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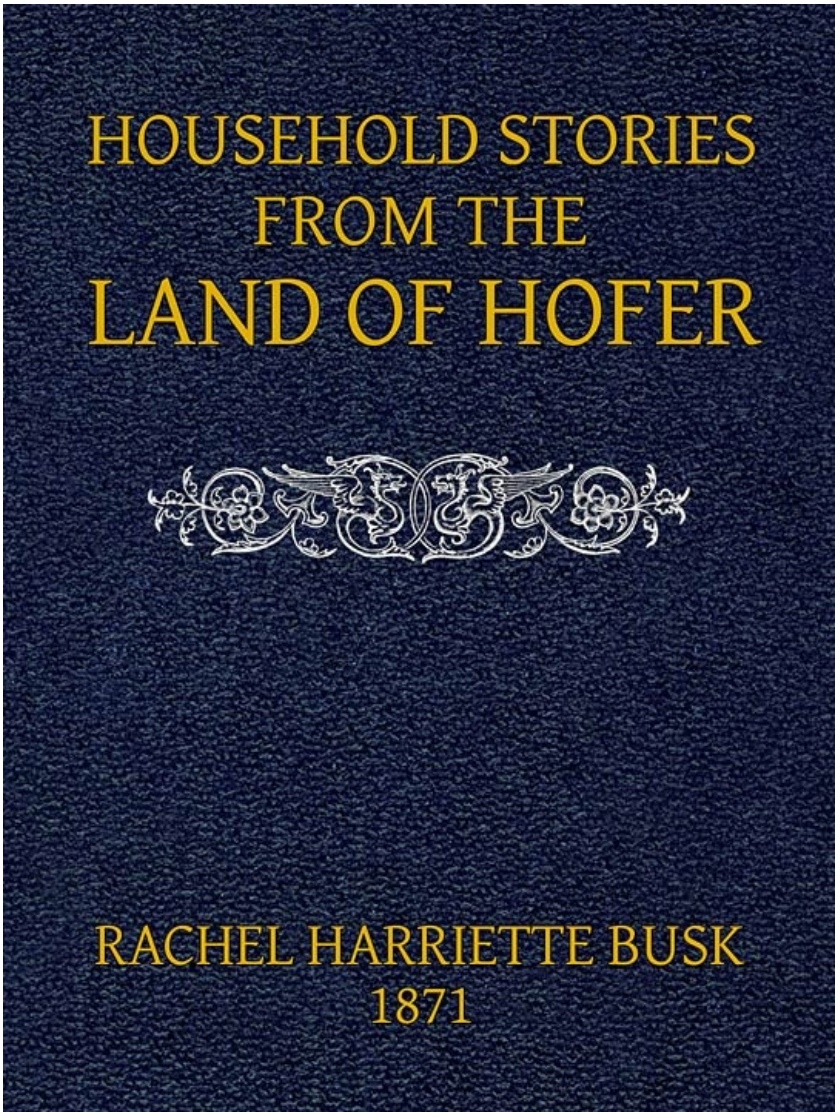

Simild the Styrian Princess and the Norgs.—*Page* 33.

HOUSEHOLD STORIES

From the Land of Hofer;

OR,

POPULAR MYTHS OF TIROL,

INCLUDING THE

ROSE-GARDEN OF KING LAREYN.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "PATRAÑAS; OR, SPANISH STORIES," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY T. GREEN.

LONDON:
GRIFFITH AND FARRAN,
SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY AND HARRIS,
CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.
MDCCCLXXI.

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HOUSEHOLD STORIES

from the Land of Hofer.

INTRODUCTION.

> "Blessed are the people of whom history is silent; for history occupies itself more with the doings of fools than of the wise; with storms than with tranquil days: it immortalizes the butcher and the tyrant, and consigns to oblivion the innocent and peaceful."—Cibrario.

Something of the deep, strong attachment to their native mountains which is innate in the children of the Alps steals over me when I think of my pleasant journeyings in Tirol[1].

Though it is a little, out-of-the-way country whose cry is seldom heard in the newspapers, though it exercises little influence in political complications, the [2] character of its people is one which, next after that of our own, has a claim to our esteem and admiration. Hardy, patient, and persevering; patriotic and loyal to a fault; honest and hospitable to a proverb—they carry the observance of their religion into the minutest practice of every-day life; and there underlies all these more solid qualities a tender, poetical, romantic spirit which throws a soft halo round their ceaseless toil, and invests their heroic struggles for independence with a bright glow of chivalry.

Surrounded from their earliest years with living pictures of Nature's choicest forms and colouring, they need no popular fiction to cultivate their imagination, no schools of design to educate their taste.

Shut out from the world's ambitions by their pathless Alps, they have learned to see before them two aims alone,—to maintain the integrity and the sanctity of their humble homes on earth, and to obtain one day a place in that better Home above, to which the uplifted fingers of their sun-bathed mountain-peaks ever gloriously point.

The paramount claims on their hearts' allegiance of the hearth and the altar are inseparably interwoven in their social code, and their creed scarcely knows of a distinction between Nature and Nature's God.

At their mother's knee they have learnt, every one, to prattle of their Father in [3] heaven with as complete a realization of His existence as of that of their father on earth. Just as they receive their toil-won food and raiment as an earnest of the paternal care of the one, the change of the seasons, the sunshine and the rain, betoken to them as certainly that of the Other. They scarcely trace any line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural; and earth and sky are not for them the veil which hides Divinity, but the very temple and shrine of the Godhead dwelling among His creatures.

Going forth in this simple faith through the pure, unfogged atmosphere which surrounds them, it is scarce to be wondered at if they can trace the guiding footprints and the unerring hand of Providence where for others are only chances and coincidences. Or that—like the faint outline of wished-for land revealing itself to the trained eye of the sailor, where the landsman sees but a hopeless expanse of sky and ocean—they should recognize a personal will and individuality in the powers which are the messengers to them of the good pleasure of Heaven, in the germination of fruit and grain, in the multiplication of their flocks and herds; or of the envious malice of the Evil One, in the wind and the lightning, the torrent and the avalanche, destroying the work of their hands.

It is necessary to bear this well in mind, or we shall not appreciate the delights [4] which their fantastic tales have in store for us. We must learn to realize that this way of viewing things has created a nomenclature, almost a language, of its own.

When the boisterous blast sweeps through their valleys, scattering the scent of the wild game, and driving them far out of their reach, they say it is the *Wilder Jäger*[2], the *Beatrìk*[3], or the *Nachtvolk*[4], on his chase. Their restless energies, pent up within the shelter of their rattling walls and casements, invest him with a retinue of pitiless followers and fiery-eyed hounds—while the fate of some who have ventured out while he is said to be abroad, blown over precipices or lost in crevasses, is expressed by the fancy that his train is closed by a number of empty pairs of shoes, which run away with those who come within his influence.

When the bright beams of sun and moon enliven their landscape, or fructify their seed, or guide their midnight way, they fable of them as beautiful maidens with all sorts of fanciful names derived from associations as old as the world: *Perahta*, brightness, daughter of *Dagha*, the daylight—hence, also, Perchtl and Berchtl. In other localities, *Holda* or *Hulda*; in others again, they are known as *Angane*, and *Enguane*, the *Saligen Fraüelein*, *Nornen*, *Zarger Fraüelein*, and *Weissen Fraüelein*. They say they smile on the overburdened peasant, beguile his labour by singing to him, show him visions of beautiful landscapes, bestow wonderful gifts—loaves which never diminish, bowls and skittles, charcoal and corn of pure gold; to the husbandman they give counsels in his farming; to the good housewife an unfailing store—bobbins of linen thread which all her weaving never exhausts; they help the youth or the maiden to obtain the return of the love they have longed for, and have some succour in store for every weary soul. [5]

Such helpers the people recognize of the masculine gender, also, in the so-called *Nörgl*, *Pechmannl*, *Pützl*, *Wiehtmännlein*, *Käsermännlein*, and *Salvanel*; for possibly, they say, not all the angels who rebelled with Lucifer may have been cast into the outer darkness. There may have been some not so evilly disposed themselves, but talked over and led astray by others; and such, arrested in their descent by a merciful reprieve, may have been only banished to the desolate and stony places of the earth, to tops of barren mountains and fruitless trees. Such as these might be expected to entertain a friendly feeling for the human beings who inhabit the regions which gave them shelter, and to be ready to do them a good turn when it lay in their way—lift weights, and carry burdens for them up the steep heights, and protect their wild game. And, also, it is not inconsistent with their nature to love to play them a mischievous trick full oft—make off with the provision of loaves prepared for the mowers; sit, while remaining invisible, on their sledges and increase their difficulty and confusion in crossing the mountain-paths lost in snow; entice them into the woods with beseeching voices, and then leave them to wander in perplexity; overturn the farm-maids' creaming-pans; roll the *Senner's* cheeses down the mountain sides. [6]

Worse tricks than these are those of the *Wilder Mann*. When the soil is sterile and ungrateful; when any of the wonted promises of nature are unfulfilled; when the axe of the lonely woodman rebounds from the stubborn trunk and wounds him; when the foot of the practised mountain-climber fails him on the crisp snow, or the treacherously sun-parched heather; when a wild and lawless wight (for such there are even in Tirol, though fewer, perhaps, than elsewhere) illtreats the girl who has gone forth to tend her father's flock upon the mountains, trusting in her own innocence and Heaven's help for her protection—it is always the *Wilder Mann*—in some places called the *Wilder Jörgel*, in others, the *Lorg*, the *Salvang* or *Gannes*, the *Klaubaut* or *Rastalmann*, in Vorarlberg, *Fengg*, *Schrättlig*, *Doggi*, and *Habergâss*—to whose account the misfortune or the misdeed is laid. His female counterpart is called *Trude* and *Stampa*, and the *Langtüttin*. [7]

The mineral riches of the country, and the miners occupied in searching for them, are told of as of hidden treasure sought after or revealed, as the case may be, by the *Bergweib* and the *Bergmannlein*, or *Erdmannlein*, the *Venedigermannlein* and the *Hahnenkekerle*, the stories of whose strength and generosity, cupidity and spite, are endless; while the mountain echoes are the voices of sprites playfully imitating the sounds of human life.

If the mountains and the forests are thus treated, neither are the lakes and torrents without their share of personification, and many are the legends in which the uses and beauties of the beneficent element are interpreted to be the smiles and the helpful acts of the Wasserfraülein, while the mischances which occur at the water's edge are ascribed to the *Stromkarl* and the *Brückengeist*.

The sudden convulsions of nature to which their soil has been subject from age to age are all charged with retribution for the sins of the people, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain. Castles and forest possessions of wicked rich men are sunk beneath the waters of lakes so that their foundations may never again be set up, and their place be no more found; while a curse pursues those who attempt to dig out the ill-gotten treasure. Villages are recorded to have been swallowed by the earth or buried by the snow-storms when their people have neglected the commandments of God. [8]

This literal adaptation of the admonitions of Holy Writ receives among this people another development in traditions of instances where good deeds done to the poor have been believed to have been actually done to visions of our Lord and of His Saints. Then again, their devout belief in both the irresistible justice and the ineffable love of God convinces them that there must be a place on earth where souls too soiled for heaven, yet not given over to utter reprobation, may wander till the final day of rest. And thus every shepherd, as he keeps his lonely watch upon the Alpine pastures, expects that he may meet the *feurige Sennin* who broke the Sunday rest; or the *Tscheier Friedl* who was cruel to the cattle in his charge; or the *büssender Hirt* who stole the widow's kine; or the *Markegger* who removed his neighbour's landmark; or the *Pungga-Mannl* who swore a false oath; or the *feuriger Verräther* who betrayed the mountain pass to the Roman legions.

On the other hand, the heroes and types of the Christian faith are thought of as taking a perpetual interest in the welfare of their struggling brethren: St. [9] Nothburga and St. Isidore watch over the husbandman, and St. Urban over the vinedresser; St. Martin over the mower; St. Martha, St. Sebastian, and St. Rocchus, the *drei Pestschutzheiligen*[5], are expected to be as potent in their intercession now as when at their prayers, when on earth, plagues were stayed. St. Anthony and St. Florian similarly protect against fire. St. Vigilius, the evangelizer of the country and martyr to his zeal, is still believed to guard its jealously-preserved unity of faith. In return, they receive special veneration: the ordinary dealings of life are regulated by the recurrence of their festivals, and the memory of sacred mysteries is kept in perpetual honour by setting up their tokens in every homestead and every house, in every vineyard and in every field, on every bridge and by every wayside.

It is not surprising that a people so minded have tales to tell of wonderful events which seem to have befallen them, and which take the record of their lives out of the prosaic monotony which rules our own,—tales always bearing a wholesome moral lesson, always showing trust in Providence and faith in the World Unseen, and always told with the charming simplicity which only a logically grounded expectation that events should turn out even so—and no invention or imagination —can give. [10]

A selection of these tales I have put into English dress in the following pages. Though some few of them may be found to bear analogy with similar tales of other German nations, the distinctive qualities of the Tirolese, and the peculiar nature of the scenery amid which they have been conceived, will be found to have stamped them with a character entirely their own.

I think that what I have said is sufficient to give, to such of my readers as did not possess it already, the key to their application, and I need not now append to each a tedious interpretation of the fantastic personages and scenes I shall have to introduce.

It remains only to say a word as to their distribution. The present principality of Tirol is composed of four provinces. North Tirol, South Tirol, Wälsch or Italian Tirol, and Vorarlberg. North and South Tirol have been for long so closely united that, like their language and customs, their mythology has become so intimately intermingled that it scarcely comes within the scope of a work like the present to point out their few divergences or local peculiarities. But those of Wälsch Tirol and Vorarlberg each maintain a much more distinctive character, and I have accordingly marked with a separate heading those which I have gathered thence. [11]

"The Rose-garden of King Lareyn," however, is not the peculiar property of any one province. Though the three places which claim to occupy its site are all placed in South Tirol, this pretty myth is the common property of the whole country—its chief popular epic—and has even passed into the folklore of other parts of Germany also. It is beside the purpose of the present little work to enter into the controversy which has been raised concerning the authorship. There can be little doubt, however, that it was originally the utterance of some unknown minstrel putting into rough-and-ready rhyme one of the floating myths which symbolized the conflict of the heroes with the powers of evil, so popular in the middle ages. Then poets of more pretensions wrote out, and, as they wrote out, improved the song. Thus there are several different manuscripts of it extant, of between two and three thousand lines each, but not of equal value, for later scribes, in trying to improve, overlaid the simple energy of its diction with a feeble attempt at ornament which only served to damage its force. The name of the Norg-king who is the subject of it, is in these spelt variously, as Lareyn, Luarin, Luarine, &c.; the modern orthography is Laurin. The spelling I have adopted is that of the *Chronicon* of Aventinus. [12]

I have thought it well to precede the story by some account of the Norg folk and some samples of their legends, that the reader may not come wholly unacquainted with their traditional character to the tale of the discomfiture of the last Norg-

king. [13]

1 It is common in England to speak of Tirol as “the Tyrol;” I have used the name according to the custom of the country itself.

2 The name for “the wild huntsman” in North and South Tirol.

3 The Beatrìk of the Italian Tirol is, however, a milder spirit than the *Wilder Jäger* of the northern provinces. He is also called *il cacciatore della pia caccia*, because he is supposed only to hunt evil spirits.

4 The name in Vorarlberg.

5 The three helpers against the plague. There are many churches so called in Tirol.

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NORG MYTHS.

The Norgen were a mighty folk in olden time in Tirol. In their span-high bodies resided a power which no child of man, were he ever so stalwart and well-limbed, could resist. But they were also for the most part a peaceable race, and more inclined to assist than to obstruct the industrious inhabitants of the country in their labours; so long as they were treated with respect and deference they seldom interfered with any one. Then they were generally scrupulously honourable, and strict keepers of their word. A service rendered one of them was sure to be repaid a hundredfold. An injury brought a corresponding retribution, and scorn, contempt, or ridicule roused their utmost vengeance; while some there were who entertained a true spirit of mischief, and indulged in wanton tricks which showed their character was not altogether free from malice.

They were most often to be met in lonely paths and unfrequented fastnesses of nature, but a solitary Nörglein could also occasionally stray within the haunts of men, at times asking hospitality at their hands, and at others getting into the bedrooms at night, and teasing the children in their sleep, hence the common proverb— [14]

“Shut the door closely to,
Or the Norg will come through[1].”

And at other times, again, they would take part in the field and household labours, as if they found it sport. The name of Norg was chiefly appropriated to them in South Tirol; in Vorarlberg the analogous cobbold went by the name of *Rutschifenggen*. Every locality, every valley, every hamlet, and almost every farm, had its own familiar dwarf whose doings were handed down as household words.

