in the world he does it, I cannot imagine."

"That is of no consequence," said Bräsigg, "but what do the day-laborers say to their expectations?"

"That pack," said Fritz, who had learned something besides politeness from his master, "are not worth their salt, for, as I was crossing the yard afterwards, they were standing in groups together, and I heard them talking about 'flatterers,' and 'gee and haw management'----"

"They meant that for you," said Bräsigg, grinning.

"Yes, only think of it!" said Fritz innocently. "And in the afternoon; five of them came to the Herr, just the ones I had thought the most reasonable of all, and old Flegel, the wheelwright, was the spokesman, and said they had been informed that Herr Pomuchelskopp had given his people an advance, and had promised them more potato-land, and other things besides, but they would say nothing about that, for they had never been so badly off as the Gurlitz people, and they were contented with what they got: but they were not contented with the way they were treated, for they were blamed unjustly, and scolded when they did not deserve it, and they were driven back and forth, from the yard to the fields, so that they had no idea what they were to do, and it would be the best thing for the Herr von Rambow to let me go, for I did not understand how to manage the farm or superintend the people, I was too young. And if they might make a request, it was this, that they might have their old Inspector Habermann back again. Now, just think of it, such a set!"

"Hm!" said Bräsig, grinning all over his face. "Well, what did the young Herr say?"

"Oh, he blew them a fine blast, and told them if *he* were contented with me,--and then he motioned toward me, whereupon I made a courteous bow,--then his masters the day-laborers might very well be contented also. You see, that old fellow, Johann Egel, stepped up,--you know him, he is one of the oldest, with the white hair,--and said they were not *masters*, no one knew that better than they, and in coming to him as their master, they had acted from good intentions, and not because they wished to use hard words. The Herr von Rambow was master, and he could do it or not, as he pleased."

"He is a devilish cunning old fellow," said Bräsig, grinning more than ever.

"Yes, only think of it! But that was not all, by a long way; the butt end came afterwards. Towards evening, I noticed one after another of the day-laborers going to the riding-stables, and as I knew that Krischan Däsel, our groom, had a pique against me, I thought, 'What can be going on there?' and I went into the stables, and there is a hole between the riding-stable and the other stables, and I could hear Krischan Däsel exciting the others."

"That is to say," interrupted Bräsig, "that you listened a little."

"Why, yes," replied Fritz.

"Very well," said Bräsig, "go ahead!"

"Well, I must tell you, Krischan Däsel is positively bent upon marrying Fika Degel, and has been betrothed to her several years, and the Herr will not have a married groom, for he thinks a married groom would care more for his own children than he would for the colts, which is all right enough, but he will not dismiss him, either, because he thinks he does well for the beasts; though for my part, I don't agree with him. And now Krischan Däsel has got it into his head, that if he can break up the raising of thorough-breds, and do away with the paddocks, the Herr will let him marry Fika Degel, and so he was stirring up the day-laborers to demand the paddocks for potato-land."

"Well, you ran directly to the Herr, and told him that?" inquired Bräsig.

"Of course," said Fritz, "he ought to know it beforehand, so as to be prepared for them. And when they came, and began about the paddocks and potato-land, and were of the opinion that their wives and children were just as good as the Herr's mares and foals, and ought to be cared for first, then he scolded them finely, and packed them off immediately. Krischan Däsel, of course, was paid up and sent off at once."

"Well, what does the gracious Frau say to all this?" asked Uncle Bräsig.

"Eh," said Fritz, shrugging his shoulders, "what shall I say? she says nothing to it. I don't know what has come over her. She used to greet me,--rather ceremoniously but still politely,--but now she never looks at me, ever since that stupid book-business with Marie Möller. *She* has been gone, this long time, and it is just as well, for she was an old goose; and now the gracious Frau attends to the housekeeping, herself, and, I must say, she is a good housekeeper, although she doesn't speak to me; and Korlin Kegel says she does it only to divert her mind from other thoughts, and she often sits down, and writes letters, but tears them all up, and sits with her hands in her lap, gazing at the little gracious Fräulein. 'It is a pity,' says Korlin Kegel. 'But the housekeeping goes on all right, and without any scolding and storming round; no, so it shall be, and so it is done. If she only had a friend or a companion,' says Korlin Kegel,--well it is none of my business,--and he has no friends either."

"But it *is* some of my business," cried Frau Nüssler, springing up, "and I will go and see her tomorrow, and you, Jochen, may as well go also and see that poor, foolish young man, and advise him for his good; such times as these should bring neighbors together."

"Yes, mother," said Jochen, "what shall I do about it? And then this old goose-business here; but Gottlieb and Lining----"

"To be sure," cried Frau Nüssler, "he helped them to their living, and we must not forget it of him."

"Well, but *he*," said Bräsigt, looking like a sly old rascal, "has *he* no friends? What would the Herr Zamwell Pomuchelskopp say to that?"

"Pomuchelskopp?" said Fritz. "We have nothing more to do with *him*," bringing out the word with great contempt, and bending down to Bräsigt he whispered, "he has sued us, he has sent us notice for the money; I know it from Zodik, from Moses' Zodik. Yes, that pot is broken, and Slusuhr is coming constantly, now by letter, now in person; but we have got one on our side, too, the advocate Rein, do you know him?"

"Oh, yes," whispered Bräsigt, "I know him, with his North pole, and Island of Ferro."

"A confoundedly smart fellow, isn't he?" asked Fritz.

"Yes indeed," said Bräsigt, "he can lead people by the nose finely. But," he asked aloud, "what has the young Herr decided about the day-laborers?"

"I will tell you," said Fritz. "We have both decided to defend our lives to the last extremity, and he sent me to Rahnstadt, to get these revolvers."

"Well, and if the day-laborers come again?"

"Then we shall shoot," said Fritz.

"Right!" said Bräsigt, taking one of the revolvers in his hand, and playing with it, rather absently, "but Frau Nüssler, you have made it all wet, it might get rusty," and he wiped it on his coat-tails, and went to the window, as if to examine it more closely, while Fritz, meantime, explained to Jochen Nüssler the construction of the other.

"Jochen, where is your tool-chest," asked Bräsigt.

Jochen pointed, with his foot, to the lower part of the cupboard.

Fritz heard a sort of clattering behind him, and then a sharp noise, as if something hard was broken, and, as he looked round, Bräsigt held out to him his revolver, without any cock, for he held that in the pincers, in the other hand: "There!"

"Thunder and lightening!" cried Fritz springing up.

"So!" said Bräsigt, "now you can't shoot anybody with the thing."

"Herr, how did you dare to ruin my revolver?"

"Because you are a foolish boy, and children should not play with fire-arms."

"You are an old----"

"You want to say 'jackass?' And it is possible that I am, in meddling with you; but, Herr, I stand to you in the place of your aunt, and I have done this on her account."

"My Herr gave me orders to buy these revolvers, and I do as he tells me."

"That is all right, and here is one for your Herr; he can shoot with it, if he pleases, he is accustomed to the business,--but you----" and as the thought of Habermann came into his mind he added, "Infamous greyhound, have you not caused misery enough already?"

Frau Nüssler came to the rescue.

"Hush! Bräsigt, hush! Not a word of that! But you ought to be ashamed, Triddelsitz, to talk so lightly of shooting your fellow-creatures."

"What!" cried Jochen, springing to his feet. "Mother, is he going to shoot people dead?"

And Bauschan also sprang up, with a couple of emphatic barks, and Fritz was so confused by this combined attack on all sides, that he forgot his politeness, threw on his overcoat, thrust the mutilated revolver into his pocket, with the other, and only turned round at the door to remark, with great emphasis, that no ten horses should ever drag him over that threshold again.

"It will not be necessary," observed Bräsigt, very quietly. But if he had heard Fritz's figures of speech, as he rode bowing along the street, on old dapple-gray, and examined his ruined revolver, he would not have been so composed, for, compared with the titles of honor which Fritz generously bestowed upon him, those of the Emperor of Austria were of no account whatever.

Fortunately he did not hear, and on the whole he did not care much that Fritz had placed the Nüsslers' house under the ban; but he had made the discovery this morning that the oldest friendships might be broken in such times as these, and he registered a solemn vow never, under any circumstances, to retreat upon the Rexow farm, with the Rahnstadt Burgher-guard. His confounded whims often ran away with him; but his good heart kept close behind, and seized the reins directly; Strife and confusion were very far from his intentions, he really wanted nothing but joy and peace; although, by his peculiar conduct, strife and confusion were often produced.

Towards evening, when Jochen and Bauschan had fallen comfortably asleep in the twilight, and it was a fine opportunity for a few sensible words, he began about Rudolph and Mining: "Frau Nüssler, there is an old proverb, that says: 'He who loves long, his love grows old, and he who'----"

"Leave your stupid proverbs alone, Bräsig, they are not suited to me, or to you! I know what you want to say, and I understand that this cannot go on much longer; but what is to become of him and of me?"

"Frau Nüssler, you mean young Jochen----"

"Hush, Bräsig, name no names! You might, for all *him*,"--pointing to Jochen--"but on *his* account," and she pointed to Bauschan, "you must be very careful, for he is cleverer than all of us put together. Just see, how he pricks up his ears."

"Hm!" said Bräsig, looking under Jochen's chair, "truly! but that need not hinder us. Frau Nüssler, this business must come to a happy ending."

"Yes, Bräsig, I say so, myself, every day, but only tell me, what is to become of me, and of him?" pointing again to Jochen. "When Mining and Rudolph get the control, what shall I do, what shall he do?"

"Frau Nüssler, you will have quiet days, and enjoy yourself in your descendants."

"That may be, Bräsig, and one gets accustomed to everything, even to idleness; but look at me, with all my housekeeping I grow stouter, every day, and if I should sit still in my chair I should soon be unable to move, and be a perfect monster."

"Frau Nüssler," said Uncle Bräsig, standing before her, while the recollection of his youth came over him, "you were always handsome, and you always will be," and he made a bow, and grasped her hand.

"Bräsig, that is a stupid joke!" said Frau Nüssler, drawing her hand away, "and just look at that old dog! Hasn't he sense enough to understand it? But we are not talking about me, now; what shall become of him? I can do all sorts of handiwork; but he, if he has nothing more to do?"

"He smokes tobacco, and sleeps," said Bräsig.

"Yes," said she, "just at present, but he has altered fearfully, of late. I say nothing about the foolish old goose-business, for I can talk him out of that, but he has become so contrary, of late, he is always disputing, and since he has had nothing to occupy his mind, he imagines the most foolish things."

"Jochen?" asked Bräsig, with much emphasis.

"Yes," said Frau Nüssler, "but it is all over now. Look!"

And Bräsig, looking, saw Bauschan stand up, and whisk his rough tail across Jochen's face, a couple of times, and Jochen raised himself up, and asked, quite distinctly, "Mother, what o'clock is it?" Then he recollected himself, and perceiving Bräsig, said, "Bräsig, that is a clever fellow, that Herr von Rambow, he has been making a speech again."

Rudolph came in then, and candles were brought, and Bräsig made a frightful grimace, across the table, at Rudolph; but it was not meant badly, it was merely confidential, and signified, "Keep perfectly quiet, rely wholly upon me, your business is going on well."

The evening passed slowly, for each had his own thoughts, and when it was bedtime Bräsig was the only one who soon fell asleep; Rudolph was thinking of Mining and the wedding, Frau Nüssler of the dreadful times of idleness which awaited her, and Jochen of the geese, and Herr von Rambow's speech. This last thought kept him waking all night, and when Frau Nüssler, towards morning, turned over on the other side, for a little nap, she saw Jochen fully dressed, going out of the door, with Bauschan at his heels. That this meant something, she was sure, but what, no mortal could tell.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Young Jochen went with Young Bauschan up and down the yard, and stopped frequently to rub his head, as if there were something he did not rightly understand. Bauschan also stood still, looked at Jochen, wagged his tail rather doubtfully, and sank back into his own gloomy thoughts about the co-regency. Rudolph came out.

"God bless you, father, are you up already?"

"Yes, Rudolph, it is because of the old geese,"--he had something more to say, but was not quite ready with it, and Rudolph said:

"Well, father, never mind the old story; but I am glad you are up so early this morning, you can tell the bailiff what the people are to do; I did not go over to the Pumpelhaven boundary yesterday, I will run over, and see how they are getting on with the ploughing. We are to do just as we did yesterday, manuring the potato-land."

"Yes, Rudolph, but----"

"Yes, father, you will find it all right; I must hurry, to get back in time," and he was off.

Jochen walked up and down again; the day-laborers, meanwhile, were coming into the yard, and the bailiff, Kalsow, came up to Jochen.

"Kalsow," said he, "let the people all come together here, in a heap," and with that he and Bauschan went into the house. The day-laborers, the housewives, and the farm-people all stood in a group before the house, and asked, "What are we to do?"

"I don't know," said Kalsow, the bailiff.

"Well, go in and ask him then!" Kalsow went in. Young Jochen was walking up and down the room, with Bauschan at his heels, for young Jochen had kept on his cap, and that was a token to Bauschan that his attendance was required.

"Herr," said Kalsow, "the people are all there."

"Good!" said Jochen.

"What shall we do?" asked Kalsow.

"Wait," said Jochen.

Kalsow went out, gave the people orders, and they waited. After a little while, he came in again.

"Herr, they are waiting."

"Good!" said Jochen. "Tell them to wait a little longer, I am going to make them a speech presently."

Kalsow went back, and said they must keep waiting, the Herr would make them a speech presently.

The people waited; but, as nothing came of it, Krischan the coachman said, "Kalsow, I know him, go in and remind him of it."

So Kalsow went in again; and said, "Well, Herr, how is it about the speech?"

"Thunder and lightning!" cried Jochen, "do you suppose thoughts grow on my shoulders?"

Bailiff Kalsow was frightened; he went back to the people, saying, "That was of no use, he was angry with me; we must wait."

"God bless me!" said Frau Nüssler to herself, in her store-room, where she was putting things in order, "what does it mean, that the people are all standing before the house?" and opening the window she called out, "what are you standing here for?"

"Eh, Frau, we are standing here waiting."

"What are you waiting for?"

"Eh, Frau, we don't know; the Herr is going to make us a speech."

"Who?" asked Frau Nüssler.

"The Herr," said Kalsow.

"*What* is he going to make?" asked Frau Nüssler.

"A speech," said Kalsow.

"He must be going crazy," exclaimed Fran Nüssler, dropping the window, and, running in to Jochen, she seized him by the arm, and shook him, as if to bring him to his senses.

"What do you want to do? Make a speech? What are you going to make a speech about? About me, or about Rudolph and Mining?"

"Mother," said Jochen,--but he said it firmly,--"about the geese."

"God have mercy on you," said Frau Nüssler, quite beside herself, "if you say another word to me about the geese!"

"What?" cried Jochen, setting himself up, for the first time in his life, against his wife. "Cannot I make a speech? They all make speeches, Herr von Rambow makes speeches, Pomuchelskopp, Bräsigtalks in the Reform--what? am I not good enough?"--and he brought down his fist on the table,--"wife, am I not master? And shall I not talk about my geese?"

Frau Nüssler turned quite pale, stood there stiffly, looking Jochen in the eye, but said not a word, pressed one hand against her heart, and felt with the other after the door-latch behind her, and when she found it opened the door, and went out backwards, still with her eyes fastened upon Jochen,--as a lion-tamer does, when he sees that the beast has lost its respect for him. But, when she was outside, she threw herself down on a bench in the hall, and began to cry and sob terribly. Yes, the year 1848 was a dreadful year, no government was secure; even in this, open revolt had broken out.

Bräsigt came down stairs, singing and whistling; but how suddenly he ceased, when he saw his old treasure in her grief!

"May you keep the nose on your face! What has happened? At this time of day, Frau Nüssler, half-past six, do you sit down and cry?" With that he threw himself on the bench beside her, and tried to pull away the apron from her face. Frau Nüssler pushed away his hands. "Frau Nüssler, I beg you, for God's sake, tell me what is the matter."

At last Frau Nüssler said, with a heavy sigh, "Jochen!"

"Good heavens!" cried Bräsigt, "he was perfectly well yesterday. Is he dead?"

"No indeed;" cried Frau Nüssler, taking away the apron, and turning her red eyes upon Bräsigt, "but he has gone crazy!"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Bräsigt, springing to his feet, "what has he been doing?"

"He is going to make a speech."

"What? Young Jochen make a speech? That is a bad sign!"

"Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!" lamented Frau Nüssler, "and the laborers are all standing out in the yard, and he has turned me out of the room, I don't know how I came here."

"This is going to extremes!" cried Bräsigt, "but compose yourself, Frau Nüssler, I am not afraid of him, I will venture to go in." And he entered the room.

Jochen was walking up and down, rubbing his head. Bräsigt sat down near the door, and followed him with his eyes, but did not speak; on the other side of the room sat Bauschan, who also followed his master with his eyes, but did not speak,--it was a very serious business, at least for Jochen and for Bräsigt; Bauschan was tolerably composed. At last, Bräsigt asked very gently:

"What is the matter, Jochen?"

"I don't know," said Jochen, "my head is so confused; my thoughts are running every way, as when one shakes up a bushel of oats."

"I believe you, Jochen, I believe you," said Bräsigt, and looked after him again, as he walked up and down. All at once Jochen stood still, and exclaimed angrily, "How the devil can I think of a speech, with both of you looking at me like that!"

"So! Do you want to make a speech? What do you want to make a speech for?"

"Bräsigt, am I any worse than other people? Are my laborers worse than other people's laborers? They want their satisfaction, in these hard times; but I am not exactly fitted for it, the business is too much for me; you are quicker-witted, do me a favor, and make one for me."

"Why not?" said Bräsigt, "if it is to do you a favor; but you mustn't disturb me!" and now Bräsigt walked up and down the room, and Jochen sat still, and looked at him.

Suddenly the Herr Inspector opened the window, and called: "All come up here!" The day-laborers came up.

"Fellow-citizens!" began Bräsigt; but--bang!--he shut down the window: "Thunder and

lightning, that won't do! They are only day-laborers, one can't talk to them as if they were burghers! And now you see, Jochen, how difficult it is to make a speech, and will you meddle with a business, for which even I am not prepared?"

"Yes, Bräsigg, but----"

"Be still, Jochen, I know what you are going to say." He went to the window, opened it again, and said, "Children, each one go to his work, for to-day; there will be no speech to-day."

"Well, that is all the same to us," said Kalsow, "but the Herr--"

"He has been thinking about it," interrupted Bräsigg, "and he has decided that the spring is too early for it; by and by, at harvest, he will make you a fine one."

"Yes," said Kalsow, "that is the best way. Come then, people!" and they went to their labor.

But now, as the coast was clear, Bräsigg turned towards Jochen, and all the dignity, which his body was capable of expressing, was shown in his manner to Jochen, and all the influence he had exercised upon Jochen, in years past, now centered upon the poor kammerpächter, as he said, "What? They call *you* crazy? You are no more *crazy* than Bauschan and I; but you are *foolish*. Why did your dear--I mean blessed--I mean cursed--parents bring you into the world? To make speeches, and frighten your dear wife out of her wits, who has nourished you at her bosom this five and twenty years, like a new-born child? Come with me, this moment, and beg her pardon, and tell her you will never do so again!"

And Jochen would have done so; but he was spared the apology, at least in the manner which Bräsigg demanded, for Frau Nüssler entered the room:

"Jochen, Jochen! How you distress me!"

"Eh, mother----"

"Jochen, you will be the death of me!"

"With your good-for-nothing speeches," interposed Bräsigg.

"Mother, I will not--"

"Ah, Jochen, I believe you will not do it this morning; but you have set yourself up, you shall see, it will happen again."

Jochen said no, he had had enough of it.

"God grant it!" said Frau Nüssler, "and that you may see that I can give up, too; for all me, Rudolph may be married to-morrow."

"So," said Bräsigg, "now there is peace in the house again! now everything is in order, now give each other a kiss! One more, Jochen, that the left side of your mouth need not come short."

This was done, and Uncle Bräsigg trotted off directly to Gurlitz, that he might inform his little goddaughter Mining of her happy prospects. He took the nearest foot-path, and that was the one which the Herr Proprietor Muchel had stopped up, that it might not be public any longer; but he had not succeeded in his design, for Gottlieb, at Bräsigg's suggestion, had opposed it, and had gained the suit.

As Bräsigg went along this path, he met the Herr Proprietor coming towards him, with a very friendly face in the distance, and as he came nearer he said, "Good-morning, my dear----" but he got no further, for Bräsigg turned upon him, and without looking him in the face said, "A certain person was going to have my boots pulled off, and let me hop about with bare legs, like a crow;" and with that, he passed on, without looking round.

And when he had discharged his errand to Mining, at Gurlitz, and, after great rejoicing with his little rogues, Lining begged him to spend the day with them, although he must excuse Gottlieb, since it was Saturday, and he must write his sermon, he said, "Frau Pastorin Lining, every one has his business, and if the Herr Pastor Gottlieb has a sermon to make, why shouldn't I have one, too? For I must go to the Reform this evening;" and so he went back to Rahnstadt.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

When Bräsigg had opened his budget of news from Rexow and Gurlitz, and the Frau Pastorin and Habermann had no more questions to ask, he took flight again.

"You won't take it unkindly, Frau Pastorin, or you either, Karl, but as soon as I can change my boots I must go to the Reform. You ought to come with me, Karl, we are going to elect a new president to-day, because the old one, as he says, can't stand it any longer. I shall vote for the advocate Rein,--do you know him? A capital man, a thoroughly good fellow,--but he makes jokes, to be sure; and then we have a very important question for discussion, to-day,--Rector Baldrian says it is demanded by the spirit of the times,--we are going to find out how there comes to be such great poverty in the world. You ought to come with me, Karl."

But Karl would not go, and Bräsigg went alone.

The first person upon whom his eyes fell, as he entered the hall of the Reformverein, was--Zamel Pomuchelskopp, who, as he perceived Bräsigg, came right up to him, saying, "Good-evening, dear brother, how are you, dear Zachary?"

There were not many who observed how Bräsigg received this salutation, and those who saw it did not comprehend it clearly; but shoemaker Bank had seen it, and told me about it. "Fritz," said he, "see here, if you should look at the Herr Inspector's face in a shoemaker's glass, he looked like that; the mouth was so broad, and the nose so thick, and his whole face looked like fire and fat, and as he put out one foot before him and said, 'Herr Zamwell Pomuchelskopp, I am no brother of yours,' do you know what he looked like? Exactly like the old Sandwirth Hofer, of Tyrol, when he is to be hung on the wall by Landlord Voss, at Ivenach, only that he had no musket in his hand. And then he turned his back to him, and such a back! and went up to the election-table, and gave his vote for the new president, and said aloud, through the hall, 'I vote for the Herr Advocate Rein, for our business must be pure (rein), and if any dirty fellows come in here they must be turned out.' No body understood what he meant; but they were all still as mice, for they knew something had happened; and as he went through the hall they all made room for him, for he looked like a mad bull; but he seated himself quietly at the other end of the hall, and all the members of the Reformverein know what happened afterwards."

This is what Hanne Bank told me, and I believe him, for he was a good friend of mine, and an honest man, although he was only a shoemaker; he was sent to a bloody grave, in his best years, by a good-for-nothing scoundrel, because he stood up for the right, and although it may be out of place here, I will write it, that the memory of such an honest man and good friend may be honored elsewhere than on his tombstone.

So Zachary Bräsigg seated himself at the farther end of the hall, and sat there like a thunder-storm, ready at any moment to break loose. The advocate Rein was made president, he touched the bell, crawled into the cask, and returned thanks for the honor, and finally said,--

"Gentlemen, before we begin our discussion of the poverty-question, I have the pleasure to announce to you that the Herr Proprietor of Gurlitz proposes himself as a member of our Reformverein. I believe there is no one who will oppose his admission."

"So?" cried a terribly spiteful voice behind him, "are you so sure of that? I beg for a word or two," and as the new president turned round, there stood Uncle Bräsigg, by the cooling-vat.

"Herr Inspector Bräsigg has the floor," said the president, and Uncle Bräsigg stuffed himself into the cooling-vat.

"Fellow-citizens," he began, "how long is it, since we declared for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity here at Grammelin's? I will say nothing about Liberty, although I cannot stir my body in this confounded cask; nor will I speak of Equality, for our new president gives us a good example of that, since he always goes about in a gray coat, and not, like certain people, in a blue dress-coat with gilt buttons; but I wish to speak of Fraternity. Fellow-citizens! I ask you, is that Fraternity, when a man wants to pull off his brother's boots? and when a man will let his fellow-creature run about in the snow, like a crow, or if the snow is gone, in the mud? and a man boasts himself against another, and makes game of him? I ask you, is that Fraternity? and I tell you Herr Zamwell is such a brother as that. And I have nothing more to say."

He came down from the speaker's stand, and blew his nose, as if he were sounding a trumpet over his speech.

Tailor Wimmersdorf then took the floor, and said the Rahnstadt Reform must consider it a great honor to have a proprietor among them; so far as he knew, it was the only one, for the Herr von Zanzel, although he owned an estate, and was a member, was not to be counted, for he made no purchases in Rahnstadt, and had nothing to do with them. He voted for the Herr Proprietor.

"Bravo!" resounded through the hall. "Wimmersdorf is right! Neighbor, you are right! How shall we live, if we don't keep on good terms with such people?"

"That is not my opinion," said Schultz, the carpenter, creeping softly up into the cask, like a fat snail, out of its shell, and he looked like one, for all the world. "Stuff and nonsense, tailor Wimmersdorf, stuff and nonsense! Did the Gurlitz potentate trouble himself about us, did he pay up our bills, before he needed us? Why does he stand here in the hall, when his admission has

been opposed? Hasn't he modesty enough to go out? But no! And why? Because he is a Great Mogul. I say, out with him, out!" and the snail crept into its shell again.

"Out! out!" cried several voices, and others cried, "Speak again! Go on!" and a rascally shoemaker sung out in a clear voice,--

"Snail, snail, come out of your shell!
Stick out your horns, we know you well!"

But Schultz the carpenter would not come, he knew very well that he should only weaken the impression his speech had made; he preferred to strengthen it, he stood with Bräsigt, behind the scenes, and both called, "Out! out!" and they would certainly have gained their point, had not the devil pushed forward David and Slusuhr, into the cooling-vat, each with a moustache, to signify that they were excessively liberal. They sung Pomuchelskopp's praises with psaltery and harp; he was a helpful angel, said Slusuhr,--"Yes, a fat angel," cried that rogue of a shoemaker,--he had helped many a poor family here in Rahnstadt,--he said nothing about the ten per cent. interest,--and he would do much more for the city. David began the same song, a little colored with saffron and spiced with garlic. "Gentlemen!" said he, making a low bow to the roguish shoemaker, who received it very quietly, "bethink yourselves, think of the good of the whole city! In the first place, there is the Herr Pomuchelskopp himself, in person, then there is the gracious Frau Pomuchelskopp,--a fearfully clever woman,--then there are the Fräuleins Salchen and Malchen, and the Herr Gustaving and the Herr Nanting and the Herr Philippping, and then come the Fräulein Mariechen and the Fräulein Sophiechen and the Fräulein Melaniechen, and then come the little Herr Krischaning and the little Herr Joching, and then comes the youngest of all,--well, wait a moment, I am not through yet,--and then come the house-maids, and the kitchen-maids, and the nurse-maids, and the swine-maids,--and I don't know how many more,--and then come the coachman and the grooms, and the herdsmen, and they all want something. Why should they not want something? Everybody has his wants. And they need coats and they need trousers, and they need shoes and boots, and they need stockings and shirts and jackets; and when it is cold they need warm coats, and when it is warm, they need cool ones, and when Palm Sunday comes, and they go to be confirmed, they must have nice coats, and on Christmas--good heavens! I have always said this Christ must have been a great man, what an amount of business has he introduced into the world by Christmas! And all these things we make, and sell in our shops. But who buys them of us? The Herr Pomuchelskopp buys them of us. I have nothing more to say."

And it was not necessary, for, as he finished his speech, all the tailors and shoemakers were, in imagination, making boots and shoes and trousers and jackets for the little Pomuchelskopps, and the shopkeepers were disposing of their remnants to Muchel, and Kurz had, in anticipation, sold him half his stock in trade.

But in spite of this, Bräsigt and the carpenter Schultz still cried, "Out with him! Out!" and the other side cried; "Let him stay!" "Out with him!" "Let him stay!" And there was a dreadful uproar. The material interests represented by the Pomuchelskopp's boots and trousers, rose up in opposition to the ideal fraternity; it was a hard fight. At last the bell from the president's desk quieted them sufficiently for the Herr President Rein to make himself heard.

"Gentlemen," said he--"Out with him!" "Out with him!" "Let him stay!"--"Gentlemen," he began again, "Thank God!"--"Out! out!" "Let him stay!"--"Thank God! the opinion of the assembly has expressed itself so decidedly, that we can proceed to a vote. So; let all those who are in favor of admission go to the musician's gallery; those who are opposed, go to the speaker's stand."

The Rahnstadt Reformverein put itself in motion; every one trotted off as fast as he could, to show his decided opinion, and it sounded, from a distance, as if a fulling-mill were in full progress at Grammelin's, and the result of this quiet proceeding was soon manifest, for Grammelin rushed into the room, crying, "Herr President! Children! I beg of you go to some other place, or vote in a more quiet way!"

"Eh, what?" said Thiel, the joiner; "we must vote! Else it is no Reform."

"I know that, Thiel, but you are voting so hard, that the plaster is all tumbling down from the ceiling."

They perceived by this that they were going a little too fast; and from that time, they did not attempt to vote with their feet; but only with their hands.

The votes were counted; Pomuchelskopp was admitted as a regular member of the Reformverein. Schultz the carpenter turned to Bräsigt, and asked, over, his shoulder, "Well, if it comes to this, Herr Inspector, what will become of Germany?"

"It is all one to me," said Bräsigt; "but don't talk to me of your Fraternity!"

Now the poverty-question came upon the carpet, and after the president had explained the question, the Rahnstadt Reformverein took it up for discussion: "How poverty came to be in the world, and why it remains here."

The first who rose was Rector Baldrian. He came up from behind, like all the rest, into the speaker's stand, but piled up a great heap of books before him, as high as his shoulders, to create a favourable opinion of himself, in the minds of the audience. As he had arranged the Bible and Xenophon, and Plato and Aristotle, and Livy and Tacitus, and all that he had on hand of Cicero, he made a bow, and said those were his reserves.

"Gossip," said Johann Bank to the shoemaker, Deichert, "this will be tedious; we know what he is, come and have a glass of beer."

Then the rector began, and proved first, from the Bible, that in very old times there was poverty among the Jews.

"That is not so!" cried an eager voice from the crowd, "the confounded Jews have all the money there is; they know well how a poor man feels."

The rector did not let himself be disturbed, he proved the matter from the Bible, and then took up Xenophon, and told about the Helots in Sparta, but the assembly did not seem quite to understand it. Upon that, he opened Plato, and began on him, that is, on the "Republic," and said that if the Rahnstadters had such a state of things as Plato had planned for the Athenians, every laborer in Rahnstadt could have roast beef and potatoes for dinner every day, and could ride in a coach Sunday afternoons, and the children, who now went begging about the streets, would go with gold chains around their necks, instead of beggars' sacks.

"Let him tell us more about that!" "Three cheers for Plato!" sounded through the hall. "Gossip, is that the old Jew-grinder Platow, who is blind of one eye?"

"Eh, gossip, I knew him well enough; he has bought many a piece of beef of me," said Kräuger, the butcher.

The president's bell produced quiet, and that rogue of an advocate Rein turned to the rector, and begged, in the name of the assembly, that he would have the kindness to give the Rahnstadt Reformverein a particular account of the Platonic Republic.

That was a hard request, and the sweat ran down the poor old rector's face, as he began three times, and three times broke down, for he was far from having a clear idea of it himself. He finally said, in his distress, the Platonic Republic was a republic, and what a republic was his hearers, so well educated in political matters, knew very well. Well, everybody knew that; and then the rector got off among the Romans, and told something quite different, how sometimes the old Romans got hungry, and how they clamored loudly for *panem et circenses*. "Panem, my dear hearers," said he, "signifies bread, and circenses, open air plays."

All at once, shoemaker Deichert sprang up on a bench, and cried, "That is what I say! The old Romans were no fools; and what they did, we Rahnstadters can do, any day! What? when I and Bokel and Jürendt and all the others are sitting at Pfeifers, playing vingt-et-un, shall the burgomeister come and take away our cards, and send us and Gossip Pfeifer to the Rath-house, and make us pay a fine and costs? What? I say, like the old Romans, free, open play for all!"

"You are right, there, gossip," cried Jürendt, "three cheers for the old Romans and the Herr Rector!" And the others echoed: "Hurrah! hurrah!"

The rector acknowledged the compliment to himself and the Romans by a bow, and as he noticed that the president glanced frequently at the clock, he hastened to finish his speech, and concluded with these words: "My respected hearers, if we consider poverty at the present time, we shall find that it is only the children of poor people, and of the mechanics, who go begging in our city." With that he retired, carrying off his "reserves" under his arm.