Thus it is told that there was once a countrywoman, who lived in a lonely Meierhof[2] of the Passeierthal, standing over her stove, preparing a pancake for her husband’s dinner, and as he was a great eater she used an immense number of eggs—three dozen and more—in his pancake: as fast as she broke the eggs into the pan, she threw the shells behind her. Three Norgs came by as she was so occupied and amused themselves with playing with them and arranging them into all kinds of patterns. The Meierin[3] was a grumpy sort of woman, and instead of finding pleasure in the glee of the little people, grew cross with them, and scattered the dirty black ashes among the egg-shells they had arranged so prettily. Offended at this ill-natured treatment, the Norgs took their departure, but first laid the thread of the good wife’s spinning-bobbin as a snare across the floor, and then stationed themselves outside the window to see what happened. [15]

Presently the husband called to know if the pancake was not ready, and the Meierin, running to satisfy him, with both hands engaged in holding the dish of the enormous pancake, caught her feet in the thread, and fell flat on the ground with her face in the dish, while the three Norgs completed her vexation by setting up a loud laugh in chorus.

Here is another story of their doings, in which they play a different part. There was a storm in the valley of Matsch, and a storm in the valley of Matsch is often a terrible matter. This was one of the worst: the pitiless flood streamed down the heights, and threatened to overflow the banks of the *Hochseen*[4]; the wind from the glacier howled dismally over the mountain-sides; the people closed their doors and shutters against the blast, and listened to the roar of the elements, trembling with the thought that every moment might come the signal of the inundation which should carry them and their habitations away in its torrent. In the solidest and most important house of the straggling village, which bears the same name as the [16]

valley, was gathered the family of the richest man of the place, who had no reason to share these fears, but with singing and lively conversation chased away the dismal influence of the lugubrious sounds without.

Suddenly, between the angry gusts of wind, a doleful voice was heard piteously praying for help. One of the party opened the casement, and looked out, but with more of curiosity than interest, and then quickly closing it again, came back into the room with a laugh to describe the ludicrous figure he had seen. It was a little mannikin with a beard big enough for a full-grown man, his clothes drenched with the rain, and slung over his shoulder a tiny bundle tied in a handkerchief, which yet seemed to bow him down with its weight. The description provoked a chorus of laughter, and the wretched little Norg—for it was a Norg—would have been no more thought of but that his wail became more irritating than that of the wind, and at last the master of the house got up and shouted to him to go on, for it was [17] useless to stand droning there, he was not going to open his house at that time of night, or to such a ridiculous object. But though he banged the window to as closely as possible after delivering himself of this speech, the little man's menacing couplet yet reached his ear—

"The reckoning day
Is not far away[5]."

Nevertheless the Norg begged no more, but endeavoured to pass on his way. He could not get far: the torrents of rain had obliterated the path which led from the rising ground on which this house was built, to the next, and it was scarcely safe to descend in the dark with the loose stones rattling away under the feet. Fortunately a glimmering light betrayed a low hut built into the slope. It looked so poor and humble, that the Norg felt ashamed to ask aught of its inhabitants, who could scarcely have had enough for their own needs; but when he saw how utterly forlorn was his position, he sat down on a stone, and wept. Notwithstanding that the poor little Norg had such a hoarse voice that it was more like that of a wild animal than a man, there was a compassionate little maid within who perceived it was a voice of distress, and put her head out to ask who was there. "Poor old [18] man!" she cried; "come inside and dry yourself, and let me give you something warm." But before he could answer he heard a weak voice within, "Beware, Theresl, of the wolves—remember we are in 'Matsch der Wölfe Heimath[6].'" "Never fear, mother dear," replied the maiden, "this is no wolf, but a very distressed little old man, who does not look as if he could harm any one; and besides we are now in June—the wolves don't threaten us in the summer," and she opened the door, and let in the little man.

By the time she had dried his clothes and fed him with some warm soup, the worst of the storm had abated, and he was able to go on his way. The maiden offered him shelter for the night, but he declared he must reach home before midnight, and prepared to depart. Before he left he asked her what there was she most desired. "Oh, that my mother be restored to health!" answered Theresa; "I desire nothing more than that!"

The Norg walked to the bedside, and informed himself of the nature of the sick mother's illness. "Your mother shall be cured," said the little man; "but you must come to me to-morrow at midnight to the Nörgelspitz;" and as the girl started at the impossibility of the feat, he continued, "You have only to make your way as far as the *Wetterkreuz*, and there call three times 'Kruzinegele! Kruzinegele! [19] Kruzinegele!' and I will be at your side, and take you up the rest of the way." And he took his departure, singing,—

"Morgen oder Heut
Kommt die Zahlzeit."

The next night Theresa courageously set out on her way, and climbed as far as the *Wetterkreuz*—and it was lucky she had to go no farther, for here she sank down quite exhausted. She had not lain there many seconds when she saw a procession of little men just like Kruzinegele, with a litter and torches, who carried her up till they came to a door in the rock, which opened at their approach. This led to a magnificent crystal hall glittering with gold and gems, and on a gold throne sat Kruzinegele himself, with his fair daughter by his side. When the litter was brought to the steps of the throne, he came down courteously, and renewed his thanks for her hospitality, but she could not find a word to say, in her astonishment at seeing him so changed. Meantime he sent his daughter to fetch the herbs which were to cure the poor mother, and gave them to her, telling her how to administer them. "You see," he added,—

"Morgen oder Heut
Kommt die Zahlzeit;

and your rich neighbour will find it so too." Then he told the little men to carry her [20]

home, and they laid her in the litter, and bore her away; and she remembered nothing more till she found herself comfortably in bed, with the rising sun kissing her cheeks. But the appearance of every thing was as much changed as Kruzinegele himself had been! The walls that used to bulge, and reek with mildew and damp, were straight and smooth; glass casements replaced the ricketty shutters; nice white curtains tempered the sunshine; the scanty and broken furniture was replaced by new. But what she valued above all, in her hand were the herbs which were to make her mother's healing drink! Their decoction was her first occupation; and by the next day they had restored her mother to health, and joy once more reigned in the cottage, thanks to the Norg!

It had been the rich churl's custom, equally with the other villagers, to take his cattle on to the mountain pastures to graze for the beginning of the summer season *am Johanni*[7]. His grazing ground was just the highest pasture of the Nörgelspitz. The festival now soon arrived, and the picturesque processions of cattle with their herds went lowing forth as usual, to enjoy their summer feed.

When the Norg's enemy, however, arrived at his destination, instead of the emerald slopes he was wont to find, with their rich yield of *marbel* and *maim*[8], all [21]
ready prepared by St. Martin's care[9] for the delight of his cows and sheep, all was stony and desolate! Three days they spent wandering about in search of a few blades to browse, but even this was denied them—nor ever again did the Nörgelspitz bring forth any thing but ice and snow!

Of the sleek droves which had started, the envy of all beholders, few beasts lived to return; the prosperity of the once flourishing *Hof* had fled, and before many years were out its proprietor was obliged to leave it, a ruined man. Theresa had in the meantime married a thrifty peasant, whose industry enabled him to be the purchaser of the abandoned Hof, which he soon stocked to the full extent of former days. Ofttimes a curious grey-bearded little stranger would drop in at night to share their comfortable meal, and before he went away he would always sing his couplet—

"Morgen oder Heut
Kommt die Zahlzeit."

Such occasional apparitions of the strange visitants excited the curiosity of the inhabitants of the earth to the utmost, and many a weird story was told of frightful injury happening to those who had striven to penetrate their retreat, and for a long [22]
period none had any success in the enterprise.

It happened one day, however, that a daring hunter who had been led far from his usual track, and far from the country with which he was familiar, by the pursuit of a gemsbock, found himself at the entrance of a low-arched cavern. As night was about to fall and the sky wore a threatening aspect, he was glad to creep within this shelter till the light of morning should enable him to find his way home once more.

He had not proceeded far within the dim corridor, when he perceived that in proportion as he got farther from the light of day the cave became brighter instead of darker! Eagerly seeking the cause of this phenomenon, he perceived that the walls were all encrusted with gold and precious stones, which emitted constant sparkles of light. He thereby recognized at once that he had reached an approach to one of the resorts of the Mountain-folk, as the Norgs were also called from having their habitation in the hearts of the mountains.

To avoid the fate of those who had ventured within the mysterious precincts, he was about to make good his escape, when he felt something soft under his feet. It proved to be a red hood or cap, dropped there by one of the Mountain-folk, a veritable *Tarnkappe* which had the property of making the wearer invisible to men, and also enabled him to command admission to any part of the subterranean settlement. He had scarcely placed it on his head when one of the little men of the [23]
mountain came running up to look for his lost cap. Fritzl the hunter was much too cunning to give up the advantage of its possession, but with great good humour he told the dwarf he reckoned it too great an advantage to have the opportunity of visiting his beautiful territory to give it up for nothing; but he assured him he should have no reason to regret having given him admission. The dwarf could not choose but obey, and the *Jäger* enjoyed the singular privilege of surveying all the hidden treasures of the underground world.

Beautiful are the glories of the mountain world as seen by mortal eyes—gorgeous its colours when illumined by the southern sun, but all this is as barren darkness compared with the glories hidden within its stony recesses. Here, the sky overhead was all of diamonds and sapphires and carbuncles, and their light sparkled with tenfold glory and beauty to the light of the sun and moon and stars; the trees were of living gold and silver, and the flowers and fruit of precious stones; the grass all

of crystal and emerald; there was no cold or heat, no perplexing change of season, but one perpetual spring spread its balmy air around; lakes there were all of opal and mother-o'-pearl, and gorgeously plumed swans perpetually crossing them served the inhabitants in lieu of boats. [24]

The *Jäger's* delight and admiration at all these sights won the sympathy and regard of his guide, and by degrees he grew more communicative, and explained to him the whole economy of their mode of life. He showed him how they were divided into three distinct classes: those wearing red caps, who were gay and good-natured, and filled with goodwill towards mankind also, notwithstanding many wild pranks; those with brown caps, whose mischief was mingled with malice rather than fun, but who yet would suffer themselves to be propitiated; and those with black caps, always gloomy and morose, who boded evil wherever they went. His guide advised him to have nothing to say to these, but with some of the red and brown he was admitted to converse: he found them pleasant and sociable, and ready enough to communicate their ideas. Some asked him questions, too, about various matters which seemed to have puzzled them in their peregrinations on earth, while others, who had never been outside their own habitations, had other inquiries to make—but some there were also who had no curiosity on the subject, but rather contempt; and one thing that amused the *Jäger* in them was their incapacity to conceive many of the things he had to tell them, and particularly to understand what he could mean when he talked about death.

Chiefly to keep the spiteful freaks of the black-caps in check there was a guard of warrior dwarfs, whose array was shown to our *Jäger*. Formidable they must have been, for the armour of each was made out of one diamond, and they wore helmets and greaves and shields all of diamonds, and while they were thus impervious to every attack, their swords were of diamond too, and resistless therefore in their thrusts. [25]

The *Jäger* could not restrain his raptures at their gorgeous show, as the colours of the gems around were reflected in this shining armour.

The dwarf had nothing left to show after this, but then stood and sighed over the glories of the past. "And what were the glories of the past?" inquired the *Jäger*, with intense interest. The dwarf watched his interlocutor closely, and satisfied himself that his interest was not feigned. Then he paused long, as hesitating whether to unburden himself to a stranger of the sad thoughts which crowded into and oppressed his mind. A few words of sympathy, however, decided him at last

"Yes, we still have some power and some riches left, and some of our ancient strength, but we have lost our kings, the kernel of our strength. It is true, we are able to surprise you with isolated exhibitions of riches and power, but, on the whole, your people has got the better of ours; and since your heroes of old destroyed the last of our royal race, we have been a doomed, disorganized, dwindling race, fast disappearing from our ancient fastnesses." [26]

"And how happened it that our people got the better of yours? How did our heroes destroy your royal race? I pray you tell me."

The dwarf led the *Jäger* into a delicious alcove of the opal rock, whose pure, pale lustre seemed more in accordance with his melancholy mood than the garish brilliancies that had hitherto surrounded them. They laid them down on the bank, and the dwarf thus recounted the story.

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THE ROSE-GARDEN OF LAREYN, THE LAST NORG-KING.

The lineage of our kings had endured for countless generations, he said, and had always enjoyed the undeviating homage of our people.

In our kings were bound up our life and our strength; they were the fountain of our light and the guardians of our power. The royal race was a race apart which had never mingled with the race of the governed, yet which had never failed or been found wanting. But Adelgar cast his eyes on Hörele, one of the Norginnen of the common herd, and raised her to share his throne. The union not only was unblessed—what was worse, all the rest of the royal stock died out, and all the noble princes of his first marriage died away one after the other[10]; and when Hörele at last came to die herself, there was only one left. [27]

This was Lareyn, the last of his race. Adelgar looked around him with tears, for there was none left to whom he could marry his son, and he had experienced in himself the ill effects of departing from the ancient tradition which forbade him

from mingling his race with the race of the governed, and he bewailed his folly.

But Lareyn bethought him of a remedy; he determined to go out into the outer world, and choose him a wife among the daughters of its inhabitants, and bring her to reign over the mountain people and continue the royal stock. In a supreme council of the elders of the kingdom it was decided to approve what he proposed. But Adelgar only consented with much reluctance, and accompanied his permission with many conditions and counsels, the chief of which were that Lareyn and his suite should every one go forth clothed in a *Tarnhaut*[11], and that he should exercise his choice in a far distant country where the ways of the dwarfs [28] were not known, and where, whatever might befall, no friend of the bride could think of coming to his palace to seek her, for the old king rightly judged that the Christian folk would not willingly give a daughter of theirs to the Norgs.

Lareyn promised his father to attend to his injunctions, and gave orders to prepare a thousand suits of diamond armour for his body-guard, and five hundred suits of silk attire for his pages, who were to bear the gifts with which he meant to captivate the maiden of his choice, and *Tarnhauts* to cover them all—and, above all, the presents themselves of jewels and priceless goldsmith's works, at which the Norgen were very expert.

While all these things were being got ready Adelgar died, and Lareyn succeeded to the crown. However much he desired to adhere to his father's injunctions, he was forced to decide that under the altered circumstances it could not be well for him to journey to a distance from his kingdom, and to leave it long without a head. He determined, therefore, to search the neighbourhood for a maiden that should please him. In the meantime he made use of his newly acquired power to prepare a dwelling to receive her which should correspond with the magnificence of his presents, and by its dazzling lustre should make her forget all that she might be [29] inclined to regret in her earlier home. The highest title of honour was now promised to whoso of his subjects could point out to him an unexplored mine of beauty and riches. This was found in a vault all of crystal, which no foot of dwarf had ever trod. Lareyn was beside himself with gladness when he saw this; he ordered a hundred thousand dwarfs immediately to set to work and form of it a residence for his bride; to divide it into chambers for her use, with walls and columns encrusted with gold; to engrave the crystal with pleasing devices; and to furnish it with all that was meet for her service. Thus arose the great Krystallburg[12] ever famous in the lays of the Norgs, and which the cleverest and richest of the children of men might have envied. That so glorious a palace might be provided with a garden worthy of it, hundreds of thousands of other dwarfs were employed to lay out the choicest beds and bowers that ever were seen, all planted with roses of surpassing beauty, whose scent filled the air for miles round, so that, wherever you might be, you should know by the fragrant exhalation where to find the *Rosengarten* of King Lareyn[13]. Engrossed with these congenial [30] preparations, Lareyn forgot all his prudence and moderation: that they might be completed with all possible expedition the whole working community of the dwarfs was drawn off from their ordinary occupations; the cultivation of the land was neglected, and a famine threatened. Lareyn then would go out and make a raid on the crops of the children of earth, and take possession of whatever was required for the needs of his own people, without regard for the outcry raised against him, knowing that, strong in his supernatural strength, he had no retaliation to fear.

While thus he pursued his ravages every where with indiscriminating fury, he one day came upon the *arativo*[14] of a poor widow whose only son was her one support. The golden grain had been gathered into her modest barn just as Lareyn and his marauders came by; swift, like a flock of locusts, they had seized the treasure. The widow sobbed, and her stalwart son fought against them in vain; Lareyn was inexorable. At another time the good-nature of his Norg blood would have [31] prompted him at least to repay what he had appropriated in the gold and precious stones of which he had such abundant store, but now he thought of nothing but the prompt fulfilment of his darling design; and he passed on his way unheeding the widow's curse.

At last the Krystallburg was complete, and the Rosengarten budding ready to burst into a bloom of beauty. To so fair a garden he would have no other fence but a girdle of silk, only he gave it for further defence a law whereby any who should violate that bound should forfeit his left foot and his right hand.

Lareyn looked round, and his heart was content. He felt satisfied now that he had wherewithal to make any daughter of earth forget her own home and her father's people, how delightful soever might have been the place of her previous sojourn.

Donning his *Tarnhaut*, he went forth with his followers marshalled behind him, all equally hidden from human sight.