He was followed by Johann "Meinswegens." "Gentlemen," said he, "I am, meinswegens,^[11] a dyer," and thereupon he extended his two hands over the cask with so much emphasis that the whole Reformverein was astonished.--"I used to go to school to the Herr Rector, and he is right, we must have a republic, meinswegens Plato's, meinswegens somebody's else; but what the Herr Rector said about the mechanics, that is a sin and a shame; I mean, meinswegens, the mechanics and not the Herr Rector. Gentlemen, I have, meinswegens, travelled into strange countries as a journeyman mechanic--"

"You sat in the chimney-corner, with your mother," cried a voice from the crowd.

"What? I have been as far as Birnbaum in Poland, and, meinswegens, farther still, ever so far! as true as the sky is blue, and on the word of an honest blue dyer," and he smote on his breast. "And, gentlemen, I could, meinswegens, keep two journeymen, only that, unfortunately, indigo is so dear."

"Oh, you rascal! You color with logwood!" cried shoemaker Deichert.

"That is a stupid joke!" cried Johann.

"What, indigo? Hear!" cried several voices, "he colors with logwood!"

"Yes," cried the roguish shoemaker, "one can easily tell the women-folk that he colors for, they look like tar-barrels, the old logwood gives such a strong color."

"Young man," asked Johann, in a very superior way, "have you, meinswegens, ever looked into my dye-tub?"

"You should hold your tongue, when we are talking about poverty; you are well enough off," cried another.

"Gentlemen, meinswegens, that is a stupid joke! It is true, I have built myself a new house----"

"Of logwood," cried the shoemaker. "Of logwood!" repeated the others.

"No! no!" cried the dyer, "of fir wood, with oaken beams!"

"Of logwood!" cried the others.

"Gentlemen," began Johann once more, very impressively, raising himself up, and striking his breast with his blue fist, "I am, meinswegens, a Rahnstadt burgher, and I have no more to say."

"That is enough!" cried several.

"Then do as you ought!" cried the day-laborers, "down with the blockhead, he tells us nothing but what we know already."

And Johann "Meinswegens" was obliged to come down from the platform.

Then came Kurz: "Fellow-citizens! We are to discuss poverty, and my honored predecessor has been speaking of indigo. That is a pretty business! Why should we poor merchants pay taxes, if every dyer may get his own indigo, and my honored Herr Predecessor can only do this, because no one can overlook his cards, and see how much indigo he uses, and how much logwood!"

"You look at the cards, yourself!" cried a voice behind him,--he looked round, right into Bräsig's face, but was not disconcerted, and went on: "For he can buy his indigo cheaper of me than even at Rostock. But, fellow-citizens, about poverty--if it goes on like this, we shall all become poor."

"He is right there, gossip," said shoemaker Deichert to Johann Bank.

"Fellow-citizens, I purchased myself an express wagon and a horse, to send home my goods, and also to make a little profit."

"We common people don't care about your little profits!" interrupted Fritz Siebert, the carrier.

"But," Kurz went on, "what happened? They laid an attachment on my wagon, last year, at Teterow----"

"Because you had not paid the tax," again interrupted Fritz Siebert.

Kurz did not mind such little interruptions as these, for he had been turned out once, and he was a persevering character, so he went on: "Our Herr Burgomeister sent for me, and asked me what sort of a wagon I sent my goods home in. 'In my own wagon,' I said. 'So, *per se?*' said he. 'No,' I said, 'not per sea, Rahnstadt is not a seaport; per land-carriage.' Then he laughed, and said he had expressed himself in Latin. Fellow-citizens, What are we coming to, when the magistrates express themselves in Latin, and attachments are levied on horses and wagons? That is the way to poverty. How shall we merchants live on the small profits we get on coffee and sugar, tobacco and snuff?"

"Don't talk about your cursed snuff!" cried shoemaker Deichert, "it has given me a nose like that!" and he held up his fist before his face; but he did not have a chance to say more, for everybody laughed, as they saw his natural nose peeping out on both sides of his fist.

"Fellow-citizens!" said Kurz, again, "I know, very well, there must be poverty, but it should be of a reasonable kind; I mean, so that every one may be able to take care of himself, and not be a burden to other people. But is that possible, under the sad state of things in our city? Fellow-citizens! for some years, I have been striving against the unjust privileges which certain people have obtained, and in which they have been protected."

"Gossip," said Thiel, the joiner, to Jürendt, "you see, he is coming to the stadtbullen. There he must stop, baker Wredow is my brother-in-law."

He was right. "Fellow-citizens!" cried Kurz, "I mean the stadtbullen, these----"

"Down with him!" cried Thiel, the joiner.

"Yes, down with him!" echoed through the hall.

"We will hear nothing of bulls and cattle!" cried several voices.

"He grudges everybody the least profit!" cried Fritz Siebert.

"He wants it all for himself, even the stadtbullen!"

The president struck his bell emphatically, Kurz drew himself up in the stand, and made one more attempt: "Fellow-citizens!"

"Eh, what, fellow-citizens?" cried Thiel the joiner and Deichert the shoemaker, and pulled the unlucky tradesman down backwards, by the skirts of his coat, out of the cooling-vat, so that he gradually disappeared, and only his two hands trembled for a moment on the rim of the cask, as if he were drowning, and smothered sounds arose, "Stadtbullen--bullen--bullen--bullen?" Then all was silent, and Kurz fell half fainting into Bräsig's arms. Bräsig and the carpenter carried him out.

"I wish you would hold your confounded tongue!" said Uncle Bräsig, as he dragged Kurz into the next room, and got him into a corner, "do you want to be turned out again?" and the two old fellows planted themselves to the right and left of Kurz, and stood there like the two men in the "Wild Man's gulden," who keep watch over a springing lion, lest he should attack the people; only the two old boys went more sensibly to work than the wild men, and each had a pipe in his hand, instead of a club.

Meanwhile, Fritz Siebert was showing that poverty came from the turnpike toll; the turnpike tolls must be given up; and tailor Wimmersdorf made a very reasonable proposition; something must be done for the poor, and he could think of nothing better at the moment, than to write down the grand-duke's castle, at Rahnstadt, as "national property;" if that could be sold, a good bit of poverty might be remedied, this was carried, and seven men went off to the castle, with Grammelin's stable lantern, and a piece of chalk, to attend to the business.

"Krischan," said a voice behind Pomuchelskopp, "I like that. You can write,--you shall write, tomorrow evening, on the door of our master's house."

Pomuchelskopp looked round--the voice struck him as familiar--right into the face of one of his own Reform day-laborers, and the cursed rascal had the impudence to nod. He had very peculiar feelings; he had no idea what to do; whether to play his trump of master, or to try fraternity again. Something must be done, he must at least get the Reformverein on his side; and when Bräsig and Schultz returned to the hall, after having frightened Kurz into going home, the president was saying:

"Herr Pomuchelskopp has the floor."

Pomuchelskopp pressed slowly through the crowd, shaking Thiel's hand by the way, clapping Wimmersdorf on the shoulder, and speaking a few friendly words to the roguish shoemaker's apprentice. When he had squeezed himself into the cask, he began: "Gentlemen!"

Well, that always makes a great impression, when a blue dress-coat with bright buttons addresses a laborer's frock, and a mechanic's soiled coat, as "Gentlemen!" and a murmur went through the hall: "The man is right! He knows how to treat us!"

"Gentlemen!" said Pomuchelskopp, once more, when the murmurs ceased, "I am no orator, I am a simple farmer; I have heard better speakers here,"--and he bowed to the rector and Johann "Meinswegens," and tailor Wimmersdorf, Fritz Siebert also came in for a share, on account of the turnpike tolls,--"I have also heard worse,"--and he glanced at the door where Kurz had been carried out,--"but, gentlemen, I have not been drawn to you by the *speeches*, so much as by the *sentiments* which I find here."

"Bravo, bravo!"

"Gentlemen! I am all for Liberty, all for Equality, all for Fraternity! I thank you for admitting me into this noble union." Here he drew a white handkerchief from his pocket, and laid it down before him. "Gentlemen, you have been talking about poverty. Many a silent hour have I spent in thinking upon this subject, through many a sleepless night have I wearied myself with the question how this evil could be averted,"--here he wiped the sweat from his face with the handkerchief, probably to show what a difficult matter he had found it,--"that is to say, gentlemen, poverty in our small towns, for our day-laborers in the country know nothing of poverty."

"So?" cried a voice from the rear. "Krischan, it is time now, speak up!"

"Our day-laborers," continued Pomuchelskopp, not allowing himself to be disturbed, although he knew the voice well enough, "receive a free dwelling and garden, free pasturage for a cow, hay and straw for the same, wood and peat, and land for potatoes and flax, as much as they need; once a week, alternately, a bushel of barley, a bushel of rye, or a thaler, and all the chaff from the threshing-floor, and the housewives can earn five shillings a day. Now, I ask you, gentlemen, is any day-laborer in the city as well off? Ought a day-laborer to require any more?"

"No, no!" cried the city laborers.

"Gentlemen," said Stosse Rutschow, "I am a journeyman carpenter, and I never get more than nine groschen a day, the summer through, and one groschen of that goes to the master; I would rather be a day-laborer with Herr Pomuchelskopp."

"Donkey!" cried Schultz the carpenter, "have you worked at all, this whole spring? You have been loafing about!"

"Quiet! quiet!" cried the people.

"Gentlemen!" Pomuchelskopp went on, "this is the way our day-laborers are situated, and look at their treatment! Any day-laborer can give notice at any time, and seek another place; isn't that honest? isn't that satisfactory?"

"Krischan, speak, it is time!" again cried the voice in the rear.

"Gentlemen!" said Pomuchelskopp, drawing to a close, "I am heartily agreed with this noble union in its sentiments, and on this subject of poverty in the small towns, and you shall see--I am not a rich man, but what I can do shall be done. And now, gentlemen, I ask your assistance and protection; if city and country are true to each other there will be order, and we can arrange and settle everything in a peaceable manner, in this noble Reformverein. Long live the Rahnstadt Reformverein!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Long live the Reformverein!" echoed from every corner of the hall.

"Long live Herr Pomuchelskopp!" cried several voices, and Muchel, with a bow and a very friendly demeanor, went back to his place.

As he turned round, the speaker's stand was already occupied, and Zachary Bräsigg's red face shone upon him, not like a peaceful sun or moon, but like a fiery meteor, which the Lord sends into the world as a sign of his righteous judgments.

"Fellow-citizens!" he cried, and made a grimace at his fellow-citizens, as if he had devoured two of them for breakfast that morning, and would now select a nice, fat one for his supper.--"Fellow-citizens! if the Herr Zamwell Pomuchelskopp had stayed quietly at home in Gurlitz, I would not have said a word; if he had not pretended to be friends with me, here in this very hall, and had not on this grand father-land platform," here he struck on the cooling-vat, "told such confounded lies, I would not say a word."

"You must not talk like that!" cried tailor Wimmersdorf, "that is all nonsense!"

"If tailor Wimmersdorf considers my speech nonsense," said Bräsigg, "he can stop his ears, for all I care; he is much too stupid for me to notice; and now he can go and complain of me if he likes, I am Inspector Bräsigg."

"You are right! Go on!" cried the people.

"Fellow-citizens, I should have said nothing at all, for I hold it for a very unsuitable thing, in an agriculturist or any other man, to stir up the laborers against their master; but when such a--" "Great Mogul," interposed Schultz,--"stands up on this altar of fraternity to deceive this Reform with lies, and glorify himself, and make false representations of the happiness of his laborers, then I will speak out. Fellow-citizens! my name is Inspector Zachary Bräsigg."

"Bravo! bravo!"

"The Herr Zamwell Pomuchelskopp has told you that there is no poverty to be found in the country, he has regulated all the conditions of the day-laborer so wisely--bonus! as our honored Herr President Rein says; but, fellow-citizens, these day-laborers' conditions are something like roast beef and plum pudding; they are very nice, but we can't get them. For example, and merely *præter propter*, take the houses! Close by Gurlitz is a sort of pig-pen, which passes for a house, and Willgans lives there,--is Willgans here?"

Willgans was not there.

"No matter. The roof has not been mended these three years, and the rain runs in overhead, and when there is a hard storm, the living-room is flooded, and the poor little children must wade round like frogs, while their father and mother are away at work, and when he complained about it Herr Pomuchelskopp said his name was Willgans (Wild-goose), and water was suitable for geese."

"Fie! fie! He ought not to say that!"

"And now about the free pasturage, and the hay for the cow! *Where* is the pasturage? Half a mile from the village, on the out-field, where nothing grows but goat's-beard, and among the fir-trees, and can the women go back and forth three times a day to milk? Well they don't need to go so often as that, for eighteen laborers, out of the one and twenty, have lost their cows, from one complaint or another, and the three that are left are real dancing-masters."

"The fellow is a Great Mogul!" cried the carpenter, "out with him! out!"

"Quiet, quiet! Go on again!"

"Yes, fellow-citizens, I will go on. About the wood and peat! The peat is moss-peat from the bog, and crumbles apart, and gives no heat, and the wood is fir-brush, and scattered branches, which the children carry home on their shoulders; and then the potato and flax land! Where is it? In the out-fields, on the worn-out soil. How is it manured? Only by the birds, and when one looks at his few potatoes, at harvest, he clasps his hands above his head, and says, 'God preserve us! Shall the family and the pig live on those all winter!' But they do not live on them, they steal. They don't steal from Pomuchelskopp, for they would pay too dear for it, but they steal in the neighborhood, and a good friend of mine, Frau Nüssler, has given orders that, if the Gurlitz laborers are caught stealing potatoes there, they shall let them go, for they do it from necessity, and they are to be pitied!"

"Hurrah for Frau Nüssler!" said Johann Bank, and "Hurrah!" was repeated, again and again.

"And the flax!" continued Bräsigt, "so long!"--measuring about a foot on his arm,--"so that even the Herr Notary Slusuhr himself, who is a particular friend of Herr Pomuchelskopp's, once made the bad joke in my presence, that the womenfolk at Gurlitz wear such short dresses, because the flax is too short to make long ones."

"He is an infamous donkey," cried the carpenter, "to be cracking his jokes at the poor! Out with him!"

"Fellow-citizens!" began Bräsigt afresh, "I will only say, the house, the cow-pasture, and the wood and peat, and flax and potato land are, for the laborers in the country, their roast beef and plum pudding, they are very nice; but they can't get them, and therefore there is poverty in the country. But how does it come about in the city? Fellow-citizens, I will tell you, for I have lived here long enough, and have studied human nature: the great poverty in the city comes from the great destitution here!"

With that, he made a bow, and took his leave, and "Bravo!" resounded through the hall: "The man is right!" "Long live Inspector Bräsigt!"

And then President Rein dismissed the assembly, saying that after such a speech no one could have anything more to say; and they all came up and congratulated Bräsigt, and shook hands with him all at once, all except Pomuchelskopp and the city musician, David Berger; the one had stolen away quietly, and the other had run home to call together his fellow-musicians, and when Bräsigt stepped out of Grammelin's door, there stood seven brass instruments before him, in a semi-circle, and opened fire on him at once, with "Hail to the chief!" and David Berger had his spectacles on, and was conducting with Grammelin's billiard cue, so that Uncle Bräsigt must look out for his head. And the Gurlitz laborers stood around him, in a body, and weaver Ruhrdanz said, "Don't be afraid, Herr Inspector, you have stood by us, and we will stand by you." And as Bräsigt was escorted by this festive procession, across the market, and through the streets of Rahnstadt, these poor, despised people followed him in trust and reverence, for it was the first time that the world had troubled itself about their distress and sorrow, and the feeling that one is not wholly forsaken works more good in the human soul than any amount of admonitions.

Before the Frau Pastorin's house, Bräsigt made a short speech to his guard of honor: he regretted that he could not invite them in, but it would be unsuitable in a clerical house, for he lived with the Frau Pastorin; but he hoped they would all meet him at Grammelin's, to-morrow evening, over a bowl of punch. They received this with a "Hurrah!" and when Bräsigt had gone to bed, after telling Karl the whole story, the Rahnstadt glee-club sang under window,

"Laurels wave where the warrior sleeps,"

and on the road to Gurlitz went the day-laborers, in serious mood; and old weaver Ruhrdanz said, "Children, listen to me! We will get rid of him; but not by force, no! in all moderation, for what would the grand-duke and the Herr Inspector Bräsigt say, if we should show our gratitude for his speech by making fools of ourselves?"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

After church next day, for it was Sunday, Kurz came in to see Habermann and Bräsigt:

"Good day! good day! I am angry; nothing but vexations the whole day! What? Such a set of

people! Won't let a man speak at all! Eh, one might better keep swine than be a democrat! They listen to the stupidest speeches, and cry 'Bravo,' and give serenades, disturbing people out of their sleep, and when one tries to make an important subject clear to them, do they drum and pipe then? and they call that a Reformverein!"

"Listen to me, Herr Kurz," said Bräsigg, stepping up to him, fully two inches taller than usual, "it is very unbecoming in you, to sneer at that serenade, for that serenade was given to *me*, and *you* would have been turned out again, if the well-meaning Herr Schultz and I had not taken you under our protection. What? What does the old proverb say? 'When it is the fashion, one rides to the city on a bull;' but it is not the fashion in the Reformverein, and if one persists in riding in and rampaging about on a bull, the people won't stand it, and they turn him out, with his bull, for the Reformverein is not designed for such purposes."

"It is all one to me!" cried Kurz, "other people rode in on donkeys, and were treated with great distinction."

"You are a rude fellow!" cried Uncle Bräsigg, "you are an impertinent rascal! If this were not Karl Habermann's room, I would kick you down stairs, and you might carry your bones home in a bag."

"Hush, Bräsigg, hush!" interposed Habermann, "and you, Kurz, ought to be ashamed of yourself, to come here stirring up strife and contention."

"I had strife and contention last evening; I have had strife and contention all day long. This morning, when I had hardly opened my eyes, my wife began with strife and contention; she is not willing I should go to the Reformverein."

"She is quite right, there," said Habermann, seriously, "you are not a fit person to go, for, with your hasty, inconsiderate behavior, you do nothing but mischief;" and leaving him he went over to Bräsigg, who was running up and down the room, puffed up like an adder: "Bräsigg, he couldn't have meant it so."

"It is no consequence to me, Karl, what such an uncouth, malicious, miserable beast thinks of me. Riding in on a donkey? Fie, it is nothing but the meanest envy."

"I didn't mean *you*!" cried Kurz, running up and down the other side of the room, "I meant my brother-in-law, Baldrian, and the dyer, and the other blockheads. And isn't it enough to drive one crazy? First, the quarrel with my wife, about the Reformverein, then a quarrel with my shopman,--he slept till nine o'clock this morning, was out singing on the streets last night, and at the beer-house, till four o'clock; then a quarrel with the stable-boy and the horse-doctor,--my saddle-horse has got the influenza,--then another quarrel with my wife, she don't want me to have anything to do with farming."

"There she is right again," interrupted Habermann. "All your farming amounts to nothing, because you don't understand it."

"So! I don't understand it? Nothing but vexations! Afterwards the stupid servant maid, she put on a table-cloth for dinner that came down to the floor; well, we sit there, a customer rings, I am provoked with the shopman because he doesn't start up immediately, start up myself, catch the table-cloth between my feet, and pull off the soup-tureen, and the whole concern, on the floor. Do you see, then my wife comes, and holds me fast, and says, 'Kurz, go to bed, you are unlucky today;' and every time that I get angry, she says, 'Kurz, go to bed!' It is enough to drive one crazy."

"And your wife was right again," said Habermann, "if you had stayed in bed, you would not have come here to make trouble."

"So?" cried Kurz, "did you ever lie in bed all day, with sound limbs, merely because it was an unlucky day? I will never do it again, no matter how much my wife begs me. One worries himself to death! She took away my boots and my trousers, and I lay there and fretted, because I could not get up, if I wanted to."

Uncle Bräsigg began to laugh heartily.

"Well," said Habermann, "then you came over here, and got vexed again."

"Eh, how?" said Kurz, "I didn't mean that at all, I only came over to ask you two Herr Inspectors if you would go with me to my field, and see if it was ready for ploughing."

Through Habermann's persuasions the quarrel was made up, and the three farmers went to the field, Kurz making close calculations, and reeling off his agricultural phrases, while Bräsigg said to himself, "Who is riding on the donkey now?"

"I have a piece of ground here," said Kurz, "measuring a hundred and fifty square rods, and I have bought ten cartloads of manure from Kränger the butcher, real, fat, slaughter-house manure; I am going to plant beets; I had it strewed yesterday; isn't that enough, gentlemen? Look here!" and he turned out of the road into the field.

"Very badly strewed!" said Bräsig. "A properly manured field should look like a velvet cover," and he began to poke the lumps apart with his stick.

"Never mind," said Kurz, "something will grow, it is good slaughter-house manure, cost me ten thalers."

All at once he stood stock still, caught at the air with his hands, and looked wildly around him.

"Good heavens!" cried Bräsig, "what is the matter?"

"Thunder and lightning!" cried Kurz, "the devil is in it! This is not my field, this next one is mine, and that confounded rascal has gone and put my manure on another field! And I told him to do it! Ten thalers! And the carting! And the strewing! Isn't it enough to make one crazy?"

"Eh, Kurz, that is not so bad," said Habermann, "that can be settled, your neighbor will be good-natured, and pay for the manure."

"That is the very thing!" cried Kurz. "This is baker Wredow's field, whom I have such a quarrel with about the stadtbullen; he had better take care!"

"There's a farmer for you," said Bräsig very quietly, "carting his manure into other people's fields!"

"It is enough to drive one crazy!" cried Kurz, "but I will save what I can," and he ran to the boundary of the field, and began tossing the lumps of manure over into his field with his stick, and worked away, until he was out of breath with exercise and rage, and then he threw his stick across the field, and panted out the words: "I will have nothing more to do with it! Why didn't I stay in bed! When I get home, and get hold of that rascal of a boy,--children, I beg you, hold me fast, or something dreadful will happen!"

"Rely upon me," said Bräsig, "I will hold you," and he caught him by the coat-collar at once.

"But what was the stick to blame for?" said Habermann, going to pick it up. Something stuck fast to the stick, Kurz had thrust it through, with his working, and thrown it away with the stick; the old man was going to shake it off, but as he looked at it, he stood still. Bräsig had been occupied with Kurz, and had not paid attention to his old friend, and he now called.

"Come, Karl, we are going! There is nothing to be made of this business."

He got no answer, and as he looked at his friend, he saw him standing, with something black in his hand, which he regarded with fixed attention, not turning nor moving.

"Good heavens, Karl, what have you there?" cried Zachary Bräsig, going towards him. Still he got no answer, Habermann, pale as death, was looking at that which he held in his hand, and which made his features quiver with agitation.

"Karl, Karl! What have you found, what is the matter?"

And at last the words burst from Habermann's struggling breast: "That packet! This is that packet!" and he held out to Bräsig a piece of waxed cloth.

"What? What sort of a packet?"

"Oh, I have held it in my hand, I have seen it for years, waking and dreaming! See, here is the von Rambow coat of arms, here are the marks on the cloth. It was put together like that, it was of that size! It was put up so, with the two thousand thalers in gold! This is the packet, which Regal was sent to Rostock with."

AH this came out as disjointedly, anxiously and confusedly, as when one talks in a dream, and the old man seemed to be so overpowered by excitement that Bräsig sprang towards him, and held him, but he held the cloth fast, as if it had grown into his heart, and Bräsig raised himself, to look at it nearer,--Kurz came up also, without noticing any thing remarkable, for he was not yet over his vexation: "Well," he exclaimed, "now, tell me, isn't it enough to drive me crazy? There lies my manure, there lies my ten thalers, on baker Wredow's field."

"Thunder and lightning!" cried Bräsig, "do leave your confounded manure in peace! Your talk is as bad as the stuff itself. There is your cane,--we must go home. Come, Karl, recollect yourself."

And when Habermann had taken a few steps, the color returned to his face, and a restless agitation and a driving haste came over him, he began to ask after this thing and that; of whom Kurz had bought the manure, when it was loaded, how it was loaded, what sort of a man the butcher Kräuger was, and then he stood still, and folded the packet together, and looked at the creases in the cloth, and at the seal, while Kurz quite forgot his anger, and wondered what had come over the old inspector, that he should take so much interest in his manure and his ten thalers. At last Bräsig told him about the matter, but he made him promise with a fearful oath, that he would not repeat a word of it, to any one; "For," said he, "you are one of the people whose tongues run away with them."

And then they stood together in the street, and deliberated how the wrapper of the packet could have come into the butcher's yard, and Kurz, as well as Bräsig, was of the opinion, that it was impossible the butcher could have anything to do with the business,--he was too respectable a man.

"Yes," said Habermann, and the old energy and decision and judgment, which he had seemed to lose in his trouble and grief, had quite come back to him, "yes, but a neighbor might have thrown it over there. Does the butcher live alone in the house?"

He had tenants in the back part of the house, Kurz said, but he did not know who they were.

"I must go to the burgomeister," said Habermann, and as they came back into the town, he went to his house. Kurz would have gone with him, but Bräsig held him back: "We two have lost nothing." And as he said farewell to him, at his own door, he added, "You belied me to-day in the most shameful manner; I have forgiven you, however, the 'riding on a donkey;' but if you breathe a word about Karl Habermann's business, I will wring your neck for you,--you confounded old syrup-prince, you!"

Habermann found the burgomeister at home; he told him about his discovery and laid the waxed cloth together in the previous folds, while the burgomeister grew more and more attentive, and finally said:

"Yes, to be sure, to be sure! I had the packet in my hand, also, when I gave the messenger his pass; the examination, that followed immediately, fixed it clearly in my memory, and if I were called as a witness, I must testify that it is the same, or one exactly like it. But, my dear Herr Habermann, the trace is still too indistinct; for example, the butcher certainly can have nothing to do with the business, he is one of our best citizens; it is not to be thought of."

"But there are other people in the back of the house."

"That is true, yes! Do you know who lives there? Well, we can soon find out," and he touched the bell. The waiting-maid came in.

"Fika, who lives in the back part of the house with Kräuger the butcher?"

"Eh, Herr, widow Kählert lives there, and then Schmidt the weaver," said Fika.

"Schmidt? Schmidt? Is that the weaver Schmidt, who is divorced from his wife?"

"Yes, Herr, and people say he is going to be married again, to the widow Kählert."

"So? so? Do people say that? Well, you may go;" and the burgomeister walked up and down, thinking and thinking, and then stopped before Habermann, and said, "It is really a remarkable coincidence; that is the divorced husband of the woman, whom we took up once for examination; you know, she claimed to have found the Danish double louis-d'ors."

Habermann said nothing, fear and hope were struggling too powerfully in his breast.

The burgomeister touched the bell again; Fika came: "Fika, go round to butcher Kräuger's, and tell him I want him to come here, in a quarter of an hour."

Fika went; and the burgomeister said to Habermann, "Herr Inspector, these are very significant indications; yet it is possible we may come to a dead halt; I can give you very little encouragement. But even if we arrive at no certainty, what does it matter? No reasonable being can have any suspicion of you. I have been really troubled to see that you have taken such utterly groundless suspicions so much to heart. But I must ask you to go now; people will certainly think you are concerned in the matter. Say nothing about it, and take care that Kurz and Bräsig are silent also. Yes--and--yes, that will do! You can send Inspector Bräsig to me, to-morrow morning at nine o'clock."

Habermann went, and Kräuger the butcher came.

"Dear Herr Kräuger," said the burgomeister, "I sent for you, that you might give me information on a few points. The widow Kählert and the weaver Schmidt live with you?"

"Yes, Herr Burgomeister, they live in the back of my house."

"As I hear, weaver Schmidt is going to marry widow Kählert. Does the woman know that there are some legal hindrances in the way of Schmidt's contracting a second marriage?"

"Yes, Herr Burgomeister; I don't know about that last; I don't trouble myself about the people; but, you know, these women folks! if these is a courtship in the air, they are like the bees, and bring the news into the house,--well, Herr Burgomeister, you won't take it ill, mine is naturally no better than the rest; well, she came in lately, and said the business was so far settled that Kählertsch was quite determined about it, but the weaver wasn't ready yet. And Frau Kählert told Frau Bochert, she had cooked and washed for him over a year, and it was time he were making his preparations; but it was all the fault of that baggage his divorced wife, who came and teased the weaver to take her back again. If she should come again, however, she would trip her up, and

the weaver might cook and wash for himself."

"The widow Kählert must be very foolish," said the burgomeister, "to want to marry that man. She has a little something, enough to live on; but he has nothing in the world but his loom; that came out in the evidence, at the divorce."

"Yes, it was so *then*. But, you see, Herr Burgomeister, I don't trouble myself about him,--if he pays his rent, I have no further business with him, and he has always done that honestly; and he has rented, for this year past, a little room of mine, that opens into his, and my wife says she went in there once, with Frau Kählert, and it was very nicely fitted up, with a sofa, and pictures on the wall."

"He must have had a good deal to do then, and have earned a good deal."

"Eh, Herr Burgomeister, a weaver! and it is such a noisy business, they can tell, all over the neighborhood, when the old loom stands still, and there are a good many days, when I don't hear its music. No, he must have something laid up."

"Then he lives very comfortably?"

"Yes, indeed! He has his fresh meat every day, and I told my wife, 'You shall see,' I said, 'it is only because of the nice mutton and beef that Kählertsch wants to marry him.'"

"Well, Herr Kräuger, just tell me plainly,--I ask you in confidence,--do you think the man is really an honest man?"

"Yes, Herr Burgomeister, I think he is. Now in some things I am very observant, I have had some tenants who would run a splinter into their fingers, in the yard, and when they pulled it out, in their kitchen, it would be a four-foot log of my beechen timber, and when they went through the shop, a pound of beef would jump into their coat-pockets, and the apples from my trees were always falling at their feet. Well, it isn't so with him; I say to you, don't meddle with him!"

The burgomeister was an honorable man, and a man of the best intentions; but at this moment such good testimony in behalf of one of his fellow-men, was not agreeable to him; he would rather have heard that people thought the weaver a rascal. Some things are hard to explain; but so much is certain, there are dark abysses in human nature, and when such an abyss has opened in the office of the judge, it has swallowed up thousands of innocent men. "Judge, judge justly! God is thy master, and thou his servant!" is a fine old proverb, which my father taught me when I was a little boy, but the weakness of human nature does not always suffer us to act up to it, to say nothing of the openly wicked, who seek their advantage in injustice.

The butcher had gone, and the burgomeister walked up and down the room, thinking over the matter, and contriving how he could find out how the waxed cloth came into the butcher's yard. Two things urged him powerfully to this investigation, one was his deep compassion for Habermann's troubles, the other, his firm persuasion that this was the wrapper of the gold-packet which he had held in his own hand. But he knew, also, that he had not yet a firm clue, which he could follow; yet he was sure of so much, that the weaver's divorced wife still held intercourse with him.

Habermann, also, was walking up and down in his room, hastily, restlessly. Ah, how strongly he was impelled to share his hopes and his prospects with his child, and the Frau Pastorin! But unrest for both? And he had enough to do, to control his own.

Bräsig sat in a chair, turning his head back and forth as Habermann walked up and down the room, and looking at him; like Bauschan when Jochen Nüssler had his cap on.

"Karl," said he, finally, "I am very glad to see you are growing so active, and you shall see, it will have a good effect upon you. But, I tell you, you must have an advocate. Take the Herr Advocate Rein; he is a good fellow, who knows how to turn and twist, in spite of his length. You can't go through with it alone, Karl; but he can help you, and, if it is necessary, I can bring the matter before the Reformverein, and your fellow-citizens can help you to your rights."

"Bräsig, for mercy's sake! what are you thinking of? You might as well tell it to the town-crier! I am dreadfully afraid Kurz will let it out."

"Kurz? No, Karl, don't be afraid, he can't talk about it to-day, for I have been to him and scolded him till he can scarcely see or hear, and to-morrow you shall see he will have the croup, so that he cannot speak a word."

"Bräsig, I beg of you; Kurz have the croup?" and Habermann laughed in spite of his agitation, "what are you talking about?"

"Karl, you needn't laugh at me! See, his saddle-horse has the inflorentia,--the horse-doctor said so, and he ordered that the old mare should be separated from the other horses, on account of the infection, and there was Kurz running about the sick horse in his cotton-wadded dressing-gown, feeling her here, and feeling her there, and then he ran back to the sound ones, to see if they had caught it already, and so he has infected the sound ones, for the infectious matter would

get into the cotton wool of the dressing-gown,--cotton wool is the best thing in the world to carry infection,--and, you shall see, he has caught it himself, and to-morrow he will have the croup. The glanders is catching, why shouldn't the inflorentia be?"

Habermann passed a very restless night; but although he had not closed an eye, he was full of energy next morning; a beam of hope had fallen into the darkness, and gilded his prospects; but he could not stay in the house, the four walls oppressed him, he must have room for his restlessness, and long before Bräsig went to the Rathhaus to keep his appointment with the burgomeister, Habermann was wandering along the quiet footpaths through the green spring fields. And what a lovely spring it was! It was just as if heaven were saying to earth, "Hope confidently!" and earth again to man, "Hope confidently!" and to the old inspector also, she cried, with her green springing leaves and bird-voices, "Hope confidently!"

Heaven did not keep her promise to earth, the next year was a year of want; earth did not keep her promise to man, the next year was a year of misery; would she keep her promise to the old man? He knew not, but he trusted the message. He walked on, and on, he came to Gurlitz, he went along the same pathway where he had walked with Franz, that Palm-Sunday morning, when his daughter was to be confirmed. He knew that it was on this day that love had first stirred in the young man's heart,--Franz had written him so, he often wrote to him,--and a great bitterness arose in him that the happiness, which had grown so silently and purely in two innocent hearts, should be disturbed and destroyed by the foolishness and injustice of another person, and be turned off, abruptly, into another path which led to Rexow, that he need not go through the Pumpelhagen garden.

A girl came towards him with a child on her arm, and as she came nearer she stood still, exclaiming:

"Herr Inspector! Herr Inspector! How long it is since I have seen you!"

"Good day, Fika," said Habermann, and looked at the child, "how goes it with you?"

"Ah, Herr, very badly; Krischan Däsel mixed himself up in that business against the Herr, that we might be able to get married, and the Herr has sent him away, and I should have gone too, but the gracious Frau would not permit it. Well, if you want to get down, run then!" she said to the child, who was struggling in her arms.

"I always have to take her out about this time," she added, "for the gracious Frau is busy about the housekeeping, and the little one frets after her."

Habermann looked at the child. She plucked flowers at the roadside, and coming up to him with "Da! man!" she put a marigold blossom into his hand, and through Habermann's heart shot the recollection of such a flower, which another child--his own child--had put into his hand years ago, and he lifted the child in his arms, and kissed her, and the child stroked this white hair: "Ei! ei!" and he let her down, and turned to go, saying, "Fika Degel, take her home, it will rain soon."

And as he went his way, the spring rain fell to the earth in gentle drops, and his heart shone beneath it, like the fresh grain. What had become of his hatred?

When Habermann reached Rexow, his sister sprang to meet him, as quickly as her stoutness would allow:

"Karl! God bless you! Karl! Have you come at last! And how bright you look! And so handsome! Dear brother, has anything happened? Has something good happened to you?"

"Yes, child, yes; I will tell you by and by. Where is Jochen?"

"Jochen? Dear heart, you may well ask. Where he is, no mortal knows; he comes and goes like a bird on the fence. Since the time when it was settled that Rudolph and Mining are to be married next week, on Friday,--you are coming to the wedding?--he has no rest, day nor night, and busies himself about the farming, and now that the spring seed is all planted and he has nothing in the world to do, he runs about the fields, and when he comes home, he makes us all miserable. It is just as if he would make up, in the eight days between now and the wedding, what he has neglected for five and twenty years."

"Oh, let him work! It will do him no harm."

"So I say, but Rudolph is vexed because he follows him round so."

"Well, that won't last long. Is everything quiet here?"

"Oh, yes, and if Jochen had not wanted to make that speech about the geese, we should have known nothing about the troubles, but at Gurlitz and Pumpelhagen it looks badly."

"At Pumpelhagen, too?"

"Oh, yes, yes! They say nothing about it; he doesn't speak, and she doesn't speak, but the whole region knows that it may break out, any day. He has so many debts, now the day-laborers demand their wages, and he has been letting them run up, and then they want you again for

inspector."

"Oh, that last is all nonsense!"

"So I said. No, I told the gracious Frau, my brother Karl will never come to this place again."

"What?" asked Habermann, hastily, "have you been to see her?"

"Yes, indeed, Karl. Didn't Bräsig tell you we were going?"

"He said you were going, but I did not know that you had been there."

"Yes, Karl, it happened this way; Triddelsitz came here with his new-fashioned pistols, and said they would greet the day-laborers with them, and I said to Jochen we must go to those people. Well, they had affronted us, to be sure, and there was no need of our going; but, Karl, the times! If one will not stretch out his hand to help a neighbor in such times as these, I would, not give much for him! Well, we rode over there, but what Jochen said to the young Herr, of course no mortal knows. 'Jochen,' said I, 'what did he say to you?' 'Nothing at all,' said he. 'What did you talk about?' I asked. 'Eh, what should we talk about?' said he. 'What did he say to you at last?' said I. 'He said adieu,' said he, 'but, mother, I shall not go there again.'"

"Well, how did she receive you?" asked Habermann.

"Eh, Karl, I believe if she had allowed herself she would have fallen upon my neck and wept. She took me into her room, and looked so friendly and natural, and when I told her that being a neighbor and a friend, I had come to see if I could be useful to her in any way, she looked at me kindly and quietly, and said, 'Tell me, how is your brother?' and when I had told her you were pretty well,--thank God!--she asked after Louise, and when I had told her good news of her, she became quite cheerful, and began to tell me about her housekeeping; but it was not as when a couple of housewives, like me, sit down together to have a little sensible talk over their housekeeping; it was a little too quick for me; but one could see very well she understood it thoroughly. Dear heart, she may have need of it yet! See, Karl, I plucked up courage, and stood up and took her hand in both mine, and said she must not repulse me,--no one should throw away dirty water until he was sure of clean; she might be in trouble,--of course she had friends, but they might not be near at hand,--and then she must come to me, for, as her neighbor, I was the nearest to her, as the Frau Pastorin says, and whatever I could do should be done. Karl, the tears stood in her eyes, and she turned away, and pressed them back, and when she turned round to me again, her face was full of friendliness and sweetness, and she took me by the hand, and said I should have my reward, and she took me into another room, and lifted her little child in her arms, and reached her towards me, and the little thing must give me a kiss. What a dear sweet girl it is!"

"Yes, yes!" said Habermann, "I have seen her this morning. But did she make no complaint?"

"Not a word, Karl. She said nothing of him, and nothing of their troubles, and when we came away, we were as wise as before, at least I was; for Jochen told me nothing, if he had really heard anything from the young Herr."

"Well, sister, it is all the same. Every body knows that the young Herr is in great pecuniary embarrassment; Pomuchelskopp gave him notice for his money, and did not get it at St. Anthony's day, and has now sued him; Moses has given him notice for St. John's day, and will not get his money either, for in such times, and under such circumstances, he can raise nothing, and then his estate must be sold, and it will go very cheap, and Pomuchelskopp will buy it. In better times, and under the right sort of management, the estate would bring a good price. You will help the gracious Frau and so will I, I will gladly give up my little capital, if the young Herr will consent to a sensible management; but that would not go far. You must do something also; and I will talk seriously to Moses, and it will be a sin and a shame if we honest people cannot get the better of that old rascal, who muddied the water in the first place, that he might catch his carp the easier!"

"Yes, Karl, if he would manage sensibly, and have you for inspector again, then--"

"No, child," interposed Habermann, decidedly, "I shall never go there again. But there are plenty of skilful farmers in the country,--thank God!--and he must get such an one, and leave the management to him, we will make that a condition."

"Yes, Karl, that is all very well; but now we have the outfit for Mining,--Kurz might have done more about it, and for his only son, but he is always filling one's ears with complaints, and, Karl, it might make us trouble with Rudolph; and we must take care that we have something to live upon, in our old age, and then our money is all tied up in mortgages."

"Moses can arrange all that. You see, sister, you have promised the Frau you would help her, and I know you meant what you said; now is the time for you to help!"

"Yes, Karl, but Jochen! what will Jochen say?"

"Eh, Jochen! Jochen has done whatever you wanted for this five and twenty years, he will do so

still."

"Karl, you are right; he must do so. I have always managed for his good, and would he set himself against me now? But he is always making trouble; it is very hard to control him," and Frau Nüssler sprang up from her chair, and struck her fist against the table, as if that were Jochen.

"My dear child," said Habermann, "you have brought about a great deal of good, in these long years; you will bring this about too. May God help you! and now, adieu!" and he gave his sister a kiss, and departed.

What a pleasant walk he had! His restlessness of yesterday and that morning were quite gone, such a sure hope had sprung up in him, and all that he saw, the blue sky and the green earth, harmonized with his mood, harmonized with the peace which had entered his heart. And as he arrived at home, and his daughter scolded him, and the Frau Pastorin wondered why he had not come home to dinner, which they had kept waiting for him, he looked so bright and cheerful, that Bräsigg gazed at him in astonishment, and said to himself, "Karl must have found out some new indicium," for he had learned several new Latin phrases that morning. And he sat there, and made the most frightful faces at Habermann, until the old man finally understood them as signs that he should go out, and went with him up-stairs to his room.

"Bräsigg," cried Habermann, in some excitement, "do you know anything about the business? Has anything come out?"

"Karl," said Bräsigg, walking up and down with his long pipe, and tugging at a high shirt-collar, which sat very uncomfortably, as he did not usually wear one, "Karl, don't you see anything unusual about me?"

"Yes, Bräsigg," said Habermann, "your shirt-collar, and it seems to scratch you dreadfully."

"That is nothing. Higher up!"

"Eh, then I don't know."

"Karl," said Bräsigg, standing before him, "so as you see me here, I am appointed assessor at the criminal court, and get, by the hour's sitting, eight shillings, Prussian currency."

"Oh, leave that alone! But tell me, is there any prospect that anything can come of the matter?"

Bräsigg looked his friend right in the eye, shook his head a little, and said; "Karl, I dare not tell you anything, and I will not, the Herr Burgomeister has expressly forbidden me to say anything here in town, and especially to you, for the Herr Burgomeister says it will only be a useless torment for you, and we must have more indiciums, for he can do nothing without indiciums, and these confounded things can only be obtained by the greatest secrecy, says the Herr Burgomeister, and, if the whole city knows it, it would only give opportunity for all sorts of confusions among the rascals. But so much I can tell you, they have lied already, and they will keep on lying, till they fix themselves in a trap."

There was a knock at the door; it was the letter-carrier, bringing Habermann a letter: "From Paris," he said, and went away.

"Lord preserve us, Karl! You have very distinguished acquaintances! Who the devil can it be? From Paris!"

"It is from Franz," said Habermann, and his hand trembled, as he hastily broke the seal. Franz had often written to him, and every time he had been in doubt whether to mention the correspondence to his child or not,—until now, he had said nothing to her about it. He read; the letter was full of friendship, and the old attachment; every word expressed the recollection of old times; but not a single one referred to his love. At the close, he said that he should remain in Paris until St. John's day, and then return home. This last Habermann told Bräsigg, as he put the letter in his pocket.

Bräsigg was walking back and forth meanwhile, thinking, and, if Habermann had not been occupied with his letter, he must have heard what he was saying to himself.

"Remarkable! quite remarkable! It seems to me like the finger of God! The Herr Burgomeister can have no objection to that, Paris has nothing to do with the indiciums, this is a purely private affair. Karl," he said at last, standing before Habermann, and looking at him, as he had seen the burgomeister look at the weaver that morning, "Karl, tell me the real truth; does your young Herr von Rambow know,—your old pupil, I mean,—that I know, that you and the Frau Pastorin know, that something has happened between him and Louise, that nobody is to know?"

"Eh, Bräsigg, I don't know----"

"Good, Karl, I see I have not expressed my meaning clearly enough, I mean, is he of the opinion that you and the Frau Pastorin think that I think well of his love for Louise, and that you

have told me? That is my opinion, and now tell me yours."

"Eh, Bräsig, he knows that you know about it, and he knows that you think well of it; but what of that?"

"Good, Karl; lose no words! But I must go now, I have invited David Berger and his trumpeters and the whole glee club to Grammelin's this evening, to a bowl of punch, and I must go and look after it. So, adieu, Karl!" and he went, but came back again: "Karl, tell the Frau Pastorin, I shall not be home to supper. If I should say anything to her about the punch, she would preach me a little sermon; and you, Karl, don't be alarmed if I come home late to-night. I have the key." But he came back once more to say: "Karl, what can be done, shall be done."

"I believe it," said Habermann, who thought he referred to the punch, "you will do your business thoroughly." Bräsig nodded, as if to say he might rely upon him with confidence, and went.

Habermann sat there, and read his letter a second time, and who would have thought that from this manuscript so many fair hopes would blossom? The warm friendship, which spoke in the letter, soothed him like the spring weather, and the trusting tone echoed sweetly in his ears, as the song of birds. Should his hopes be again deceived? Time would show!

Ah, time and hope! They stand over against each other, like the cuckoo and the seven stars; a man who, after long darkness, ventures to hope again, and sees the first faint gleams of happiness in the dark sky, must yet wait patiently the time when the sun stands full in the heavens.

CHAPTER XL.

The next morning, when Zachary Bräsig arose, he took hold of his head with both hands, saying:

"Karl, you may congratulate yourself that I haven't a worse headache than I really have: for who could play assessor to-day? If I had followed Grammelin's cursed punch receipt I should have a whole nest of sparrows in my head this morning. But I made it after my own fashion."

"Well, were you very jolly?" asked Habermann.

"Oh, yes! the younger part of the company were quite lively; as for me, I kept myself very quiet. I sat by the town-musician, David Berger, and, by the way, Karl! what an amount that fellow can stand! I thought to myself, that belongs to his business; but one glass after another, incessantly! and at last he became what they call sentimental, he embraced me, and, with tears in his eyes, told me how little he could earn in these political times, till Herr Süßmann, who is Kurz's shopman, and I really pitied him. And Herr Süßmann proposed to the company that we should get up a fraternity ball, for David Berger's benefit; that is, a political one, where all ranks, nobility, and ritter-proprietors, and pächters and burghers and their wives and children, should come together, and shake hands, and dance with, and, for aught I know, kiss each other. And this indicium was resolved upon, and it is to be a week from Sunday. And Herr Süßmann drew up a subscription paper, and I subscribed for you and me and the Frau Pastorin and Louise."

"Bräsig, I beg of you, what would the Frau Pastorin and Louise do at a ball, or I, either?"

"But you must, for it is a noble cause."

"And you couldn't go either, Zachary, for a week from Friday is Mining's wedding day, and the next Sunday the going to church, and what would my sister say if you were absent, and at your stupid Reform-ball?"

"That alters the matter, we must have it put off, and so adieu, Karl, I will go at once to Herr Süßmann, and see about it, and then I must go to the Rathhaus, you know, to sit for four groschen an hour."

He went directly to Kurz's shop, but Herr Süßmann was not there, Kurz himself was running about, opening the drawers and looking in, and then shutting them again.

"Good morning, Kurz, where is your young Herr?"

"I have no young Herr; I am Herr^[12] myself."

"Kurz, take care of your words, we live in democratic times, since----"

"Ah, what? Here? Take care! I despise the whole democracy, when my shopman goes out drinking punch over night, and cannot get up in the morning; and old people should be ashamed--"

"Hold, Kurz, you are beginning again with your flatteries, like last Sunday, but I cannot allow it at present, on account of my situation at the court. And adieu, Kurz! But I am sorry for you, for you have caught the inflorentia, you should go to bed, there is something in your bones, and if you will feel under your gaiters, you will find you are beginning to get the rheumatism. But adieu, Kurz!"

He went off, but Kurz raved about his shop, and stormed at the whole world, until his wife, as soon as the shopman was out of bed, got him into bed, and put him under arrest for the time.

After this little interview, Bräsigg went to the Rathhaus, and earned there without any further trouble, and in all quiet, five times four groschen, for the sitting lasted five hours. When he came home they had finished dinner, and as the table was spread again, expressly for him, the Frau Pastorin made some pointed remarks about irregularity in one's habits of life, and coming home at two o'clock in the morning, and sitting down to dinner at two o'clock in the afternoon; and Uncle Bräsigg sat there, and grinned, looking very well contented with himself, as if he would say, "Ah, if you knew what hard work I have been doing, and in what place I went through with it, you would stroke me and pet me, you would kiss me, and do more than you have ever done for me;" and when he rose from the table, he said, solemnly, "Frau Pastorin, it will all come to light, as the Herr Burgomeister says," and he nodded to Habermann, "Bonus! as the Herr President Rein says," and going up to Louise, he put his arms round her and kissed her, and said, "Louise, get me the finest sheet of writing paper that you can find, for I want to pack up a little--well, I will say indicium,--so that it may not be injured, for it is to go a long way."

And as he went out with the sheet in his hand, he turned round again to remark:

"Karl, as I said before, what can be done shall be done."

And he came back once more to say: "Frau Pastorin, I shall come home to supper to-night."

He went to the post-office. The postmaster was at home, he was always at home; for a hundred and fifty thalers salary, he had imprisoned himself for life, not in a room, no, in a bird-cage, which he called his "comptoir," and when he had no postal business, he sat there and played the flute, and sung, like the finest canary-bird. He was engaged in this agreeable business, when Bräsigg entered:

"Good-day, Herr Postmaster. You are a man of honor, therefore I wish to ask your assistance in a delicate matter. Of course, it isn't necessary for you to know the thing itself, that must remain a secret, and what I tell you must also remain a secret. I am going to write to Paris."

"To Paris? What the devil are you writing to Paris for?"

"To Paris," said Bräsigg, drawing himself up.

"What in the world!" said the postmaster, "one of you inspectors gets a letter from Paris, and the other will send one. Well, we will see how much it costs." He turned his books over, and said at last, "I can't find it here, I will reckon it up; it cannot be done under sixteen groschen."

"No matter, I have earned twenty groschen this morning, at the court."

"Whom is the letter for?"

"The young Herr Franz von Rambow."

"Do you know his address, where he lives?"

"Why, in Paris."

"But Paris is a great city. You must know the street, and the number of the house."

"God bless me!" said Bräsigg, "all that! I don't know it."

"Ask Habermann."

"That is just the thing, he mustn't know of it."

"Well, I know no other way, then, than for you to write your letter, and enclose it to the Mecklenburg ambassador, Dr. Urtlingen, he may be able to find him."

"He must," said Bräsigg, "for the business is of great importance, and that is what he gets his salary for. But what I was going to say, will you allow me to write the letter here? Because it must be kept a secret from Habermann."

"Oh, yes," said the postmaster, "come right in here, before my wife sees you, for, though it is the regular room for passengers, my wife will allow no one under a count to go in there. And you must let yourself be locked in."

Bräsig had no objections to that, and so he sat there, from three o'clock in the afternoon, until it grew dark, and wrote his letter; the postmaster fluted and sung, in his bird-cage; he wrote; the Frau Postmaster came and rattled the door, she wanted to get into her sanctum, and scolded because the key was gone; the Herr Postmaster had it in his pocket, and fluted and sung; Bräsig wrote his letter. Finally he finished it; he read it over, and we can look over his shoulder. Here it is.

"HIGHLY WELL-BORN YOUNG HERR VON RAMBOW:

"A very remarkable thing has happened here, since Kurz the merchant had his manure carted on to baker Wredow's field, who is his rival in respect to the stadtbullen. Habermann found a piece of black waxed cloth there, with the Rambow coat of arms on it, which was a great relief to him, on account of the suspicion about the theft of the louis-d'ors, in the year '45, and the Herr Burgomeister also says that it is an indicium. The Herr Burgomeister has made me assessor at the court; there is a little something to be earned in that way, but it is very hard for me, being an old farmer, and accustomed to exercise, and also on account of the gout; it is not much trouble to be sure, but one gets sleepy in the long sittings. But the good of it is that I can know all about the business, which Habermann must know nothing about, because the Herr Burgomeister has forbidden it. Since you are in Paris, and not in Rahnstadt, I can talk with you freely, as a friend, about the business, and the business is this: the weaver, he lies, that he has no more intercourse with his wife, and the Herr Burgomeister says that is another indicium. We have a great many indiciums already. The principal business is still to come, however, namely, Kählertsch. Kählertsch is positively determined to marry the weaver, and is of the opinion that the weaver will not have her, because his divorced wife wants him to marry her again. This has caused bad feelings in Kählertsch,--what is called jealousy,--and she has come out with a lot of new indiciums, as the Herr Burgomeister says, very important and elevant, or, as I express myself in German, nearly connected with the matter. But the Herr Burgomeister says, one must be very careful, for the women-folks are spiteful when they are jealous, and tell lies sometimes. Meanwhile her lies have proved themselves, since she has come out with the whole truth, that the weaver was always getting Danish double louis-d'ors, as also the butcher Kränger testified, in two compertinent cases. And while the weaver was before the court, telling us new lies and new indiciums, they searched the weaver's house, with Hoppner at the head, and found nine Danish double louis-d'ors, in his cupboard, in a secret place. Which he tried to contend against, later, but did not succeed. She, the weaver's wife, who is the worst of the lot, was also caught, this morning, since they found, in searching her house, a snuff-box, which had belonged to the blessed Herr Pastor himself, and was kept by the Pastor's family like a relic, in a glass case, for which shameful deed she has been furnished with free lodgings. Kählertsch has also been taken up, since in her wickedness she has belied the court, the Herr Burgomeister, and myself, as assessor. They all lie, till they are black in the face, but what good does that do them? The Herr Burgomeister says he is morally persuaded that they have done it, and it must come out, and it will come out. What a triumph it will be for my Karl Habermann, when he stands in his old age, like an angel of innocence tried in the fire, and goes about among the people, with his white hair, in the white robes of innocence. They must be as ashamed as drowned poodles for all they have done to him, I mean--to speak with respect--Pomuchelskopp and the Pumpelhagener, who have fallen out with each other, because Zamwell has sued the other, of which I will say nothing more, since I told Pomuchelskopp my opinion of him at the Reformverein, and your Herr Cousin of Pumpelhaven has given me the cold shoulder. He is going on in a bad way, for he is dreadfully disturbed because Moses has given him notice for the money on St. John's day, and he has no money and no grain, and how can they live? He is an utterly incapable man. You must never, while I live, let Habermann know of this letter; because it is a secret between us. But I thought it would be interesting for you to know who the real rascals were, and that Karl Habermann,--thank God!--is not among them. He is very much cheered up by these occurrences, and strikes out with his heels, like a young colt, when the saddle is taken off. I think this is an encouraging sign for the future. As for news of your old acquaintances in the region, I can only tell you that, next week Friday, Mining and Rudolph expect to be united in marriage. Frau Nüssler, whom you will remember as a very beautiful young woman, is still--no need to say--very handsome, but has grown a little stouter; Jochen also is very well, and is training up, for his future establishment, a new crown prince. Your Herr Colleague, of old times, is now the Totum at Pumpelhaven; Habermann says he will yet do well; I say he is a greyhound, who goes among people with his fire-arms, on account of which he has put Frau Nüssler and me formally under the ban. We have a Reform at present in Rahnstadt; the young Pastor Gottlieb preached against it, but the young Frau Pastorin knows how to manage him. Rector Baldrian brought the tailoresses, and a certain Platow or Patow or some such person, into the Reform; but Kurz has been repeatedly turned out; his four horses have the inflorentia; it began with his old saddle-horse, and it will end with himself, for he has already got the rheumatism. The old Frau Pastorin Behrends is still our honored hostess, also with eating and drinking, for Habermann and I lodge and sleep, and take our daily meals with her; she, as well as Habermann, would send greetings to you, but they cannot, for they know nothing about it. But we often speak about you, since you are always like an ever-present picture before our eyes. I cannot think of more to tell at present,--but one thing

occurs to me. Pomuchelskopp got himself voted into the Reformverein; the master carpenter Shultz is a brave man, he stood by me, at that time. Krischan Däsel has been sent away by your Herr Cousin, and there is no definite trace of Regal; but Louise Habermann is--thank God!--very well indeed.

"In the hope that my humble writing may not be disagreeable or inconvenient, I have the honor to subscribe myself, with the deepest reverence, and greeting you from the heart as an old friend,

"Your most obedient humble servant,

"Zachary Bräsig.

"*Immeriter Inspector, and temporary Assessor.*

"Rahnstadt, 13 May, 1848.

"Postscript.--Apropos! I write this letter in the Frau Postmaster's sanctum, since the Herr Postmaster has locked me in expressly for the purpose, and has sworn not to say a word. This is all because of the secrecy, for Habermann and the Frau Pastorin and Louise know nothing about it; Louise has given me this sheet of letter paper, it belonged to her, and I believe it will be a little gratification to you, for I remember my youthful days, when I had three sweethearts at once. She is devoted, in love and sadness, to her old father, and for others she is a precious pearl of the human race. If I receive an answer from you, that you have no objections, I will write again about the rascals they have caught. If you should be in our region again a week from Sunday, I invite you to our fraternity ball; the seamstresses and tailoresses are all to be invited.

"The Aforesaid."

When Bräsig had finished this difficult piece of work, he rapped and pounded on the door, and as the postmaster unlocked it and let him out, he stood there, with the sweat dripping from his face.

"Bless me!" said the postmaster, "how you look! It is true, isn't it? Unaccustomed labor is painful!"

With that, he took the letter from him, and put it in an envelope, and directed it to the Herr Ton Rambow, and then enclosed it in another envelope, to the address of the Mecklenburg ambassador in Paris. Bräsig paid his sixteen groschen, and the letter was now ready to start on its journey, for the postman, who should take it, that moment stopped at the door. And the postmaster sung, in his bower:

"Ein Leipziger Student hat jungst nach haus geschrieben,
Frau Mutter, sagen Sie, darf denn kein Mädchen lieben?"

And as Bräsig went out of the door he sung:

"Custine schickt eine schnelle Post,
Die nach Paris reiten muss:
Die Sachsen and Preussen marschiren ins Feld,
Um Mainz zu bombardiren,
Und wenn ich keinen Succurs bekomme,
Denn muss ich capituliren."

"You may capituliren, as much as you please, for all me; only hold your tongue, as you have promised," said our old friend, and he went home, not only with the agreeable feeling that he had done a good action, but also with the equally agreeable feeling that he had accomplished a difficult task very skilfully, since he considered it pure finesse, as he said to himself, to have introduced Louise into the letter, so delicately, so *præter propter* and so *circa*, that one must have keen scent, to suspect anything.

Well, when one indulges such a delightful consciousness of his good and skilful performances, and, so to say, warms himself at its blaze as at a cosy fire, on a winter's evening, it must be doubly vexatious to be driven out in the wind and rain, with all manner of scolding and reproaches; and this happened to Bräsig, when he entered the Frau Pastorin's room, where she was sitting with the little assessor; Louise was not there. Frau Pastorin was just trying to light a lamp, and the matches would not catch, firstly, because Kurz did not supply them with the best quality, and secondly, because Frau Pastorin--perhaps from economy--had the habit of putting the broken matches, and those that would not light, back into the box, so that such a match, in the course of its short life, had the satisfaction of being tried at least twenty times, which may have been very agreeable to the match, but was very provoking to other people.

"Well, there you are!" cried the Frau Pastorin angrily, trying a match. "There you are, at last,"-

-the second match. "You are running about the town all day,"--another match; "but you go with blind eyes,"--two matches at once,--"and with deaf ears!"--another match. "You always know everything,"--a match--"and when anything happens, then you know nothing,"--three matches together.

Bräsig went up to the Frau Pastorin very politely and pleasantly, and took the match-box from her hand, saying, "By your leave!"--a match--"what do you mean by that?"--the second match. "Have I done anything to harm you?"--the third match. "Kurz ought to be paid with his own wares!"--two matches, "His things that ought to catch don't catch, and what ought not to catch, catches,"--three matches. "The confounded things have got the inflorentia!" and with that he threw the whole box on the table, pulled his own match-safe out of his pocket, and struck a light.

"Bräsig," said the Frau Pastorin, putting all the tried matches carefully into the box, "I am very much vexed with you. I am not inquisitive, but, when anything happens that concerns Habermann and Louise, I am certainly the nearest, and ought to know it. Why must our little Anna first come out with what you ought to have told me long ago, for you knew it. I see it in your face, you knew it."

"How so?" asked Bräsig, and was going to pretend great ignorance; but the Frau Pastorin was too much provoked with him, for she thought he had treated her shamefully, and she said:

"You need not pretend; I know that you know everything, and you tell me nothing!" and now she began to tap the old man, and the little assessor also bored away at the Herr Assessor; finer and finer the two women drew their threads, and got everything out of Bräsig that he knew, for silence was by no means a special gift of his, and when he at last cried out in sheer despair: "So, now I know nothing more," then the little round Frau Pastorin placed herself before him, saying, "Bräsig, I know you, I see it in your face, you know something more. Out with it! What else do you know?"

"Frau Pastorin, it is a private affair."

"That is all the same; out with it!"

And Bräsig shoved about in his chair and looked right and left, but there was no help for it, he must surrender, and he said finally, "I have written about it to Herr Franz von Rambow, at Paris; but Karl Habermann must never know it."

"To Paris!" cried the Frau Pastorin, putting her hands on her sides, "to the young Herr von Rambow! What have you written to him? You have written something about Louise, I see it in your face! Yes, you have written something, and what I would hardly dream of, you have done!" She rang the bell violently: "Fika, run to the post-office, the Herr Postmaster shall give you back, immediately, the letter that Herr Bräsig has written to Paris."

Tereng-tereng-tereng-tentereng! blew the postillion, and the post with Bräsig's letter drove by, with flourish of trumpets, before the Frau Pastorin's nose, express for Paris, and the Frau Pastorin in, great vexation, sank back in her sofa-corner, sent Fika back to the kitchen, and--alas! that we should have to confess it--she was almost ready to murmur against providence, that, perhaps for the first time, the Rahnstadt post had started at the right moment, to take Bräsig's stupid letter to Paris.

Bräsig declared, most solemnly, that he had managed the business with the greatest delicacy, so that there was not the least indicium to be perceived.

"Did you send greeting from her?" asked the Frau Pastorin.

"No," said Bräsig, "I only said she was very well."

"Have you written nothing else about her?"

"I only wrote that the sheet of paper belonged to her, and that she was a precious pearl of the human race."

"So she is," interposed the Frau Pastorin.

"And then I closed in a very friendly way, by inviting the young Herr to our fraternity ball."

"That was foolish," cried the Frau Pastorin, "he will notice that, he will think you have the intention to bring him and Louise together again."

"Frau Pastorin," said Bräsig, placing himself before her, "with all respect for your words, *is* it foolish and wicked, if one has the intention of bringing two people together again, who have been separated by the wickedness and meanness of other people? I had this intention, and therefore I wrote that letter; Habermann could not have done it; for why? He is her father, and it would not have been fitting. You could not have done it; for why? Because they have called you already, here in Rahnstadt, all sorts of scandalous names. It is nothing to me, however, if people do call me an old go-between; I don't trouble myself about it; I will fetch and carry between here and Paris, and if I am only considered in Paris to be an honest man and a faithful friend to Karl

Habermann and Louise, it is nothing to me if all Rahnstadt calls me an old matchmaker."

"Yes, Frau Pastorin, yes!" cried the little assessor, falling upon the Frau Pastorin's neck, "the Herr Inspector is right. Who cares for the gossips of Rahnstadt? What matters the stupid judgment of the world, if two people can be made happy? Franz must come, and Louise must be happy," and in her delight she ran up to Bräsigt, and put her arms round his neck, and kissed him, right on his mouth. "You are a dear, old Uncle Bräsigt!"

And Bräsigt returned the kiss, and said, "Yes, you little clavier-mamsell, you dear little lark, you! You ought to try your happiness also, in such relations. But hold! We mustn't cackle too soon, the business is not settled yet, the rascals are not yet convicted, and, if I know Karl Habermann, he must be perfectly cleared in that affair, before he will consent to such an arrangement, and therefore I have said nothing about the matter, that he and Louise might not be disturbed. And it is a great blessing that Kurz has the inflorentia, for he could never have held his tongue so long otherwise."

"Bräsigt," said the Frau Pastorin, "taking it all together, I believe you have done right."

"Haven't I, Frau Pastorin? And you were only vexed, because you didn't write first. But you shall have the honor of writing to the young Herr, when it is all settled."

Three days after this interview, Bräsigt came home, and met the Frau Pastorin in the hall. Her right hand was in a bandage, for she had just sprained it, falling down the cellar-stairs.

"Frau Pastorin," said he, with great earnestness and expression, "I shall come down again immediately, and have something to tell you."

With that, he went up-stairs to Habermann. He said neither "Good day" nor anything else, as he entered the room, but, looking very solemn, went through into the bedroom. There he poured out a glass of water, and returned with it to Habermann.

"Here, Karl, drink!"

"What? Why should I drink?"

"Because it is good for you. What you will need afterward, will not hurt you before."

"Bräsigt, what ails you?" cried Habermann, pushing away the water; but he noticed that something unusual was coming.

"Well, Karl, if you won't take it, you won't; but collect yourself, collect yourself quickly;" and he walked up and down, while Habermann followed him with his eyes, and turned pale, as he felt that this moment was to influence his destiny.

"Karl," said Bräsigt, standing before him, "have you collected yourself?"

He had really done so; he stood up and exclaimed:

"Bräsigt, say what you have to say! What I have borne so long, I can bear yet longer, if need be."

"That is not my meaning," said Bräsigt. "It is all out, the rascals are convicted, and we have the money; not all, but some of it."

The old man had dreamed what it would be to be delivered from his troubles, for a ray of hope had gleamed upon his horizon; but when the sun was fairly risen upon this new day, and shone brightly in his face, his eyes were blinded by the sudden splendor, and a thousand suns floated around him.

"Bräsigt! Bräsigt! My honest name! My child's happiness!" and he sank back in his chair, and Bräsigt held him the glass of water, and the old man drank, and recovered himself a little, and grasped Bräsigt, who stood before him, about the knees: "Zachary, you have never in your life deceived me!"

"No, Karl, it is the pure truth, and it stands in the protocol, and the rascals will be sent to Dreiberg, the Herr Burgomeister says; but first to Bützow, to the criminal court."