He wandered from castle to castle, from *Edelsitz*[15] to *Edelsitz*, from palace to palace, but nowhere found he the bride of his heart, till he came to the residence of the Duke of Styria. Here, in a garden almost as lovely as his own Rose-garden, he found a number of noble knights assembled, and their ladies, all of surpassing [32] beauty, taking their pleasure on the greensward amid the flowers.

Lareyn had never seen so much beauty and gallantry, and he lingered long with his attendant wights running from one to another, and scanning the attractions of each, as a bee hovers from flower to flower, gathering the honey from their lips. Each maiden was so perfect, that he would have been content with any one of them, but each was so guarded by her cavalier that he saw no way of approaching her; at last, driven to despair, he wandered away under the shade of a lonesome grove.

Here, under a leafy lime[16], his eye met a form of loveliness which surpassed the loveliness of all the dames he had heretofore seen put together, and he felt thankful now that he had not been able to possess himself of any of them, for then he had never seen her who now lay before him in all the bloom of her virgin perfection. Lareyn, accustomed to associate his conceptions of beauty with a dazzling blaze of gold and jewels, found an entirely new source of admiration in the simple attire of the Styrian princess, for it was Simild, daughter of Biterolf, Duke of Styria, who lay before him, seeking rest amid the midday heat, draped only in virgin white, with wreathed lilies for her single ornament. [33]

Lareyn stood absorbed for some time in contemplation of her perfect image. Then, hearing the voices of her companions drawing near, quickly he flung a *Tarnhaut* over her, so that they trooped by, searching for her, and passed on—seeing her not —to seek her farther. Then he beckoned to the bearers of a litter he had prepared in readiness to approach, into which her sylph-like form was soon laid; and over hill and dale he carried her towards the *Rosengarten*.

They had got some way before Simild woke. Lareyn rode by her side, watching for her eyes to open, and the moment she gave signs of consciousness he made a sign for the *cortége* to halt. Quick as thought a refection was laid out on the greensward, while a band of Norg musicians performed the most delicious melody.

Simild, enraptured with the new sights and sounds, gazed around, wondering where she was and what all the little creatures could be who hopped around ministering to her with so much thoughtfulness. Lareyn hastened to soothe her, but fancying that some of the Norgs were wanting in some of their due services to her, he rated them in such a positive tone of command that Simild began to perceive that he was the master of this regiment of ministrants, and hence she inferred that by some mysterious means she had fallen into his power; but what those means could be she was at a loss to conceive. [34]

Lareyn now displayed his presents, and in presenting them poured forth the most enthusiastic praise of her beauty. Simild's vanity and curiosity were both won; yet the strangeness of the situation, the sudden separation from her friends, her ignorance of what might be going to befall her, roused all her fears, and she continued to repeat in answer to all his protestations of admiration that she could listen to nothing from him till he had restored her to her home.

"This is the one thing, sweet princess, that I cannot do at your bidding," he replied. "Whatever else you desire me to do shall be instantly executed. And it is hardly possible for you to exhaust my capacity of serving you."

Then he went on to describe the magnificence and riches of his kingdom, and all the glories over which, as his bride, she would be called to reign, till her curiosity was so deeply excited, and her opposition to his carrying her farther grew so faint, that he lost no time in taking advantage of her mood to pursue the journey.

In the meantime the greatest consternation had fallen on all the friends of Simild. The maidens whose duty it was to wait on her sought her every where, and not finding her they were afraid to appear before her father. The knights and nobles who had been in her company were distracted, feeling the duty upon them to restore her, and not knowing which way to begin. The old Duke Biterolf shut [35] himself up within the palace and wept, objecting to see any one, for his heart was oppressed with sorrow; and he refused to be comforted till his child should be restored to him.

But Dietlieb, Simild's brother, a stout young sword[17], when he had exhausted every counsel that occurred to him for discovering his sister's retreat, determined to ride to Gardenna on the Garda-See, the castle where resided Hildebrand[18] the Sage, renowned for wisdom, and prudence, and useful counsel.

When Hildebrand the Sage saw him come riding yet a long way off, he said to

those who stood beside him on the battlements, “See Dietlieb the Styrian, how he rides! His heart is full of indignation. Up, my men, there is work for us; some one has done him a great wrong, and us it behoves to stand by him, and see him righted.”

Ute, Hildebrand’s wife, and her daughters prepared a warm welcome for the [36]
prince, as was due; and the heroes gathered round Hildebrand held out their hands to him as to one whose integrity and valour claimed their respect. Hildebrand himself led him to his chamber, and left to no maiden the task of helping him off with his armour[19], but with his own hand lifted off his helmet and laid by his good shield.

Then they placed refreshing wine from the cool cellar in the rock before him, and a banquet of many dishes, as became so worthy a guest. When the tables had been removed[20], Hildebrand invited his young guest to detail the cause which had brought him. Dietlieb, who was burning to tell the story of his mishap, poured out the details of his sister’s misadventure, without omitting the smallest incident which could serve Hildebrand to form an opinion as to the remedy to be adopted.

The event was so strange that Hildebrand himself could not venture all at once to divine the nature of the injury. But he forbore also to express his perplexity, lest the bold young Styrian should be discouraged. Without therefore expounding exactly what his views were, but determining to ponder the matter more deeply by the way, the advice he propounded in the first instance was, that they should all [37]
repair forthwith to seek the aid of Berndietrich[21].

The counsel was received with joyful acclamation; and loud was the clanging as every one ran to don his chain-armour, for all were glad to be called to deeds of high emprise, and such they deemed were in store for them if Dietrich von Bern was to be their leader.

Ute and her daughters, to whom their courage and mettle was well known, greeted them as they went forth with no sinking hearts, but gave them augury of good success.

As they journeyed along, they came to a broad heath, which they were about to pass over with their train, when up sprang a man of forlorn aspect, who cried after Hildebrand, and asked his aid.

Hildebrand, seeing him in such sorry plight, turned aside out of compassion, to ask what had befallen him. It was no other than the peasant—the widow’s son—whom Lareyn had so deeply wronged, and, seeing the heroes go forth in such brave array, he besought their aid against the oppressor of his mother. Some of them laughed at his wild mien and uncouth gestures, but Hildebrand the Sage took him apart, and lost not a word of his story of how the Norg-king lived in the heart of the mountains, of how he came out with his mighty little men, and ravaged all the face of the country, contrary to all the habits of his former life, and of how it was [38]
all because his own labourers were engaged in preparing the most magnificent palace for the reception of a daughter of earth, whom he meant to make his bride.

Hildebrand now felt he knew all, and with the help of the poor countryman, the widow’s son, would be able to conduct the heroes into his retreat, inflict condign punishment, and release the captive princess.

How, with purely natural means, to overcome the resistless strength of the Norgs did not indeed make itself apparent; this was matter for further consideration, and sufficed to engross his thoughts for the rest of the journey. Of one thing he was satisfied—that he was right in claiming the intervention of Berndietrich, whose traffic with the supernatural powers[22] made him, of all the wigands[23], alone [39]
capable of conducting such an expedition.

Hildebrand and his companions were received by Theodoric with hearty welcome and hospitable care and cheer. As they sat at table, all the heroes together vied with each other in lauding the prowess of Theodoric, till they had pronounced him the bravest sword of which the whole world could boast.

This was the time for Hildebrand. “No!” he cried, as he upsprang, and by his determined manner arrested the attention of all the wigands. “No, I say! there is [40]
one mightier than he; there is one with whom he has never yet ventured to measure his strength——”

“Who? Name him!” shouted Theodoric, rising to his feet, and glaring round him with defiant fury, only kept in check by his regard for Hildebrand.

“I speak of Lareyn, the Dwarf-king, the dweller in the depths of the mountains of Tirol,” replied Hildebrand, in a voice of firm assurance.

“The Dwarf-king!” exclaimed Theodoric, with incredulity and contempt; and he sat down again.

“As long as the Dwarf-king is suffered to live in his mountain stronghold, and to ravage the lands of the peaceful peasants, I call no man who knows of him a hero. But him who overcomes this little one—him I will call a hero indeed, above all others!”

“If your Dwarf-king were so formidable, *Meister* Hildebrand,” replied Theodoric, “you would have told me of him before now, I ween. How has he raised your wonderment just at this time?”

“Because just at this time his insolence has increased. He has built a palace surpassing all palaces in magnificence, which he calls his Krystallburg, and has surrounded it with a garden of beauty, which he calls his Rosengarten, fenced round only with a silken girdle, but of whomsoever crosses that boundary he forfeits the left foot and the right hand.” [41]

The report of this boast was enough to decide Theodoric, the impetuous sword. “If it is thus he vaunts him,” he cried, “he shall know that there is one will dare brave his decree, and destroy the garden his ferocity guards after the manner you describe.”

With that up he rose, and called for his Velsungen[24], for his armour he never put off, and he called for his helmet and his horse; and before another had time to frame his purpose, he had started, without parley and without guide.

Only Wittich the Wigand, his boon companion, who loved to share his rash ventures, and was familiar with his moods, could bestir himself to follow before he was too far gone to be overtaken.

To Tirol they rode by day and by night, without slacking rein, for their anger brooked no reprieve. They slacked not their speed for dell or mountain, and they rode forty miles through the dense forest; but every where as they went along they tested the air, as it was wafted past them, to see if they could discern the perfumes of the Rosengarten. At last, as they toiled up the mountain side, a majestic sight was suddenly opened to their view. The white shining rock of the living mountain was cut and fashioned into every pleasing device of turret and tower, diamonds and rubies were the windows, and the dome was of pure gold set with precious stones. “We have far to ride yet,” said Wittich the Wigand, as he scanned the lordly place. “And yet the perfume of the Rose-garden reaches even hither,” said the *Bernäre*[25]. “Then we know we are on the right track,” answered Wittich; so they put spurs to their horses, and rode forward with good heart. [42]

They had pushed on thus many a mile when the blooming Rosengarten itself came in sight, entrancing their senses with its beauty and its odours.

“What was that?” asked Theodoric, who always rode ahead, as some light obstruction made his mount swerve for a moment.

“Why, you have burst the silken girdle of King Lareyn’s Rosengarten!” said Wittich the Wigand; “so now we have incurred the vengeance of the little man.”

“Ah!” said Theodoric, as he gazed around, “let us not harm this pleasant place; sweetly are the flowers disposed, and in the fragrant hours of evening and of morning it must be well to be here: let us destroy naught!”

“Nay!” said honest Wittich, “came we not forth to destroy this devil’s-work, and to reduce the pride of the boasting Norg-king who spares none? Shall we return, and leave our work undone? I have no such mind; nothing will I leave of what we see before us now.” [43]

He dismounted to carry his threat into effect; and Theodoric, not to be behindhand, or to incur suspicion of fearing the Norg-king, dismounted too. Then with one consent they hewed down and rooted up the fair plants, till the whole garden was a wilderness, and they lay them down upon the grass to rest.

As they lay, there appeared before them, coming at full speed, as on swift wings, a knightly form clad in shining armour, so that Wittich cried, “See, Lord Dietrich, who comes to visit us—surely it is St. Michael, leader of the heavenly hosts!”

“I see no St. Michael,” answered Theodoric, sullenly. “It is one of no heavenly build, albeit he bears him so bravely. We may rue that we have loosed our helmets and shields, for methinks he regards us with no loving eye.”

While they spoke the rider had advanced over a good space of the way, and they could discern the manner of his bearing. His horse was lithe as a roe-buck upon

the wild mountain heights, and its housings of cloth-of-gold gave back the rays of the golden sun; the bridle was studded with precious stones, and embroidered with cunning workmanship of gold, moreover it was held in a commanding hand. The saddle was dazzling with rubies, and so were the stirrups no less; but the armour was most dazzling of all, and all hardened in dragon's blood[26]. His sword [44] of adamant could cut through steel and gold; the handle was one carbuncle, which darted rays of light. Over his breast-armour he wore a tight tunic of cloth-of-gold, with his arms embroidered in glowing colours. His helmet was of burnished gold and topazes mingling their yellow light, and between them many a carbuncle which by night gave the light of day, and from within it there sang pleasant voices of birds—nightingales, bulfinches, and larks, with softened voices, as if they lived, and breathed their song upon the branches of their native trees.

His shield was likewise of gold, and recorded many a deed of prowess of him who bore it; on it was painted a leopard, too, with head erect, as though preparing to spring upon his prey. In his right hand was a spear, and from its point floated a small red banner[27], on which appeared two swift greyhounds intent on following the wild game. But more imposing than all this display of gold and art was the rider's majestic mien, which was as of one used to know no law but his own will, and to be obeyed by all who approached him; and yet, with all this, he was only a span high! For it was King Lareyn, and he wore tightly buckled his girdle of [45] twelve-men's-strength.

Theodoric would gladly have laughed his little figure to scorn, but when he caught the fire of his eye he was fain to acknowledge he was no puny antagonist in fierce intention, whatever was his height.

Nor did Lareyn spare angry words when he had come up with the knights, and saw what they had done; there was no epithet of scorn in his vocabulary that he did not pour out upon them. He told them their lives were forfeit for the mischief they had wreaked upon his roses, and they could only redeem them by the surrender of their left foot and right hand.

Theodoric was not slow to pay back his vituperation in corresponding measure. He bid him remember what a little, wee mannikin he was; that his was not the right tone in which he ought to talk to princes. Had he ventured to ask a money-compensation, it would have been impertinent enough, but what he *had* asked was a ludicrous pretention.

"Money!" shouted the Norg, in no way disconcerted; "I have more gold at command than any three of you together. You call yourselves princes, do you? You have done no princely deed to-day; you have incurred the common penalty which I have decreed for all alike who trespass on my Rose-garden—so no more words: [46] hand over your horses, armour, and clothing[28], together with the left foot and right hand of each."

"Herr Dietrich!" interposed Wittich, "is it possible you have patience to listen to the insolent railing which this little mite pours out in his folly? Say but the word, and I will punish him once and for all. It needs but to take him and his mount by the leg, with one grasp of my strong hand, and knock their heads against the stone wall, that they may lie as dead as the roses we have already strewn around!"

"God is exhaustless in His wonders!" replied the *Bernäre*; "for aught we know, He has laid up within this mite's body all the strength of which he is so forward to boast: or by some magic craft he may have possessed himself of might commensurate with the riches which we can see plainly enough he has at command. If it comes to fighting, we will bear ourselves like men; but take my advice, and be not rash, for very much I doubt if we shall leave these mountains of Tirol alive this day."

"Now, prince of lineage high! if I knew not your prowess before this day," cried Wittich, beside himself with indignation, "I had said you were afraid of his sword, which a mouse might wield! Shall a Christian knight shrink before any pagan hound? But a thousand such wights as this could be overmatched by you; and [47] without arms you could smite them down, and hang them all on the trees!"

"Your ideas of your powers are not weak," interposed King Lareyn; "you talk of one of you being a match for a thousand such as I: come on, and let us see how you will bear you against *one* 'tiny antagonist'!"

Wittich's impatience knew no bounds at the challenge; without exchanging another word with Theodoric he sprang into the saddle, and Lareyn, who had chafed at being spoken of as an unworthy adversary, now drew himself up, proud to find Wittich did not scorn to meet him mounted.

They rode out opposite each other on the greensward with their lances poised, and

then dashed the one at the other like two falcons on the wing. Wittich, not at all wanting in the science of handling his lance, made sure to have hit Lareyn, but the spell that surrounded him protected him against the thrust, while his lance struck Wittich's throat where the helm was braced, and sent him backwards off the saddle on to the ground with great force. As he fell among the clover he vowed that no other lance had ever so offended him, for never before had victory appeared so easy. Hastily he sprang to his feet, to wipe away the shame by seeming indifference; but Lareyn stood before him in the long grass with his sword [48]
ready to take the forfeit he demanded, the left foot and the right hand,—and *would* have taken it, but Theodoric deemed it time to interfere; he said he should have reckoned it a shame on him could it have been said of him that he had stood by while a companion was made to pay so hard a penalty for so small a harm.

"What is a shame to you is no affair of mine," cried Lareyn in return; "but instead of defending your companion, it behoves you to defend yourself, for, as you had your part in the destruction of the garden, I demand my forfeit equally of you, and your left foot and right hand I must have. Stand on guard then! for I am a match for twelve such as you."

The words stung Theodoric to the quick. But with what celerity soever he vaulted into the saddle, the moment had sufficed for Lareyn to bind fast Wittich to a tree, and gain his stirrups in time to confront his foe.

"I perceive you are the *Bernäre*," he said, "by your shield and helm; and never have I poised lance so gladly against any foe, and never have had such satisfaction in triumph as I shall when I have you bound by the side of your companion, and when the great Dietrich von Bern shall lie in the bonds of the little Norg!"