"Bräsigt," said Habermann, and he stood up, and went into his sleeping room, "leave me alone, and say nothing to Louise! Yes, tell her to come up."

"Yes, Karl," said Bräsigt, walking to the window, and looking out, and wiping the tears from his eyes, and as he went through the door he saw his Karl, in the bedroom, upon his knees.

Louise went to her father, Bräsigt told her nothing; but to the Frau Pastorin he was not so silent.

"Bless me," said the little Frau, "now Louise has gone away, and Habermann does not come, and you, Bräsigt, don't come at the right time, the dinner will be cold, and we have such nice fish."

What were you going to tell me, Bräsig?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Uncle Bräsig, looking as if the rascals had infected him with all sorts of roguery, and he must exercise it now upon the Frau Pastorin, because she had abused him so about the letter; "only that Habermann and Louise are not coming to dinner. But we two can begin."

"Eh, Bräsig, why are they not coming?"

"Well, because of the apron."

"The apron?"

"Yes, because it was wet."

"Whose apron was wet?"

"Why, Frau Kählert's. But we will eat our dinner, the fish will get cold."

"Not a morsel!" cried the Frau Pastorin, and put a couple of plates over the fish, and over those a napkin, and over that her plump hands, and looked so wildly at Bräsig with her round eyes, that he could no longer persist in his *rôle*, but burst out: "It is all out, Frau Pastorin, and they are convicted, and we have most of the money again."

"And do you tell me that now, first?" cried the little Frau, and jumped up from the table, and was running up to Habermann. Bräsig would not allow that, and, by promising to tell her everything, brought her back to the sofa.

"Frau Pastorin," said he, "the chief thing that is, the principal indicium, came out through Kählertsch, that is to say, not properly, of her own accord, but through her wicked jealousy, which is a dreadfully powerful feeling in many women, and produces the most terrible consequences. I don't mean you, by that, I only mean Kählertsch. You see the woman had made up her mind to marry the weaver, and the weaver would'nt have her. Now, she is rightly of the opinion that the weaver's divorced wife wishes to marry him again, herself, and she lies in wait for them, and so it happened once that her apron--I mean Kählertsch's--was wet, and she was going to dry it on the garden fence. While she was there, half concealed behind the fence, she saw the weaver and his divorced wife, holding a *rendezvous*,--well, you know what that is, Frau Pastorin----"

"Bräsig, I tell you----"

"Quiet, Frau Pastorin! and they were not sitting in a ditch, they were standing among the pole-beans, so that the woman must have got into the garden from over the fence, in the rear, since she had not gone through the house. Kählertsch in her wicked jealousy, called Frau Kräuger, the butcher's wife, to come and look also, and they two watched the other two, till they disappeared among the beans, and after a little the woman got over the fence, and the weaver busied himself in the garden, whereupon the two women quietly retired. So far we had got, and this was true, for the butcher's wife swore to it.

"Then the Herr Burgomeister says, if Kählertsch would only speak out, we might learn more. Then I say, 'Herr Burgomeister, woman's jealousy!' then he says, 'But how?' Then I say, 'Herr Burgomeister, I knew something about it, when I had three sweethearts at once,--jealousy is a terrible passion, and it knows neither mercy nor pity. Let me try her.' and when Kählertsch came again I said, in an off-hand way, 'Well, if the weaver had not married any body else, meantime, I suppose he could marry his divorced wife again.' And the Herr Burgomeister took my hint, and said yes, if he wanted to, the clerical consistory could give him a desperation. You see, that put the woman, herself into a desperation, and she burst out, if it was coming to that, she would tell something, the weaver had brought money with him out of the garden, for before that he had had no money in his cupboard, but afterwards she had looked, and had found money there, several double louis-d'ors. You see, she had trapped herself, showing that she had been, with a night-key, into other people's cupboards. The Herr Burgomeister had her arrested and put in prison, so we now had the three rogues fast.

"When the weaver came in again, and lied again, as to how he had come by the money, and lied to the very face of the butcher's wife, that he had not been with his wife in the garden, you see, the butcher's wife got angry too, and said she had seen the calves of her legs, as she was climbing over the fence,--don't take it amiss, Frau Pastorin,--but she said so. And then the weaver was sentenced to have ten on his jacket, for our laws,--thank God!--still have penalties for infamous lying, and the Herr Burgomeister talked to him very solemnly, and told him he was a master weaver, and he should be degraded from his trade; but would he confess? not a bit of it. But so soon as he had had his first three on the jacket, he fell on his knees,--which was a dreadful sight to me, so that I turned away,--and said he would confess everything, and he did so, since he had not stolen it himself, but his wife. The woman had stolen the money from the day-laborer, Regel, taking the black packet from his waistcoat pocket, when he was intoxicated, and hid it in the woods, under the moss and bushes, and there it had lain for two years, and whenever she went to get wood, she would take out a couple of pieces, which she would get changed by the help of some of the old Jew women,--she has been to Kurz, also. And then, perhaps a year and a

half ago, she met the weaver, and asked him if he would not marry her again, for she was no longer poor, she had something now, and she gave him a double louis-d'or; he would'nt listen to her then, however, because at that time he was in love with Kählertsch,--I beg you, Frau Pastorin, with Kählertsch! They might offer me Kählertsch on a silver salver, I should never fall in love with her. But he took the louis-d'or, and she teased him again, and made him other presents, till at last his inclination began to return to her, and he wanted nothing more to do with Kählertsch. And she showed him all her treasure, and they changed it about, now here and now there, to keep it concealed, and finally, this spring, they locked it up in a box, and he threw the black cloth into the butcher's compost heap, and they buried the treasure in the garden. And we went there with the weaver, and found fourteen hundred thalers, among the potatoes. Just think of it--fourteen hundred thalers among the potatoes! They had spent the rest of it."

"Good heavens!" cried the Frau Pastorin, "how clever you and the Herr Burgomeister must have been, to get so much out of them."

"So we are, Frau Pastorin," said Uncle Bräsigg, quietly.

"But the woman?" cried the little Frau. "She was the nearest to it."

"Yes, Frau Pastorin, that was an exciting moment, for the Herr Burgomeister had concealed the indicium of the box and the gold, under his every-day hat, and when the weaver's wife was confronted with her husband, and once more admonished to tell the truth, and persisted in lying, then the Herr Burgomeister lifted his hat, and said, 'It is no matter. We have the money already.' You see, when she saw the box, she flew at the weaver, like a fury, and in a moment she had torn his whole face, just with her nails, and screamed, 'Cursed wretch! I would have made him happy, and he has made me unhappy!' Frau Pastorin, love is madder than jealousy. Kählertsch never would have done that! But, Frau Pastorin, our fish must be quite cold."

"Ah, Bräsigg, how can you think of anything like that. But I must go to Habermann, I must tell him--"

"That you are very glad he is so triumphantly cleared." said Bräsigg, drawing her down on the sofa again; "so you shall, but not yet. For, you see, I believe Habermann has something to tell the Lord, and Louise will help him, and that is right too, but she is enough; for, Frau Pastorin,--as Pastorin you should know,--our Lord is a jealous God, and when He communes with a thankful soul he does not suffer that others should approach, but draws back, and, where the presence of God has shone, human sympathy must wait till afterwards."

The little Frau Pastorin looked at him in astonishment, and finally broke out:

"God bless you, Bräsigg! I always called you an old heathen; but you are a Christian, after all!"

"I don't know, Frau Pastorin, I don't know what I am. But I know that the little I have done, in this matter, I have not accomplished as a Christian, but as assessor at the criminal court. But Frau Pastorin, our fish is spoiled by this time, and I don't feel at all hungry. The house seems too narrow for me,--adieu, Frau Pastorin, I must go out in the fresh air a little while."

CHAPTER XLI.

The Friday, on which Rudolph and Mining were to be married, had come, and the loveliest Whitsuntide weather shone upon Rexow, and on the singular edifice which Jochen, with the aid of Schultz the carpenter, had constructed near his modest farm-house. From the outside, the affair was not very distinguished looking, it was only of boards and laths hammered together, and looked uncommonly like a building in which wild beasts are exhibited, at the Leipsic fair. Inside, the work of art presented a more stately appearance, for the boards were covered with blue and yellow cloth, half of one color, and half of the other, since there was not enough of one kind, in Rahnstadt, to cover so large a hall; and secondly, it was adorned with six notched beams, for on no other condition would carpenter Schultz undertake the job. There ought, properly, he said, to be nine, in such a building as a wedding-hall, but the expense would be too great, and since Jochen did not understand much about architecture, and Frau Nüssler had enough to do with the eating and drinking for the wedding, and Bräsigg was his friend, and would not oppose him, because he had helped him at the Reformverein, carpenter Schultz had his own way, like a moth in a rug, and built in the notched beams to his heart's content; and upon each of them Bräsigg hung a sort of contrivance, intended to represent a chandelier, and Krischan the coachman climbed about on them for a week, in his buckskin breeches, adorning them with oak-leaves; which he did very finely, but to the detriment of his apparel, since the beams, with their splinters,

little by little devoured his buckskin breeches.

Jochen put his hand in his purse, and paid the money for the new house, for he wanted everything done, for his Mining, in the finest manner, and he got Krischan a new pair of breeches.

"Mother," he cried to his wife, "come! look! What shall we do about it?"

"Yes, Jochen, it is all very well. But there ought to be lights in the chandeliers!"

She was going out, when a voice spoke to her from the clouds, that is, the oak-leaf-clouds, and a face full of light, candlelight, bent down to her and said solemnly, "It shall all be attended to, Frau Nüssler," and as she looked nearer into the clouds, she saw the honest, red face of her old angel, Bräsig, looking out from the oak-leaves and tallow-candles, which he had strung around his neck, like a clergyman's bands, that he might have his hands free to fasten them in their places.

When this was done, the three stood together, and contemplated the effect, and Bräsig said, "Truly, Jochen! 'Tis like a fairy palace, out of the 'Arabian Nights,' which I read last winter from the circulating library!"

And Jochen said, "Yes, Bräsig; it is all as true as leather; but it is only for one night; for, day after to-morrow, we must tear it down."

"That would be barbarous!" said the carpenter, "the six notched beams would last ages, and the fairies might walk in as if they were born and bred there."

And the next day came the fairies, not, indeed, exactly as Herr Schultz had represented, no, they came, at that time, all in crinoline, that is to say, the half-grown, horse-hair variety, not with bells and springs and bee-hives, and steel bird-cages, as at present; but they were beginning, even then, and Auntie Klein, from Rostock, had put a regular barrel-hoop of tough oaken wood, into her petticoat, which grazed her sister's shins so unmercifully on the way, that the poor woman had to stand on one foot through the whole wedding. But the fairies came, and they had wreaths in their hair, of natural flowers, and not artificial, which was a pity, for towards the close of the wedding, when the feet were weary, and the lovely eyes drooped, and the bright clouds of hair were tumbled about as if a storm-wind had blown through them, then the weary flowers drooped their heads and whispered to each other, "I wish it were over; nothing gives one such a longing for the quiet night, as all this gaiety." How much better we do things at present! The artificial flowers stand up brisk and lively, and say, "Always ready! Our stems and strings hold out, and when this is over, they will lay us away in a box; and we shall get rested, and when another time comes we are always ready!" Ah, how the world has improved! If they could only keep fresh and bright the youthful limbs and the fresh lungs and the innocent hearts,—well, for all me, the whole pretty fairies themselves,—with their wires and threads and steel springs!

Bräsig distributed invitations for Frau Nüssler and Jochen with a free hand, and had selected from Rahnstadt and the vicinity a fine company of neat, willing and active dancers, and although there was now and then a crooked stick among the men, it was no matter, said Uncle Bräsig, for you could see a man's legs distinctly enough, and could beware of them. Besides the Rahnstadters and a few others in the region, Jochen Nüssler had, through Rudolph, invited all his relations, a very wide-spreading race. Not that they themselves were so wide-spreading, I only mean the relationship, and they were scattered widely over all Mecklenburg and Pommerania.

There sat uncle Luting, there Uncle Krischaning, there Uncle Hanning, and there Cousin Wilhelming,—"who is my own second cousin, and a very witty fellow, when it comes to eating and drinking," said Jochen,—and there sat Aunt Dining, and Aunt Stining, and Aunt Mining, and Aunt Lining, and Aunt Rining,—"and Aunt Zaphie is coming too," said Jochen, "who was an extremely fine woman in her day." "She has been here this great while," said Bräsig. And as one stately equipage after another drove up to the Rexow court, and the whole Nüssler family in a company stood around Jochen, welcoming each other, and inquiring how things had gone for the last sixteen or twenty years,—for it was as long as that since they had seen each other, and those who knew how to write never did,—Bräsig said to Frau Nüssler:

"A very constant race, these Nüsslers! Regular thorough-bred Nüsslers! Only Jochen is a little different from the rest, since he has grown so thin, and so talkative." And going into the "temple of art," as carpenter Schultz called his edifice, and finding the architect sitting there, absorbed in admiration of his work and a bottle of Bavarian beer, he said, "Schultz, you have done your part, and I have done mine; but, you shall see, Jochen will spoil the whole performance, with his stupid relations, so that it will turn out like a mess of sour porridge."

"I have nothing to say about it, being only a guest here," said Herr Schultz, "but if they are what you say, then, out with them!"

And Bräsig walked up and down the garden, like a tree-frog, not that he had on a green coat, for he wore his nice brown one, with the yellow vest, no, he was like a tree-frog only because he prophesied foul weather before night. All at once, he looked over the garden fence, and saw Jochen's own "phantom" approaching, not driven by Krischan, but by a day-laborer, and looking nearer he saw two women sitting in it, and when he looked nearer still, there sat his own sister

the widow of the dairy-farmer Korthals, with her only daughter, who lived far away, in straitened circumstances, in a village in Pomerania.

"God preserve us!" he cried, "my own sister! And her little Lotting, too! This is *her* doing!" and running through the kitchen to the hall, he met Frau Nüssler, and cried, "You have done this for me! Oh, you are----"

Just then two ladies entered the hall, very simply dressed, but both of them lovely as pictures; the older, with tears of emotion and gratitude running down her friendly, true-hearted face, the younger, with her fresh, innocent soul shining out of great blue eyes, under a cloud of golden hair, and asking, "Where is my dear, good Uncle Zachary?" for it was long years since she had seen him.

"Here! here!" he cried, and pulled and pushed his dear relations through the hall, till he got them up to Frau Nüssler, and said, "There she is; now thank her!" And when the two had expressed their gratitude, and turned round again to look for him, he was gone. Like a miller, who has started his mill, and poured the corn into the hopper, he had crowded his way through the stout meal-bags of the Nüssler family, and now sat in the arbor, in the garden, blowing and trumpeting at his nose, until Schultz the carpenter decamped with his beer-bottle from the temple of art, believing that the musicians had arrived.

But they did not come yet; first came Kurz and the rector, each with his good old advocate at his side, and when they had been presented, and had crowded about, for a while, in the room with the Nüssler family, old Uncle Luting Nüssler came up to Kurz, in a pompous, overbearing way, and said, in a deep voice, "You can congratulate yourself upon being connected afresh with such a rich and noble relationship. Do you see," and he pointed to Uncle Krischan, who had just thrown himself upon the sofa, "there tumbles a hundred thousand thalers."

"I don't do it for that," said Uncle Krischan.

Well, that made Kurz angry, but he restrained himself; but when Uncle Luting went on to ask, "Have you ever in your life seen so many rich people together in one company?" then Kurz's wrath broke out, and he replied, "No! nor ever in my life so many blockheads!"

He turned away, and his wife, who had heard it, followed him and said, "Kurz, I beg you, for God's sake, don't begin again with your democracy! It would be much better for you to go to bed at once."

He would not do that, but he was placed under the ban, for the whole evening, by all the Nüssler family.

And Pastor Gottlieb came with Lining, and they were treated with great respect by their elders, because they were to perform the marriage ceremony. Don't misunderstand me! Not that Lining herself was to marry them, not at all! but, for once in her life, she had interfered in Gottlieb's professional affairs, and had altered his marriage ceremony a little, so that Gottlieb said it was not like a Christian minister's speech, it was more like a family speech; but she remained firm in her position that as Mining's twin she ought to know what would go most to her heart, and Gottlieb had to yield to her.

And now came Habermann, with the Frau Pastorin and Louise and the little assessor, driving up in a glass coach, for the Frau Pastorin had said, "So, and in no other way!" She had once been compelled to decline a wedding invitation from Frau Nüssler, in her great sorrow, and now she would make up for it in her great pleasure at this second wedding, and then she pressed the hands of Habermann and Louise and the little assessor, saying, "Isn't it so? We are all happy to-day." So they came to Rexow, and when they arrived Habermann saw Bräsig's sister, whom he had known years ago, and it was not long before they sat together, talking of old times, and every other word was "Zachary," and Louise and the little assessor had Lotting between them, and every other word was "Uncle Bräsig."

Then came a great harvest wagon, with flowers and wreaths, Krischan the coachman driving the four horses, in the saddle, in his new yellow buckskins, his whip ornamented with red and blue ribbons, and he himself with a wreath of roses around his hat, which looked uncommonly as if the old hat were celebrating its fiftieth golden wedding, upon this occasion, and on the front seat, sat David Berger, the town-musician, playing on his clarinet:

"Wer niemals sinen Rausch gehabt,
Das ist kein braver Mann,"

and behind him sat his companions, blowing the same tune, though not in the same time, for since they sat on the second, third and fourth seats they could not possibly keep it, since he was always three ahead of them; and when he turned round angrily, or Krischan would go faster and used his whip, he always got his hair pulled, for one of his mischievous companions had fastened the handle of the whip to his back hair, and when Krischan touched the whip, or when he stirred himself, he was in constant torment.

And behind this wagon came another harvest wagon, full of white dresses, and from under the white dresses peeped pretty little dancing feet, and above them, on the round heads, nodded roses and pinks, which looked out modestly from the curly locks, as if they were too bashful to glance at the pretty faces. These were the little fairies. And right in the midst of the fairies sat the Herr Postmaster, in his new uniform, the only one Rahnstadt had to show,--otherwise he would not have arrived at such an honor,--and sung, gay as a finch, his finest song in this garden of roses. Behind this wagon came yet another harvest wagon, loaded with gentlemen, with dancers, the best dancers in Rahnstadt, and Kurz's Herr Süßmann danced along the wagon pole in front, and the Herr Rector's youngest pupil sat, with his legs dangling in the air, behind.

The guests all looked very joyous, but the Frau Hostess was in the greatest perplexity, for she was not acquainted with a single one of them, since Bräsig had selected them merely with reference to their capacities for dancing, and she called for Bräsig; but when he finally came Krischan the coachman had brought them all in, and undertook to dispose of them. He opened the doors of the kitchen and dining-room, and shoved them all in: "In with you, there! Take it easy! Get a little something to eat and drink; they are not ready yet!"

And the advice was good, for the marriage was delayed a little, because one of the groomsmen had not yet arrived, namely Fritz Triddelsitz, who at Rudolph's request had been persuaded to remove the ban from the Nüssler house, and to officiate in that capacity. At last he came, riding up the court on his dapple-gray and in full state, and mingled among the guests with so much dignity, and bowed right and left with so much elegance, that the rector's foolish little pupil whispered in Herr Süßmann's ear: "What a pity that we are all ready, he might have helped us." Whereupon Herr Süßmann regarded him with a look of compassion, and turning to Bräsig, who stood at his other side, said, "Herr Inspector, have you heard that I am chosen dance-director for our fraternity ball, day after tomorrow?"

Bräsig was going to tell him that he would be a blockhead if he undertook it, for Kurz would discharge him, but he did not have time to say it, for just then the bridal pair entered the room.

Rudolph was truly a fine looking bridegroom. His fresh, joyous demeanor was hidden, to-day, under a quiet earnestness, and only the firm resolve under all circumstances to fight for his wife and himself, like an honest fellow, shone in his brown eyes. Yes, he was a handsome bridegroom, for when does a man look handsomer than when, full of courage and hope, he goes out to his first conflict? Who could blame his mother, the good old advocate, for going up to him at this moment, and kissing him, and stroking his brown curls, and secretly pulling out his ruffle a little, from the dress coat, so that people might see it?

And now Mining! Mining looked, in her white satin dress and myrtle wreath, like a Bauersdorf apple, freshly plucked from the tree, and laid in its green leaves on a silver salver. Fresh and cool outside, as the ripe fruit, but her heart was glowing, and before Gottlieb had uttered a word of the ceremony, there was a pair betrothed,--confident hope and quiet blessedness had joined hands. And Frau Nüssler was crying quietly behind her handkerchief, and saying to Bräsig, "I cannot help it, she is my last, my youngest." And Bräsig looked at her, full of friendliness, and said, "Frau Nüssler, control yourself! It will soon be over;" and going up to Louise Habermann, he made a bow, saying, "My Fräulein, if you are ready, it is time,"--usually he called her "Louise," but to-day he was a groomsman, and must do what was proper. And Fritz Triddelsitz went up to the little assessor, for she was the other bride's maid, and Kurz and Rector Baldrian placed themselves as leaders by Rudolph, and when young Jochen after some delay was shoved forward, he stood by his Mining, and on his other side stood Habermann, for they were the two leaders for the bride,--and then the procession moved to carpenter Schultz's temple of art, where Gottlieb stood behind a green and white altar, and began to read Lining's marriage ceremony.

I know very well that a marriage at home is not thought much of,--now-a-days all marriages must be celebrated in church, and I have nothing against it, for I was married in church myself about that time, since my wife was a minister's daughter, and would not have it otherwise; but, as I was saying, at that time this kind of marriage ceremony had not been established in Mecklenburg by the ecclesiastical consistory, and the old modes were still in fashion, and children were married as their parents had been. New modes were in fashion too, as Krischan Schultz said, when he fastened his horse by the tail; but Gottlieb knew nothing about them, and if he had known about them, and had wished to fasten his horse in the new mode. Lining would not have allowed it; Lining was a married woman, but she would not allow her other half to disgrace himself before these rich, stout, stupid Nüsslers, and the Rahnstadt shopmen and school-boys, or that her twin sister should have her marriage feast spoiled by an ecclesiastical consistory, although she was the most dignified of pastors' wives, that is, after the Frau Pastorin, who was always the nearest.

After the ceremony, the two little twin-apples lay in each other's arms, in full, untroubled blessedness, and Rudolph embraced them both together, and Frau Nüssler stood a little aside, looking over her handkerchief, with her head turned over our shoulder, as if she were listening to something,--possibly the angel's song,--and as the stout, rich, stupid Nüsslers pressed around, with their congratulations, young Jochen stood among them and bowed to this one and that, as if it were his own wedding-day over again: "Uncle Luting, it is my Mining! Cousin Wilhelming, it is our little governess! Aunt Zaphie, what shall we do about it!" These people crowded up, the men with their bright waistcoats, and gold watch-chains across their breasts, and the women with whole flower-pots on their caps, and some of them with dropping eyes, as if the flowerpots had

been watered too plentifully, and were running over. And the men and the women of Jochen's family kissed, alternately, Rudolph and Mining, as if before all things they must be taken into this rich, stout, stupid relationship, so that Kurz at last grew terribly angry, because he could not reach his new daughter-in-law, and for once his good old advocate agreed with him, because she could not reach her own son. And the Rahnstadt dancers also crowded about and wandered around the pair, and what else could they do? they could not have their kisses yet; and among this company stood Fritz Triddelsitz with the little assessor, tall and slender and imposing, not as a groomsman, no, as commander of the whole, and behind him stood the rector's little pupil, imitating with his short body and black woolen stockings all the motions that Fritz made with his long body and black silk stockings. He was Fritz's natural shadow, that is, at noon-day, when shadows are short.

Near by stood two other couples, who were not crowding up, for they were sufficiently occupied with themselves, and had time to spare; these were Habermann and his Louise, and Uncle Bräsig and the Frau Pastorin. Louise lay with her head on her father's breast, looking up to him, as if she had been long ill, and had been brought out from her couch, for the first time, into the free air, and the blue sky seemed to say: "Better days! better days!" and her face looked as peaceful and happy as the blue sky, and sun and moon and stars might wander there, and dew and rain might fall, to refresh and rejoice and enlighten mankind. Close to this pair stood Zachary Bräsig, with his arm round the little Frau Pastorin, and his eyebrows elevated, and he blew his nose, and said, "My little Mining! My little goddaughter! How happy she is!" and every time that one of the old, stout Nüsslers gave Mining a kiss, he bent down to the Frau Pastorin, and gave her a kiss, as if he must make up to this good old lady what the stupid old people were inflicting upon Mining. "You see, because!" as our servant maid, Lisette, says, here in Eisenach, when she can think of no other reason. And so Bräsig kissed the Frau Pastorin, and the Frau Pastorin suffered it, without thinking any harm; but when Aunt Zaphie, who had formerly been very handsome, and a sort of Venus among the Nüsslers, gave Rudolph three or four kisses, the little Frau Pastorin was startled, and when Bräsig approached his lips again, in such a friendly way, she said, "Bräsig, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! What have you particularly to do with me?"

And Bräsig drew back embarrassed, and said, "Frau Pastorin, don't take it unkindly, but my feelings ran away with me," and he brought the Frau Pastorin to Habermann, saying, "Karl, you must exchange. Louise is my bride's maid, and I am a bachelor, and you and the Frau Pastorin are both widowers, and that is suitable."

Mining had taken her Rudolph by the hand, and, when she saw her dearest and oldest friends standing a little on one side, had made various efforts to penetrate the sand-bags of stout, rich, stupid Nüsslers, and the wooden palisades of shopmen and school-boys, but without success; but when her brand new husband saw her futile manœuvres, he came to her assistance, shoved aside sand-bag No. 1, the rich Uncle Luting, and sand-bag No. 2, the witty cousin Wilhelming, grasped the longest palisade, Fritz Triddelsitz himself, in the short ribs, and moved him gently to another place, and neatly sent his pupil-shadow after him, and having thus made a breach through obstinacy, stupidity and tedium,--certainly no easy thing to do,--he brought his brand new bride to the people, who instead of congratulating her with flower-pots, and gay waistcoats and gold watch-chains, did it with what lies beneath them, their heads and their hearts. And when Frau Nüssler came up, and pressed her children, alternately, to her heart, Rudolph wiped the tears from his eyes, and said, "Let us all come out into the garden, and be by ourselves a little while."

And the carpenter, Schultz, who stood near and heard him, said; "Yes, out with you! All of you, out! We must set the tables here!" and he began to shove the rich Nüsslers about as if they were blocks and lumber. And when our company,--I say *our*--had come to the famous arbor, Bräsig pointed to the cherry-tree, and said, "Mining, this tree must be an indicium and a token to you, all your life, since your future was decided under it, and under me that time; and since we are talking about tokens, Mining, bring me a blue larkspur again, there is one!"

And when Mining had gone for it Uncle Bräsig said, "Rudolph, have you always remembered the blue larkspur?" And when Rudolph said he had, Bräsig looked in his clear eyes, and then examined him from head to foot, and said, "I believe you!" and when Mining came back with the flower he said, "Thank you, Mining! And now I will give you my wedding present for it," and he pulled out an old thick, black pocket-book from his brown coat, and rummaged among his old milk and corn accounts, and took out a withered flower, saying, "See, my little godchild, this is the flower of that time,"--and he held it towards her with the fresh blossom,--"and if, after long years, Rudolph can look at you with the same clear eyes, and give you this new flower, then you may say, 'I have been a happy wife.' I have nothing more to say, nothing! and I have nothing else to give you, nothing at all!" and with that he walked away, and our company heard him saying to himself, "Nothing at all! but this indicium, Rudolph's indicium!" And when they found him again, he was walking with his sister and his niece Lotting, and the two women were caressing and thanking him, because he had never forgotten or forsaken them.

Then Frau Nüssler came up to our company: "Come children, all is ready. But don't take it ill! Jochen's family are the most distinguished, and I cannot offend Jochen to-day,--he is master for this once,--they must sit nearest the bridal pair. Kurz and his wife, of course, will sit among them, for, as you say, Frau Pastorin, they are the nearest, and Gottlieb and Lining must also sit there, he as clergyman, and she as twin, and Jochen, too, because they are his friends. But we, Frau Pastorin, Karl, Louise, and you, Bräsig! we will sit together at one end, and it shall be a merry

wedding."

"A la bong kör!" said Bräsig, "but where is the shopman, Süßmann? I must speak to him about the fraternity ball."

"Oh, bless you! the poor fellow is sitting in the back kitchen; he and Triddelsitz were performing some kind of antics over a heap of pea-straw, and he fell, and something split, and Krischan had to get him Jochen's old blue trousers, and he will not let himself be seen by daylight, but is waiting until evening, when they will not noticed."

"And he wants to be dance-director!" said Bräsig, as he followed our company to the hall.

Then the feast began, and Frau Nüssler's little waiting-maids, with their fresh faces and three-cornered caps, and white bib-aprons, ran about the temple of art, and turned and whirled like humming tops,--for the old waiters with their shabby black dress-coats, and white neck-ties *à la* turkey-cock, and white cotton gloves which are always dipping into the gravy, were not the fashion then,--and the stout Nüsslers sat there and ate, as if there were a French commissary in their stomachs, provisioning an army for a Russian campaign, and when they had finished the fricassee they began on the pudding, and when they had disposed of the pudding they attacked the roasted pigeons and sparrows, and wondered that the pigeons in Mecklenburg were not as large as the geese, and murmured against providence because sparrows were not as thick as hops, and when the roast meat came, Cousin Wilhelming, the wit of the Nüssler family, stood up and clinked his glass, and cried, "Quiet!" three times, and holding up his glass said, "To the health of the old General Knusemong (*que nous aimons*), who has been a very distinguished general, and is so to this day!" and with that he looked towards the young pair, blinking with his left eye at Mining, and with his right at Rudolph. And Uncle Luting--understand me, the rich Uncle Luting--stood up expressly for the purpose, and said, "Wilhelming, you are a devilish fellow!" And Bräsig said to the Frau Pastorin, "Frau Pastorin, I know you are opposed to the Reform, but I assure you the witty shoemaker in the Reform would have done it much better!" And Frau Nüssler sat on thorns and thistles, in distress lest Jochen should take it into his head to make a speech; but Jochen restrained himself, his speeches were not for the world at large, they were only for the neighborhood, and all he said was, "Wilhelming, fill Luting's glass! Luting, help Wilhelming!"

And when the punch-bowls were placed on the table, and the champagne came, the old Nüsslers looked at the labels, and said they had just such in their cellars, and Fritz Triddelsitz and the Herr Shopmen and the Herr Pupils drank one glass after another, losing no time, until the left wing of the wedding-army became so uproarious that the little assessor remarked to the commander of these light troops, to Fritz Triddelsitz, that if they were to attack the enemy in that condition they would be obliged to retreat, and when Fritz was making arrangements to withdraw his forces, then there happened a diversion, for him and for the whole company. Well, just to think what clever things an ignorant beast will do sometimes! Bauschan, Jochen's Bauschan, our old Bauschan was sitting with a green wreath about his neck, and another about his tail,--for Krischan the coachman had dressed him up for the occasion,--on the green and white altar, which was behind the bridal pair, and where Gottlieb and Lining had married them, and he thrust his dignified autocratic face between their heads and licked Mining with his tongue, and struck Rudolph with his tail, and then licked Rudolph, and struck Mining. And when he had done this, the old fellow settled down again upon the altar with the greatest dignity, looking as if he were well contented with the whole affair, but meant to sit there a little longer, for his own pleasure. Jochen sprang up: "Bauschan, for shame! Down with you!" But Uncle Bräsig sprang up also, saying; "Jochen, do you treat your best friend like that, on this solemn occasion?" and turning to Pastor Gottlieb, he added: "Herr Pastor, let Bauschan alone! When the beast shows his affection, here on this Christian altar, the beast knows something that we don't. And Bauschan is a clever dog! I know it; for when I heard about the love-affairs, up in the cherry-tree, he heard them from below, for he was lying in the arbor, under the bench. Herr Pastor, this Bauschan is certainly a marriage witness, for he was there when they were betrothed."

Gottlieb turned pale at the scandalous idea, but did not break out into a sermon this time, for there was suddenly a humming and buzzing, as of a swarm of bees; everybody had risen, and began to remove chairs and tables,--"Out! out!" cried carpenter Schultz,--and dishes and platters, and the rector's youngest pupil tumbled down with a great pile of Frau Nüssler's china plates, and the fragments clattered through the hall, and he stood looking at his work, and feeling in his vest-pocket for treasures which were as much concealed from his own eyes as from those of other people, and as Frau Nüssler passed by and saw the performance he turned very red, and said he would gladly pay for them, but he hadn't so much by him. And Frau Nüssler patted him kindly on the shoulder and said, "Oh, nonsense! But you must be punished!" and she took him by the hand and led him to Bräsig's niece Lotting, and said, "You shall dance out my plates here, this evening." And he paid his debt honestly.