"Dwarf! waste not words," cried Theodoric, in a terrible voice, his eyes flashing [49]
fire; his spear trembling in his hand with the fury that burnt within him. Before the foes could meet, however, and not a whit too soon, Hildebrand appeared upon the scene, having found his way, with the bold Wolfhart who never shrank from any fight, and Dietlieb the *Steieräre*[29], by the guidance of the injured widow's son.

Hastily Hildebrand reached Theodoric's ear: "Fight him not in that way," he said; "he has ever the advantage with the lance, and if he hurled you from the saddle, where would be your princely honour? Never could you again reign in your Hall of Verona. Dismount, and meet him on foot upon the grass, and watch for what further may be suggested to us."

Theodoric gladly accepted the counsel of the sage, and, standing once more on the ground, called to the Norg to meet him there. Lareyn refused not, but met him with many a valiant thrust, which the wigand parried, and returned too, as best he might, with Hildebrand's counsel, till the little man complained of the interference, without which, he swore, Dietrich had been bound even as Wittich. But Theodoric bid him not talk, but fight, and with that planted him a blow between the eyes which shut out the light of the sun. Hildebrand, meantime, released Wittich, as it behoved while one fought in his defence. But Lareyn, finding he could gain no [50]
signal advantage against the hero, drew his *Tarnhaut* from his pocket, and, slipping it over his head, became invisible to his antagonist. Now it was a weird running hither and thither, as the deft Norg paid out his cunning blows, and the bold wigand in vain sought him, that he might return them; now his blow fell on the stone wall, and now on a tree, while the Norg's mocking laughter echoed at each mistake.

"One counsel only I see," cried good Hildebrand, distressed to see his prince so hard thrust; "call to him to drop his sword, and wrestle with you; so shall you reach him, and at least know where he stands."

The hero followed the counsel of his master, nor did the Norg refuse. True, Theodoric now could at least feel his unseen foe, but he felt him to his cost, for it was impossible to stand against his strength, nor was it long before the dwarf forced the hero down upon his knees on the grass. Great was the wigand's distress, for never had antagonist so dealt with him before.

"Dietrich! beloved lord," cried Hildebrand, "list to my word. One way of safety there is: wrench from him his girdle—his girdle which gives him twelve men's strength!"

Gladly Theodoric heard the counsel, nor was he long in finding with his hand the girdle; by it he raised King Lareyn from the ground, and dashed him down again, [51]
till the girdle burst and fell beneath their feet. Hildebrand quickly caught it up, lest the dwarf should again possess himself of it; but Lareyn gave a cry of despair which might have been heard o'er mountain and forest three days' journey off! Then, with doleful voice, he said,—

“Dietrich von Bern! if you are the noble sword for which men hold you, you will be now content, and will give me my life; while I will be your tributary, and mighty are the gifts I have to offer you.”

“No!” replied Theodoric; “your haughtiness and pretensions have been too gross. I pardon not such as you so easily; we must have another trial, in which you must yield up your worthless life.”

“I have no power in fighting against such as he now, without my girdle,” mused the Norg; “my only chance of safety lies in getting one of the heroes who is equal to him to fight for my cause in my place. So he made up to Dietlieb the *Steieräre*, and conjured him, as he was his brother-in-law, to help him in his need—even as he loved his sister’s honour.”

“True!” replied Dietlieb; “since you confess honestly that you have my sister, it is meet that I should be your champion; and I will deliver you or die.” With that he went to Theodoric, and prayed him earnestly four times, by his regard for knightly honour, for woman’s worth, for friendship, and for virtue—four things which, at [52] receiving his sword, every knight bound himself to honour, that he would spare Lareyn. But Theodoric was not to be moved, and each time only swore the harder that he would fight it out to the last; that Lareyn had offended him too deeply, and that he could not be suffered to live. When Dietlieb found the ambassage he had undertaken unsuccessful, and that he would have to own his failure, he grew impatient and wroth, and riding his horse up to Theodoric, he proclaimed in a loud voice,—

“Be it known, Prince Dietrich, highly praised, that I declare King Lareyn, great in power and riches, *shall not* be bound your prisoner, nor his life taken; that I appear here to answer for him with brotherly service, and that either he shall be let go scot free, or in my person only shall the death-blow be dealt out for him.”

Theodoric, unwilling to enter a feud of life and death with one of his own allies, and yet too proud to refuse the challenge, answered him nothing. But Dietlieb took the Norg and hid him away in safety in the long grass out of Theodoric’s sight, and then returned ready to confront him. Theodoric, finding he was determined in his attack, called for his horse, and bound on his helmet, his shield he took in his hand, and hung his sword to his girdle.

“Think not I spare you more than another, Lord Theodoric, when I have found the [53] cause I ought to defend,” cried Dietlieb, and his flashing eye told that he would fight his fight to the end.

Theodoric still said no word, but his anger was the more desperate.

Thus minded, they rode at each other, and the lance of each hurled the other from his horse upon the grass. Up each sprang again, and drew his trenchant sword; the one struck, and the other pierced, till the grass all around, as high as their spurs, was dyed as red as the roses they had destroyed anon. Then Theodoric dealt such a mighty stroke on Dietlieb’s helmet that the fire flashed again, and he thought, “Now have I conquered him and Lareyn at one blow.” But Dietlieb, recovering from the momentary shock, struck Theodoric’s shield with such force that he dashed it from his grasp; you might have heard the clash a mile off!

When the bold Theodoric found he had his shield no longer, he took his sword in both his hands, and gave the wigand such a mighty *Schirmschlag*[30] that he felled him to the ground.

“Now then, foolish man!” he cried, in scorn, “do you still hold out for Lareyn?” [54]

Dietlieb sprang to his feet once more with a start which made his armour ring again, and, for an answer, ran at Theodoric, and tried to repeat his stroke; but Theodoric was more difficult to bring down, and answered his attack by striking him on the rim of his shield so forcibly that he loosed the band by which he held it.

Meantime, Hildebrand had been occupied stirring up the other wigands to part the combatants, and at this moment Wittich and Wolfhart came up to Dietlieb and seized him, and with main force dragged him off the field; while Hildebrand reasoned with Theodoric about the merit and friendship of Dietlieb, and the advantage of compromise now that he had done enough to prove his superiority in the fight. Theodoric, who ever gave weight to Hildebrand’s reasoning, agreed to be friends again with Dietlieb, and to leave Lareyn his life and liberty, only exacting homage and tribute of him. To these terms Dietlieb also agreed, and all entered the bonds of good friendship.

Lareyn, who had watched the combat and listened to the treaty of peace from his hiding-place in the long grass, gave in his adhesion, promising to pay tribute of all his wealth.

“And now, good brother-in-law,” he said, addressing Dietlieb, “or brother-in-law that-is-to-be,—for Simild has not yet given her consent to be my wife—let us talk a little about your lovely sister. You are doubtless burning to know how I became [55] possessed of her, and I no less to tell.” Then he told him how he had found her under the *linden*-tree, and had enveloped her in the *Tarnhaut* and carried her away unseen by mortal eye; and of how all Norgdom was subject to her, of how he had laid an empire of boundless wealth at her feet, and how, if she preferred reigning on earth, he was able to buy a vast kingdom to endow her with. Then he noticed that the day was declining, and they far from shelter, and bade them all welcome to his underground home, promising them good cheer and merry pastime. Dietlieb, anxious to see his dear sister again, accepted the offer, and the other wigands agreed to follow him. Stern Hildebrand the Sage would have preferred camping in the open air, but Theodoric told him it would be a shame on his name before all heroes if, having been so near the Norg kingdom, of which all had heard, he should have feared to make acquaintance with its economy and government. All the others were of his mind, but Hildebrand reminded Theodoric, that as he whom all were ready to obey had counselled incurring the danger, he made himself responsible for all their lives. “He who gave us prudence will guard our lives and honour,” said the prince; and without further parley they rode on, after Lareyn’s guidance.

On they rode, through thick forest and narrow mountain-path, till, as it grew dark, they came to a golden door in the rock. It opened at Lareyn’s approach, and the [56] moment they had passed within they found themselves surrounded by a light above the light of day from the shining stones that glittered around. Trumpets sounded to herald their entrance. As they advanced through the sparkling trees friendly birds warbled a sweet welcome; and as they neared the hall soft melodies of lutes and harps enchanted their ear. All around them the Norgs disported themselves, ready to render any service the wayfarers might require. Refreshment was all ready, as if they had been expected; and when the wigands had done justice to the spread, they were led each to his apartment to take their rest, which they well needed.

In the morning Lareyn prayed them to stay and enjoy the wonders of his kingdom and taste his hospitality, whereupon new debate arose. Theodoric was disposed to trust him; and Dietlieb desirous to keep friends with him for the sake of his sister; while Wolfhart was ready for any sort of adventure; but Wittich, who had tasted the effects of Lareyn’s guile and strength, used all his persuasion to induce the others to return, and prudent Hildebrand deemed it the wiser part. At last, however, Wolfhart said, scornfully to Wittich, that if he was afraid to stay he could go back; he had no need to spoil their pleasure. After that Wittich said no more, but by his sullen looks he showed he disapproved the venture. [57]

Lareyn, seeing them doubtful, came up, and with much concern bid them have no hesitation or fear, for all they saw was at their service—they had but to command. To which Theodoric made answer that such words were princely indeed, and if his deeds accorded therewith he never would have reason to rue the league he had made with them.

Then with delight Lareyn led them through the riches of his possessions. So much heaped-up gold, so many precious stones, such elaborate handiwork none of Theodoric’s band had ever seen before; and the place rang with their exclamations of wonder.

But all this was nothing to the cunning feats of the Norgs, who, at a sign from Lareyn, displayed their various talents before the astonished eyes of the heroes. Some there were who lifted great stones bigger than themselves, and threw them as far as the eye could reach, then by swiftness attained the goal before the stone they threw! Others rooted up great pine-trees, and broke them across as sticks. Others did feats of tilting and horsemanship, and others danced and leapt till the knights were lost in wonder at their agility and strength.

Lareyn now called his guests in to dine; and all manner of costly dishes were set before them, arranged with greater care and taste than Theodoric was used to in his own palace, while sweet-voiced minstrels sang, and nimble Norgs danced. In the midst of the repast, Simild, summoned by Lareyn, entered the hall, attended by [58] a train of five hundred choicely-robed *Norginnen*; her own attire a very wonder of art. It was all of silk and down, and set off with ornaments of jewellery beyond compare with any on earth; stones there were of value enough to ransom three kingdoms; and in her coronet one which lighted up the hall with its radiance—meet crown of her own loveliness! At Lareyn’s courteously worded request she gave all the guests a joyful welcome, with a word of praise from her rosy lips for each, for their fame of knightly deeds. But when she saw Dietlieb her joy knew no bounds; they embraced each other with the heartfelt joy of those who have been long and cruelly separated.

“Tell me, sister mine,” said Dietlieb, anxiously turning to account the brief opportunity her embrace gave him of whispering into her ear, “is it of your own will that you are here, in this strange mountain dwelling? is this Lareyn dear to you? and do you desire to dwell with him? Or has his artifice been hateful to you? Say, shall I rid you of his presence?”

“Brother, it is your help I need to decide this thing,” replied the maid. “Against Lareyn’s mildness I have no word to say: gift upon gift has been heaped upon me; with honour after honour have I been endowed; and every wish of mine is fulfilled ere it is born. But when I think of Him of whom all our pleasures are the bounty, I [59] feel no pleasure in pleasures so bestowed. This pagan folk holds Christ, our dear Lord, in hate—and when I think of Him, I long to be again in Christendom[31].”

“Yes, Simild, sister dear, in Christendom is your place, not here; and since such is your mind, cost what it will, I will set you free from the Norg-king’s power,” was Dietlieb’s answer; and there was no time for more, for Lareyn called them back to the fresh-dressed banquet.

“Come, new allies but trusted friends!” cried the dwarf, “come, and let us be merry, and pledge our troth in the ruby bowl! Lay aside your heavy arms and armour, your sword and shield. Let us be light and free as brothers together.”

As he spoke a whole host of waiting-men appeared, who helped the knights off with their armour, and brought them robes of rich stuffs and costly work. The guests suffered them to do their will, for they were lost in admiration at the choice [60] banquet; at the table, all of ivory inlaid with devices of birds and game so lifelike they seemed to skim across the board; at the vessels of silver and gold and crystal of untiring variety of design; and, above all, at the order and harmony with which all was directed.

Cool wine from cellars under earth was now served round[32]; then various dishes in constant succession, each rarer than the last; and then again sounded soft, clear voices to the accompaniment of the harmonious strings. And again and again the tankards were filled up with *Lautertrank*, *Moras*[33], and wine.

At last the tables were drawn away, and at the same time Simild and her maids withdrew; but many an hour more the guests sat while the music and the singing continued to charm them. But lest even this should weary, King Lareyn, as if determined there should be no end to the change of pastimes with which he had undertaken to amuse his guests, sent to fetch a certain conjuror who dwelt in the heart of a high mountain, and whose arts surpassed any thing that had been done before. The magician came at his bidding, and exhibited surprising evidences of [61] his craft, till at last the king said,—

“You are a cunning man, no doubt, but there is one exhibition of your power you have never been able to give me, and I shall think nothing of your art till you can satisfy me. In this country within the mountains, these jewels fixed in vault, wall, and sky, weary one with their perpetual glare. Make them to move as the luminaries of earth, so that we may have calm, peaceful night for repose.”

“True, O king! I have never before been able to accomplish this desire,” replied the magician; “but now I have acquired this art also, and waited for a fitting occasion to make the first display of the same.”

“No occasion can be more fitting than the present,” answered Lareyn, “when by its inauguration you shall celebrate the visit of my honoured guests, and also by its achievement afford them that rest from the glare of day to which they are accustomed in their own nights.”

“I desire but to obey,” replied the magician; and forthwith he threw on to the fire that burnt on a black stone before him, a powder which no sooner touched the flame than a pale blue smoke arose with pleasing scent, and, curling through the hall, presently extinguished the brilliant shining of every countless jewel with [62] which the walls and roof were set.

“Now, if you are master of your art,” continued the king, “let us have light once more.”

The magician, wrapt in his incantation, spoke not, but dropped another powder on the flame, which at once sent up a wreathing fume of rainbow hues, carrying back to every precious stone its lustre.

“Wondrous!” “Brave artist!” “Wondrous show indeed!” were the exclamations which broke spontaneously from every lip.

“Now let it be dark again,” said the king; and the magician quenched the sparkling

light as before.

“Now light,” he cried; and so alternated until the sight was no longer new. Now, it was dark, and this time Lareyn called no more for light, nor spoke, and the silence was long; till the heroes grew anxious, and Wittich turned to where Wolfhart had sat, and said, “I like not this: who knows but that while we can see naught the Norgs may fall upon us and destroy us?” But Wolfhart answered not, for a stupor had fallen upon him that the fumes had been gifted to convey; and Wittich, too, felt their influence before he could utter another word; so it was with Hildebrand the Sage no less. Theodoric only had time to answer, “Such treachery were not princely; and if Lareyn means harm to us, he may be sure he will rue this day,” and [63] then sleep fell upon him as on the others.

Dietlieb had already left the hall, thinking under cover of the darkness to find his sister, but being met by a page had been conducted to his apartment, and knew nothing of what had befallen the others.

Lareyn, meanwhile, sought out Simild in anxious mood. “Ever lovely virgin!” he exclaimed, “support me with your prudent counsel in this strait. I have already told you how your people have avenged on me that I have loved you; how they have laid low my silken fence and golden gates, and wasted my choice garden of roses. Good reprisals I had thought to have taken, and had I been left man to man against them I had overcome them all; but Hildebrand the Sage interposed his advice: it was thus the *Bernäre* had the advantage over me, and had it not been for your brother Dietlieb’s stout defence, he had even taken my life. But in all the other four beside him there is no good, and in one way or another I had found means to rid me of them, but for Dietlieb’s sake, who would be as ready to oppose me in their defence as he opposed Dietrich in mine. So, fair lady mine, say how shall I end this affair?”

“If you would follow my advice,” replied Simild, “be not rash; and, above all, use no treachery; keep to the pact of peace that you have sworn; and be sure the [64] Christian knights will not go back from their plighted word. But in place of the little girdle of twelve-men’s-strength that they took from you, here is a ring of equal power which your seven magicians welded for me: with that you will feel all your old consciousness of strength and dignity. But, by all you hold dear, let the wigands go forth with honour!”

Lareyn was not slow to own that the counsel was good, and spoke as if he would have followed it. But when he put on the ring, and found himself endowed once more with twelve men’s strength, he could not forbear taking his sweet revenge for his yesterday’s defeat and danger.

First, he had sevenfold bolts put on Dietlieb’s door, that he might not be able to come forth and aid his brethren; and then he sent and called for one of the giants, who were always true allies to the dwarfs, and entreated him to carry the heroes to a deep dungeon below the roots of the mountains, where they should be bound, and shut out from the light of day, and never again be able to do him harm.

The feat pleased the giant well; and, having bound a cord round the waist of each of the sleeping heroes, slung the four over his shoulder as if they had been no heavier than sparrows, and carried them to the dungeon below the roots of the mountains, whither Lareyn led the way, now skipping, now dancing, now singing, [65] now laughing in high glee, to think how well he had succeeded in ridding him of his foes—but forgetting all about Simild’s advice, and his promise to her.

It was not till next morning that the heroes woke; and then all was cold and dark around them, and they knew they were no longer in the hall of the banquet, for the iron chains and stanchions, the chill, and must, and damp, and slime, told them they were in a dungeon under earth.

Loudly they all exclaimed against the deceit with which they had been caught, and loudly they all swore to find means to punish the treacherous captor. But Theodoric’s anger was greater than the anger of them all; and the fiery breath[34] glowed so hot within him that it scorched away the bonds with which he was bound!

Once more, then, his hands at least were free, and his companions gave him joy; but his feet were still held to the rock by chains of hard steel, the links as thick as a man’s arm. Nevertheless, his indignation was so great that when he beat them [66] with his fists they were obliged to yield, as they had been made of egg-shell; and when he had broken his own chains he set to work and released the others also.

Great was their joy and thankfulness; but heaviness came down on them again when they saw themselves closed in by the cruel rock, and all their armour and weapons of defence locked up far away from them in the Norg’s castle. Another day they lay there in despair, and another, for wise Hildebrand saw no way of

passing through the rock[35].

Meantime Simild had grown uneasy at the silence that reigned in the palace; there was no more sound of revel and festivity, and of entertaining guests. She was no more sent for to entertain them, and Lareyn hid himself from her, and avoided her. In dire fear she hunted out the right key of her brother's apartment, and having covered the glowing carbuncle in her coronet, which lighted up every place, crept along silently till she had reached him.

"Sister mine!" exclaimed Dietlieb, "what does this mean? why am I held fast by seven locks? and why do no tidings of my companions reach me? Oh! had I but my [67] sword and shield, I would release them from the hands of Lareyn, and of how many Norgs soever he may have at his command! or at least I would not survive to bear the shame of living while they are in I know not what plight."

"Dietlieb, be guided by me," replied the maiden: "we must deliver them out of the dire dungeon in which Lareyn has treacherously confined them, but also we must have your life and honour safe. Take this ring upon your hand, for against him who wears it none can prevail; and then go and deliver your companions." With that she took him along to where his armour lay concealed; and having girt him with it, she said many a fervent blessing[36] over him, to preserve him from harm.

Endowed with the strength the ring gave him, Dietlieb was able to load himself with the arms and armour of all the four heroes; and at its command a way was made in the rock, through which he passed it in to them. As each piece fell upon the hard floor, the clang re-echoed through the far-off mountains.

Lareyn heard the noise, and knew what had befallen, so he sounded on his horn the note that was known far and wide through all the lands of the Norgs; and at [68] the call three hundred thousand dwarfs appeared swarming over the whole face of the country.

"To me, my men! to me!" cried Lareyn, as they drew near. "Before you stands he who has essayed to release our enemies whom I and the giant had bound under the roots of the mountains. He has given them back their strong armour and their weapons of war, and if they get loose and come among us, great havoc will they make of us, therefore smite him down and destroy him!"

The dwarfs rushed on Dietlieb at the bidding of the king; but Lareyn would not engage him himself, because he had fought for his release. Dietlieb, young and strong, stood planted against a vault of the rock, and as the mannikins approached him, he showered his blows upon them, and sent them sprawling, till the dead and mangled were piled up knee-deep around him.

The heroes heard the sound of the battle in their prison, and they longed to take their part in the fray; but they saw no means of breaking through the rock to reach him, till Hildebrand bethought him that he had yet with him the girdle he had picked up when Theodoric tore it from the Norg-king's body. This he now handed to the hero.

Theodoric took it, and spoke not for joy, but with its strength tore down the living rock round the opening Dietlieb's ring had made, and burst his way to stand [69] beside the brave young *Steieräre*. This done, scorning the girdle's strength, he cast it back to Hildebrand, trusting in his good sword alone.

"Now, treacherous dwarf, come on!" he cried. "No knightly troth has bound you, but against us, your guests and allies, you have acted as one who has no right to live! Come here, and let me give you the guerdon you have earned!"

Lareyn refused not; and the two fought with fury terrible to behold. And yet Theodoric prevailed not. Then Hildebrand discerned the ring of twelve-men's-strength on Lareyn's hand, where it was not before, and knew it was a talisman, so he called to Theodoric, and said,—

"Dietrich, my prince, seize yonder ring upon the Norg-king's hand! so shall his strength be no more increased by the powers of his magic."

Theodoric, ever prone to be guided by the advice of the Sage, directed a mighty blow upon the ring, so that the hoop must fain give way; and the dwarf's power went from him.

"Now all your hosts, and all your arts, and all your gold shall profit you nothing more!" So cried the *Bernäre*; "but condign penalties you must suffer for your crime. My prisoner you are, nor is there any can deliver you more."

The Norgs, grieving for their king's loss, trooped round Theodoric and attacked him on every side; but he swang his good sword Velsungen around, and at every [70]

sweep a hundred Norg's heads fell pattering at his feet. Suddenly a little dwarf came running out from the mountain rock, and seizing Lareyn's horn, blew on it notes which wandered wild through all the forest-trees.

Five giants lived in the forest, and when they heard those notes they knew the Norgs were in dire distress. With swift strides they came; their helmets flashed like lightning over the tops of the pines; and each brought his sword and pike of trenchant steel. The little dwarf saw his brethren mown down like grass before the scythe, and again sent forth his far-sounding notes of distress. The giants heard it, and marched over hill and dale, till they came before the mountain-side. Again the little dwarf sent out his appeal, and the giants burst their way through the mountain; but albeit they came with such speed, twelve thousand Norgs were meantime lost to King Lareyn by Velsungen's strokes.

Dietlieb and Hildebrand, Wittich and Wolfhart mowed down their harvest too.

Now they had to prepare for another kind of attack, for in fearful array the five giants came down upon them, brandishing their clubs of steel. But neither could these stand before the swords of the heroes, and each several one laid low his adversary.

When the Norgs saw that their king was bound, and their best fighting-men [71]
destroyed, and the giants themselves without breath, they knew they could stand no longer before the wigands, but each turned him and fled for refuge to the mountains.

The heroes then, seeing no more left to slay, went into the banquet-hall, where only Simild stood, for all the Norgs had hidden themselves in fear.

"Welcome, noble brother! and welcome, bold swords all!" cried the maid; "you have delivered us from this treacherous king. Now you will go home to your own land with glory and honour, and take me with you."

The heroes returned her greeting, and rejoiced in her praise; then they piled up the treasure on to waggons, all they could carry, and in triumph they made their way to earth, and Lareyn with them, bound.

First they directed their steps to Styria, till they came to the spreading linden-tree whence Simild had first been taken; for there sat Duke Biterolf, her father, bewailing his bereavement, and around him trooped her maidens lamenting their companion.

All was restored to joy and gladness now that Simild was at home again. They passed seven days in high festival, the heroes all together; and many a time they had to tell the tale of their bold deeds, and the wonders of the mountain-world. And the minstrels sang to the merits of the conquerors, while the merry bowl passed round and round. [72]

At last Theodoric rose and thanked Biterolf for his hospitality, who thanked him in return right heartily for the help he had lent his son. With that Theodoric took his leave, and along with him went Hildebrand the Sage, and Wittich the Wigand, and the strong Wolfhart, and King Lareyn too, of whom Theodoric made his court-fool in his palace at Verona. [73]

[Contents]

THE NICKEL[37] OF THE RÖHRERBÜCHEL.

From the fourteenth to the sixteenth, in some few places down to the seventeenth, centuries the mountains of Tirol were in many localities profitably worked in the search after the precious metals; many families were enriched; and the skill of the Tirolese miners passed into a proverb throughout Europe. When the veins lying near the surface had been worked out, the difficulty of bringing the machinery required for deeper workings into use, in a country whose soil has nowhere three square miles of plain, rendered the further pursuit so expensive that it was in great measure abandoned, though some iron and copper is still got out. There are many old shafts entirely deserted, and their long and intricate passages into the [74]
bowels of the earth not only afford curious places of excursion to the tourist, but are replete with fantastic memories of their earlier destination.

One of the most remarkable of these is the so-called Röhrerbüchel, which is situated between Kitzbühl and St. Johann, and not far from the latter place. It was one of the most productive and one of the latest worked, and it boasted of having the deepest shaft that had ever been sunk in Europe; but for above a hundred and

fifty years it has been *taub*[38], that is, *deaf*, to the sound of the pick and the hammer and the voices of the Knappen[39].

I have given you *my* way of accounting for the cessation of the mining-works. The people have another explanation. They say that the Bergmännlein, or little men of the mountains—the dwarfs who were the presiding guardians of these mineral treasures—were so disgusted with the avarice with which the people seized upon their stores, that they refused to lend them their help any more, and that without their guidance the miners were no longer able to carry on their search aright, and the gnomes took themselves off to other countries.

One of these little men of the mountains, however, there was in the Röhrerbüchle [75] who loved his ancient house too well to go forth to seek another; he still lingered about the mile-long clefts and passages which once had been rich with ore, and often the peasants heard him bewailing, and singing melancholy ditties, over his lonely fate. They even thought he came out sometimes to watch them sadly in their companionship of labour, and peeped through their windows at them in their cosy cottages, while it was cold and dark where he stood without: and many there were who took an interest in the *Nickel of the Röhrerbüchel*.

The Goigner Jössl[40] had been mowing the grassy slope near the opening of the Röhrerbüchl; he was just putting up his implements to carry home after his day's toil, when he espied the orphan Aennerl[41] coming towards him. Her dark eyes had met his before that day, and he never met her glance without a thrill of joy.

"I have been over to Oberndorf for a day's work," said orphan Aennerl, "and as I came back I thought I would turn aside this way, and see how you were getting on; and then we can go home together."

"So we will," answered Jössl; "but we're both tired, and the sun isn't gone yet— [76] let's sit down and have a bit of talk before we go."

Orphan Aennerl was nothing loath; and they sat and talked of the events of the day, and their companions, and their work, and the weather, and the prospects of the morrow. But both seemed to feel there was something else to be said, and they sat on, as not knowing how to begin.

At last Jössl removed his pointed hat from his head and laid it by his side, and took out and replaced the jaunty feathers which testified his prowess in the holiday sport[42], and finally cleared his throat to say, softly,—

"Is this not happiness, Aennerl?—what can we want more in this world? True, we work hard all day, but is not our toil repaid when we sit together thus, while the warm evening sun shines round us, and the blue heaven above and the green fields below smile on us, and we are *together*? Aennerl, shall we not be *always* happy together?"

They were the very words that orphan Aennerl had so often longed to hear her Jössl say. Something like them she had repeated to herself again and again, and [77] wondered if the happy day would ever come when she should hear them from his own lips. Had he said them to her any day of her whole life before, how warmly would she have responded to them!

To-day, however, it was different. The rich peasant's wife for whom the poor orphan worked had been harsh to her that day, and for the first time envious thoughts had found entrance into her mind, and discontent at her lowly lot.

So, instead of assenting warmly, she only said,—

"Of course it's very nice, Jössl, but then it's only for a little bit, you see. The hard toil lasts all day, nevertheless. Now to have a Hof[43] of one's own, like the one I work upon at Oberndorf, with plenty of cattle, and corn, and servants to work for you, *that's* what *I* should call being happy! Sitting together in the sunset is all very well, but we might have that besides."

The good, hard-working, thrifty, God-fearing Jössl looked aghast to hear his Aennerl speak so. Beyond his day's wage honestly worked for, and the feather in his *Trutzhut* bravely contended for, and his beloved Aennerl wooed with tenderness and constancy—he had not a thought or a wish in the wide world. Hitherto her views had been the counterpart of his; now, for the first time, he perceived there was something had come between them, and he felt disappointed [78] and estranged.

"If *that's* your view, Aennerl girl, it isn't the Goigner Jössl that will be able to make

you happy," replied the youth at length, coldly; "your best chance would be with the Nickel of the Röhrerbüchel," he added, almost bitterly, as one who would say, Your case is desperate; you have no chance at all.

"What was that?" said Aennerl, suddenly starting. "Who can be working so late? Don't you hear a pick go 'click, clack'? Who can it be?"

"No one is working at this hour," replied Jössl, in no mood to be pleased at the interruption. But as he spoke the bells of the villages around toned forth the *Ave-Maria*. Both folded their hands devoutly for the evening prayer; and in the still silence that ensued he could not deny that he heard the sound of the pick vigorously at work, and that, as it seemed, under the ground directly beneath their feet.

"It is the Bergmännlein—it *must be* the Bergmännlein himself!" exclaimed Aennerl, with excitement.

"Nonsense! what silly tales are you thinking of?" replied Jössl, inwardly reproaching himself for the light words he had just spoken suggesting the invocation of a superstition with which his honest, devout nature felt no sympathy; and, without letting the excited girl exert herself to catch the strange sounds [79]
further, he led her home.

Aennerl's curiosity was roused, however, and was not to be so easily laid to rest.

The next evening Jössl's work lay in a different direction, but no sooner had the hour of the evening rest arrived than he started on the road to Oberndorf, to see if he could meet his Aennerl coming home. But there was no Aennerl on the path; and he turned homewards with a heavy heart, fearing lest he had offended her, and that she was shunning him.

But Aennerl, whom the desire of being rich had overcome with all the force of a new passion, had been more absorbed on that last memorable evening by the idea of having heard the Bergmännlein at work amid the riches of the mines than with —what would have been so terrible a grief at any other time—having offended her faithful Jössl. Accordingly, on the next evening, instead of being on the look-out for Jössl to walk home with her, her one thought had been to find out the same place on the bank where they had sat—not with loving affection to recall the happy words she had heard there, but to listen for the sound of the Bergmännl's axe, and perhaps follow it out; and then—and then—who could tell *what* might befall? Perhaps she might be able to obtain some chips of those vast wealth-stores unperceived; perhaps the Bergmännl's heart might be opened to her—who could [80]
say but, in some mode or other, it might be the way to fortune?

She was not long in tracing out the spot, for she had marked the angle which the well-known outline of the mighty Sonnengebirg bore to the jagged "comb[44]" of the Kitzbichler-Horn, and for a nearer token, there lay, just before her, the crushed wild-flower which her Jössl had twisted and torn in his nervousness as he had brought himself to speak to her for the first time of their future. But she thought not of all that at that time; she was only concerned to find the spot, and to listen for the stroke of the Nickel's pickaxe. "Hush!" that was it again, sure enough! She lingers not on that happy bank; she stops not to pick up one of those wild-flower tokens: 'click, clack,' goes the axe, and that is the sound to guide her steps. The village bells sound the *Ave-Maria*, but the sacred notes arrest her not—the evening prayer is forgotten in the thirst for gold.

But Jössl heard the holy sound as he was retracing his steps mournfully from his fruitless search after her, having missed her by but a minute's interval. He heard it as he was passing a little old, old wayside chapel, which you may yet see, with a lordly pine-tree overshadowing it, and which records the melancholy fate of some [81]
Knappen who perished in the underground workings. Jössl, who has no fear on the steep mountain-side, and loves to hang dangerously between earth and sky when he is out after the chamois, shudders when he thinks of those long, dark, mysterious passages where the miners worked underground, and, as he kneels on the stone step of that wayside memorial, obedient to the village-bell, involuntarily applies his prayer to all those who have to penetrate those strange recesses: "Be with them; help them now and in the hour of death. Amen." If you had told him his Aennerl was included in that prayer he would not have believed you then.

Meantime Aennerl had found her way to the opening of the old mine. It has a lateral shaft through which you may walk some distance—a very long way it seemed to Aennerl, now breathless and trembling, but the nearing sounds of the Bergmännl's tool kept up her courage, and determined her not to give in till she had attained the goal.

On she went, groping her way with fear and trembling, and expecting every

moment to come upon some terrible sight. But, far from this, in proportion as she got deeper into the intricate passages of the Röhrerbüchel, the way, instead of getting darker, grew lighter and lighter. A pale, clear, rosy light played on the sides of the working, which, now that she looked at them close, she found to her [82] astonishment were not made of rough, yellow clay, as she had thought hitherto, but of pure, sparkling gold, and encrusted with gems!

It was no longer fear that palsied her, it was a fascination of delight at finding herself in the midst of those riches she coveted, but the near approach of which brought back misgivings of the danger of their possession of which she had so often heard, though without ever previously feeling an application to herself in the warning.

Her curiosity far too strongly stimulated to yield to the counsel of her conscience to turn and flee the temptation, she walked stealthily on and on, till the faint, rosy light grew into a red, radiant glow, which, as she reached its focus, quite dazzled her senses.