Then the dancing began. First the Polonaise. Fritz Triddelsitz had the lead for Herr Süßmann was not yet visible, and what a dance he led them! Through the hall, and through the garden, and through the kitchen, and the entry, and the living room and the sleeping rooms, and back into the garden again, and into the hall went the procession, until Jochen's stout relations were quite out of breath, and Bräsig called out to him, why didn't he take the barn-yard by the way? And Jochen Nüssler danced, third couple, with Aunt Zaphie in her flower-pot on one side, and Bauschan in his wreath on the other, and he looked between them like a pearl in a golden setting, or an ass

between two bundles of hay. And when the Polonaise was over, David Berger played the slowest of waltzes, "Thou, thou reign'st in this bosom, There, there, hast thou thy throne," and another band answered out of the distance: "Our cat has nine kits," and as he played on: "Speak, speak, Love, I implore thee! Say, say, hope shall be mine!"--came the answer from the distance: "Son and daughter, Into the water!"--and so on, for Frau Nüssler had given orders that there should be dancing in the milk-cellar also, and there sat old Hartloff, with his one eye, and Wichmann the joiner, and Ruhrdanz the weaver, and all the rest; and Hartloff had helped them all to a good drink, and told them not to be discouraged, they could cope with such a city band as that, any day, and so they did their best, and Krischan the coachman kept them supplied with liquor. And when the fun was at its height, Rudolph and Mining came into the milk-cellar, and Mining danced with Krischan, and Rudolph with the cook, and the bailiff got up a hurrah for the married pair, and Hartloff fiddled so madly that Ruhrdanz tried in vain to keep up with him on the clarionet, and finally gave up in despair. And when the bridal pair had gone, Krischan stood behind the door with the cook, arguing the matter.

"Dürt, what must be, must."

"Eh, Krischan, what do you want?"

"Dürt, we are a bridal pair too, and what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander; we must show ourselves on this occasion, they cannot take it ill of us."

And Dürt said it was very disagreeable to her, and, if she must do it, she would rather dance with Inspector Bräsigg, for she knew him; and Krischan said, for all he cared, and he would dance with the Frau. And nobody thought it anything out of the way, in the temple of art, when Krischan stood up with Frau Nüssler and Bräsigg with Dürt, and danced as merrily as the rest. So it was, in those times, and 'tis a pity it is so no longer,--at least not in many places. Great joy and profound grief bring high and low together: why should a master who wishes his laborers to mourn at his funeral not share his pleasures with them also?

It was a joyful occasion, and I could not possibly describe the pleasure which filled every heart, as the young feet danced merrily about, and hands silently pressed each other. I only know that Fritz Triddelsitz stood there as commander-in-chief, and that the little assessor at his side very often blushed, and after the dance ran to Louise, as if to seek her protection. I only know that the little pupil got knocked over several times, in the dance, because he was lost in arithmetical calculations, how he, when his predecessor came to be sexton, and he should be appointed school-master, might live with the greatest economy, and rent a bit of potato-land from the shoemaker at four shillings the square rood, and if the rich Uncle Bräsigg could help them with a few thalers, perhaps he might marry the lovely blue eyes and the golden hair which looked up to him so joyously, and in the confusion of the dance got entangled in his black coat, which was about one third paid for at Kurz's shop. I only know that the only unhappy being, in the whole company, was Herr Süßmann, and he only when his eyes happened to fall upon Jochen's old blue trousers.

Yes, it was a joyful occasion; but everything has its end; the little fairies and the shopmen and school-boys and the dancers, and David Berger with the musicians, drove off home,--the old people had gone before,--and Jochen placed himself at the head of his relations, and showed them to their quarters, and Frau Nüssler took the ladies to their rooms, and every married lady had her nice bed; but the unmarried ones, with Aunt Zaphie at their head, had to sleep in the great blue room, *en table d'hôte*.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Sunday after the wedding the young Frau von Rambow was busy in the morning with her housekeeping, and wrote down her expenses in her account book, and then sat in deep thought, till she was wholly disheartened with vague distress and anxiety, for she felt certain that things were going badly with Axel; but she had no idea of the desperate condition at which they had really arrived, through his unwise management, for her worst suspicions and anxieties fell far short of the truth. She merely inferred from his unsteady, hasty demeanor, and the restlessness which drove him hither and thither, that he was in great difficulty. That it was the most extreme difficulty, that the knife was at his throat, and a slight accident, a little maliciousness, might finish the business, she truly did not dream. He had told her nothing; he had ordered horses to be put to the carriage that morning, and had gone off for three days. Where? Why? Those were questions that no longer passed her lips, for why should she knock at a door from which issued only falsehood and evasion? She closed her account book with a sigh, and said to herself, "What is the use? A woman's hands cannot prop up a falling house." And as she saw Fritz Triddelsitz,

through the window, strolling wearily and sleepily across the yard, she let her hands fall in her lap, saying, "And all the management depends on *him*; and it is fortunate too, for he is honest, and has been brought up by Habermann. Ah, Habermann! Habermann!" she cried, and mournful and remorseful thoughts overcame her, and enclosed her in their grasp. Who has not, some time in his life, passed such an hour, when one thought crowds upon the heels of another, like the ghosts of by-gone days, and all point with their fingers to the weak places in our hearts? They will not stir nor move, they stand like wall and mortar, ever pointing to the place, and connecting our present trouble with that place, and calling in our ears, this is the consequence, why hast thou acted thus? And what she had done, had been only out of love; but the ghosts did not turn any for that,--what does a ghost know of love?

As she sat there, Daniel Sadenwater came in, and announced the Herr Proprietor Pomuchelskopp. The Herr was not at home, Frida said. He had told him so, said Daniel, but the Herr Pomuchelskopp had said expressly, he wished to speak with the gracious Frau. "I will come directly," said Frida. She would not have said that usually, but at the moment she was glad to escape from her gloomy thoughts; she had a great aversion to Pomuchelskopp, but still he was a flesh and blood man, he was none of her grisly ghosts.

But she would not have done it, if she had known what awaited her. Pomuchel had previously, and at last on that very morning, held wise counsel with David and Slusuhr, and they were agreed in this conclusion: that it would be best for him to buy the estate of Axel, at private sale; "For" said Pomuchelskopp, "if it comes to an auction, they will put it up too high for me. Ah, how they would drive it up! the old nobility would come together, and some of them have a great deal of money,--and they stick to each other, like burs,--and they would pay his debts, if it came to the hammer, or buy it in for him."

"You must look out for them," said Slusuhr.

"No! no!" cried Pomuchelskopp. "If I can get it quietly, that is the best way. He is as mellow, as mellow as a rotten apple, and I know him, he never looks over the fence, he only reaches after the nearest thing, and if I offer him a good bit of money, enough to pay his debts and have a little left over, he will take it."

"You forget one thing," said the notary, "she is there still."

"Oh, she knows nothing about it," said Muchel. "Fortunate for us, else it would not have gone so far. She looked at me once,--when they had that fuss about the stolen money,--with a pair of eyes that I shall never forget, so long as I live."

"Well," said David, "what of that? she is a woman,--not such a woman as Frau Pomuchelskopp, for *she* is a dreadfully clever woman,--she is a noble lady, she knows a great deal about some things, and nothing at all about others. If he is mellow, well, she must be made mellow too."

David's advice prevailed; yes, when the poor lady should learn all, blow upon blow, then she must become pliable in their hands, then she would not oppose the sale of the estate; and it was decided that Pomuchelskopp should make a beginning, and the others should follow him, that very morning; they knew that Axel was not at home.

When the Frau von Rambow went down to Pomuchelskopp, he looked as gentle and compassionate as if he were a clergyman, come to condole with her upon her mother's death; he stretched out both hands with a cordial gesture, as if he would take her hand in his, and press it warmly. Not getting her hand, however, he folded his own together, and regarded her with such a fatherly expression, in his old fat eyes, as a crocodile assumes when he is just ready to cry.

He had come, he said, as an old friend, as a true neighbor, to speak with the Herr von Rambow; the business was very pressing, and since the young Herr was not at home, it was necessary that he should speak with the gracious lady. It would be a great grief to him, if he, as a neighbor, could not help, when there was such a misfortune in prospect as the public auction sale of Pumpelshagen.

Frida started back, exclaiming, "Sale of Pumpelshagen!"

And now Pomuchelskopp looked like an unfortunate, innocent mother, who has overlaid her child in sleep; "God bless me!" he cried, "what have I done! I believed, gracious Frau, that you knew already----"

"I know nothing," said Frida, pale, but firm, and looking at the old sinner as if she would look him through; "I know nothing, but I wish to know all. Why should Pumpelshagen be sold?"

"Gracious lady," said the Herr Proprietor, almost wringing his hands, "the many debts----"

"Whom is my husband indebted to?"

"I believe, to many people."

"To yourself, also?"

And now it seemed as if a sluice were drawn up in Pomuchelskopp's heart, and the streams of friendliness, which had been accumulating for long years, were poured out at once upon the house of Pumpelshagen. Yes, he said, he had also demands upon him, but the money which he had loaned had been given out of friendship, and so it should remain. He had merely come over, this morning, to give the young Herr good advice, how the business might be managed, and if possible to help him out of his difficulties. So far as he knew, it was Moses who insisted on the sale, and if his mouth could be stopped everything might be settled. And as he took leave, he said, very kindly, with such a dignified shaking of the head, and much blinking of the eyes, as if to repress tears, if he had known that the gracious lady knew nothing about it, he would rather have pulled out his tongue than have uttered a word on the subject.

If it had been a matter with which she was less nearly connected, she must have perceived the falseness of Pomuchelskopp's behavior; but she had only a vague feeling of it, for distress and terror prevented her from seeing clearly. She felt as if the house had been shaken by an earthquake, as if the walls, which had hitherto protected from the storm, were ready to fall upon her and her child, and bury, beneath themselves, the little happiness she still hoped for in the future, she must get out into the open air, into the garden; and there she walked up and down in the cool shade, thinking and thinking, and it seemed to her as if the very shadows cast by the trees were hers no longer, or even the flowers blooming at her feet, which she herself had planted. She sat down on the same bench where her father-in-law, the old Kammerrath, had sat, when he told Habermann of his troubles; Habermann had helped then,--where was Habermann now? The same tree shadowed her, which she had first seen from the distance when Axel had so proudly pointed out to her his fair estate; where was this pride? where was the estate? To whom did this tree belong?

She sat there for a moment, as she thought, but the moment lasted two hours. She heard steps approaching on the Gurlitz pathway, and started to go; but before she could get away the notary and David stood before her. Slusuhr was a little startled, coming unawares upon the woman whom he was about to put to the torture; but David grinned like a monkey, into whose hand an apple had fallen unexpectedly. The notary went up to the gracious lady with great respect, and with a low bow inquired if they could speak with the gracious Herr.

"He is away from home," said Frida.

"It is very necessary that we should see him," said David. Slusuhr looked at David over his shoulder, as if to say, "Will you hold your stupid tongue?" but he repeated the same words:

"Yes, gracious lady, it is necessary that we should see him."

"Then you must come again on Wednesday; Herr von Rambow is coming back on Tuesday," and she turned to go.

The notary stepped before her, saying, "The business is not so much ours, as the Herr von Rambow's; perhaps a messenger might be sent after him. It is really a very pressing case. We know of a purchaser for Pumpelshagen, a thoroughly safe man, who wishes, however, a definite answer, within three days, whether Herr von Rambow will dispose of the estate at private sale, or let it come to an auction, at the end of the term. The Herr, here, is the son of Moses, who has given notice of his money for St. John's day, and through me, as his man of business, urges the private sale."

Of course this was all a tissue of lies. The fair young Frau stood still and looked at the two rascals; her first fright was over, and all the pride of her innocent soul rose against this undeserved misfortune.

"Gracious lady," said David, after he had fumbled at his watch-chain a while, in great embarrassment under her steady gaze, "bethink yourself; there is my father with the seven thousand thalers,--with the interest and costs, it amounts to eight,--there is Herr Pomuchelskopp's eight thousand thalers, there are the trades-people at Rahnstadt,--we have the accounts by us,--three thousand, then there are the bills of exchange, and, here and there, ten thousand more, owing,--well, what do I know? perhaps to Israel at Schwerin. If you should sell, now, to a safe man, and you could sell the furniture, and the beds, and the linen, you would have ten thousand thalers over, or perhaps eleven, or, for all I know, even twelve thousand. And then, if you should move to Rahnstadt, and rent a house there, you would have nothing to do, and could live like a countess."

Frida said nothing, but bowed coldly to the two companions, and went into the house. Nothing drives a high spirit to defend itself and to present a brave front to the world, like the rude intrusion of the world into one's private affairs. Then the foot advances to tread upon the head of the adder, and pride and honor and a good conscience turn out all other emotions which have restlessly worked in the heart, and there is no longer strife, there is calm repose; but it is like the repose of death.

"There she goes, like a princess!" said David.

"You blockhead, you!" cried Slusuhr. "Well, I will never, in my life, go on any business again with such a dunce."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked David. "Didn't we do just that way with the peasant at Kanin, and the matter was settled at once?"

"Yes, with a peasant. But did you come into the world yesterday, that you don't know that a noble lady is no peasant? We wanted to make her mellow and pliable--well, much good may it do you! we have only stiffened her neck. If it had come over him in that way, he would have said yes to everything; but," he added, rather to himself than to David, "there are men,--yes, and women, truly,--who are really strong, for the first time, under misfortune."

As they returned to the Herr Proprietor, and he learned how the young Frau had received them, he was greatly enraged.

"Good heavens!" said he to David, "how is it possible you could go about such a critical business in such a rough way? You should merely have bored and pricked and teased her, instead of setting her whole future life before her. God bless me! I had it all so nicely in train; and now, you shall see, when he comes home she will stiffen his back up as well, and the end will be, it will come to an auction."

"Then you can buy it," said Slusuhr.

"No, no! They will drive it up too high for me, and it joins so finely to my estate!" So the worthy Herr complained and disputed with the others, and consulted what should be done, and how they could manage it.

In another part of Gurlitz, there were also consultations going on. In weaver Ruhrdanz's room, day-laborers and day-laborers wives were sitting together, and the talk that went round was not hasty and reckless, but thoughtful and deliberate, though venomous.

"Well, what do you say, brother?"

"Eh, what should one say? He must be got rid of, he is a regular skinner! Well, now you, Ruhrdanz?"

"You are right there, I say so, too; he must be got rid of! But, friends, you should see, they would send him back to us again. If we only had papers about it, so that he dare not come back."

"Oh, your stupid papers!" cried a great rough woman, from behind the stove, "when you come home, in the evenings, from the city, with your heads full of brandy, you are ready to do great things, and afterwards you flop together, like a dish-cloth. What? Must I send my children about the country, begging? I have had no bread, for three days, but such as the children have brought home."

"Things are a little better than they were, though," said old father Brinkman.

"Yes," cried Willgans, "but from fear, not from kindness. We will go up to the court, each with a good staff, and there we will teach him to know the Lord, and then we will lead him over the boundary, and give him a start on the way: 'There! now travel!'"

"What?" cried Kapphingst, "and that Satan of a woman, who almost killed my girl about an old chicken, will you let her stay?"

"And the old girls," cried a young woman, "who tormented us so, when we were servants at the court, and seemed like merciful angels in the parlor, when there was company, and knocked us round in the kitchen, like regular devils,--shall they stay too?"

"We must get rid of the whole concern," said Willgans.

"No, children, no!" said old Brinkman. "Do not meddle with the innocent children!"

"Yes," said Ruhrdanz's old wife, who sat by herself, peeling potatoes for dinner, "you are right, Brinkman, and Gustaving must stay too; I saw him bringing old Schultz a measure of potatoes, secretly; and when he measures the land for potatoes and flax, he always gives a couple of rods more than *he* does; and, Willgans, see! your oldest boy wears a pair of his outgrown breeches, at this moment. He cannot do as he would, the old man looks after him too closely. No, against Gustaving and the little ones, nobody must lift a hand."

"Mother, I say so, too," said Ruhrdanz. "And, let me tell you something, we must do everything regularly! The others are not here now; this evening we will talk about it again. He will not be at home; Johann Jochen had to get the glass coach ready, they are going to the ball, in the city, this evening; then we can talk it over."

"Yes," cried the great rough woman, "yes, talk and talk! You drink your heads full of brandy, and we are starving. If *you* don't get rid of these people, *we* shall do it, for we can do as other women have done, all over the country; thorn-bushes and nettle-stalks are not far to seek." With that, she went out of the door, and the company dispersed.

"Bernhard," said Ruhrdanz's wife to him, "the matter may turn out badly."

"So I say, mother, and you are quite right; but if the business is only conducted with regularity, the grand-duke can have nothing against it. The only trouble is that we have no proper papers to show; but if he should have to show *his* papers, fine papers they would be."

Ruhrdanz was right; as for the grand-duke, I don't know about that; but he was right about the glass coach, and Pomuchelskopp's journey to the ball; for towards evening the Herr Proprietor sat in the coach, in his blue dress-coat, and his brave, old Häuning sat by him, looking, in her yellow-brown silk, like one of her own cookies, with all sorts of scalloped flourishes, though the soapy flavor was lacking; she was as dry and tough as a leather strap, and her bones clattered over the rough roads, like a bunch of hazelnuts, hung in the chimney-corner. Opposite sat the two fair daughters, sumptuously arrayed; but greatly vexed, because their father positively insisted upon taking them to *this* ball, a *burgher* ball. To punish him for it, they made no effort to amuse him, and talked of the burghers as *canaille*, and also wrought vengeance upon his shins, by the way, by means of the new hoops in their crinoline, which the wheelwright had put in freshly, that morning, of stout hazel stock. Gustaving sat by the coachman, Johann Jochen, on the box.

I cannot think of dancing, this evening, with my pretty readers, at the fraternity ball, I am too old, and besides, it is only three days since Rudolph's wedding, where I did my utmost. I will merely go as a spectator, and enjoy the pleasant summer evening, on the bench before Grammelin's door; I can look into the hall for a few moments, later in the evening, and drink a glass of punch, and fraternize a little, like the rest.

There were great doings at Grammelin's. All the grandees of Rahnstadt were there, the burghers, head and tail and neck and crop, a few proprietors, Pomuchelskopp at the head, a few noblemen and their sons,—their wives were not there, they were all troubled with corns that afternoon, and the daughters were absent from home,—the *pächters* in the neighborhood, and the young country people came in crowds. Very few of our friends were to be seen, for it was church-going with Jochen Nüssler's family, and the Frau Pastorin and Habermann and Louise had gone out there, and Rector Baldrian and Kurz, with their wives and Bräsig, had also gone, but had returned in time to go to the ball. Kurz did not go, however, for he had been so provoked over Jochen's stout relations, that his wife put him to bed, which was a good thing, not only for himself, but for Herr Süßmann and the ball, for the young Herr could manage his affairs as dance-director without disturbance. He had got himself a new pair of trousers, and had put so much lard on his hair, that there was plenty to spare to grease his joints with. The little assessor went with her parents, and Fritz Triddelsitz, who was aware that she was coming, appeared as a proprietor of the highest rank, connected with the nobility. The little pupil, whose groschens were all gone, and who had discovered that Bräsig's niece would not be there, sat just across the street from Grammelin's, before a forlorn old piano, which he belabored, while he sung:

"Mich fliehen alle Freuden, ich sterb vor Ungeduld,"

and so forth, only he mispronounced, in his distress, and said:

"Mich freuen alle Fliegen!"

Rector Baldrian came, with his wife, and Bräsig with Schultz the carpenter, and Slusuhr and David. David had on two gold rings more than usual, which had been given him in pawn, and chewed cinnamon bark, to counteract the odor of the produce business.

And when they were all there, and they were ready to begin, David Berger played the "Mamsell jäs"—as the dyer Meinswegens called the thing,—and Herr Süßmann sang out, quite loud:

"Allons enfant de la partie!"

At first, all seemed very good-natured, but, as a whole, there wasn't much fraternity. On one side it was all right, the young gentlemen among the grandees, and those from the country, were very brotherly towards the pretty little burghers' daughters; but the young ladies from the country, and the grandees' daughters, were positively determined not to fraternize with the burghers' sons, and the first open quarrel began with Malchen Pomuchelskopp. The shoemaker, the wit of the Reformverein, who was a burgher's son in Rahnstadt, asked her to dance, and she thanked him, but she was engaged; and then she sat there, and waited for Fritz Triddelsitz or Herr Süßmann, or some other helping angel, whom providence might send to dance the next hop waltz with her. But there were no angels of the kind ready, and she remained sitting. The rogue of a shoemaker cracked his jokes over it, and at last said, quite aloud, that if the distinguished ladies would not dance with them, they ought not to let the distinguished gentlemen dance with their women-folks, for they had not come there to look at each other. And then the storm broke upon the poor, pretty, innocent, little burghers' daughters, and their brothers and lovers attacked them: "Fika, don't you dance any more with that long-legged apothecary's son!" and "Dürt, wait, I shall tell mother!" and "Stine, another dance with the advocate, and we are parted!" So it went through the hall, and at last it came to Father Pomuchelskopp's ears, how the trouble originated,

and it disturbed him so much that he went to Malchen, and represented to her in the most pathetic terms the mischief she had done. The shoemaker, he said, was a very worthy young man, he was counted equal to any ten in the Reformverein, on account of his terrible wit, and it must be made up, and in spite of all her opposition Father Pomuchelskopp took his educated daughter upon his arm, and led her through the hall to the shoemaker, and said it was a great mistake, his daughter would consider it a special honor to dance with such a distinguished member of the Reformverein. And, behold! the shoemaker and Malchen were dancing together!

Father Pomuchel had now, so to speak, sacrificed his first born upon the altar of fraternity, but it did not avail much, the discordant elements would not harmonize. Uncle Bräsigt was doing his utmost, on the other side, he puffed about in his brown dress-coat, introduced Herr von So and So to the wife of Thiel the joiner, and compelled himself to walk arm-in-arm, about the hall, with his worst enemy in the Reformverein, the tailor Wimmersdorf, and at last, before everybody, gave the wife of Johann Meinswegens, the dyer, a couple of fraternity kisses on her red face; but it was a hopeless task, what could one man accomplish, though with the best will in the world? "Herr Schultz," he said, at last, quite worn out with his labors, "when it comes to the eating and drinking, I hope we may be a little more brotherly; the dancing only seems to bring us farther apart."

But even the eating and drinking did not help the matter; the people of rank sat at one end of the table, the burghers at the other; at one end they drank champagne, at the other a frightful tippel, which Grammelin sold, with the greatest impudence, as fine red wine, at twelve shillings the bottle. The shoemaker, indeed, was invited by Pomuchelskopp to be his guest at table, he sat by Malchen, and Father Pomuchel filled his glass assiduously; the dyer, Meinswegens, had sat down with his wife between two proprietors, and ordered "Panschamber," for he had filled his pocket with four-groschen pieces; but when he went to pay he became aware that he had made a mistake, in the twilight, for he brought out a handful of dyer's tickets. Bräsigt had seated himself between a couple of the dearest little burghers' daughters, whom he treated in such a fatherly way that the Frau Pastorin, if she had seen it, would not have given him a good word for a week, and Gottlieb would certainly have preached him a sermon; but what good did it all do? Grammelin's sour wine did not suit well with his champagne, and so at supper they were farther asunder than ever.

"Herr Schultz," said Bräsigt to his old friend, who sat opposite, "now it is time to play our last trump, you speak to Herr Süßmann, I will tell David Berger."

Herr Schultz went round to Herr Süßmann. "Have you your song-books ready?"

"Oh, yes."

"Go ahead, then! Now is the time!"

Herr Süßmann distributed the songbooks, while Bräsigt went up to David Berger, and inquired:

"Herr Berger, do you know that air of Schiller's:

"Schwester mit das Leinwand nieder,
Bruder in das Ordensband?"

"Yes, indeed," said David.

"Well, go ahead, then! Begin!" And suddenly resounded through the hall:

"Freude, schöner Gutter funken,"

but fewer and fewer voices joined the chorus, weaker and weaker grew the song, till, at last, old Uncle Bräsigt stood there, with the book before his nose, and the tears running down his cheeks, and sung:

"Seid umschlungen Millionen,
Untergang der Lügenbrut!"

That was too strong, they couldn't stand that. "Lying brood!" No, that was too much; they all lied, to be sure, but only when it was necessary. The company rose from table, very much out of humor. Bräsigt sat down in a corner and began to grumble, he was vexed to his inmost heart; the young people began to dance again, and David and Slusuhr sat in an adjoining room, drinking champagne, and cracking their jokes over Uncle Bräsigt.

"Herr Inspector," said the carpenter Schultz to Bräsigt, after a while, "there are some people sitting in No. 3, and the notary and David are poking fun at you, because you bring your politics into everything, and the notary said, if the French should get no king after Louis Philippe, then you might become King of France; you had nothing to do, and might like the situation."

"Did he say that?" asked Uncle Bräsigt, rising from the corner, with great energy.

"Yes, he said that, and the others laughed at it."

"And he is sitting in Grammelin's No. 3?"

"Yes, he is sitting there."

"Come with me, Herr Schultz."

Bräsigt was angry, as I have said, he was exceedingly angry; the fine fraternity *fête*, from which he had hoped so much for mankind, was hopelessly ruined; he felt like the patriarch Abraham, when he offered up his darling child, he would have nothing more to do with it, he would go home; then providence sent him this scapegoat, upon whom he could express his anger, and so much the better, since he was the friend and tool of Pomuchelskopp.

"Come along, Herr Schultz," said he, crossing the hall with great strides to the dressing room, where he had left his hat and buckthorn walking-stick. The hat he left there, but the stick he took with him to No. 3.

There were many guests sitting here, over their bottles, and laughing at the jokes of the Herr Notary. All at once a great silence fell upon the merry company, as they saw a face among them which frightened them out of their laughter. That was Bräsigt's, which looked, in a very singular way, first at his buckthorn stick, and then at the notary, so that the company, with a suspicion of what might possibly happen, hastened to withdraw from the table.

"What rascal wanted to make me King of France?" cried Bräsigt, in such a voice that the plastering fell from the ceiling, and his stick seemed like a live thing in his hand: "I will not be made King of France!"--whack! came the buckthorn, between the notary's shoulder-blades. "Oh Lord!"--"I will not be made King of France!" and a second time the buckthorn did its work, and Uncle Bräsigt and his stick alternated in the assurance that they had no ambition for the French crown. Candlesticks, lamps and bottles entered actively into the battle-royal, and David got under the table, that is to say, he crept there for refuge. The notary shrieked for help, but no one stood by him; only when the affair was over, David plucked up courage, under the table, to inquire: "Begging your pardon, Herr Inspector, is this what you call fraternity?"

"Yes!" cried Bräsigt, "you miserable scamp! Between a man and a dog, blows are the best fraternity."

"Out! out!" said Herr Schultz and he grappled David, under the table, and dragged him to light.

"Gentlemen," cried Slusuhr, "you are witnesses how I have been treated, I shall enter a complaint."

"I have seen nothing," said one.

"I know nothing about it," said another.

"I was looking out of the window," said a third, although it was pitch dark.

"Herr Schultz," said Bräsigt, "you are my witness that I have treated the Herr Notary Slusuhr with the greatest forbearance," and with that, he left the room, got his hat, and went home.

The blows which Slusuhr had received in No. 3 had echoed by this time through the hall, and in no way tended to harmonize the existing discords. The two Herrs von So and So with their sons had taken leave long before, and some of the grandees had also quietly retreated. The little assessor had her hat on, and her cloak wrapped around her, though Fritz Triddelsitz was almost on his knees before her, begging for one more, just *one* more little Schottische.

Pomuchelskopp also prepared for departure; he had an indefinite, but just, premonition that something was going to happen to him that evening, so he went to his family and told them it was time they were starting for home. His family afforded a sad picture of the whole entertainment, for they were quite divided. Gustaving was still hopping about, contentedly, with tailor Wimmersdorf's youngest daughter, Salchen was standing a little aside with Herr Süßmann, listening attentively while he related how merely by way of joke he had taken the stupid situation at Kurz's shop, but he should remain there no longer than till he could decide which of the places to accept, which were offered to him in Hamburg, Lübeck or Stettin, or possibly he might conclude to establish himself in Rostock, for he had a rich uncle there, who was constantly urging him to get married and come and live with him. Malchen sat in a sofa-corner, crying with vexation over her shoemaker. Klücking, our brave old Häuning, sat there stiff as a stake; however agitated by the events of the evening she may have been, she gave no sign, she remained steadfast, even the shoemaker had not moved her out of her composure, and when Muchel proposed that they should go she merely said, in a very friendly way, "Pöking, will you not invite your friend, the shoemaker, to ride with us? You might also invite one of your noble acquaintances. And then, if you ask weaver Ruhrdanz, and Willgans, and your other brothers of the Reformverein, the company will be complete."

And with this matrimonial sting in his great fraternal heart, our friend set off on his homeward journey.

CHAPTER XLIII.

One should never be confident beforehand how a matter will turn out; especially, one should never make free with the devil, for he is apt to come when he is called, and often appears uninvited. The guests whom Häuning advised Pomuchelskopp to invite, were standing before the gate of Gurlitz waiting for their host and hostess. All the villagers and Pomuchelskopp's day-laborers stood there together, as the summer morning began to dawn, before the court-yard gate, to give their master a reception.

"Children," said Ruhrdanz, "what must be, must, but do everything with regularity!"

"Out with your regularity!" cried Willgans. "Has he treated us with regularity?"

"No matter," said Ruhrdanz, "we cannot get our rights out of hand. That is where you are mistaken. When we go to the grand-duke about it afterwards, and that is no more than proper, and he asks, 'Willgans, what did you do?' and you tell him, 'Why, Herr, we first gave the old man and his wife a good beating, and then we took them over the boundary,' how will that sound? What will the man say to that?"

"Yes," said old Brinkmann, "Ruhrdanz is right? If we take him over the boundary then we are rid of him, and there is no need of our doing anything more."

This was finally resolved upon. Behind the men stood the women and children, and the great, strong woman of yesterday morning was there also, and she said, "Now we have things, so far, as we want them. If you don't do it though, and get rid of the fellow and his wife, I will beat my man till he cries for mercy."

"Yes, gossip," said another woman, "we must, *we must!* I went to the pastor's yesterday,--well, the Frau Pastorin gave me something, and he preached patience. What? Patience? Has hunger patience?"

"Johann Schmidt," said a tall, slender girl, "just run up the hill, and see if they are coming. Fika, how will our two mamsells look, when they are sent packing?"

"Shall we tell the pastor about the matter?" inquired the day-laborer Zorndt of Brinkmann. "It might be well that he should know about it."

"I don't think there is any use in it, Zorndt, he knows nothing about business. If the old pastor were only alive!"

"They are coming!" cried Johann Schmidt, running back.

"Come, who is to speak?" said Willgans, "I will hold the horses."

"Eh, Ruhrdanz," went from mouth to mouth.

"Well, if you are contented, why should not I speak?" said Ruhrdanz. Then all was quiet.

The coachman, Johann Jochen, drove up, and was going to turn in at the gate; then Willgans seized the two leaders by the heads, and turned them aside a little, saying, "Johann Jochen, stop here for a moment."

Pomuchelskopp looked out of the carriage, and saw the whole village assembled: "What does this mean?"

Ruhrdanz, and the rest of the company, stood at the door of the carriage, and he said, "Herr, we have made up our minds that we will not consider you our master any longer, for you have not treated us as a master ought, and no more have you other people before us, for you wear a ring around your neck, and we cannot suffer a master with a ring around his neck."

"You robbers! You rascals!" cried Pomuchelskopp, as he became aware of the meaning of this performance. "What do you want? Will you lay hands on me and mine?"

"No, we will not do that," said old Brinkmann, "we will only take you over the boundary."

"Johann Jochen!" cried Pomuchelskopp, "drive on! Cut them with your whip!"

"Johann Jochen," said Willgans, "so sure as you touch the whip, I will knock you off the horse. Turn about! So! to the right!" and carriage and horses were headed towards Rahnstadt. Salchen and Malchen were screeching at the top of their voices, Gustaving had sprung down from the box, and placed himself between his father and the laborers, to keep them off; all was in confusion, only our brave old Häuning sat stiff and stark, and said not a word.

"What do you want of me? You pack of robbers!" exclaimed Pomuchelskopp.

"We are not that," cried Schmidt, "we would not take a pin-head from you, and Gustaving can stay here and manage, and tell us what to do."

"But the wife, and the two girls, we cannot stand any longer," said Kapphingst, "they must go too."

"Hush, children!" said Ruhrdanz, "everything with regularity. Merely to take them over the boundary amounts to nothing; we must give them up to our magistrate, the Rahnstadt burgomeister. That is the right thing to do."

"Ruhrdanz is right," said the others, "and Gustaving, you go quietly home, nobody will hurt you. And you, Johann Jochen, just drive at a steady pace," and they placed themselves, some on one side, some on the other, and the procession started, at a regular parade step. Pomuchelskopp had resigned himself, but he was not resigned to his destiny; he sat wringing his hands and lamenting to himself: "Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! what will become of me? what will they do?" and then, putting his head out of the door, "Good people, I have always been a kind master to you."

"You have been a regular skinner!" cried a voice from the crowd.

Salchen and Malchen wept, Häuning sat there, stiff as a thermometer tube, but if the day-laborers had understood that sort of thermometer, they would have seen that the mercury was far above boiling point, and Willgans, who was close by the door, would have been more careful, for suddenly, without saying a word, she made a grab at him, and got fast hold of his curly, chestnut hair, and pulled it to her heart's content, and her eyes gleamed and sparkled out of the dusky carriage, as if she had been transformed into an owl, and had taken him for a young hare.

"Thunder and lightning! Look at the carrion!" cried Willgans. "Strike at her, Düsing! See the devil! Strike her on the knuckles! ye, ya! ye, ya!"

Before Düsing could rescue him, Häuning banged his nose, a couple of times, against the door-handle, and the blood ran in streams.

"Thunder and lightning! I say! Such devilry is not to be put up with! Hold on, I will----"

"Hold!" cried Ruhrdanz, "you must not blame her for that, it is only her natural wickedness; you must let it go for this time; but you can tell the grand-duke about it and show him your nose, if you like, that he may see how they have treated you."

Häuning said nothing, and the procession moved on; at the boundary the laborers sent home their wives and children, who had followed so far, behind the carriage, and about seven o'clock they marched, slowly and solemnly, into Rahnstadt.

Uncle Bräsig lay by the window, smoking his pipe, and thinking over his heroic deeds of the previous evening. Kurz, although he had not attended the fraternity ball, was fearfully cross, and went scolding about his shop: "The stupid dunce! the harlequin! Only wait! Only come home!" and, although he intended to be in such different circumstances afterwards, he must at length come home, that is to say, Herr Süßmann. Herr Süßmann danced over the threshold. Kurz braced his two hands against the counter, and looked at him, as if he would spring over the counter in his wrath, and meet Herr Süßmann in the hall; he let him, however, come into the shop first.

"Morning, principal, principälchen, principälchen!" cried Herr Süßmann, staggering about the shop, and finally seating himself on the rim of a herring cask, with his hat cocked on one side: "Morning, Kurzchen, Schurzchen, Wurzchen----" but he had not time to finish his variations, Kurz had his hands in his hair, knocked off his hat into the herring-cask, and began dragging him about the shop by his ambrosial locks. Herr Süßmann groped blindly about him for something to lay hold of, and caught at the stop-cock of the oil-cask; the cock came out, and the oil poured out in a stream.

"Good heavens!" cried Kurz, "my oil! my oil!" and he let go of Herr Süßmann, and stuck his right fore-finger into the hole. Herr Süßmann held up the cock in triumph, and, as it often happens that crazy or intoxicated people do uncommonly clever things, the bright idea occurred to Herr Süßmann that he would do his work thoroughly. So he pulled out the cock from the vinegar barrel.

"Oh, good gracious! my vinegar!" cried Kurz, and he stuck his left fore-finger into the vinegar barrel. And as he was now fairly caught, and stooping over, the opportunity was too tempting for

Herr Süssmann to neglect. "Principälchen! Kurzchen!"--whack! "Leben sie wohl, Tuten dreherchen!"--whack, whack! "Johannageht, und nimmer kehrt sie wieder!"--whack, whack, whack! Then he fished his hat out of the herring-cask, put it on, as much askew as possible, laid the two cocks on the counter, about twenty feet from Kurz, and danced, laughing, out of the door.

"Help!" screamed Kurz, "help! he-l-p!" But his people were not in the house, and his good old advocate was in the back garden, cutting asparagus, and the only one who heard him was Uncle Bräsig. "Karl," said he, "it seems to me, as if Kurz were yelling. I will go over, and see if anything has happened."

"He-l-p!" cried Kurz.

"Preserve us!" said Bräsig, "what an uproar you are making here, at seven o'clock in the morning!"

"Infamous rascal!"

"How? Is that the way you greet me?"

"Good-for-nothing scamp!"

"You are a rude fellow!"

"Give me those cocks, that lie on the counter!"

"Get your dirty cocks yourself, you donkey, you!"

"I cannot, the oil and the vinegar will run out, and I don't mean you, I mean Süssmann."

"That is another thing," said Bräsig, perching himself on the counter, and swinging his legs, "what is the matter with you?"

Kurz related how he had got into this situation.

"You strike me very comically, Kurz, but let this be a warning to you; a man is always punished in the members in which he has sinned."

"I beg you----"

"Quiet, Kurz! You have always sinned in oil and vinegar, since you have emptied the quart measure with a jerk, so that often two or three spoonfuls would be left in it. Will you always give right measure hereafter? Will you never look at the cards again, when we are playing Boston?"

"Good heavens! yes, yes!"

"Well, then, I will release you," and with that he brought the cocks.

Hardly was Kurz free when he darted out of the door, as if he expected to find Herr Süssmann waiting for him outside. Bräsig followed, and they came out just as Pomuchelskopp and his escort were passing.

"Preserve us! What is this? Ruhrdanz, what does this mean?"

"Don't take it ill, Herr Inspector, we have turned out our Herr."

Bräsig shook his head: "You have done a very foolish thing!" and he fell into the procession, and many people who were in the street followed to the burgomeister's house. Here the laborers took out the horses, and Ruhrdanz and Willgans and Brinkmann, and several others went in to see the burgomeister.

"Well, Herr," said Ruhrdanz, "we have got him here."

"Whom?"

"Eh, our Herr Pomuchelskopp."

"What? What is that?"

"Oh, nothing, only that we won't have him for our Herr any longer."

"Good heavens, people, what have you done."

"Nothing but what is right, Herr Burgomeister."

"Have you laid hands on your master?"

"Not a finger; but the old woman there, she laid hands on Willgans, for she----"

But the burgomeister had gone out of the room, and stood by the carriage, and begged the

company to get out; they did so, and he brought the family into his living room.

"Oh, what will become of us! what will become of us!" moaned Pomuchel. "Herr Burgomeister, you know, I have always been a good master to my people."

"Kopp, for shame!" interposed Häuning.

"No," said the burgomeister, paying no attention to Häuning, and looking the Herr Proprietor firmly in the eye, "you have not been a good master. You know I have often remonstrated with you, on this account, and you know that, because of your behavior to your people, I have declined to act as your magistrate. I have nothing to do with the business, and if I were to concern myself in it, merely as a private citizen, I should not take your side, but that of your poor, oppressed people. You must excuse me, therefore----"

"But you can at least give me your advice," begged Pomuchelskopp. "What shall I do?"

"You cannot go back to Gurlitz, at least not at present, it might give occasion for violent deeds; you must wait the result, here. But wait a moment; I will speak to the people again."

Well, what good could that do? The people were firmly resolved in the matter; the bad fellows among them had yielded to the decision of the older, more peaceable laborers and villagers, and now they were all so fully persuaded that they were in the right, that they were not to be moved from their purpose.

"No, Herr," said Ruhrdanz, "we will never take him back; that is settled."

"You are guilty of a great offence, and it may go hard with you."

"Yes, that may be; but if you talk of offences, Herr Pomuchelskopp has been guilty of worse offences against us."

"Those foolish people at the Reformverein, have filled your heads with their silly ideas."

"Don't take it ill, Herr Burgomeister; that is what everybody says, but it isn't true. What? Our Herr Pomuchelskopp belongs to the Reformverein, and has made a speech there; but, Herr, he told nothing but lies, and we know better."

"Well, what do you intend to do?"

"Herr Gustaving is there, and when he tells us to do this or that, we shall do it; but Willgans and I will go to the grand-duke, and give him an account of the matter, and that is what I wanted to ask you, if you would give us some papers to take with us."

"What do you want with papers?"

"Well, Herr Burgomeister, don't take it ill, there is no harm in it. You see, I went to the old railroad, without any papers, and they turned me out, of course; but the grand-duke is no railroad, and he would not act so inconsiderately, and if we have no papers to show you can show your nose, Willgans, how the old woman has treated you, and I will show my honest hands, which have never been in any unjust business."

Upon that, the old man went out, and the laborers crowded around him, and felt in their pockets, and produced the few shillings and groschens they had by them: "There, now go! The shortest road to Schwerin!" and "Neighbor, don't forget Kapphingst's girl!" and "Neighbor, if he asks what we have lived on, you may say honestly we have stolen nothing from our master; but we have helped ourselves to a few of Frau Nüssler's potatoes, because she never minded it."

The two set out for Schwerin, the other day-laborers went home; Johann Jochen drove the empty carriage behind them; the people, who had assembled in quite a crowd before the burgomeister's door,--for the business had spread through the town like wildfire,--dispersed to their homes, and Uncle Bräsig said to Habermann, "Karl, he is getting his deserts. I went in a moment, not on his account, but for those poor fellows, the laborers; but when he came in, I went away, for I didn't want to see him in his disgrace."

Pomuchelskopp had gone to Grammelin's, with his dear family, and he sat now, in misery and distress, by the bedside of the Herr Notary; for Slusuhr had gone directly to bed, after his beating, in order that the business might appear to be very serious.

"I have sent for the doctor, and shall have myself examined, so that I can catch the inspector nicely. Strump is not at home, but the other one will be here directly."

"Ah, how fortunate you are!" said Pomuchel.

"I should not have supposed," said the Herr Notary, turning on his other side, "that it was a particular piece of good fortune to get a jacket full of blows from a buckthorn staff, as thick as your thumb."

"You can avenge yourself, but I,--poor man that I am,--what can I do?"

"You can get a detachment of soldiers, and then you can punish the rascals, within an inch of their lives, and if you are too much of a milksop to do it yourself, employ your wife, she will do it finely."

"God bless you! no! no! I have enough on my hands! I can do nothing about Pumpelhagen yet, and I dare not go back to Gurlitz, they will tear my house down over my head. No, no! I shall sell, I shall sell!"

"Shall I tell you some news?" said David, who came into the room, in time to hear the last words, "you are right, sell; I will look out for you, I know----"

"Infamous Jew rascal!" said Slusuhr, shifting his position again,--"aw! thunder!--do you think we cannot manage that for ourselves? Yes, Herr Pomuchelskopp, I would sell, for if they don't tear your house down they might get at the barns, and the potato middens."

"Well, Herr Notary, what will you do?" asked David. "You have some money; you might manage a farm-house, or a mill, but for an estate like that? You must come to my father."

"Your father? When he hears that it is for Pomuchelskopp, he will say: 'Cash down!' We three are not in very high credit with him."

"If I tell him----" began David, but just then the doctor came in, the father of the little assessor.

"Good morning! You sent for me?" turning to Slusuhr, "you wanted to see me?"

"Ah, Herr Doctor, you were at the ball last night. Oh, my bruises! You must surely have heard--"

"He got a beating," said David, "I am a witness he was dreadfully abused."

"Will you hold your cursed tongue?" cried Slusuhr. "Herr Doctor, I wish you would examine me medically; I fear I shall never recover the use of my limbs."

Without more words, the doctor went up to the patient, and removed the shirt from his shoulders, and there was much to be read there which is not usually seen on a pair of shoulders, and the inscription was written in red ink, in the largest capitals. Pomuchelskopp sat there, with folded hands, in the deepest melancholy, but when he saw the inscription on the notary's back, a very comfortable expression dawned in his face, and David sprung up, exclaiming, "Good heavens! How he looks! Herr Doctor, I will let you examine me too; carpenter Schultz dragged me out from under the table, and tore my new dress-coat."

"Send for the tailor!" said the doctor quietly, and turning to the notary: "I will leave a certificate for you, with Grammelin. Good morning, gentlemen!"

Then he went down-stairs, and after a little while, Grammelin's waiting-maid brought up the paper, which the doctor had left for the Herr Notary. Slusuhr opened it, and read:

"As in duty bound, I hereby testify that the Herr Notary Slusuhr has received a good, sound flogging, as is clearly evident from the suggillations upon his back. It has done him no harm, however. SO AND SO, DR. MED."

"Has the fellow the insolence to say that?" screamed Slusuhr. "It has done him no harm? Well, just wait, we will talk about that, by and by."

"Good heavens!" cried David, "isn't it better that it has done you no harm, than if had hurt you?"

"You are an idiot! But what am I lying here for?" said Slusuhr. "You will excuse me, I must go out, I must thank the Herr Inspector for his flogging--with a little writ."

"Don't forget me, my dear friend," said Pomuchel. "You must write for me to Pumpelhagen to-day."

"Rely upon me. I feel spiteful enough, to-day, to get out writs against the whole world. Haven't you something to write, David?"

"If I have anything to write, I can write it, if I have nothing to write, I shall write nothing," said David, and he went out with Pomuchelskopp.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Gloomy, heavy, leaden hours oppressed the young Frau von Rambow, after Pomuchelskopp's visit; slowly, step by step, they passed over her, and in their footprints new cares and anxieties sprang up; with firm, energetic hands, she pulled up these weeds from her path; but in time the most active hand grows weary, and the strongest heart longs for rest.

Her husband had not returned on the day appointed; instead there had come a messenger, with a letter, bearing Slusuhr's seal, who said he had orders to wait, until he could give the letter into the hands of the Herr von Rambow himself. What that signified, she could easily understand. She sat, in the twilight, in her room, by her child; her hands were folded in her lap, and she looked out, in the hazy summer evening, at the dark clouds gathering over the sky.

The day had been sultry, and in such weather, the blood flows heavily through the veins, not leaping and throbbing, like a living spring of clear water, but dragging; sleepily along, like the black water in a ditch, and even as Nature sighs and pants for the storm, which shall give her fresh life, so the heart longs and sighs, in impatience, for the whirlwind and thunderbolt of destiny, which may save it from such wearing torture,—come what may, deliver us from this fearful suspense. This was Frida's mood, so she longed and sighed for a sturdy thunder-bolt which might drive away the foul air in which she was stifling, and make everything clear around her; and she did not sigh in vain.

Korlin Kegel came in, bringing the post-bag, and stood there as if she wanted to do something, then unlocked the bag, and laid a letter on the table before her mistress, and again stood still.

"Gracious Frau, shall I light the lamps?"

"No, let them be."

Korlin did not go, she remained standing:

"Gracious Frau, you have forbidden us to come telling tales, but----"

"What is it?" asked Frida, rousing herself from her thoughts.

"Ah, gracious Frau, the Gurlitz people have driven away Herr Pomuchelskopp, and his wife and his two daughters."

"Have they done that?" cried Frida.

"Yes, and now all our day-laborers are standing outside, and want to speak to you."

"Are they going to drive us away?" asked Frida, rising, very quietly and proudly, from her chair.

"No, no! dear, gracious Frau," cried Korlin, throwing herself on the floor, and grasping her about the knees, while the tears started from her eyes, "no, no! There is no talk of that, and my old father says, if any one should propose such a thing, he would beat out his brains with a shovel. They only say there is no use in speaking to the Herr, he breaks up their talk too shortly. They want to speak to you, because they have confidence in you."

"Where is Triddelsitz?"

"Dear heart! he is going round among them, but they won't listen to him, they say they have nothing to do with him, they want to speak to the gracious Frau."

"Come!" said Frida, and went down.

"What do you want, good people?" asked the young Frau, as she stepped outside the door, before which the laborers were assembled. The wheelwright, Fritz Flegel, stepped up, and said:

"Gracious Frau, we have only come to you because we are all agreed,—and we told the Herr so before; but nothing came of it. And the Herr answered us harshly, and we have no real confidence in Herr Triddelsitz, for he is so thoughtless, and doesn't know yet how things should be managed, and we thought you might help us, if you would be so kind. We are not dissatisfied because we want more, we are contented with what we get, and we get what belongs to us;—but never at the right time; and poor people like us cannot stand that."

"Yes," interrupted Päsel, "and last year, the famine year, the rye was all sold, and you see, gracious Frau, some of us get our pay in grain; and I was to have twelve bushels of rye, and live on it, and I got none, and they said we must be patient. Oh, patience! And all the potatoes bad! How can we live?"

"Gracious Frau," said an old white-haired man, "I will say nothing about the means of life, for we have never gone hungry; but for an old man like me to stand, all day long, bent over in the ditch, shoveling water,--and at evening I am too stiff to move, and cannot sleep at night for misery,--it isn't right. We didn't have such doing? when Herr Habermann was here; but now it is all commanding and commanding, and the commanders know nothing about the work."

"Yes, gracious Frau," said the wheelwright, stepping forward again, "and so we wanted to ask you if we couldn't have a regular inspector again, if Herr Habermann will not come, then some other; but one that would treat us kindly, and listen when we have something to say, and not snap us up, and scold us when we haven't deserved it, or knock our children about with sticks, as Herr Triddelsitz used to."

"That shall be put a stop to," cried Frida.

"Yes, gracious Frau, he has broken off that habit; about six months ago I had a very serious talk with him about it, and since then he is much better behaved, and more considerate. And if our gracious Herr would be considerate too, and think of his own profit, he would get a capable inspector, for he himself understands nothing about farming, and then he need not have a whole field of wheat beaten down by the wind, as it was last year, and the people would not talk about him so. And, gracious Frau, people talk a great deal, and they say the Herr must sell the estate, and will sell it to the Herr Pomuchelskopp; but we will never take him for our master."

"No!" cried one and another, "we will never take him." "A fellow who has been driven off by his own laborers!" "We can't put up with him!"

Blow after blow fell the words of the day-laborers upon Frida's heart. The little love and respect which they professed for her husband, the knowledge of their embarrassed situation, which was evident even to the common people, weighed heavily upon her, and it was with extreme difficulty that she controlled herself, and said:

"Be quiet, good people! The Herr must decide all these matters, when he comes home. Go quietly home, now, and don't come up to the house again in such a crowd. I will join in your petition to the Herr, and I think I may safely promise you that there will be a change in the management by St. John's day,--in one way or another," she added with a sigh, and paused a moment, as if to reflect, or perhaps to swallow something that rose in her throat. "Yes, wait until St. John's Day, then there will be a change."

"That is all right then."

"That is good, so far."

"And we are very much obliged to you."

"Well, good-night, gracious Frau!"

So they went off.

Frida returned to her room. It was beginning to thunder and lighten, the wind blew in gusts over the court-yard, driving sand and straw against the window-panes. "Yes," she said, to herself, "it must be decided by St. John's Day, I have not promised too much, there must be a change of some kind. What will it be?" and before her eyes rose the dreary picture which David had so coarsely drawn; she saw herself condemned to live in a rented house in a small town, with her husband and child, with no occupation, and no brighter prospects for the future. She heard the neighborhood gossip; they had seen better days. She saw her husband rising in the morning, going into the town, coming home to dinner, smoking on the sofa in the afternoon, going out again, and going to bed at night. And so on, day after day, with nothing in the world to do. She saw herself burdened with household cares, comfortless, friendless; she saw herself upon her death-bed, and her child standing beside her. Her child; from henceforth a poor, forsaken child! A poor, noble young lady! It is a hard thing to occupy a station in which one must keep up appearances, without the requisite means. A poor young gentleman may fight it through, he can become a soldier; but a poor young lady? And though the Lord should look down from heaven, and endow her with all the loveliness of an angel, and her parents should do for her all of which human love is capable, the world would pass her by, and the young Herrs would say, "She is poor," and the burghers, "She is proud." So Frida saw her child, who lay meanwhile in peaceful child-sleep, undisturbed by the storm and tempest without, or by the storm and tempest in her mother's breast.

Korlin Kegel brought a light, and the young Frau reached after the letter which lay upon the table, as a person will do, when he wishes to prevent another from noticing that he is deeply moved. She looked at the address, it was to herself, from her sister-in-law, Albertine; she tore open the envelope, and another letter fell into her hand, addressed to her husband.

"Put this letter on your master's writing-table," she said to the girl. Korlin went.

Her husband's sisters had often written to her, and their letters were generally such as ladies write to drive away ennui. Frida opened the letter; but ah! this was no letter born of ennui. Albertine wrote:--

"DEAR SISTER:

"I do not know that I am doing right. Bertha advises me to it, and Fidelia has twice taken away the paper from under my pen, she thinks it will only worry our dear brother Axel. But--I don't know, I cannot help myself,--necessity really compels us. We have already written twice to Axel, without getting an answer; he may be absent from home a good deal, in these hard times, and also very much occupied,--for these unhappy political troubles are beginning to reach us, as we have evidence enough in Schwerin,--and so I believe I am doing right in turning to you; you will give us an answer. You know that Axel borrowed the capital which our dear father left us, to invest it on the estate at Pumpelhagen; he promised us five percent, interest, instead of four and a half, which we got before,--it was not necessary, for we did well enough,--but he promised us the interest punctually, every quarter, and it is three quarters since he has sent us any. Dear Frida, we should certainly have said nothing about it, if we were not in the greatest embarrassment. Added to this, our brother-in-law Breitenburg has been here, who knew nothing of Axel's having borrowed from us, and when he found it out, he spoke of Axel in the most dreadful way, and declared that we were three geese. He asked to see our security by mortgage, which we could not show him, because Axel has always delayed sending it; and then he said, right to our faces, we should never see our money again; it was notorious that Axel was so deeply in debt, through his bad management, that Pumpelhagen would be sold over his head. We know, to be sure, how to make allowance for our brother-in-law's speeches, for he was always unfriendly to our dear Axel,--and how could it be possible? Pumpelhagen sold? In our family for hundreds of years! The Grand-Duke would not allow it, and we told him as much,--Fidelia in her lively way,--then he took his hat and stick, and said in his coarse way, 'Your brother Axel was always a fool, and now he has become a scoundrel,' whereupon Fidelia sprang up, and showed him the door. It was a frightful scene, and I never would have written you about it, if I had not a secret anxiety lest Axel and Breitenberg should encounter each other, and, like the brothers-in-law, Dannenberg and Malzahn, out of an exaggerated sense of honor, shoot each other, across a pocket-handkerchief. Caution Axel to avoid such a meeting, and, if it is possible, take care that he sends us our interest.

"We think of visiting you this summer; we have taken a childish pleasure in the thought of seeing you and the dear old place again, where we played as children, and dreamed as maidens, and--alas!--where we parted from our dear father. Yes, Frida, I rejoice in thinking of it all, and Bertha and Fidelia with me, for we live only in recollection; the present is dreary and comfortless. Only now and then some friend of our father's comes in, and tells us what is passing in the world, and it is really touching for Bertha and me to see how our little Fidelia, with her natural vivacity, will throw aside her sewing and interest herself in everything. She is very much interested in the court. Now, farewell, dear Frida, pardon my gossip, and give the enclosed letter to Axel. I have written him very earnestly and trustingly; but have spared him, as much as possible, anything disagreeable. We shall see you in August.

"Yours,

"ALBERTINE VON RAMBOW.

"SCHWERIN, June 11, 1848."

Frida read the letter, but she did not read it through; when she came to the place, "Your brother Axel was always a fool, and now he has become a scoundrel," she threw the letter on the floor, and wrung her hands, then sprang to her feet, and walked up and down the room, crying, "That he is! that he is!" Her child lay sleeping before her; she threw herself down in the chair, and took up the letter again, and read over the terrible words, and the dark picture she had been making to herself of her child's future was gone like a shadow, and before her eyes another shone, in livid colors; on it stood the three sisters, and underneath was written: "Betrayed! betrayed by a brother!" And in the back-ground stood her husband; but, dimly seen, she could not tell what was truth and what was falsehood, and underneath was written: "Scoundrel!" Horrible! horrible! Now all was lost,--doubly lost! For it was not her own loss merely, it was the loss of one whom she had loved, dearer than her own soul. That was fearful! Oh, for help, to remove this glowing brand from the brow she had so often lovingly kissed! But how? Who could help her? Name after name shot through her head, but these names all seemed inscribed on a distant, inaccessible, rocky wall, where she could find no footing. She wrung her hands in distress, and the prospect grew darker and darker, when, all at once, there beamed upon her in her anguish and torment an old, friendly, woman's face. It was Frau Nüssler's face, and she looked just as she had when she had kissed Frida's child.

The young Frau sprang up, exclaiming, "There is a heart! there is a human heart!" It thundered and lightened, and the rain poured in torrents; but the young Frau caught up a shawl, and rushed out into the storm.

"Gracious Frau! For God's sake!" cried Korlin Kegel, "in the rain? in the night?"

"Let me alone!"

"No, that I will not!" said the girl, as she followed her mistress.

"A human heart, a human heart," murmured the poor young Frau to herself; the rain beat in her face,--onward! onward!--she had the shawl in her hand, and never thought of it, her feet slipped in the muddy path, she did not know it, there was a voice in her ears crying ever, "Onward! onward!"

"If you must go, gracious Frau, then come along!" cried Korlin Kegel, taking the shawl and wrapping it about her head and shoulders, and encircling her waist with a strong arm. "Which way?"

"Frau Nüssler," said the young Frau, and murmured again, "a human heart!" And a human heart was beating close beside her, and she never thought of it; nothing keeps hearts asunder like the words, "Command and obey." She had always been good to her people, and had received every kindness from her servants with acknowledgments; but at this moment she did not think of Korlin Kegel, her whole heart was absorbed in the thought that Axel must be saved from shame and dishonor; and the friendly face of Frau Nüssler shone upon her through the rain and the darkness, like the nearest, and the only star. "Thither! thither!"

"Good heavens!" said Frau Nüssler, going to the window, "Jochen, what a storm!"

"Yes, mother, what shall we do about it!"

"Dear heart!" said Frau Nüssler, sitting down again, in her arm-chair, "suppose one were out in it! I should be frightened almost to death."

Frau Nüssler went on knitting, and Jochen smoked, and everything was quiet and comfortable in the room, when Bauschan, under Jochen's chair, uttered a short bark, such as signifies, in canine language: "What is that?" Receiving no answer, he lay still, but all at once he started up, and went with his old stiff legs, to the door, and began to whine vehemently.

"Bauschan!" cried Frau Nüssler, "What ails the old fellow? What do you want!"

"Mother," said Jochen, who knew Bauschan as well as Bauschan knew him, "Somebody is coming." And the door was thrown open, and a pale, female form tottered in and a strong girl supported her, and seated her on Frau Nüssler's divan.

"Dear heart!" cried Frau Nüssler, starting up, and seizing the young Frau's hands, "what is this? What does it mean? Good gracious! wet through and through!"

"Yes, indeed!" said Korlin.

"Jochen, what are you sitting there for? Run and call Mining! Tell Mining to come, and bid Dürt to make camomile tea."

And Jochen also sprang up, and ran out, as fast as he could, and Frau Nüssler took off the young Frau's shawl, and wiped the rain from her face and her fair hair, with her handkerchief, and Mining shot into the room like a pistol-ball, and was full of questions; but Frau Nüssler cried, "Mining, there is no time for looking and questioning; bring some of your clothes and linen, quickly, into my bedroom." And when Mining was gone, she herself asked:

"Korlin Kegel, what does this mean?"

"Ah, Madam, I don't know; to be sure, she got a long letter this evening."

Mining returned quickly, and Frau Nüssler and Korlin took the young Frau into the bedroom, and when she was undressed, and had drunk the tea, and lay in Frau Nüssler's bed, her senses returned, for it was mere physical weakness which had overpowered her, and if the first shock, and the dreadful feeling that there was no creature who could help her, had turned her brain a little, here by this friendly face, and this friendly treatment, she was herself again. She sat up in bed, and looked confidingly into Frau Nüssler's eyes: "You told me once, if I were ever in trouble, you would help me."

"And so I will," said Frau Nüssler, quite overcome, and stroking her hands she said "Tell me, what is it?"

"Ah, much!" cried the young Frau, "our laborers are discontented, we are in debt, deeply in debt, they are going to sell the estate----"

"Preserve us!" cried Frau Nüssler, "but there is time enough for that!"

"I could have borne that," said the young Frau, "but another trouble has driven me to you, and I cannot and dare not tell you----"

"Don't speak of it, then, gracious Frau. But this isn't business for women; we ought to have a man's counsel, and if you feel able, we might drive over to see my brother Karl, at Rahnstadt."

"Ah, I could go; but how should I look the man in the face, whom----"

"That is where you are mistaken, gracious Frau, you don't know him. Jochen!" she cried at the door, "let Krischan harness up, but let him make haste, and do you make haste, too! Mining!" she cried at another door, "bring your new Sunday mantle and hat, and a shawl; we are going out."

All was quickly ready, and as she got into the carriage, Frau Nüssler said to Krischan:

"Krischan, you know I don't like fast driving; but drive fast to-night! We must be in Rahnstadt in half an hour. Else they will have gone to bed," she added to the young Frau.

The little assessor had just gone home from the Frau Pastorin's, Habermann and Bräsig had said "Good-night!" and gone up-stairs, and Bräsig opened the window and looked out, to observe the weather: "Karl," said he, "what a fragrance there is after the storm! The whole air is full of atmosphere." Just then a carriage stopped at the Frau Pastorin's, and the light from the house shone directly upon it. "Preserve us!" cried Bräsig. "Karl, there are your sister and Mining, at this time of night!"

"Can any misfortune have happened!" exclaimed Habermann, snatching the candle, and running down to the door.

"Sister," he asked hastily, as Frau Nüssler met him at the foot of the stairs, "why have you come here, in the night? Mining,"--but he stopped abruptly,--"gracious Frau! You here, at this time?"

"Karl, quick!" said Frau Nüssler, "the gracious Frau wishes to speak with you alone. Make haste, before the others come!"

Habermann opened the Frau Pastorin's best room, and led the young Frau in; he followed her, just catching, as he shut the door, the beginning of Bräsig's speech, on the stairs:

"May you keep the nose on your face! What have you come here for? Excuse me, for coming down in my shirt sleeves; Karl very inconsiderately took away the light, and I couldn't find my coat, in the dark. But where is he, and where is Mining?"

Frau Nüssler was not obliged to answer these questions, for Louise came out of the Frau Pastorin's room with a light.

"Bless me! aunt!"

"Louise, come in here, and you, Bräsig, put your coat on, and come down to the Frau Pastorin's room!" They did so, and Frau Pastorin came in also, and the hall was left empty and still, and if one had put his ear to the door on the right, he would have heard the honest, touching confession, which the young Frau, at first with embarrassment and bitter tears, but afterwards with entire confidence and secret hope in her heart, poured out to the old inspector; and if he had listened at the door on the left, he would have heard the most frightful lying from Frau Nüssler, for it had occurred to the good lady that, since they had taken the gracious Frau for Mining, she might as well pass for Mining, till she had finished her business, so that they need not torment her with questions, and so she told them that Mining had a dreadful toothache, and that her brother Karl knew of a remedy, a sort of magnetism, which must be applied between twelve and one o'clock at night, in perfect silence; and Frau Pastorin said she thought that was an unchristian proceeding, and Bräsig remarked, "I never knew that Karl had any taste for magnetism and doctoring." And after a little, Habermann put his head in at the door, and said, "Frau Pastorin, leave the door unlocked, I have an errand out, but I shall be back soon," and before Frau Pastorin could say a word, he was gone, and he went to the street where Moses lived.

CHAPTER XLV.

Moses had become a very old man, but his health was still quite good, only that he was rather lame, and sleep would not come at his call; so he used to sit up late into the night, in his arm-chair, with a cushion under his head, hours after his Blümchen was asleep, and think over his old business affairs; with new ones he would have nothing to do. David lay on the sofa, and talked, or slept, as he felt inclined; but I must do David the justice to say he was not an exception to the general rule of his fellow-believers, he took good care of his old father, and this Jewish fashion is one which many Christians would do well to follow.

This evening they were chatting together.

"David," said the old man, "what did I tell you? You should not entangle yourself with Pomuffelskopp."

"Well? If I have entangled myself, I am well paid for it."

"You have strewed dust on your head, you have eaten filth."

"Are louis-d'ors filth?"

"Pomuffelskopp's are."

"Father, if you were willing, we could do a great business; Pomuffelskopp is going to sell Gurlitz."

"Why?"

"Well, he wants to sell."

"I will tell you, David, because he isn't sure of his day-laborers, that they won't set fire to his barns, or knock him on the head. I will tell you further: I shall not do the business, nor will you; but your friend the notary will do it, he is too shrewd for you, and you are too young."

"Father, I---"

"Hush, David! I will tell you something more; you want to be rich, rich all at once. See, there is a pitcher with a narrow neck, half full of louis-d'ors, you reach in, take up a handful, and cannot get it out, you reach in and take one, and get it out easily, and so on, again and again, till you have them all."

"Have I taken too large a handful?"

"Hush, David, I have not done yet. You see two people, one throws a louis-d'or into clean water, and the other throws a handful into the gutter; you go into the cold water and get the louis-d'or, and it is bright and clean; you go into the gutter and get out the whole handful, and people turn away from you, for you are a stench in their nostrils. Pomuffelskopp has thrown his louis-d'ors into the gutter."

"Well, they don't smell of it."

"If men do not smell them, they smell to heaven; but men do, that is to say, honest men; but they are not offensive to Pomuffelskopp and the notary, their odor is like myrrh and frankincense."

David was going to say something, when there was a rap at the house-door. "What is that?" asked David.

The old man was silent; then there came a louder rap.

"David, go and open the door!"

"What? at this time of night?"

"David, open it! When I was young, and went about with my pack, I often knocked at the door, and the door was opened to me, and now I am old, and shall soon stand before a door and knock, and the God of Abraham will say, 'Let him in, it is a man!' This is a man, also. Open the door, David!"

David obeyed, and Habermann entered.

"Wonder of wonders!" cried the old man, "the inspector!"

"Yes, Moses, you must not take it ill. I could not help it, I must speak with you confidentially about a matter of business."

"Go out, David!"

David made a sour face, but went.

"It isn't of much use," said Moses, "he will stand at the door, and listen."

"Never mind, Moses, I cannot say to you what I would here. Can you not come with me to my house?"

"Habermann, I am an old man."

"Yes, indeed, I know it; but the air is mild, the moon is risen; I will take you by the arm; yes, Moses, I will carry you, if you say so."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Moses, I cannot tell you here; you must hear with your own ears, and see with your own eyes. You can do a good work."