She now found herself in a broad and lofty clearing, into which the long narrow passage she had so long been timorously pursuing ran, and in the sides of which she saw the openings of many other similar ramifications. The walls, which arched it in overhead and closed it from the daylight, were of gold and silver curiously intermixed, burnished resplendently, and their brilliance so overcame her that it was some minutes before she could recover her sight to examine more particularly the details of this magnificent abode.

Then she discovered that all this blaze of light came from one huge carbuncle[45], [83] and that carbuncle was set in the breast-bib of the leathern apron worn by a dwarf, the clang of whose pickaxe had lured her to the uncanny spot.

The dwarf was much too busily and too noisily engaged to notice Aennerl's footsteps, so she had plenty of leisure to examine him. He was a little awkward-shaped fellow, nearly as broad as he was long, with brawny muscular arms which enabled him to wield his pick with tremendous effect. He seemed, however, to be wielding it merely for exercise or sport, for there did not appear to be any particular advantage to be gained from his work, which only consisted in chipping up a huge block of gold, and there were heaps on heaps of such chips already lying about. Though his muscles displayed so much strength, however, his face gave you the idea of a miserable, worn-out old man; his cheeks were wrinkled and furrowed and bronzed; and the matted hair of his head and beard was snowy white. As he worked he sang, in dull, low, unmelodious chant, to which his pick beat time,—

"The weary Bergmännl, old and grey,
Sits alone in a cleft of the earth for aye,
With never a friend to say, 'Good day.' [84]
For a thousand years, and ten thousand more,
He has guarded earth's precious silver store,
Keeping count of her treasures of golden ore
By the light of the bright Karfunkelstein[46],
The only light of the Bergmännlein
But never a friend to say, 'Good day,'
As he sits in a cleft of the earth for aye,
Has the lonely Bergmännl, old and grey!"

He had poured out his ditty many times over while Aennerl stood gazing at the strange and gorgeous scene. The ugly, misshapen, miserable old man seemed altogether out of place amid the glories of the wonderful treasure-house; and the glittering treasures themselves in turn seemed misplaced in this remote subterranean retreat. Aennerl was quite puzzled how to make it all out. It was the Nickel of the Röhrerbüchel who was before her, she had no doubt of *that*, for he was exactly what the tradition of the people had always described him, and she had heard his ungainly form described before she could speak; so familiar he seemed, indeed, from those many descriptions, that it took away great part of the fear natural to finding herself in so novel a situation.

At last the dwarf suddenly stopped his labour, and, as if in very weariness, flung the tool he had been using far from him, so that it fell upon a heap of gold chips near which Aennerl was standing, scattering them in all directions. One of the [85] sharp bits of ore hit her rudely on the chin, and, anxious as she was to escape observation, she could not suppress a little cry of pain.

Old and withered and haggard as he seemed, the Cobbold's eye glittered with a light only second to that of the Karfunkelstein itself at the sound of a maiden's voice, and quickly he turned to seize her. Aennerl turned and fled, but the Nickel, throwing his leathern apron over the shining stone on his breast, plunged the whole place in darkness, and Aennerl soon lost her footing among the

unevennesses of the way and lay helpless on the ground. Her pursuer, to whom every winding had been as familiar as the way to his pocket these thousand years, was by her side in a trice, still singing, as he came along,—

> “But never a friend to say, ‘Good day,’
> As he sits in a cleft of the earth for aye,
> Has the lonely Bergmännl, old and grey!”

The self-pitying words, and the melancholy tone in which they were uttered, changed most of Aennerl’s alarm into compassion; and when the dwarf uncovered the carbuncle again, and the bright, warm red light played once more around them, and showed up the masses of gold after which she had so longed, she began to feel almost at home, so that when the dwarf asked her who she was and what had brought her there, she answered him quite naturally, and told him all her [86] story.

“To tell you the truth,” said the Cobbold, when she had finished, “I am pretty well tired of having all this to myself. I was very angry at one time, it is true, with the way in which your fellows went to work destroying and carrying every thing away, and leaving nothing for those that are to come after, and I was determined to put a stop to it. I am not here to look after *one* generation, or *two*, or *three*, but for the whole lot of you in all the ages of the world, and I must keep things in some order. But now they have given this place up and left me alone, I confess I feel not a little sorry. I used to like to listen to their busy noises, and their songs, and the tramp of their feet. So, if you’ve a mind to make up for it, and come and sit with me for a bit now and then, and sing to me some of the lively songs you have in your world up there, I don’t say I won’t give you a lapful of gold now and then.”

A lapful of gold! what peasant girl would mind sitting for a bit now and then, and singing to a poor lonely old fellow, to be rewarded with a lapful of gold? Certainly not Aennerl! Too delighted to speak, she only beamed assent with her dark, flashing eyes, and clapped her hands and laughed for joy.

The Nickel of the Röhrerbüchele.—*Page* 84.

“It’s many a day since these walls have echoed a sound like that,” said the dwarf, with deep feeling, and as Aennerl’s smile rested on him, it seemed to wipe away [87] some of the rough dark wrinkles that furrowed his cheeks and relax the tension of his knit brows. “And yet there’s more worth in those echoes than in all the metallic

riches which resound to them! Yes, my lass, only come and see the poor old Bergmännl sometimes, and cheer him a bit, and you shall have what you will of his."

With that he led her gently back into the great vault where she had first seen him working, and, stirring up a heap with his foot, said,—

"There, lass, there's the Bergmännl's store; take what you will—it is not the Bergmännl that would say nay to a comely wench like you. Why, if I were younger, and a better-looking fellow, it would not be my lapfuls of gold I should offer you, it would be the whole lot of it—and myself to boot! No, no, I shouldn't let you go from me again: such a pretty bird does not come on to the snare to be let fly again, I promise you! But I'm old and grey, and my hoary beard is no match for your dainty cheeks. But take what you will, take what you will—only come and cheer up the poor old Bergmännl a bit sometimes."

Aennerl had not wanted to be told twice. Already she had filled her large pouch and her apron and her kerchief with all the alacrity of greed. So much occupied was she with stowing away the greatest possible amount of the spoil, that she scarcely remembered to thank the Bergmännl, who, however, found pleasure [88] enough in observing the rapturous gestures her good fortune elicited.

"You'll come again?" said the Cobbold, as he saw her turn to go when she had settled her burden in such a way that its weight should least impede her walking.

"Oh, yes, never fear, I'll come again! When shall I come?"

"Oh, when you will! Let's see, to-day's Saturday, isn't it? Well, next Saturday, if you like."

"Till next Saturday, then, good-bye!" said Aennerl, panting only to turn her gold to account; and so full was she of calculation of what she would do with it, that she never noticed the poor old dwarf was coming behind her to light her, and singing, as he went,—

"The weary Bergmännl, old and grey,
Sits alone in a cleft of the earth for aye,
With never a friend to say, 'Good day.'
For a thousand years, and ten thousand more,
He has guarded earth's precious silver store,
Keeping count of her treasures of golden ore
By the light of the bright Karfunkelstein,
The only light of the Bergmännlein.
But never a friend to say, 'Good day,'
As he sits in a cleft of the earth for aye,
Has the lonely Bergmännl, old and grey!"

Aennerl had no time for pity; she was wholly absorbed in the calculation of the grand things she could now buy, the fine dresses she would be able to wear, and in [89] rehearsing the harsh speeches of command with which she would let fling at the girls whom she would take into her service, and who yesterday were the companions-in-labour of orphan Aennerl.

The village was all wrapt in silence and sleep as Aennerl got back with her treasure.

"So late, and so laden! poor child!" said the parish priest, as he came out of a large old house into the lane, and met her. "I have been commending to God the soul of our worthy neighbour Bartl. He was open-handed in his charity, and the poor will miss a friend; he gave us a good example while he lived—Aennerl, my child, *bet' für ihn*[47]."

Aennerl scarcely returned his greeting, nor found one word of sorrow to lament the loss of the good old Bartl; for one thought had taken possession of her mind at first hearing of his death. Old Bartl had a fine homestead, and one in which all was in good order; but Bartl was alone in the world, there was no heir to enter on his goods: it was well known that he had left all to the hospital, and the place would be sold. What a chance for Aennerl! There was no homestead in the whole Gebiet[48] in such good order, or so well worth having, as the Hof of old Bartl.

Aennerl already reckoned it as hers, and in the meantime kept an eye open for any [90] chances of good stock that might come into the market.

Nor were chances wanting. The illness which had carried old Bartl to the grave had been caught at the bedside of the Wilder Jürgl[49]. A fine young man he had been indeed, but the villagers had not called him "Wild" without reason; and

because he had loved all sorts of games, and a gossip in the tavern, and a dance with the village maids more than work, all he had was in confusion. He always said he was young, and he would set all straight by-and-by, there was plenty of time. But death cut him off, young as he was; and his widow found herself next morning alone in the world, with three sturdy boys to provide for, all too young to earn a crust, and all Jürgl's debts to meet into the bargain. There was no help for it: the three fine cows which were the envy of the village, and which had been her portion at her father's death, only six months before, must be sold.

Aennerl was the purchaser. Once conscience reproached her with a memory of the days long gone by, when she and that young widow were playmates, when orphan Aennerl had been taken home from her mother's grave by that same widow's father, and the two children had grown up in confidence and affection with each other. "Suppose I left her the cows and the money too?" mused Aennerl—but only [91]
for a moment. No; had they been any other cows, it might have been different—but just those three which all the village praised! one which had carried off the prize and the garland of roses at the last cow-fight[50], and the others were only next in rank. *That* was a purchase not to be thrown away. Still she was dissatisfied with herself, and inclined to sift her own mind further, when she was distracted by the approach of loud tramping steps, as of one carrying a burden.

It was the Langer Peterl; and a goodly burden he bore, indeed—a burden which was sure to gather round him all the people of Reith, or any other place through which he might pass.

Aennerl laughed and clapped her hands. "Oh, Peterl, you come *erwünscht*[51]!" she exclaimed. "Show me what you have got to sell—show me all your pretty things! I want an entirely new rig-out. Make haste! show me the best—the very best—you have brought."

"Show *you* the *best*, indeed!" said the Langer Peterl, scarcely slackening his pace, and not removing the pipe from his mouth; for hitherto he had only known the [92]
orphan Aennerl by her *not* being one of his customers. "Show *you* the best, indeed, that what you can't buy you may amuse yourself with a sight of! And when you've soiled it all with your greasy fingers, who'll buy it, d'you suppose? A likely matter, indeed! Show you the best! ha! ha! ha! you don't come over me like that, though you *have* got a pair of dark eyes which look through into a fellow's marrow!"

"Nonsense, Peterl!" replied Aennerl, too delighted with the thought of the finery in prospect even to resent the taunt; "I don't want to look at it merely—not I, I can tell you! I want to buy it—buy it all up—and pay you your own price! Here, look here, does *this* please you?" and she showed him a store of gold such as in all his travels he had never seen before.

"Oh, if *that's* your game," said the long Peter, with an entirely changed manner, "pick and choose, my lady, pick and choose! Here are silks and satins and laces, of which I've sold the dittos to *real* ladies and countesses; there are——"

"Oh, show me the dittos of what *real* ladies and countesses have bought!" exclaimed Aennerl, with a scream of delight; and the pedlar, who was not much more scrupulous than others of his craft, made haste to display his gaudiest wares, taking care not to own that it was seldom enough his pack was lightened by the [93]
purchases of a "*real* lady." To have heard him you would have thought his dealings were only with the highest of the land.

But it needed only to say, "This is what my lady the Countess of Langtaufers wears," "This is what my lady the Baronin Schroffenstein bought of me," for Aennerl to buy it at the highest price the Long Peter's easy conscience could let him extort; and, indeed, had he not felt a certain commercial necessity for reserving something to keep up his connexion with his ordinary customers on the rest of his line of route, orphan Aennerl would have bought up all that was offered her under these pretences, and without stopping to consider whether the materials or colours were well assorted, or whether such titles as those with which the pedlar dazzled her understanding existed at all!

The next day was a village festival in Reith. And the quiet people of Reith thought the orphan Aennerl had gone fairly mad when they saw at church the extravagant figure she cut in her newly-acquired finery; for, in her hurry to display it, she had in one way and another piled her whole stock of purchases on her person at once. A showy skirt embroidered with large flowers of many colours, and trimmed with deep lace, was looped up with bright blue ribbons and rosettes over a petticoat of violet satin, beneath which another of a brilliant green was to be seen. Beneath this again, you might have descried a pair of scarlet stockings; and on her shining [94]
shoes a pair of many-coloured rosettes and shoe-buckles. The black tight-fitting bodice of the local costume was replaced by a kind of scarlet hussar's jacket trimmed with fur, fastened at the throat and waist with brooches which must have

been originally designed for a stage-queen. From her ears dangled earrings of Brobdignagian dimensions; and on her head was a hat and feathers as unlike the little hat worn by all in Reith as one piece of head-gear could well be to another.

Of course, it did not befit a lady so decked to take the lowly seat which had served the orphan Aennerl; before the Divine office began she had seated herself in the most conspicuous place in the church, so that no one lost the benefit of the exhibition; and it may well be believed that the congregation had no sooner poured out of the sacred building than the appearance of the orphan Aennerl was the one theme of a general and noisy conversation.

For some it was a source of envy; for some, of ridicule; for some unsophisticated minds, of simple admiration. But the wiser heads kept silence, or said, in tones of sympathy, “The orphan Aennerl isn’t the girl the Goigner Jössl took her for.”

Jössl had been to church in his own village of Goign, and had therefore been spared the sight, as well as the comments it had elicited. But as he came towards [95] Reith to take his Aennerl for the holiday walk, he noticed many strange bits of hinting in the greetings he received, which puzzled him so, that, instead of going straight on to Aennerl, he sat down on the churchyard wall, pondering what it could all mean. “I wish you joy of your orphan Aennerl!” one had said. “Goigner Jössl, Goigner Jössl, take my advice, and shun the threshold of orphan Aennerl!” were the words of another, and he was an old man and a sage friend too. “Beware, Goigner Jössl, beware!” seemed written on every face he had met—what could it all mean? He wandered forward uncertain, and then back again, then on again, till he could bear it no longer, and he determined to go down to the *Wirthshaus beim Stangl*, and ask his mates to their face what they all meant.

Before he came in sight of the door, however, he changed his resolution. Through the open window he heard noisy talk, and noisiest of all was the voice of the Langer Peterl. Honest Jössl had an invincible antipathy to the wheedling, the gossip, the bluster, and the evil tongue of the Langer Peterl, and he never trusted himself to join his company, for he knew a meeting with him always led to words.

Determining to wait till he was gone, he walked about outside, and as there is always a train of waggons waiting at the *Wirthshaus am Stangl* while the wayworn [96] carters refresh themselves, he could easily remain unperceived.

Thus, however, he became unintentionally the hearer of all he desired to know—much *more* than he desired, I *should* say.

“I tell you, she,—Aennerl would have bought my whole pack if I’d have let her!” vociferated the Langer Peterl; “and I might have saved myself all further tramping, but that I wouldn’t disappoint my pretty Ursal, and Trausl, and Moidl, and Marie,” he added, in a tone of righteousness.

“*Buy* it, man! you don’t mean buy it! She got it out of you one way or another, but you don’t mean she bought it, in the sense of paying for it?”

“Yes, I do. I say, she paid for it in pure gold!”

“No, *that won’t* do!” said other voices; “where could she get gold from?”

“Oh, *that’s* not my affair,” replied the pedlar, “where she got it from! It wouldn’t do for a poor pedlar to ask where his customers get their money from—ha! ha! ha! I’m not such a fool as that! I know the girl couldn’t have it rightfully, as well as you do, but it wouldn’t do for me to refuse all the money I suspect is not honestly come by—ha! ha! I *should* then drive a sorry trade indeed!”

Jössl’s first impulse had been to fly at the Langer Peterl, and, as he would have expressed it, thrust the lie down his throat; but then, he reflected; where *had* the girl got the money from? what could he say? To dispute it without having means of [97] disproving it was only opening wider the sore; and while he stood dejected and uncertain the conversation went on more animated than before.

“I agree with you!” cried, between two whiffs of smoke, an idle Bursch, on whom since the death of the Wilder Jürgl that nickname had descended by common consent. “What right have we to be prying into our neighbour’s business? If the girl’s got money, why should any one say she hasn’t a right to it? She’s an uncommon fine girl, *I* say, and looks a long way better than she did before in her beggarly rags; and a girl that can afford to dress like that is not to be despised, *I* say.”

That the speaker had only received the cognomen of Wild after the Wilder Jürgl was only in that he was younger; he had earned the right to it in a tenfold degree. None of the steady lads of either Goign or Reith or Elmau, or any other place in the neighbourhood, would make a friend of him, and that is why he now sat apart

from the others smoking in a corner.