"Habermann, you are an honest man, you have always been a friend to me, you will do what is right. Call David."

Habermann opened the door; to be sure, there he stood:

"Herr Inspector, you must not take my father out tonight, he is an old man."

"David!" cried the old man, "bring me my fur boots!"

"Father! you mustn't go! I will call mother."

"Call mother, if you want to, I shall go."

"What are you going to do?"

"Transact important business."

"Then I will go too."

"David, you are too young; bring me the boots."

There was no help for it, David must bring them and put them on; Habermann took the old man firmly by the arm, Moses took his usual grip in his left coat-pocket, on account of the lacking suspender, and, leaning on Habermann's arm, hobbled slowly over to the Frau Pastorin's house.

As Habermann and old Moses crossed the Frau Pastorin's threshold, they made something of a noise, for Moses stumbled at the door, and came near falling. Frau Pastorin, of course, heard the commotion, as did the whole company with her; "Ah, there comes Habermann with poor Mining," said she, and running to the door put out her head; but when she expected to see Mining, though perhaps with a swelled cheek, there stood old Moses in his dressing-gown, and fur boots, with his old face full of wrinkles, and looking at her with his great black eyes:

"Good evening, Frau Pastorin!"

The little Frau Pastorin started back, almost to the middle of the room; "Preserve us!" cried she, "Habermann is carrying on all sorts of magic and unchristian performances; now he is bringing his old Jew into the house, at midnight; is this on account of Mining's toothache?"

Frau Nüssler felt as if she were standing in her kitchen, dressing fish, and had just taken hold of a great pike, and the creature had snapped at her thumb, and was pressing his teeth deeper and deeper into her flesh, and she must keep still, else he would tear open her whole thumb. What had possessed Frau Nüssler to tell a story, and such a story, which might come out any moment!

"Frau Pastorin," said Bräsig, "as for Moses, that was only an appearance; it could not have been himself, for I was there yesterday, and he told, me expressly, he was not able to go out any longer."

"Ah!" interposed Louise, "father has certainly some important business with the old man, and aunt knows about it, and so she has told us that story about Mining. What, should father be doing with such nonsense?"

The pike pressed his teeth deeper into Frau Nüssler's flesh; but she set her own teeth together, and held out.

"Eh, see!" cried she, "Louise, you are dreadfully clever! Clever children are a blessing for their parents, but"--here she suddenly pulled her thumb from the pike's teeth;--"I wish you had been a good deal more stupid. I will tell you; Mining isn't there, it is the gracious Frau from Pumpelbogen, who has some business to attend to with Karl and Moses."

The little Frau Pastorin was quite vexed, partly because she was not sooner informed, for, in her own house, she was surely the nearest, partly because, after long years, she had, for the first time, discovered that her good neighbour Frau Nüssler was capable of the most horrible, unchristian lying.

"And that story was all a lie then?" she inquired.

"Yes, Frau Pastorin," said Frau Nüssler, looking like one of the condemned.

"Frau Nüssler," said the Frau Pastorin, and it seemed as if an invisible hand had dropped upon her shoulders the little black mantle of her sainted pastor, "lying is a horrible, unchristian vice."

"I know it, Frau Pastorin; I never lied for myself, in my life. When I tell lies, it is only for the benefit of other people. I thought it would be too bad for the poor Frau, who is in such trouble, to be plagued with questions, and since you all took her for Mining I merely said yes, and made up a

little story."

It seemed now as if the invisible hand had endowed the Frau Pastorin with her blessed Pastor's bands also, and she began:

"Dear, you are in a dreadful state, you are lying at this very moment, you think that is right which is wrong, you lie----"

"With your gracious permission, Frau Pastorin," interrupted Zachary Bräsig, taking the side of his old treasure, "I must interrupt your discourse; I am quite of Frau Nüssler's opinion. Do you see, last week the Frau Syndic called to me, and asked me, very kindly, 'Herr Inspector, is it true that the Frau Pastorin once held a rendezvous in a ditch----'"

"Bräsig!" screamed the little Frau Pastorin, and mantle and bands were gone directly.

"Don't be troubled!" said Uncle Bräsig, throwing a glance at Louise, "I can be discreet, upon occasion. 'No,' I said to the Frau Syndic, 'it is an abominable lie.' And so I told a lie for you, Frau Pastorin, and, if I must be roasted in hell for it, I beg that you will look down from heaven sometimes and afford me a little relief."

The Frau Pastorin had something to say, but Habermann looked in at the door: "Oh, Bräsig, come here a moment!"

"Habermann----" began the little Frau.

"Frau Pastorin, I shall come back directly."

Bräsig went.

On the other side of the hall they were as much excited, but in a different way. When Habermann entered the room with Moses, the young Frau rose from the sofa, with a pang in her heart, and Moses stood astonished.

"The gracious Frau von Rambow," said Habermann, and, turning to the lady, "This is my old friend Moses; but he is much fatigued from the walk. You will excuse me, gracious Frau;" and he brought him to the sofa, and laid him down, and took cushions and pillows and put them under his head.

When the old man had recovered a little, Habermann asked, "Moses, do you know the gracious Frau?"

"I have seen her riding past my house, I have also seen her walking near Pumpelhagen; I greeted her, and she kindly returned the old Jew's greeting."

"Moses, do you know that the Herr von Rambow is deeply in debt?"

"I know it."

"You have sued him."

"I know it."

"Moses, you must withdraw your suit; your money is safely invested."

"What do you call safe? I spoke to you about it last spring. In such times as these property is not safe, a man is safer; but Herr von Rambow is not a man whom I can trust, he is a bad manager, he is a fool about horses, he is a----"

"Hold! Remember his wife is here."

"Well, I remember."

Frida was suffering tortures. They were silent for awhile; then Habermann began again:

"If there was a prospect that the estate could be rented----"

"Who would rent in such times?" said Moses.

"Or the Herr von Rambow would agree to engage a regular inspector, and leave the management to him----"

"Habermann," interrupted Moses, "you are an old man, and you are a shrewd man. You know the world, and you know the Herr von Rambow; did you ever know a Herr who said, 'I will be master no longer, I will let another be master?'"

Habermann was rather taken aback by this question, he looked inquiringly at the young Frau, and Frida dropped her eyes, and said:

"I am afraid Herr Moses is right; my husband does not understand it."

Moses looked at her approvingly, and muttered to himself, "She is a clever woman, she is an honest woman."

Habermann was perplexed; he sat in deep thought, and finally said:

"Well, Moses, if the Frau von Rambow, or I, or circumstances, should influence the young Herr to consent to this plan, and if, for the security of the creditors, he should give a promise to resign the management, and engage a competent inspector, would you withdraw your suit?"

"I would withdraw it for a year; well, say two years."

"Well, then you will leave your money in the estate; but there are other debts which must be paid; there are Pomuchelskopp's eight thousand thalers."

"I know it," said Moses to himself.

"Then there the debts owing to tradesmen and mechanics, which have not been paid for a year; and the people's wages must be paid and repairs attended to; it will take about six thousand thalers."

"I know it," said Moses.

"Then there is a note for thirteen thousand thalers, in Schwerin, which must be paid immediately."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Moses, "I did not know a word of it."

"Yes, and then," continued Habermann, without noticing this remark, "we must have two or three thousand thalers over, to carry on the estate properly."

"Let me go! It is a bad business, a very bad business!" cried Moses, making a motion as if he would rise from the sofa.

"Hold on, Moses! I have not done yet."

"Let me go! Let me go! I am an old man, I cannot involve myself in such a business," and with that he rose to his feet, and made preparations to go.

"Hear me first, Moses! I do not ask you to lend the money,—it would be about thirty-one thousand thalers,—there are other people, safe people, who will lend it; you shall merely advance it until St. John's day."

"God of Abraham! Advance in these times, in fourteen days, *thirty-one thousand thalers!* And that for fools who involve themselves in a business like that!"

"Well, Moses, just listen to me. Write down the names and the amounts as I mention them. You know the Frau Pastorin? Write down the Frau Pastorin for five thousand thalers."

"Well, I know her, she is a good woman, she helps the poor; but why should I write?"

"Come, just write."

Moses took a pencil out of his pocket, moistened the point, and wrote:

"Well, there it is; five thousand thalers."

"You know Bräsigt, too?"

"Why shouldn't I know Bräsigt? Who does not know Bräsigt? He is a good man, an entertaining man; always visited me when I was sick, tried to make a democrat of me, wanted me to make speeches in the Reformverein, but he is a good man."

"Put him down for six thousand thalers. You know my brother-in-law Nüssler?"

"I have always bought his wool. He is a quiet man, and a good man, smokes tobacco; but he isn't the man of the house, his wife is."

"Well, then put my sister down for thirteen thousand thalers."

"No, I'll not do it. She is a woman, she is a very cautious woman; bargained with me for two groschen more the stone."

"Write it! My sister will tell you, herself, this very night. So! and now write, for me, seven thousand thalers, and there are the thirty-one thousand."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Moses, "he will give his hard-earned money, that he has laid up for his old age, and for his only child! And for whom? For a young man who has tried to shoot him, who has defamed his honest name, who has treated him like a dog!"

"That doesn't concern you, Moses, that is my affair. I----"

The young Frau had been sitting in torment, repressing the bitterest feelings in her soul; but she could bear it no longer, she started up, and running to Habermann laid her hands on his shoulders, crying, "No, no! that must not be! Neither these good people, nor you, shall be involved in our misfortunes. If we are to blame, we must suffer for it. I will bear--oh, and Axel would much rather bear misfortune and disgrace! but--but"--she broke out involuntarily--"the poor sisters!"

Habermann took hold of her gently, and replaced her in her chair, whispering, "Control yourself! You have trusted the business in my hands; I will bring it to a happy issue."

A flood of tears burst from Frida's eyes.

"Good heavens!" said Moses to himself, laying his pencil back in his pocketbook, "Now she is going to be magnanimous, too. Do you call this business? This is no business. And yet it is all honest! It makes the old man cry, too," and he wiped the tears from his eyes, with the skirt of his dressing-gown. "Well, we will see what the Jew can do."

Habermann had gone out and called Bräsigt, and told him, hastily, in the hall, what was in the wind, and now he came in with him.

Bräsigt came in with rather a distracted expression on his face, at which Habermann was secretly annoyed; he looked half as if he had something to sell at the fair, and half as if he were going to make a Christmas gift. He marched up to Moses, with his head in the air: "Moses, what Habermann has put down for me, I will subscribe to, Zachary Bräsigt; it is all the same to me, cash or bonds, but not before St. Anthony's."

"Good," said Moses. "You are a safe man, Herr Inspector, I will advance it."

Bräsigt went up to the gracious Frau, who had rested her arm on the table and covered her eyes with her hand, as if the light hurt them, made a deep bow, and inquired after her health, and when she had answered quietly, he asked, "And how is the young Herr von Rambow?"

Frida shrank together, and Habermann, who had intended to call in the others, one by one, saw that a diversion must be made, or Bräsigt, in all innocence, would distress the young Frau with his questions and remarks.

"Zachary," said he, "do me the favor to bring in the Frau Pastorin and my sister; Louise may come, too."

"Very well, Karl," and presently he returned with the women.

Frau Pastorin went up directly to the young Frau, and pressed her to her heart, and could not restrain herself from weeping bitterly. Louise stood by, with the deepest, though silent, compassion in her heart.

"God of Abraham!" exclaimed Moses, "what a night is this! They want to transact a business, and they cry over each other, and press each other's hands, and hang about each other's necks, and are magnanimous and affectionate, and keep an old man, like me, sitting up till morning. Mamselle Habermann," he added aloud, "when you are done with your tender feelings, perhaps you can get me a drop of wine; I am an old man."

Louise ran and brought a bottle of wine and a glass, and Bräsigt said, "Bring me a glass, too, Louise!" and had possibly the intention of having a little frolic with Moses, for he sat down by him, and began to touch glasses: "To your good health, Moses!"

But it wasn't successful, Moses did not seem disposed to respond, and Habermann brought up his sister; Moses moistened his pencil, and wrote. After Frau Nüssler came the Frau Pastorin; Moses wrote again, and before the young Frau, who sat in the corner with Louise, knew what was going on, it was all settled; and Moses stood up, saying:

"Shall I tell you some news? I will tell you: the thirty-one thousand thalers are secured, and the people are all good; but it is no business, your magnanimity has run away with you. Well, what will you have? I am a Jew, it has run away with me too; I will advance the money. But I am an old man, I am a cautious man. If the Herr von Rambow will not employ an Inspector, and do as he ought, the business is worthless, and I will have nothing to do with it. When they lay me in the church-yard, under the fir-trees, where I have built an enclosure, then people would say, 'Well, he built that enclosure for himself; what is an enclosure of oaken-wood? Shortly before his death he got honest people into trouble, only that he might make a speculation.' There is Frau Nüssler, there is Frau Pastorin, there is Herr Habermann, and there is also Herr Bräsigt. I have been a man of business, from my youth, first with my pack, and then with my produce and wool, and finally with my money, and as a man of business I will die; but a cautious one. Come, Habermann, take hold of me, and help me home again! Good-night, Frau Nüssler, my regards to Herr Jochen, he must come and see me. Good-night, Herr Inspector Bräsigt, you must come and see me too; but don't talk about the Reform any more, I am an old man. Good-night, Mamselle Habermann, when you pass my house again, greet me as kindly as you did last time. Good-night, Frau Pastorin,

when you go to bed, you can say I have had honest people in my house, tonight, the old Jew, also, is an honest man." Then he went up to Frida:

"Good-night, gracious Frau, you have wept to-night, because you are not used to it; but never fear, it will all come right; you have a new friend, it is the old Jew; but the old Jew has shed tears over you, and he will not forget it; he does not weep often now."

He turned away, and, saying "Good-night!" once more, without looking round, went out with Habermann, Louise lighting them to the door. All was silent in the room; each was busy with his own thoughts. The first to recollect herself was Frau Nüssler; she called Krischan, who was asleep in the hall, and made him bring around the carriage. Krischan obeyed with unusual celerity, for, when Habermann returned from convoying Moses home, the young Frau and his sister were already in the carriage, and he had barely time to say a few friendly, hopeful words to the young Frau, when Frau Nüssler said, "Good-night, Karl! She must go back to her child. Krischan, to Pumpelshagen!" and they drove off.

Habermann was still standing in the street, looking after the carriage, and was just turning to go into the house, when, another carriage came slowly up the street, with a pair of gray horses shining before it, in the moonlight. The old man stepped back, and stood in the doorway, his daughter had left a candle for him, in the hall, and he stood there like a gigantic shadow against the light. He waited to see who was driving, so late or so early, through the silent streets; the carriage came nearer, it stopped before the house.

"Take the reins!" cried a voice which seemed strangely familiar to him, and a man on the front seat threw back the reins to the coachman, and jumped down.

"Habermann! Habermann! Don't you know me?"

"Franz! Herr von Rambow!"

"What is going on here, that you are up so late? No misfortune?"

"No,--thank God!--no! I will tell you directly."

The young man threw his arms about the old man, and pressed him to his heart, and kissed him, again and again, and it was no misfortune, it was the purest happiness, and yet one might have supposed it was misfortune, if he had seen the maiden who sat in the next room. The color was all gone out of her cheeks, and her great eyes grew larger and larger, staring at the door, and she pressed both hands against her heart, and when she tried to rise, it seemed as if the earth trembled, and thunder rolled above her, and the voice outside struck like lightning to her heart. She did not know, she could not make it clear in this brief moment; but the garden, which she had planted years ago, with quiet, modest flowers, with shady trees, where she had so often watched the evening star, and on which the silent night had fallen, stood suddenly revealed before her, in the lightning flashes, and when these passed over, and the heart was bowed down, suddenly the sun arose, with such blinding radiance, that she must turn away her eyes; but yet she could not, for in her quiet garden wonder after wonder was bursting into bloom in the sunlight; the modest violets changed into red roses, shining like a bridal wreath, and the odor of the fragrant blossoms changed into the song of nightingales calling to their mates. And her hands sank down from her heart, and her heart beat evenly, and full, and when he entered the door, holding Habermann's hand, she threw herself on his breast, and the earth no longer trembled, and the thunder no longer rolled, and no lightning flashes smote her; but light was all around her, pure light! And they spoke to each other, they talked much with each other: "Franz!" "Louise!" and no one understood their language, and they all stood about her, and could not understand, for it was long since they had heard the language, and yet they must have had some perception of its meaning, for Uncle Bräsigt took pity on the young people, who were flying away, above the earth, among the clouds, and brought them back, with a shock, to terra firma.

"Frau Pastorin," said he, "when I had three sweethearts at once----"

"For shame, Bräsigt!" cried Frau Pastorin, through her tears of emotion.

"Frau Pastorin, you said the same thing, when I wrote, through Doctor Urtlingen, to the young Herr von Rambow, at Paris; but I wasn't, at all ashamed, and I am not ashamed to-day; I have never in my life done anything to be ashamed of. For, you see, Frau Pastorin," and he placed himself before her with great dignity, and blew his nose, but rather, above it, as if something had got into his eyes; "you see, Frau Pastorin, I have brought about a good many rendezvous lately; first in the water-ditch----"

"Bräsigt!" cried the little Frau Pastorin.

"Be quiet, Frau Pastorin, I shall say nothing about it, and I will tell lies for you, if it is necessary. Secondly, Gottlieb and Lining in the cherry-tree; thirdly, Rudolph and Mining, also in the cherry-tree; but you must not think it strange if a man has a certain feeling of pride, at having brought about a rendezvous between Rahnstadt and Paris; and that is what I have done."

"Yes," said Franz, coming down to the earth, "you have done that, and I thank you heartily for your beautiful letter. It is here, I keep it always by me."

"Hm!" said Uncle Bräsig, "always by him! Very much obliged! Would you have the kindness to tell me, quite sincerely, do you value the letter so highly, on account of my style,--you know, Karl, I was always ahead of you in style, at Pastor Behrend's,--or is it because the letter-paper belonged to Louise?"

"For both reasons!" cried Franz, laughing heartily, "but chiefly because of the good news contained in your letter. Yes," he added, turning to Habermann, "now these torments, these self-torments, are over, the last shadow of reason for our separation has vanished," and he went up to Louise, and gave her a kiss; it was a very remarkable kiss, it might have been divided by twelve, and each result have been an entire kiss.

"Bless me!" said the Frau Pastorin, at last, "the morning is shining in at the window."

"Yes, Frau Pastorin," said Bräsig, "and you have been watching all night, and you are an old lady, and not used to it; you should go to bed."

"Bräsig is right," said Habermann, "and you, Louise, go to bed, too!"

"Come, child," said the Frau Pastorin, "there will be another day to-morrow, and a happy day, too," and she kissed her. "Now your happy days are coming, and, in yours, I shall live mine over again." They went out.

"Herr von Rambow," said Habermann.

"Why not Franz?" said the young man.

"Well, then, Franz, my dear son, you can sleep in my bed, up-stairs, with Bräsig, I----"

"I cannot sleep," interposed Franz.

"Karl," said Bräsig, "I am not at all sleepy, either, my time for sleeping and nightly rest is over." He went to the window, opened it, and looked out at the weather: "Karl, it looks to me as if this morning would be a good time for the perch to bite. I must go out, I shall get too fidgety here; I will go fishing; in the Rexow firs, there is a place under the trees, where there is a splendid perch. So, good-morning, young Herr von Rambow, good-morning, Karl, entertain yourself with your future son-in-law." With that, he went off.

"But how did it happen, dear father," asked Franz, "that I found you all up so late? I started from Paris, immediately on receiving Bräsig's letter, travelled night and day, and arrived at my estate day before yesterday. But there was so much to be attended to,--my inspector is just leaving, he is going to be married,--that I could not leave, to come hither, until about this time yesterday morning. I had sent forward relays, however, and when I arrived,--well, I may as well confess,--I wanted at least to see the house in which Louise was sleeping. And here I found you all stirring."

"Ah," sighed Habermann, "it was a sad occasion. It was on account of the young Herr von Rambow of Pumpelhagen, his wife was here herself. She has suffered terribly, but there was no help for it; and even yet everything is in suspense. Would God you had come half an hour sooner; then I believe it could all have been settled." And he related what had happened, first and last, and all with such sincere regret and such cordial interest, that an earnest wish arose in Franz's heart; he must help, also, in the matter, and the best of it was, he could help. He had had the fortune to have trustworthy guardians, and honest and capable inspectors; his property and estates had increased in value under their hands, and, more recently, under his own, for he had not made it a ladder, on which to descend to abysses of misfortune and ruin, and his good sense had kept him from folly. Now he could render a thank-offering for his happiness, for he had not only the will but the ability to do good.

The two friends talked of many things, and what seemed good to the one was approved by the other; they would both help, and it was settled that Franz should have an interview with Moses; but, in spite of all their sincerity, each had a secret from the other. Habermann dared say nothing of Axel's debt to his sisters, the young Frau had confessed it to him with bitter tears and a bleeding heart, the secret was not his own property, but that of another, dearly bought and dearly won. Franz also had his secret, but it must have been a good one, for his face was full of thoughtful joy, and he put one foot up comfortably, on the sofa, and then the other, and he nodded to Habermann, in a friendly way, as he went on talking, and he kept nodding, and finally nodded himself to sleep. Youth and nature must have their rights. Old Habermann got up softly, and looked at him. Joyous thoughts were still hovering over his face, like the beams of the setting sun over a clear, still, transparent lake, and the old man brought a coverlet, and wrapped it gently over him, and then he went out into the Frau Pastorin's little back-garden, and seated himself in an arbor, which he himself had planted, several years before, in his trouble and sorrow, and looked at the window of the room where his daughter slept. Ah, did she sleep? Who can sleep, with bright sunlight shining in the heart? Who can sleep when every sound turns into a melody singing of love and happiness? A light step sounded on the gravel in the garden path, and a lovely maiden, in a light morning dress, approached, turning up her face to the sun-rising, and, with her hands folded on her breast, gazing at the morning sun, as if she too longer feared to be blinded by its light; but tears ran down her rosy cheeks. Right, Louise! The sun is God's sun, and the happiness is God's happiness, and when it shines bright and dazzling in our eyes, tears are

good, they soften the light. She bent down, and lifted a rose, to inhale its fragrance, but did not pluck it. Right, Louise! Roses are earthly roses, joys are earthly joys, they both blossom in their season, leave them to their season. Wilt thou enjoy them before their time, thou hast only a withered rose on thy breast, and a withered joy in thy heart.

She walked on slowly, through the garden, and when she came to the arbor, where her old father sat, she sprang towards him, threw herself into his arms, and nestled her head upon his bosom: "Father! father!" Right, Louise! Here is thy rightful place! In thy father's heart beams God's sunshine, in thy father's heart bloom earthly roses.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Frau Nüssler took Frida back to Pumpelhagen, dropping many a comforting word, which fell, like the dew upon a scorched field, on the young Frau's heart, and if it were not yet quite ready to sprout with fresh green, Frau Nüssler would have said, "Never fear! My brother Karl will manage that."

So the young Frau entered her room, in the gray morning, in quite a different mood from that of the evening before, when she had rushed put into the storm; and, with hope, love and faith had returned to her heart. She went up softly and kindly to Fika Degel, who sat in an arm-chair, watching by her child, and had fallen asleep, and stroking her hair gently said:

"Fika, I thank you very much; but you must be weary; go to bed."

"Gracious Frau," said Fika, starting up from a dream of her lover, "she has slept very quietly; I had to give her drink only once."

"Good," said the young Frau, "go to bed." And when the maid was gone, she stood before her child, and looked at her; no! no! the sad lot of a poor noble Fräulein was not suited to that lovely face, and the thoughts of last evening were not suited to the thoughts of this morning. Her soul had suffered torments, fearful torments, during the night, but in the night, and through the torments, hope had been born in her heart, and this child of anguish had fallen upon her neck, and nestled closely to her, and kissed her, and stroked her face, and the blue eyes were beaming heavenward, and in them shone confidence,--yes, and victory.

The young Frau went to bed, and before her rose all the forms of the night: Korlin Kegel and Frau Nüssler, the Frau Pastorin and Louise, Habermann and Bräsig, they all stood, clear and distinct, before her eyes, she understood them all, in their true-hearted conduct and character; but among these images was another, which she did not understand; that was the old Jew. Such clear light fell upon him, and such dark shadows lay in the folds of his dressing-gown, and the wrinkles of his face,--she had never seen such an image,--that all grew indistinct before her eyes, and when she thought of his leave-taking, the image grew larger and larger, and even more indistinct, and she folded her hands upon her breast, and slept.

She slept, and the old Jew was in her dreams, but they were happy dreams; only once she started up, for it seemed to her that a carriage drove into the yard. She listened; but body and soul longed for rest; her head sank back on the pillow, and the friendly dream again hovered over her fair head, and whispered wonderful things in her ears.

But she had not heard falsely; a carriage had really driven into the yard, and in the carriage sat her husband. Axel had been driving about the country, like a speculator buying up eggs and poultry; he had halted before every door, and knocked, like a travelling beggar; he had asked help from business acquaintances, he had complained of his troubles to old friends, whom he had learned to know at the races, who had often borrowed money from him; nobody was at home, and those whom he met accidentally had left their purses at home. So long as we go about in brand new breeches, we have many friends, but when they are worn out, and our others have a patch on each knee, our friends feel ashamed of us. This was Axel's bitter experience. Without his sisters' knowledge, he had secretly been in Schwerin; he had gone to the Jew, who had transacted the business so readily and quickly; but where were his securities? From his hotel he had looked over towards the region where Franz's estates lay; but where was Franz? He had done the last thing possible, he had gone to his brother-in-law, Breitenburg, with whom he had always been on bad terms; he had endured his cold reception, had told him of his terrible situation, but had said nothing about his sisters' money; Breitenburg had looked him sharply in the eyes, and turned his back upon him:

"Tu l'as voulu, George Dandin! And do you think I will throw my hard-earned savings into this

pit, dug by your folly? It was not brought me by your sister."

Axel was going to say something about the seven thousand thalers, which his father had borrowed for him from Moses; then his brother-in-law turned upon him, and asked him, right to his face, "Where are the thirteen thousand thalers, out of which you have swindled your sisters?"

That struck him dumb,—the brother-in-law knew it would,—he turned pale, rushed out of the door, and got into his carriage.

"Where?" asked the coachman.

"Home."

"Where shall we stop to-night?"

"At home."

"Herr, the horses won't hold out."

"They must."

So they drove home, and when he got out Johann stood by the two good browns: "So, the two wheel-horses were driven to death before, and now the leaders are ruined; we have a span of cripples."

Axel went up to his room with heavy steps, it was broad daylight; in his room everything was as usual, and usually he found himself very comfortable there, and the old use and wont appealed softly to his heart; but his heart was not the old heart, heart and mind were changed, and use and wont no longer harmonized with them. He was restless and troubled; he opened the window, that the fresh morning air might cool his heated brow; he threw himself into the chair, that stood before his writing table, and pressed his head in both hands, as if it were held in a vice. Then his eyes fell upon a letter, the writing seemed familiar, he must have seen it before; he opened it; yes, it was from his sister. What had his brother-in-law, Breitenburg, called him? Yes, that was it! He looked out of the window; behind the Rexow firs the sun was rising.

He looked at the letter again; it contained friendly words, but what did words avail, he had no money. He looked out of the window again, before him lay a field of wheat; ah, if it were ripe and threshed out, and had borne twenty-fold, then—no! no! even then it could not help him. And again his eyes returned to the letter; friendly words! but soon the words became more earnest, and looked at him sternly, he could not turn his eyes away; he read them to the end, and there it stood: "On this account, I have written to Frida also, for, dear, dear brother, if you have not safely invested our capital, we poor girls are utterly ruined!"

"Yes, ruined!" he cried, "ruined!" and sprang from the chair, and strode about the room, He went to the window; before him lay nature in her fullest splendor, and nature has power over every heart, but the heart must harmonize with nature, it must open itself fully and freely to the sunlight, and receive into itself the green earth and the blue heavens and the golden beams. But his heart was not open to these influences, his situation had overpowered him, and his thoughts turned solely and miserably to the most pitiable human resources. Money, money! He could coin no louis-d'ors from the sunbeams.

He threw himself into his chair again; so *she* knew it, too. He had told her many lies, which she could not prove false; there was no use in lying now, she knew it. And she seemed to stand before him with her child in her arms, and to look at him sternly, and her clear gray eyes asked, "Have we deserved this at your hands?" and his three sisters stood around him, with sunken cheeks and pale lips, saying, "Yes Axel, dear Axel, utterly ruined!" And behind the old maids stood a darker form, in guise that was not of this earth, and that was his father, who called to him, "Thou shouldst have been a prop for my old house, but thou hast taken away stone after stone, and my house is falling to the ground." He could endure it no longer, he started up,—the ghosts vanished,—he ran up and down, and when he recollected himself, he was standing before a closet where he kept his fire-arms. Ah, he knew a place, so lonely, so still, it was the Lauban pond in the Rexow firs; he had often been there with the chase, when the brave old forester, Slang, was hunting; he could do it there. He opened the closet, and took out the revolver which Triddelsitz had procured for him, to shoot at the day-laborers. He tried it; yes! it was loaded. He went out of the door, but as he crossed the landing, he saw the door which led into Frida's room, where his wife and his child lay sleeping; he was startled, he tottered back; all the joy he had experienced in the faithful affection of his wife, in the lovely awakening nature of his child, came back to him; he fell upon the threshold before the door, and burning tears started from his eyes, and these tears, this earnest prayer to God, may have saved him,—we shall see how,—for the Lord holds us by slender, invisible threads.

He rose up, the prayer had not been for his own soul, but for others; he walked away, he went to the lonely Lauban pond. He threw himself down under the firs, behind a bush, took the revolver from his pocket, and laid it beside him; he looked once more, eagerly, mournfully, at the world around him; he looked once more at the sun, God's beautiful sun, for the last time; soon, night would fall upon him forever. The sun blinded him, he took out his handkerchief, and covered his eyes, and now the last, the most terrible thoughts overcame him. He sighed deeply;

"It must be!" he exclaimed.

"A fine morning, Herr von Rambow!" cried a friendly, human voice, close by. Axel tore the cloth from his eyes, and threw it over the revolver.

"You are up early!" said Zachary Bräsigt, for it was he, and he threw himself down by Axel, on the grass. "Have you come out fishing, too?" With that, he laid his hand on the handkerchief and the revolver: "Ah, so! You were going to practise pistol-shooting a little. I used to be a very good shot, myself, could shoot out the ace of hearts and the ace of clubs, without fail."

Then he stood up, with the revolver in his hand: "You see that mark on the fir yonder,--they are getting ready to fell timber,--I will wager four groschen, I never bet higher, "--bang! the shot went wide of the mark, --bang I missed it again, and yet again, and so on with the six shots.

"Who would have thought it? All missed! Who would have thought it? Well, I have lost. Here are the four groschen. That is such an old fool of a pistol!" he cried, and tossed the revolver far out into the pond, "children and young people might hurt themselves with it."

Axel was in a strange humor; all at once, between his firm, deliberate resolve, to which he had been driven through fierce struggle and conflict, and the dark portal he was about to enter, stood this familiar, yes, in his eyes even vulgar life, as audacious and impertinent as a peasant at a fair, which could be shoved aside, neither to the right hand nor the left. He started up:

"Herr!"

"Herr-rr!" cried Bräsigt in return.

"What do you want here?"

"And what do *you* want here?" asked Bräsigt back again.

"You are an impertinent fool!" cried Axel.

"You are the greatest fool!" cried Uncle Bräsigt, "you were about to commit the most fearful crime, from a reckless impulse, and you had forgotten everything,--your wife, your child. Hm! just touch a little spring, then we are out of it all! Wasn't it so? Who is the fool now?"

Axel leaned against a tree, with one hand pressed to his heart, and the other shading his eyes from the sun, and before him stood this vulgar man, with a fishing-rod in his hand, and had interposed between him and the dark portal,--it was life, however!

"Do you see!" continued Uncle Bräsigt, "if you had come three minutes earlier than I, "--those were the three minutes when he lay praying, on the threshold, for his wife and child, --"then you would be lying here, with a hole in your head, a frightful object; and when you had gone up to the throne of God, our Lord would have said to you: 'Thou fool! Thou didst not know, what, this very night, thy dear gracious Frau was doing for thee, and the Herr Inspector Habermann, and Frau Nüssler, and the Frau Pastorin and Moses, and--and the others,' --and when the Lord had told you, do you know what you would have suffered? Hell torments!"

Axel removed his hand from his eyes, and stared at Bräsigt:

"What? what did you say?"

"That thirty-one thousand thalers have been advanced for you, this night, and Moses advances it, and your cousin Franz has arrived, who may possibly do something more. But you are an ignorant creature, who lets that greyhound of a Triddelsitz get revolvers, to shoot the day-laborers with, and then goes to shooting himself."

"Franz is here? Franz, did you say?"

"Yes, he is here; but he did not come on your account, he is here because he is determined to make Louise Habermann Frau von Rambow; but if you want to thank anybody,--Franz will do something, will perhaps do something more,--then go to your dear gracious Frau, and to Karl Habermann; you can go to Moses also, if you like, and you must not forget Frau Nüssler, and the Frau Pastorin, they have all been good to you this night."

I never attempted to shoot myself, and cannot tell exactly how a poor man would feel, when, between himself and his resolution, ordinary life presses in so forcibly. I should think it might be a little vexatious, as when a weary, weary traveller is offered a glass of flat, sour beer,--and Uncle Bräsigt looked a little sour, this morning,--which he may not refuse; but then comes the love of life, dear, human life, and a wife, with a child on her arm, pours him a glass of cool, fresh wine, and he drains the glass: "So! now tell me what has happened."

Uncle Bräsigt related the good news, and Axel tottered from the tree, and fell upon the old man's neck.

"Herr Bräsigt! Dear Herr Bräsigt! Is it all true?"

"What do you mean? Do you think I would deceive you, at such a moment as this?"

Axel turned dizzy before the black abyss, into which, just now, he had looked so boldly; he staggered back, and there was a singing and a ringing in his ears, and a glowing and shining before his eyes and everything to which he was usually indifferent pressed overpoweringly upon him,—he pressed his hands over his eyes and began to weep bitterly. Uncle Bräsigt stood and looked at him compassionately, and going up to him with the most tender pity took him by the shoulder, and shook him gently, saying:

"We all wander, here, in confusion, and you are greatly to blame for your misfortunes; but the fault is not wholly yours: what possessed your blessed Frau Mother to make a lieutenant of you? How could a farmer be made out of a lieutenant? It is just as if the musician, David Berger, who has blown half his breath out of his body with his trumpet, should set up to be pastor, and preach preach with his half-breath; he couldn't hold out. But"—and he took the young man by the arm,— "come away from this place, and then you will feel better."

"Yes, yes!" cried Axel, "you are right! All my misfortunes arose from this unblessed soldier career. I got in debt there, and these first debts brought others in their train. But," he added, standing still, "what shall I say to my wife?"

"Nothing at all," said Bräsigt.

"No," said Axel, "I have solemnly resolved to tell her the whole truth, henceforth."

"Do you think the young gracious Frau will be likely to ask you—right to your face—why you didn't shoot yourself this morning? If you should get into any difficulty about it, I will tell fibs for you, I should not mind doing it; for it would be too horrible that such a dear young Frau should carry the thought with her, through her whole life, that the husband who should have cared for her was ready to leave her and her child, like a coward. No!" he added firmly, "she must not know it; no one need know it, but you and I. And make yourself easy, she is still asleep, for she could not have gone to bed before morning, and she must have been dreadfully tired."

They came back to Pumpelhagen, and met Daniel Sadenwater in the hall.

"Daniel," said Bräsigt, "let us have a little breakfast, as soon as possible. For," he added, when Daniel was gone, "you must eat a little something, so as to have a different feeling in your stomach, for such things take away a man's strength." Did he speak entirely from benevolence, or a little from self-love? For when the breakfast came, Axel ate nothing, but he ate like a thresher.

About ten o'clock, Frida came into the room, and exclaimed:

"Herr Inspector! and you, Axel?"

"Yes, dear Frida: I got home this morning," said the young man in a low voice.

"And now you will not go away again, now you will stay here," said Frida, decidedly. "Ah, Axel, I have much to tell you,—good news. But how do you and the Herr Inspector happen to be together?"

Now, thought Uncle Bräsigt, it is time to keep my promise about fibbing. "I went out for a little fishing, this morning,—you will not take it ill, gracious Frau, that I have left my fishing-rod in your hall,—and I met the Herr von Rambow, who was out walking, and we looked at his wheat together, and he invited me here to breakfast. But, gracious Frau, what fine sausage! you must surely have got the recipe from Frau Nüssler."

"No," said Frida, absently, looking at Bräsigt and at Axel, as if it seemed very strange to her that Axel should have invited the old inspector. "How did it happen, Herr Inspector," she began. Hold! thought Bräsigt, you will fib yourself into a trap, you must give another turn to the conversation, so he interrupted:

"With your leave, gracious Frau, you always call me 'inspector,' and so I have been; but I have been promoted, I am, now assessor at the court. Apohpoh!" turning to Axel, "why don't you take your money, that lies ready for you at the court, in Rahnstadt?"

"What money?" inquired Axel.

"Why, the fifteen hundred thalers, that the baggage hadn't spent. You must have had a letter about it, several weeks ago, from the court."

"I have had so many letters from the court, of late, that I no longer open them."

"I know about the business," cried Frida. "Frau Nüssler told me, on the way. I will get the letter," and she ran out of the door.

"Young Herr von Rambow," said Bräsigt, drawing himself up, "there you have done wrong again, for we judges are not only the punishers of mankind, we are also the benefactors of mankind."

"But do tell me what money it is!"

"Here is the letter," said Frida, giving it to her husband.

Axel opened it, and with what feelings! "Money, money!" had so long been the cry of his soul, always "Money!" Now this sum of money fell unexpectedly into his lap, but what money! "Oh, my God!" he cried, staggering blindly about the room, like a sleep-walker, "then that was not true either! All of it false! In whose hands have I been? Deceived in everything,--self-deceived! Bitterly self-deceived!"

He rushed out of the door, Frida would have followed him, but Bräsig held her back. "Let me go, gracious Frau! I know a way to quiet him." He followed him to the garden, where he was raging up and down; the old man placed himself in the way:

"Herr, what sort of performances are these?"

"Get out of my way!" cried Axel.

"No," said Bräsig, "there is no necessity for it. Aren't you ashamed, to frighten your wife to death with your wild behavior?"

"Why did you not let me destroy myself?" cried Axel; "this is a thousand times worse than death! To receive benefits, and such benefits, from people, whom in better times I have despised and slandered, yes, even ruined! Not merely to receive,--no!--if one will live,--to be *obliged* to receive it! Oh, oh!" he cried, striking his forehead, "why should I live? How can I live, with this sting in my heart?"

So he raged against himself and the world, and Uncle Bräsig stood by quietly and looked at him. At last he said, "Go on like that a little longer; that pleases me uncommonly; the old nobleman's humor must work itself out. What? You will have no friendship with honest, burgher people? Isn't it so? If the Herr Vons should come, or even the Pomuchelskopps and Slusuhrs and Davids, so that nobody need know, of it, that would be more agreeable to you; but they won't come any more. But that is only a secondary matter; you ought to be ashamed that, under the eye of God, who delivered you this morning, you have again expressed the wish that you had shot yourself. Why, you are a double suicide!"

Axel was silent, and turned pale; he trembled, as he thought of the abyss into which he had looked that morning; Bräsig took his arm and seated him on the bench, where his old father and his young wife had sat, in their anguish and distress. Gradually he recovered himself, and Zachary Bräsig took him again by the arm: "Come! come to your gracious Frau! That is the best place for you now," and Axel followed like a lamb, and when his dear young wife took him in her arms, and drew him down by her on the sofa, and comforted him, then the hot tears started from his eyes, the last ice was broken up, and under the warmth of her lovely, spring sunshine his whole soul flowed out, open and free,--still in swelling waves, but free. And Zachary Bräsig stood at the window, and drummed the old Dessauer, so that Fritz Triddelsitz, who was passing by, came up and asked, "Herr Inspector, do you want me?"

"No!" growled Bräsig, "go about your business, and attend to your farming."

A carriage drove up, and Habermann and Franz got out of it. Franz had gone with Habermann, about nine o'clock, to see Moses, and had told him that, instead of the other good people, he would pay the thirty-one thousand for his cousin, and Moses kept nodding his head, and said, "You are good; the others are good, too; but you are rich; better is better."

When the business was settled, and Franz had gone a little way along the street with Habermann, he said, "Dear father, sit down here a moment, on this bench, I will come back directly, I have forgotten something I wanted to speak to Moses about." And when he went back to Moses he said, "My father-in-law, Habermann, told me, this morning, that Pomuchelskopp wants to sell Gurlitz."

"Wonder of wonders!" cried Moses, "Habermann, father-in-law! What does it mean?"

"I am going to marry his daughter."

The old Jew rose painfully from his chair, and laid his withered hand on the young head of the Christian nobleman:

"The God of Abraham bless you! You marry into a good family."

And after a little, Franz said, "Buy it for me, transact the business for me, but my name must not be mentioned, and no one--especially Habermann--is to know anything about it. At St. John's, I can raise a hundred thousand thalers."

"But how high shall I go?"

"I Leave that to you; but inquire about it to-day. I will come again to-morrow, and we can talk it over."

"Well," said Moses, "this is business, this is honest business. Why shouldn't I do a little business?"

Franz left him.

When Axel saw the two getting out of the carriage, he tried to control himself, and to conceal his agitation, but in vain. Too wild a flood was rushing through his soul, the green leaves were torn and scattered, and branches and limbs of trees floated down the current; Frida and Bräsig interposed; and when he was rushing towards Habermann impulsively, Frida held him back, saying, "Axel, dear Axel, not now! To-morrow, the day after, any time! You can always find him."

And Habermann took his hat, and said he had a message from Fritz Triddelsitz's father, and went out. Franz went up to Axel, and embraced him, and said, "Come into the other room, Axel, I have much to say to you."

And when they had been there awhile, Franz looked in at the door, and called Frida. And, a while after, Daniel Sadenwater ran out into the yard, to look for the Herr Inspector Habermann, and as he passed in, before Bräsig's eyes, Bräsig began to find it lonely in the room, and he went out into the garden, and placed himself on a little elevation, and looked over to the Rexow firs, and the Lauban pond, thinking his own thoughts, and they began in this wise: "Remarkable! What is life, what is human life?" and when his thoughts had lasted about an hour and a halt, and he had snapped at innumerable flies, they at last broke out into words: "I wish one could get something to eat, by and by, and then a quiet place, to recreate one's self a little!"

And his wish was granted, for Daniel came and called him, and when he entered the room Habermann stood by Axel, holding his hand, and Franz was rubbing his hands, and looking at the dinner-table, and he came up to Bräsig, saying, "Herr Inspector, we have good appetites to-day!" And Frida stood there, with the sweetest smile, and the most blessed content in her face, and said:

"Herr Inspector,--Herr Assessor, I would say,--when we first came to Pumpelhagen, you were my neighbor at table, now that we are going away, you must be so once more."

"Going away?"

"Yes, old friend," said Habermann, "you are a Jack of all trades, and know all that is going on; but you never thought of this: the Herr von Rambow has exchanged with Franz, he takes Hogen Selchow, and Franz, Pumpelhagen."

"That is a good arrangement, Karl, and if you crack your jokes on me, because I knew nothing about it, I knew, at least, several years ago, that the Herr von Rambow, who was your pupil, would come to something." And he went up to Franz, and shook his hand heartily.

After dinner, many things were talked over, and every one could perceive, by Axel's demeanor, how much lighter his heart was, now that he was no longer indebted to these people, but only to his cousin; and in this better mood, he agreed to everything, promised to let the inspector manage the estate, and to give Franz proper security.

Our story rapidly approaches its conclusion. After a week or so, Moses came to terms with Pomuchelskopp, for Gurlitz. It was sold for a hundred and ninety-two thousand thalers. From Moses Franz went straight to Schultz, the carpenter:

"Herr Schultz, can you hold your tongue?"

"Trust me for that."

"Well,--I am now owner of Pumpelhagen; send some of your people out there, and let them tear down the paddocks you built yonder."

"I have thought, all along, that the beasts would have a short life."

"Well; I am also, after St. John's, the owner of Gurlitz."

"See, see! So with Herr Pomuchelskopp too, it is at last: 'Out! out!'"

"Yes; but now listen to me. I want to have a pastor's-widow-house built there, and it must be planned exactly like the parsonage, and stand just opposite, close by the church-yard. You can take the measure to-morrow."

"No need of that, I have two measures already, one of my own, and one that Mamselle Habermann took, with her apron-strings and cap-ribbons."

"Good," said Franz, and a merry smile overspread his face, "use that one."

"But it wasn't right."

"No matter! You must build after that measure. Buy your needful timber to-morrow, engage carriers here in Rahnstadt, and a good master mason; but before all things, don't breathe a word

of it to anybody! If you want money, apply to Moses."

He went off, and old carpenter Schultz stood in the door, looking after him.

"Noblemen, noblemen! Crazy performances! Cap-ribbons! Apron-strings! But Pomuchelskopp out! out! Isn't that good news?"

Franz went to Hogen Selchow; Habermann and Inspector Bremer, who had been engaged for Axel, went with him. Axel departed, with bag and baggage, and the burgomeister from Rahnstadt came in, to superintend the transfer of the property, and with him Bräsig, as assessor. Three weeks were taken up in this business, and in the repairs and refurnishing of Pumpelhagen; then all was arranged to satisfaction. The Frau Pastorin, also, had completed the preparations for the wedding. I shall write about this wedding, exactly as it was; it passed over very quietly, and I shall quietly pass it over.

The day after the wedding, Louise and Franz, and the Frau Pastorin and Habermann, sat in a great coach, and Bräsig was on the box, and they drove to Pumpelhagen. As they passed through Gurlitz, there was a great display of fir boards and beams, and oaken sills, and a notched beam lay all ready, on one side, and the carpenter, Schultz, stood there, in his shirt sleeves, superintending his workmen. Franz stopped the carriage, and called out to the energetic old man, "Is everything ready, Herr Schultz?"

"Everything is ready."

"Then you may speak, Herr Schultz."

"All right!" said Schultz. "But, Mamselle Hab--- I should say, gracious Frau, what trouble you have cost me! When I thought I had it, I hadn't it by a long way. I shall have to put in another notched beam."

"What?" asked Louise, and looked at Franz.

"Only this, dear child," said Franz, putting his arm around her, "that I have bought Gurlitz, and am going to build a pastor's-widow-house here, just like the parsonage."

"For me?" cried the little Frau Pastorin, and the tears which had risen to her eyes, when she looked at the church-yard where her Pastor slept, flowed freely, and she grasped his hand, and bathed it with tears of joy, for the tears which start in sadness often change to tears of joy.

"And I thought," continued Franz, "that my father-in-law and Bräsig might live with you, as they have done. And I thought, father, you could undertake the management of Gurlitz, and you and Bräsig could also have an eye to Pumpelhagen, and see if it is managed properly."

"Just the thing!" cried Bräsig, from the box, who had heard everything because the front was down, "Karl, what did I say to you? He'll do!"

Habermann's eyes glistened with joy. To have occupation and responsibility again! to be active and useful! Louise threw herself upon her husband's breast: "Franz, what a dear, dear fellow you are!" And the carriage drove on, and arrived at Pumpelhagen. No triumphal arches this time,--but in every heart was erected a triumphal arch, to the glory of the Heavenly Father!

I have now finished my story, and might as well make an end of it; but I know how it is: many people would like to be informed of what has happened to our friends during the eighteen years since 1848, and so I will write one more chapter.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONCLUSION.

A year ago, before I moved from Mecklenburg to Thuringia, I visited the old chimney-corner once more, where I had spent so many happy days in my youth; and so I came to Rahnstadt, and went from there one afternoon, in the month of June, along the road to Gurlitz.

I intended to visit Habermann and Bräsig and the Frau Pastorin, whom I had known since the time I was an apprentice, and had often visited in Rahnstadt; I had known Gottlieb too, at first in his Pietist days, and,--strangely,--we came to be very good friends, although we held quite different opinions; probably because I was a very sedate youth, and Gottlieb liked me on that

account.

When I arrived at Gurlitz, I went up to the widow-house, and took hold of the handle of the door; the door was fast. "Hm!" said I to myself, "it is Sunday afternoon, it is hot, they have all gone to sleep." I went to the window, and raised myself on tiptoe, to look in; when a voice behind me said:

"Eh, Herr, that will do you no good; there is nobody there."

"Doesn't the Frau Pastorin live here?"

"She is dead."

"And Habermann?" I inquired.

"He has moved to Pumpelhagen, to live with the gracious Frau."

"Is the Herr Pastor at home?"

"Yes, he is at home," said old Jürn, for it was he, "yes, he is at home, and the Frau Pastorin too; they are just drinking coffee."

I went to the house and knocked at the door. "Come in!" cried a rich voice. I entered,--well, in the course of my life, I have met with a great deal that I could not explain, and some things that were very surprising,--but this time I was not merely surprised, I was really startled! There sat Gottlieb, his haircut very reasonably short, and instead of resembling the hollow of Frau Nüssler's baking trough his form was more like the increasing moon; the white, sunken cheeks had become smooth and ruddy, and the red, full lips seemed to say, "We have had a good dinner to-day, but we and the stout teeth behind us have done our duty." And that was the expression of the whole man, one that enjoyed good dinners, and yet did his duty. There was nothing lazy about his looks, all was firm and clean, and told of hard work, and refreshing rest, and comfortable meals. Well, and now! Of the Frau Pastorin Lining there was no trace, she had changed into the exact image of the little, round Frau Pastorin Behrends. "Hm!" said I to myself, "the wind sits fair in this quarter."

When the first greetings were over, we sat down together, and there were many questions to ask, especially on my side. The story that I have related I had mostly from Bräsig; Habermann also would let a word fall, now and then, for I was rather a favourite with the old man, and some things I inquired about elsewhere, a little later, and because the principal events occurred while I was apprenticed on an estate, I have called it, "During my apprenticeship."

Gottlieb told me various things, and Frau Pastorin Lining helped him, for she was constantly interrupting; and when I rose, to go to Pumpelhagen,--for I had known Franz also, when I was apprenticed in the region,--Gottlieb said, "Yes, go! You will find them all together, there; we will come by and by, and bring our three children; the oldest is absent, he is already at the gymnasium." I went through the Gurlitz church-yard, thinking over what I had heard, and it was just what is always happening on this earth; joy and sorrow, birth and death.

The first of our friends who had deceased was Bauschan. He did not die a natural death,--not that he committed suicide--no! One day weaver Ruhrdanz came into the Rexow farm-yard, with a rusty flint-lock, took Bauschan by the collar, and led him into the garden; the new crown-prince was there as a spectator, and--as appeared afterwards--behaved very badly upon the occasion, rushing about, and growling. A shot was heard, and soon after Ruhrdanz came in, and reported that Bauschan had made a very Christian end. Frau Nüssler poured him a glass of schnapps, and when he had drank it, very gravely, he said that he and the other Gurlitz people had been before the court that morning; they were all sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and because he was the head one, or the ringleader, as they called it, he must have six months longer. He went out, but came back to say: "Frau, you will not forget my old woman! It all happened because we had no papers."

The second who died was Jochen himself. Since the time that he had given up the control, he had taken to managing; he ran about the fields all day, especially in places where there was nothing to do, and would stand there, shaking his head, but saying nothing. And one Sunday, between Christmas and New-Year's, when the snow lay a foot deep over the fields, he was out and happened to fall into a ditch. He came home quite chilled; Frau Nüssler gave him camomile tea, by the quart; he drank it submissively, but next morning he said, "Mother, what is not to be helped, is not. What must be, must. It is all as true as leather, and one can do nothing more about it," and with that, he fell asleep. He had managed himself to death, and Frau Nüssler thought seriously of inscribing on his tombstone:

"He died in his vocation."

Moses was the next; the old man had walked firm and upright through life, and firm and upright he went out of it. He died firm in his faith, and they did for him according to the customs of the tribe of Judah,--for he belonged to the tribe of Judah,--and when he was buried David sat in the ashes, with a torn coat, and many Christians followed him to the church-yard around which he had built the oaken fence, and I believe he is in Abraham's bosom, where Christians are also

received. And the day after his funeral, there were three people standing at his grave, namely, Habermann, and the two young Fraus von Rambow.--Frida was come for a visit,--and Habermann wiped his old eyes, and the two young Fraus laid a couple of fresh wreaths on the grave of the old Jew, and, as they walked thoughtfully away through the Rahnstadt meadows, Habermann said, "He was a Jew in faith, and a Christian in deeds."

And now comes Häuning's turn--our brave old Häuning. Pomuchelskopp had gone off, neck and crop, bag and baggage, in the blue coach with the coat of arms, and with as many furniture wagons as he had fat sheep, to Rostock. When times got a little better for credit, he earned himself a nickname, they called him, "Much too cheap!" for he related his story to every one who would listen to him, and lamented his hard fate, and the sale of Gurlitz, and always ended with a deep sigh, "Much too cheap! Oh, very much too cheap!"

His brave Häuning pursued her course unterrified, and kept up her authority; but, dear knows, what a time she had with those Rostock maid-servants! They would not put up with such treatment as the Gurlitzers were compelled to endure. Every week, she had a new maid; one, indeed, behaved more reasonably, that was an old cook; but when she had been there about three months, this worthless creature became refractory. Häuning was very decided, she caught up the fire-tongs, and gave her a hard blow on the head. The girl hadn't another word to say, for she fell flat on the kitchen hearth. A doctor came and talked a great deal about suggillations and fractures; but the end of the story was, the poor girl was taken to the hospital. The doctor was an honest man, he reported the matter to the rightful authorities, and Häuning was summoned before the court. If she had made use of a pudding-stick, of the same length and thickness, they would have done nothing to her; but, in her valor, she had seized the tongs! Tongs were not down in the Mecklenburg statutes, and so Häuning was condemned, besides the costs, and what she must give the poor girl, to six weeks' imprisonment. Pomuchel protested, he appealed, he supplicated; it was of no use; Häuning was imprisoned on account of her great valor. He told his story to every one who would listen, he poured out streams of abusive talk about the court; at last, one of the judges happened to hear of it, and the chancellor made Pomuchel a present of four weeks' imprisonment, for himself. He tried to buy off, with money; but it was no go; even the Herr Senator Bank said, "No! this time the poltroon should be served out." And so those two old brave people were confined in adjoining rooms, over Christmas, 1852, and New Year's, 1853; and when they had been there a fortnight the jailer remarked to his wife: "Fika, there is quite a difference between the two; he runs about his room as if he was crazy, berating everybody, and she sits there, stiff and stark, in the same place, where she sat down the first evening."

Malchen and Salchen, meanwhile, to the great distress of their elders, gave a great tea-party, to which Herr Süßmann was invited, as he had, merely out of compassion, accepted a situation in the Mühlenstrasse.

When our old friend were set free, Pomuchelskopp sat down in the living room, and bewailed himself to his daughters. Häuning went straight to the kitchen, and there found a day-laborer's wife; for, during their imprisonment, there had been a great excitement, and the Rostock maid-servants had resolved that no respectable girl should go into service at the Pomuchelskopps. So they hired this woman by the day.

"What do you get a day?" asked Häuning.

"Sixteen groschen," was the reply. Häuning grasped the tongs, but bethought herself in time. But this self-control made the evil overflow into her blood, and three days after she was dead; and in three days more she was buried. Pomuchelskopp and his daughters do not know where she lies, and if any one inquires, they say, "She is buried over yonder,--over yonder." But Gustaving, who, in his capacity of inspector, often visits the city, knows. He took one of the little ones by the hand, and showed him the place: "See, Krischaning, mother is buried there."

I have been telling of sorrow, and have yet more to relate; but why not also of joy? There was joy in the pastor's-widow-house, for long years. Frau Pastorin used to sit, on summer evenings, and look at her Pastor's grave. Ah! how glad she would be to die; and then, when Dürt brought the candles, she would turn round, and look at her old furniture, and the picture gallery, and the duster in its old place, and under the picture gallery, the two friendly old faces, which she had so often seen there in her Pastor's time, and then, how glad she was to live! Habermann was constantly active, no longer for strangers, but for his children and grandchildren, for Louise had two of the dearest little girls; and he had still another gratification. Fritz Triddelsitz walked in one day,--of course in a blue dress-coat,--with the little assessor, and introduced himself as a proprietor, in Lower Pomerania, and the little assessor as his bride; and when he had talked of various matters through the evening, and they had gone away, Bräsig said, "Karl, this time you were right again; but who would have thought it? Your greyhound has become quite a reasonable being; but don't plume yourself too much upon it; it is not your doing, it is the little assessor's."

Bräsig himself scoured the whole region after news. Now he was in Rexow, then in Pumpelshagen, then in Rahnstadt, but his chief place of resort was Hogen Selchow. He journeyed thither, nearly every quarter, and when he came back he would say, "Karl, it goes well; he has quite given up the management, and now he sits in his work-shop, and invents. Stuff and nonsense, of course; but Bremer says he would not ask for a better master, and the gracious Frau looks as happy and blessed as an angel in Paradise. But, Karl, he is not so stupid, after all. He has made one invention, that I am going to try, myself. You see, you take an old hat, cut out a hole in

front, and put a lantern in, and when you are riding out, in the winter evenings, and have your lantern there, you can see, as if it were broad daylight."

Bräsig actually brought Axel's invention into practice, and frightened all the country people in the region; but once when he had visited Hogen Selchow, he had an attack of his old friend the Podagra, and the old friend kicked him in the stomach, with both feet, and on the way home, he took a severe cold. And so he lay on his death-bed.

The Frau Pastorin and Frau Nüssler and his old Karl Habermann were sitting by him, and the Frau Pastorin said, "Dear Bräsig, shall I not call in the young Herr Pastor?"

"Let it go, Frau Pastorin, you have called me a heathen all my life; it may not have been right for me to live as I have done; but the pastor-business! No, it is better so. And, Karl, my sister's daughter, Lotting, is to have two thousand thalers; and the rest shall go to the school in Rahnstadt; for, Karl, the Frau Pastorin has enough to live on, and you have enough to live on, but the poor school-children are so badly off! And Frau Nüssler has enough to live on, and my godchild, Mining, and you, Karl, and you are all going to live, and I am going to die." And then his mind began to wander and he was once more in his early childhood, keeping sheep for his father, and an old ram made him a great deal of trouble, and he called to Frau Nüssler to come and help him, and Frau Nüssler sat down on the bed, and put her arms around him, and then he began about the three sweethearts, and Frau Nüssler, and kept calling out that he had never loved any one but her, and Frau Nüssler kissed the words from his lips, saying, "I know it, Bräsig, my dear, old Zachary, I know it."

And the fancies came thicker and faster, about the time when he was assessor at the court, and the indiciums, and the young Herr von Rambow, and the Lauban pond, and how he threw the pistol into the pond and lost four groschen on the wager. And then a strange lightness came over him, and he told his dear old Frau Nüssler the most wonderful stories about the little twins, and his godchild, Mining, and Karl Habermann and Louise,—all intermingled with each other,—holding Frau Nüssler's hand fast in his all the while; but suddenly he raised himself, and said, "Frau Nüssler, lay your hand on my head; I have always loved you. Karl Habermann, rub my feet, they are cold." Habermann did so, and a bright smile flashed across Bräsig's face, and he said slowly, "I was always ahead of you in style." That was the last.

Our little Frau Pastorin soon followed him. There are a few people who live very happily on earth, and yet are glad to die. To these few belonged the little round Frau. She was very comfortable here below, but when she thought of the home above, a dear old face shown upon her, and old tones rang in her ears, for she thought of heaven as a little, neat, clean village church, where the angels sang and her pastor preached. Now she is with him, and can put on his mantle, and tie his bands, and sing with him, in the little church, no longer "funeral hymns," no! "resurrection songs."

With these thoughts running through my head, I turned the corner near the arbor, where so many people had sat in their trouble and distress, and saw, playing on the lawn, three little maidens from four to eleven years of age. And, as I came nearer, I saw a lady with a friendly, contented expression in her face, and she dropped her work in her lap, and smiled at the little girls, and shook her finger at them: "Don't provoke me too far!" Near her, sat a fresh, healthy-looking man, reading the newspaper, and he laid it down and shook his head, as if he said, "There is nothing in it." And farther on sat an old man, at whose knee a little girl of twelve years was leaning, and chatting with him, and he interrupted her lively childish prattle, to say to the young Frau: "Let them play, Louise, they will become steady and reasonable soon enough." And as I came round the corner, the old man exclaimed: "Good heavens! is not that----?" And Franz and Louise came towards me, and Franz said, "See! see! That is right, Fritz, to visit us once more!"

"Many greetings, gracious Frau," said I, "from my Louise," for my wife is a Louise too. And we talked of one thing and another, but our quiet did not last long, for a troop came tearing through the garden, like the wild hunt, and four boys, with brown eyes, and brown cheeks, and gray jackets and trousers, scampered up the path, and a little rogue of six years rushed up to Franz and clasped his knees, saying over his shoulder to the others, "I am the first!"

"Yes," said another, a boy of about twelve, "I believe you, you ran through the meadow; but how you look! Mather will scold finely!" And now the little fellow looked down at his stockings and trousers, and, truly! if his mother were contented with their condition, he would have reason to be thankful.

"Are your father and mother coming soon?"

"Yes," said the eldest boy, "they are close by. And grandmother is coming too, and Frau von Rambow, who came yesterday."

"Ah, Frida?" cried Louise, "that is good!" And it was not long before Rudolph and Mining came up, and they looked like a fair day in summer, when the sunlight lies broad over the fields, and the shadows are short, and men are working in their shirt-sleeves. Rudolph has become a capable fellow who counts for something among his colleagues, for he does not carry on his farming in the old-fashioned, narrow ways, and has regard to the welfare of other people, and of the whole country, as well as to his own profit. And behind them came Frau Nüssler, and Frida. The Frau

von Rambow looked to the right, and the left, and her face grew sad, and when she came to the arbor and the first greetings were over, Louise called to her oldest daughter, "Frida, bring auntie a chair!" for Frida had once said, she could never sit again on that bench, where she had sat in such anguish.

Frau Nüssler went up to Habermann:

"How are you, Brother Karl?"

"Finely!" cried Habermann, in a loud voice, for Frau Nüssler had grown very hard of hearing, "and you?"

"Very well, all but my hearing; that is worse. They say it comes from taking cold. Nonsense! how should I take cold? I will tell you, Karl, it came from Jochen; for he talked and talked so much, at the last, and I was quite worn out. Well, he could not help it, it was in his nature."

Then came Pastor Gottlieb and Lining, with three children. And the children played together, and their elders talked together, and at supper time the tables were laid, out of doors, one for the older people by themselves, and one for the children by themselves, and Louise's eldest daughter presided at the children's table, and Grandfather Habermann at the other, and both with a very different rule from our old Häuning. How friendly and pleasant it was!

And as we old subjects of Habermann were sitting together merrily, rejoicing in his government, who came along the garden path? Fritz Triddelsitz and the little assessor. What an uproar! How many questions were asked and answered, in a few moments!

All at once, Triddelsitz caught sight of me: "Fritz, where did *you* come from?"

"Eh, Fritz where did *you* come from?"

"Fritz I haven't seen you in seven cold winters!"

"Nor I you, Fritz."

So we "Fritzed" each other, back and forth, to the amusement of the whole company.

"Fritz," asked he, "do you still write books?"

"Yes, Fritz, I have written a whole heap of them."

"Well, Fritz, do me a single favor, and never put me into any of them."

"Eh!" said I, "there's no help for it; you are in already, Fritz."

"What am I in about?" he asked hastily.

"The rendezvous, at the great water-ditch."

"What is that?" asked Louise, who sat opposite me.

Franz laughed heartily: "I will tell you, another time."

"No, no!" cried Fritz.

"Why, what is it then?" asked the little assessor, looking at me, Fritz Reuter, and then at him, Fritz Triddelsitz. I was silent, and he said:

"I will tell you, another time."

Old Grandfather Habermann laughed with all his might.

When we were by ourselves, afterwards, Fritz took my arm, and said:

"Just tell me, who told the story?"

"Bräsig," said I.

"I thought so," said he, "Bräsig was the chief person in the whole story."

"That he was," said I.

Some people may ask the question, Where are Pumpelhagen and Rexow and Gurlitz? Well, you will look in vain for them on the map, and yet they are situated in our German Fatherland, and I hope they are to be found in more places than one. Everywhere, where a nobleman resides, who does not think himself better than his fellow-men, and who recognizes the lowest of his laborers

as his brother, and himself as a fellow-worker,—there is Pumpelshagen. Wherever there is a clergyman, who does not demand, in his self-conceit, that everybody shall believe precisely as he does, who makes no difference between poor and rich, who not only preaches, but is ready with kind words, and wise counsel, and substantial help, when it is needed,—there is Gurlitz. Wherever a burgher is active and energetic, and is driven by an impulse to become wiser and more capable, and thinks more of the general welfare than of his own pecuniary advantage,—there is Rexow. And wherever these three are united, through the love of sweet womanhood, and the hopes of fresh, joyous childhood, there are, also, all three villages together.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote 1](#): Du (thou) is the common form of address between friends; Sie (third person plural) being used with strangers, and on formal occasions.

[Footnote 2](#): Bräsigt probably means "Douche." "Tüsche" is Indian-ink.

[Footnote 3](#): A Pächter is one who rents a farm.

[Footnote 4](#): A Mecklenburg Schilling is equal to an English penny.

[Footnote 5](#): "Hug me and kiss me, but don't tumble my curls."

[Footnote 6](#): "Cross buns and cracknels."

[Footnote 7](#): Mignon's song: "Poor child, what have they done to thee?"

[Footnote 8](#): The third person singular is used in addressing inferiors.

[Footnote 9](#): Muschiken, from Monsieur, is a kind of Mecklenburg biscuit.

[Footnote 10](#): Species of dog.

[Footnote 11](#): "Meinswegens"—"for all I care."

[Footnote 12](#): Herr has the meaning of Mr., Sir, gentleman and master.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SEED-TIME AND HARVEST: A NOVEL ***

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