To be praised and defended by the Wilder Karl was a worse compliment than to be suspected by the steadier ones. The words therefore threw the assembly into some embarrassment for a moment, till the Kleiner Friedl[52], a sworn friend of Jössl, thinking he ought to strike a blow in his defence somewhere, cried out, in a menacing tone,— [98]

“Very well played, Wilder Karl! but I see your game. You think because the girl’s got money she’s a good chance for you. You think her flaunting way will estrange steady Goigner Jössl, and then you think you may step in between them—and a sorry figure she’d cut two days after you’d had the handling of her! She wouldn’t have much finery left then, I’ll warrant! The Langer Peterl there would have it all back at half-price, and that half-price would all be in the pocket of our honest Wirth am Stangl. But it’s in vain; whatever she is, she’ll be true to the Goigner Jössl, I’ll warrant—and as for you, she wouldn’t *look* at you!”

Wilder Karl rose to his feet, and glared at the Kleiner Friedl with a glance of fury. “I wager you every thing you and I have in the world, that I’ll make her dance every dance with me at the Jause[53] this very night!” and he shook his fist with a confident air, for he had a smooth tongue and a comely face, and Aennerl would not have been the first girl these had won over.

“That you won’t,” said the Wirth, coming to Friedl’s rescue, who was but a young boy, and had felt rather dismayed at the proposed wager, “for I’m not sure, till all this is cleared up, that I should admit her to the dance. But the difficulty will not arise, for Aennerl herself told my daughter Moidl that now she could wear a lady’s clothes it would be impossible for her to come any more to the village dance.” [99]

Strengthened by the support of the Wirth[54], the Kleiner Friedl felt quite strong again; and he could not forbear exclaiming, “There, I told you there was no chance for you, Wilder Karl!”

But Wilder Karl, furious at the disappointing news of the Wirth, and maddened by the invective of the Kleiner Friedl, rushed at the boy head-over-heels, bent on mischief.

But Wilder Karl, though a bully and a braggart, inspired no respect, because no feather adorned his hat, and that showed he was no champion of any manly pursuit. So the whole room was on the side of Kleiner Friedl; and the bully having been turned out, and the subject of conversation pretty well exhausted, the Goigner Jössl turned slowly home.

Now I don’t say that he was right here. He was an excellent young man, endowed in an especial degree with Tirolese virtues. His parents had never had a moment’s uneasiness about him; no one in the whole village was more regular or devout at church; in the field none more hard-working or trustworthy; at the village games and dances none acquitted himself better; and had a note of danger to his country sounded in his time I am sure he would have been foremost to take his place among its living ramparts, and that none would have borne out the old tradition of steadfastness more manfully than he. [100]

But of course he had his faults too. And one of his faults was the fault of many good people,—the fault of expecting to find every one as good as themselves, of being harsh and unforgiving, of sulking and pining instead of having an open explanation.

Now, mind you, I think it would have been much better if Jössl had, after hearing the conversation I have just narrated, gone straight on to Aennerl’s, and had it all out with her, had heard from her own lips the truth of the matter about which all Reith and Goign were talking, and judged her out of her own mouth, giving her, if he could not approve her conduct, advice by which she might mend it in the future.

But this was not his way. He had thought his Aennerl a model, almost a divinity. He had always treated her as such, talked to her as such, loved her as such. It was clear now, however, that in some way or other she had done wrong. Instead of getting to the bottom of it, and trying to set it straight, he gave himself up to his disappointment and went home and sulked, and refused to be comforted. [101]

Aennerl, meantime, knew nothing of all this. She had had a great desire to be a lady and no longer a servant; and having plenty of money, and plenty of fine clothes, she thought this made her a lady, and had no idea but that every one acknowledged the fact. I don’t think she exactly wished that all the village should be envious of her, but at all events she wished that she should enjoy all the prerogatives of ladyhood, and this, she imagined, was one. Then she had no

parents to teach her better, and Jössl, who might have been her teacher, had forsaken her.

But it was all too new and too exciting for her to feel any misgivings yet. She amused herself with turning over all her fine things, and fancied herself very happy.

In another day or two the Hof of good neighbour Bartl was put up for sale, and another visit to the Bergmännlein enabled her to become the purchaser. She thus became the most important proprietor in Reith; but she was so little used to importance that she did not at all perceive that the people treated her very differently from the former proprietor of the Hof.

Before him every hat was doffed with alacritous esteem due to his age and worth. But poor Aennerl hardly received so much as the old greeting, which in the days of [102] companionship in poverty had always been the token of good fellowship with her, as with every one.

It was long before any suspicion that she was mistrusted reached the mind of Aennerl. In the meantime she enjoyed her new condition to the full. Weekly visits to the Röhrerbüchel enabled her to purchase every thing she desired; and when the villagers held back from her, she ascribed their diffidence to the awe they felt for her wealth.

In time, however, the novelty began to wear off. She grew tired at last of giving orders to her farm-servants, and watching her sleek cattle, and counting her stores of grain. That Jössl had not been to see her, she never ascribed to any thing but his respect for her altered condition; and she felt that she could not demean herself by being united to a lad who worked for day-wages.

Still grandeur began to tire, and her isolation made her proud, and angry, and cross; and then people shunned her still more, and upon that she grew more vexed and angry. But, worse than this, she got even so used to her riches that she quite forgot all about the Nickel to whom she owed them. Her farm was so well stocked that it produced more than her wildest fancies required; she had no need to go back to the Röhrerbüchel to ask for more gold, and she had grown too selfish to visit it out of compassion to the dwarf. [103]

The Bergmännlein upon this grew disappointed; but his disappointment was of a different kind from Jössl's. He was not content to sit apart and sulk; he was determined to have his revenge.

One bleak October night, when the wind was rolling fiercely down from the mountains, there was a sudden and fearful cry of "Fire!" in the village of Reith. The alarm-bells repeated the cry aloud and afar. The good people rose in haste, and ran into the lane with that ready proffer of mutual help which distinguishes the mountain-folk.

The whole sky was illumined, the fierce wind rolled the flames and the smoke hither and thither. It was Aennerl's Hof which was the scene of the devastation. The fire licked up the trees, and the farm, and the rooftree before their eyes. So swift and unnatural was the conflagration that the people were paralyzed in their endeavour to help. One ran for ladders, another for buckets; but before any help could be obtained the whole homestead was but one vast bonfire. Then, madly rushing to the top of the high pointed roof, might be seen the figure of Aennerl clothed only in her white night-dress, and shrieking fearfully, "Save me! save me!" Every moment the roof threatened to fall in, and the agonized beholders watched her and sent up loud prayers, but were powerless to save.

Suddenly, on the road from Goign a figure was seen hasting along. It was the Goigner Jössl. Would he be in time? The crowd was silent now, even their prayers [104] were said in silence, for every one gasped for breath, and the voice failed. A trunk of an old branchless tree yet bent over the burning ruins. Jössl had climbed that trunk and was making a ladder of his body by which to rescue Aennerl all frantic from the roof. Will he reach her? Will his arm be long enough? Will he fall into the flame? Will he be overpowered by the smoke? See! he holds on bravely. The smoke rolls above his head, the flames dart out their fierce fangs beneath him! He holds on bravely still. He calls to Aennerl. She is fascinated with terror, and hears him not. "Aennerl! Aennerl!" once more, and his voice reached her, and with it a sting of reproach for her scornful conduct drives her to hide her face from his in shame.

"Aennerl! Aennerl!" yet once again; and he wakes her, as from a dream, to a life like that of the past the frenzy had obliterated. She forgets where she *is*; but the voice of Jössl sounded to her as it sounded in the years gone by, and she obeys it mechanically. She comes within reach—and he seizes her! But the flames are higher now, and the smoke denser and more blinding. "Jesus Maria! where are

they? They have fallen into the flames at last! *Jesus, erbarme Dich ihrer*[55]*!*” [105]

“*Hoch! Hoch! Hoch*[56]*!*” shouts the crowd, a minute later. “They are saved, *Gott sei dank*, they are saved!” and a jubilant cry rings through the valley which the hills take up and echo far and wide.

On the edge of the crowd, apart, stands a little misshapen old man with grey, matted hair and beard, whom no one knows, but who has watched every phase of the catastrophe with thrilling emotion.

It was he who first raised the cry that they had fallen into the flames; and the people sickened as they heard it, for he spoke it in joy, and not in anguish. In the gladness of the deliverance they have forgotten the old man, but now he shouted once more, as he dashed his hood over his head in a tone of disappointed fury, “I did it! and I will have my revenge yet!”

“No; let there be peace,” said Jössl, who had deposited Aennerl in safe hands, and now came forth to deal one more stroke for her; “let there be peace, old man, and let bygones be bygones.”

“Never!” said the Cobbold; “I have said I will have my revenge, and I will have it!”

“But,” argued Jössl, “have you not *had* your revenge? All you gave her you have had taken away—she is as she was before: can you not leave her so?” [106]

“No!” thundered the dwarf; “I will have the life of her before I’ve done.”

“Never!” in his turn shouted Jössl; and he placed himself in front of the elf.

“Oh, don’t be afraid,” replied the dwarf, with a cold sneer, “I’m not going after her. I’ve only to wait a bit, and she’ll come after me.”

Jössl was inclined to let him go, but remembering the instability of woman, he thought it better to make an end of the tempter there and then.

“Will you promise me, that if I let you return to your hole in peace, you will do her no harm should she visit you there again?”

“I promise you that I will serve her to the most frightful of deaths—*that’s* what I promise you!” retorted the enraged gnome.

“Then your blood be on your own head!” said Jössl, and, with his large hunting-knife drawn in his hand, he placed himself in a menacing attitude before the now alarmed dwarf.

Jössl was a determined, powerful youth, not to be trifled with. The gnome trusted to the strength of his muscles, and fled with all his speed; but Jössl, who was a cunning runner too, maintained his place close behind him. The dwarf, finding himself so hotly followed, began to lose his head, and no longer felt so clearly as at [107] first the direction he had to take to reach the Röhrerbüchel. Jössl continued to drive him before him, puzzling him on the zigzags of the path till he had completely lost the instinct of his way of safety. Then, forcing him on as before to the edge of the precipice, he closed upon him where there was no escape.

Yes, one escape there was—it was in the floods of the Brandenburger Ache, which roared and boiled away some hundred feet below! Rather than fall ignominiously by the hand of a child of man, the gnome dashed himself, with a fierce shout, down the abyss. And that was the last that was ever seen of the Nickel of the Röhrerbüchel.

Aennerl was now poorer than ever in this world’s goods, but she was rich in one deep and wholesome lesson—that it is not glittering wealth which brings true happiness. The smiles of honest friends, and the love of a true heart, and the testimony of an approving conscience are not to be bartered away for all the gold in all the mines of the earth.

Wilder Karl laughed with his two or three boon companions, and said, with a burst of contempt, “I’ve no doubt that fool of a Goigner Jössl will marry the orphan Aennerl now that she hasn’t a penny to bless herself with!”

And the Wilder Karl judged right. Aennerl scarcely dared hope that he could love her still, and she went forth humbly to her work day by day, neither looking to the [108] right hand nor the left, accepting all the hardships and humiliations of her lot as a worthy punishment of her folly and vanity.

But one evening as she came home from her toil, the Goigner Jössl came behind her, and he said softly in her ear, “Do you love me still, Aennerl?”

“Love you still, Jössl!” cried the girl; “you have thrice given me life—first when I was a poor, heartbroken orphan, and you made me feel there was still some one to live for in the world; and then a second time, in that dreadful fire, when hell seemed to have risen up out of the earth to punish me before the time; and now again this third time, when I began to think my folly had sickened you for good and all! Don’t ask me *that*, Jössl, for you must *know* I love you more than my life! If I dared, there is one question I should ask you, Can *you* still love *me*? but I have no right to ask that.”

“I must answer you in your own words, Aennerl,” replied Jössl: “you must *know* that I love you more than my life!”

“You must, you must—you have shown it!” exclaimed Aennerl. They had reached the bank near the Röhrerbüchel where we first saw them; the rosy light of the sunset, and the scent of the wild flowers, was around them just as on that night. [109]

“Yes,” said Aennerl, after a pause, as if it were just then that Jössl had said the words[57]—“yes, Jössl, this is happiness; we want nothing more in this world than the warm sun, and the blue sky—and to be together! Yes, Jössl, we shall always be happy together.”

They walked on together; as they reached the memorial of the dead miners the village bells rang the *Ave*. And as they knelt down, how heartfelt was Jössl’s gratitude that the prayer he had uttered at that spot once before had been so mercifully answered, and his Aennerl restored to him for ever! [110]

[Contents]

THE WILDER JÄGER AND THE BARONESS.

There was a rich and powerful baron who owned a broad patrimony in South Tirol, Baron di Valle. He was not only one of the richest and most powerful, he was also one of the happiest, for he had the prettiest and most sensible woman of Tirol for his bride. The brief days were all too short for the pleasure they found in each other’s society, and they were scarcely ever apart the whole day through.

Once, however, the Baron went on a hunting party through a part of the country which was too rough for the Baroness to follow him. The day was splendid, the scent good, and the Baron full of enthusiasm for his favourite sport; but what egged him on more than all these, was the sight of a strange bold hunter who bestrode a gigantic mount, and who dashed through brake and briar, and over hill and rock, as if no obstacle could arrest him. Baron di Valle, who thought he was the boldest hunter of the whole country-side, was quite mad to see himself outdone; nor could he suffer this to be. Determined to outstrip his rival, he spurred his horse on, so that he might but pass him somewhere; but the Wilder Jäger, for it was he, always kept on ahead, and though the brave Baron kept close to his heels, he was never able to pass him by. [111]

They had long outstripped all the rest. But all this time the Baron had taken no note of whither he went; now he found himself in the midst of a thick forest of tall fir-trees, with their lower branches cut off because they were planted so thick and close together that there was no room between them, and their tops were intergrown so that they formed one compact mass, excluding the very air and the light of day. The Wild Hunter stopped his mad career before this barrier, and then, turning, pretended for the first time to be aware of the Baron’s presence.

“What do you want here?” he exclaimed, fiercely, his rolling eyes glaring like fire. “How dare you invade my domain!” and with that he blew a mighty blast on his hunting-horn, at sound of which a whole troop of wild huntsmen, habited like himself, and with similar fiery eyes, appeared suddenly, surrounding the Baron.

“Stand back!” cried the Baron, in a commanding tone, as the wild huntsmen dismounted and prepared to seize him. [112]

“No one commands here but I,” said the Wilder Jäger. And then he added, addressing his men, “Seize him, and carry him off!”

“Hold!” said the Count, but speaking more humbly than before, for he saw he must yield something to the necessity of the case; “I suppose there is some ransom upon which you will let me off? I have wronged you in nothing, and meant no offence. I admired your brave riding, and I thought what one brave man might do, another might.”

“Since you take that tone,” said the Wilder Jäger, “I will do what I can for you. I

will let you ransom yourself at one price. You must know, that it is not you that I want at all; I only lured you here as a means of getting hold of the Baroness, and had you been uppish and violent, I should have kept you in chains for the rest of your life, while I married her. But as you know how to keep a civil tongue in your head, I will show you that I can appreciate courtesy. So now I give you permission to return, to be yourself the bearer to your wife of my conditions.

“Tell her, then, that I have won her for my own, and she belongs irrevocably to me; it is useless that she attempt to escape, for you see that my people are countless, and violence is of no avail against me. But I am a good sort of fellow, and as I love her, I don’t want to do any thing to alarm her, so long as she shows no foolish resistance.” [113]

“But the ransom? You spoke of a ransom just now,” interposed the Baron, hastily; “what, about that?”

“All in good time,” replied the Wilder Jäger—“give a fellow time to speak. The only mode of ransom is this—let the Baroness guess my name. I give her three guesses of three words each, and an interval of a month. But if she doesn’t succeed, remember, she is mine! this day month I appear and claim her. If, in the meantime, she thinks she has made the guess, and wants to satisfy herself as to its correctness”—and he laughed a ghastly laugh of scorn, as if to impress the Baron with the hopelessness of the idea—“she has only to come to the ilex grove on the border of this forest which marks the frontier between your territory and mine. If she stands there, beside the centre tree, and blows this horn—see what a pretty little gold horn it is, that I have had studded with diamonds and rubies—just fit for her pretty little fingers!” he added, with a grin of scorn—“at sound of her voice I shall be with her on the instant.”

The Baron was not one to have tolerated such talk from any human being soever, but he felt the necessity of vanquishing his temper this time—a more difficult matter ordinarily than vanquishing a foe—for a dearer life than his own was at stake; and if he could not altogether save the Baroness from the power of the Wilder Jäger, he could take counsel with her as to the means of finding out the [114] hidden name, and at least spend with her the last days that he could call her his.

Accordingly he took the horn, and stuck it in his belt without a word. And indeed no word would have availed him, for the whole troop of the wild huntsmen had vanished as it came, and he was left alone.

There was no difficulty in finding his way back by the path by which he had come, for it was plainly marked by the havoc of the surrounding vegetation the wild chase had cost. And though he now put spurs to his steed that he might reach home without losing an hour more than he could help of the companionship of his beloved wife, he now for the first time apprehended how swiftly he had come, for, riding the utmost of mortal speed, it took him three days to get back to the ilex grove which marked the boundary of his own territory. Hence it was still half a day’s journey to reach his castle. But while he was yet a great way off his loving wife came out to meet him, full of joy at his approach, for since the rest of the hunt had come home without him she had done nothing but watch from the highest turret of the castle, that she might catch the first sight of him returning; her thirsty eyes had not been slow to discern his figure as he hastened home.

Great was her amazement, however, to find that, instead of returning her greeting [115] with his wonted delight, he turned his head away, as if he dared not look at her, and wept. She rode beside him all the way home, but he still kept silence, for he could not bear to render her sorrowful with the message of which he was the bearer. But he could conceal nothing from her loving solicitude, and soon he had told her all.

Being a woman of prudent counsel and strong trust in God, she was much less cast down, however, than he had expected. Though bewildered at first, and seeing no way out of the difficulty, she yet declared she was sure some way of escape would be opened to her, it only remained to consider where they should find it. And never a word of angry recrimination did she utter to remind him that it was his mad vanity had brought them to this plight.

The Baron felt the full force of this forbearance, for he did nothing but reproach himself with his folly. But the fresh proof of her amiability only occasioned another pang at the thought of the approaching separation.

Still no good counsel came to mind, and the Baroness herself began almost to lose heart. The Baron had abandoned the hunt and all his sports, and sat gloomily in the ancient seat of his ancestors. The Baroness sat among the flowers of her oriel window, her embroidery in her hand; but her mind was far away over the tops of the dark green trees, looking for some bright thought to bring deliverance to her [116]

from above. Every morning and evening they knelt together in the chapel of the castle, and prayed that a spirit of prudence and counsel might be given them.

Ten days had passed, and no good thought had come. The Baron reclined gloomily in the ancient seat of his ancestors, and the lady sat among the flowers of the oriel window gazing over the tops of the high dark fir-trees, full of hope that some wise counsel would be given her. Suddenly she rose and clapped her hands, and her ringing laugh brought the Baron bounding to her side.

“I have found it, Heinrich!” she exclaimed; “I am sure I have found the name! Doesn’t the Wilder Jäger live among the tall fir-trees?”

“Yes; among the tall fir-trees is his dwelling.”

“And didn’t he speak of three names?”

“Yes; he said your guess must include three names.”

“Then I have it, Heinrich! What more natural than that he should be called from the names of the trees which form his palace? As I was gazing over the tops of the high dark trees the words came into my mind, ‘Tree, Fir, Pine’—those will be the three words. Come, and let us go out to the ilex grove, and be free to belong to each other as of old!”

She was so lively that the Baron caught some spark of her hopefulness, but he was too far sunk in despondency to enter into her joy all at once. Nevertheless, it was not a moment when, if ever, he would have thwarted her, so he ordered the horses to be saddled, for it was still early morning. And they rode together to the ilex grove which was the boundary of the Wilder Jäger’s domain; the Baroness striving every minute by some sprightly speech to distract the Baron, and the Baron utterly incapable of rousing himself from his gloomy fears. [117]

The Baroness was the first to reach the grove; in fact, she had ridden on a good way in advance, that she might have it out with the Wilder Jäger before her husband came, so that she might greet him on his arrival with the news that she was free.

Merrily she sounded the jewelled horn, and before its sound had died away the Wilder Jäger was at her side. He no longer looked dusty, wild, and fierce, as during the Baron’s mad chase. He seemed a man of noble presence, carefully dressed in a green hunting-suit, with a powerful bow in his hand, and a beautiful boy to hold his arrows. In his belt was a jewelled hunting-knife of exquisite workmanship, and to a cord across his shoulder hung a golden horn of similar pattern to that he had sent the Baroness, and, moreover, as a further act of gallantry, he wore a scarf of red and white, the favourite colours of the Baroness. A jewelled cap shaded the sun from his brow, which a red and white plume gracefully crested. [118]

The Baroness looked astonished to find she had nothing more formidable to meet, and felt that had she not already been the wife of the Baron di Valle, she would not have found it so great a calamity to be obliged to marry the Wilder Jäger.

The Wilder Jäger was not slow to perceive that the impression he had produced was good, and bowing towards her with courtly mien, paid her a respectful salutation, and immediately added,—

“Your eyes are so clever, fair Baroness, that I very much fear you are going to pronounce my name, and rob me of the happiness I had so nearly bought! Spare me, therefore, lovely lady—say *not* the word! but come with me into the shady pine-forest, where you shall have every thing heart can desire—the noblest palace, the widest domain, and unlimited command; retainers without number, pleasures without alloy, and every wish gratified without condition!”

He approached her as he spoke. His eyes sparkled no longer with the angry fury which had thrilled the Baron, but with a mild fire of tenderness and devotion. Nothing more attractive and winning than his whole appearance and manner could be conceived, and for a moment the Baroness had almost forgotten the less accomplished—but, oh! more sincere—passion of her Heinrich. [119]

It was only for a moment. The weakness passed, she instantly drew herself up with dignity, and stepped back against the friendly ilex.

“It was not to hear such words I came,” she said, “but to pronounce those which are to free me from ever having to listen to such protestations again——”

“Oh, say them not! say them not!” said the Wilder Jäger, throwing himself at her feet. “Any thing but that! Name any wish by fulfilling which I can win your favour; name any difficult task by accomplishing which I can prove myself worthy of your

love——”

“My love,” said the Baroness, striving to speak coldly, “is another’s already; you see, there is none to be won from me. But interrupt me no more. I have guessed your name, to discover which was to be the price of my freedom. It is——”

The Wilder Jäger clasped her feet in despair, entreating her not to pronounce it, but she went on, with a clear, confident voice, to utter the words,—

“Tree! Fir! Pine!”

The Wilder Jäger looked up as if he did not quite understand what she meant.

“Now, let go your hold, and let me pass, for I am free!” she said, resolutely.

“‘Free,’ say you?” said the handsome Cobbold, with astonishment. “Free? did you mean you thought *that* was my unknown name?” [120]

“Yes,” replied the lady, in a voice of conviction.

“Oh, dear, it is nothing like it!” he answered, with glee, and yet not without a delicate regard for her disappointment. “No, that is not it; nor is it likely you should *ever* arrive at it. So days of happiness are before us yet.” He had no need to kneel to her longer, but it was joy to him to be at her feet.

“Dare not to speak so before me!” replied the Baroness, trying to tear herself away. “I know of no happiness, except with Heinrich; and I am persuaded that, though I have failed this time, it will yet be given to me to find the word which shall restore me to him completely.”

The Baron arrived as she finished speaking; and though he saw by the sorrowful look which now had possession of her bright face, and the triumphant mien of the Cobbold, that she had failed, and that she was still under the Wilder Jäger’s spell, he was so incensed to find him in such an attitude that he drew his sword, and would have closed with him then and there, but the Wilder Jäger blew one note upon his horn, and in an instant he was surrounded, as before, by his myrmidons, who unarmed him and held him bound upon the ground, while the Cobbold himself approached to seize the hand of the Baroness. A fiery fury took possession of him, and sparks darted from his eyes which fell smouldering among the twigs of fir. Powerless to defend his wife by force, the Baron once more mastered his anger, [121] and reminded his adversary courteously of his promise to leave them at peace for the interval of a month.

“I am always ready to answer you in whatever tone you elect to adopt,” said the Wilder Jäger, rising, and leaving the side of the Baroness. “You see, it is useless to attempt force against me; but when you behave with due consideration, so will I.” At a sign from him the sprites loosed the Baron’s bonds, gave him back his sword, and held his stirrup with the most respectful care, while he mounted his horse.

“Depart, then, unharmed,” said the Wilder Jäger, “since you set so much store on prolonging your suspense. I should say, it was wiser to make the best of a bad bargain and submit to your fate at once, with grace. However, I have given my word and won’t go back from it. I restrain my power over you till the full end of the month; and, what is more, I not only give the lady three guesses, but as many as she likes. For,” he added, with a cynical leer, “she is as little likely to guess it in thirty as in three; while every time that she chooses to essay the thing, it gives me the happiness of seeing her.” And he turned away with a peal of wild laughter which made the lady shudder.

The sprites vanished as they had come; and the Baron and his wife rode sadly home, without the courage to exchange a word. [122]

If the Baroness had for a moment been won by the comely presence and devoted admiration of the Wilder Jäger, she had now seen enough reason to fear his treacherous humour, and to dread her impending fate as much as at the first.

They spent the rest of the evening in prayers and tears in the chapel of the castle, and the next evening, and the next; and the days flowed by as before, but more sadly, and with even less of hope. The Baroness scarcely now dared raise her eyes so high as the tops of the tall dark trees; they fell abroad over the beautiful landscape stretched out beneath them, and the good gifts of God cropping up out of the ground; and she thought how beautiful was that nature to which she must so soon say adieu!

Thus ten days passed without a gleam of expectation. Suddenly she rose and clapped her hands; and her silvery laugh brought her husband bounding to her side.

“I have it this time, Heinrich!” she said.

And the Baron listened anxiously, but trusted himself never to speak.

“Said you not that the Wilder Jäger’s domain was entirely among the tall dark trees?”

“So it seemed to me it was,” responded her husband.

“But *I* certainly discerned through the forest patches of ripe golden grain. Saw you them not too?” [123]

“The first time I rode too fast to notice them, but I do think on this last journey I saw such here and there by the wayside.”

“No doubt,” continued the lady, “it is hence he takes his name; these small patches of golden grain are more worth than all the vast forests. Order the horses, for I have guessed his name! It came to my mind just now, as I looked over the harvest-fields stretched out yonder.

“Wheat, Oats, Maize—that will be his name!”

The Baron knew her counsel had often proved right when he least expected, and even disputed it, and though he was now too desponding to expect success, he was likewise least inclined to dispute her word. So he ordered the horses round, for it was yet early morning, and they rode to the ilex grove.

The Baroness, whose hope seemed to rise as she got nearer the goal of the journey, was full of spirit and cheerfulness, and, finding it impossible to work up the Baron to the same expectation as herself, rode on to accomplish her work ere he arrived.

One note of the jewelled horn brought the Wilder Jäger to her presence.

As she had failed before, he had less fear of her success this time, and he was proportionately less subservient and submissive.

“So you think you are come to give me my dismissal, beautiful Baroness? But you have no reason to repulse me so—be assured I mean it well with you; and though there is no limit to my power over you, I shall never treat you otherwise than with honour,” he said, with a little scornful laugh which suited his fine features exactly, and made him look handsomer than before. And as he spoke so, his haughty tone, not unmixed with warmth and admiration, thrilled her with the notion that, after all, if it were not for her troth plighted to the Baron, it would not be so very dreadful to owe obedience to one who knew how to command so gracefully. [124]

But it was only for a moment. The weakness passed, she drew herself up with dignity, and, retreating against the support of the friendly ilex, said,—

“Silence! and remember your promise to leave me at peace till the fatal month is out. I cannot listen to you. And now for your name——”

The Cobbold bowed, with a half-mocking, half-respectful inclination, as if forcing himself to listen out of courtesy, but secure that she would not guess right.

“Wheat! Oats! Maize!” said the Baroness, with a positive air.

The Cobbold stared comically, as if doubting whether she was in earnest; and at last, as if to relieve her out of politeness, he replied,— [125]

“Oh, dear no, that’s not at all like it!”

The Baroness hung her head in despair; then, drawing herself up again, she said,—

“How do I know you are not deceiving me? You say this is not your name, and I have to believe you—but suppose I maintain that it *is* it?”

“You are not fair, beautiful Baroness,” replied the Wilder Jäger, with a charming dignity. “I have never deceived you, nor ever would I deceive so noble a lady! what I have promised, I have kept; but in this case I have no means of deceiving you—great as is my power, that is one thing beyond it. Could a mortal, indeed, discover and pronounce my name in my presence, I could not stand before him an instant. But this it is not given to mortals to know, and that is why I proposed this difficulty to you. Should I have paid you so bad a compliment,” he added, with his cynical laugh, “as to render it possible that I should lose so great a prize?”

The Baron rode up while he was saying this, and shrank dumb with despair at the cruel words and the positive tone in which they were uttered.

Without condescending to exchange a word with the Cobbold this time, he lifted his wife on to her palfrey and rode away with her in silence.

It was now all over. His despondency even gained the Baroness, and she ceased to rack her brain with the hope of finding the inconceivable name. Her eye not only [126] dared not raise itself to the tall dark trees—it had not even power to range over the landscape. With her head sunk upon her breast, she sat silently among her flowers in her oriel window, nor cared even to look at them. Only in the morning and the evening they knelt together in the chapel of the castle, and prayed that the calamity might pass away yet.

The days went by, and now the last but one had come; and the Baroness trembled, for her imagination pictured the Cobbold coming to carry her away. But her courage did not forsake her even now, and she proposed to go out into the forest to meet her fate, as more noble than waiting for it to overtake her.

The Baron, too dispirited to discuss any matter, and indifferent to every thing, now that all he cared for was to be taken from him, gave a listless consent. The next morning, having prayed and wept together in the castle chapel, they set out on their mournful pilgrimage, the young wife led as a lamb to the sacrifice.

The flowers bloomed beneath their feet, and the sun shone warm overhead, the birds sang blithe and gay—all nature was bright and fresh; but with heavy hearts they passed through the midst, nor found a thought but for their own great sorrow. As they came to the borders of the forest, however, the Baroness discerned the cry as of one in distress. Forgetting for the moment her own agony, her compassionate [127] heart was at once moved, and she begged her husband to turn aside with her, and find out the poor wretch who pleaded so piteously. In a little time they had followed up the sound, and they found one of the Wilder Jäger's men tied in front of a lately lighted fire. In a few minutes more the heaped-up wood would have been all in flames, and then the luckless wight must have been slowly roasted! At a word from the Baroness, the Baron cut his bonds; and then they inquired what was the occasion of his punishment. "Oh, it don't want much to get a punishment out of the Wilder Jäger!" was the answer.

"Is he so very severe, then?" asked the Baroness, her cheek blanching with fear.

"At times, yes; it depends how the fancy takes him—if he is out of humour he spares no one. If he were not so violent and arbitrary, I would do you a good turn for that you have done me; but I dare not, his anger is too fearful."

The more he descanted on the Wilder Jäger's barbarity, the more the Baroness prayed that he would tell her the word that would save her; but he dared not, and all her instance was in vain. "And yet there might be a means," he said, for he was desirous of doing a service to his deliverers.

"Oh, speak! tell us what we can do—no matter what it is, we will do it!" answered both at once. [128]

"Well, if you happen to *overhear* it, I shan't have *told* you, and yet it will serve your turn just as well;" and with that he walked on close in front of them, singing carelessly as he went.

"How are we to 'overhear' it, Heinrich?" said the Baroness, after a bit.

"He seems to have forgotten us," replied the Baron, in despair. "I have been expecting him every minute to turn round and give us a hint of how he meant to help us; but it is just like every one you do a favour to—when they have got what they want, they forget all about you."

They walked on in silence; and the fellow kept on close in front of them, singing as before, and always the same verse.

At last the Baroness got wearied with hearing the same thing over and over again, and she began repeating the words over to herself, mechanically. She could not make them out at all at first, for he had a rough, abrupt articulation, but by dint of perseverance in an occupation which served as a distraction to her agony, she at last made it out, word by word:—

"The Wild Huntsman's betrothed (though he is not tamed)
To a lady fair
Driven to despair.
If she only knew he's Burzinigala named!"

"'Burzinigala named!' exclaimed the Baroness, with the ringing laugh of former [129] days, and clapping her hands merrily.

“I have it all right this time, you may depend, Heinrich!” and she laughed again.

The Baron was too delighted for words—he embraced his wife in his joy; and they walked on with a very different mien from what they wore before. The first joy over, they turned to thank their helper; but he had already disappeared, climbing over the tops of the trees to get out of sight of the Wilder Jäger’s eye for as long as might be.

There was no more lingering now, they hasted on, anxious only to proclaim their triumph.

The ilex grove was soon reached, and the jewelled horn quickly produced the Wilder Jäger.

To-day he was habited with greater care even than on the former occasions, and there was also still more assurance in his manner, and still more forwardness to flatter.

“Well, lady fair,” he said, with a mocking air, “do you deem you have guessed my name this time?”

“Really, it is so difficult,” replied the lady, “that how can you think I can hope to succeed? Besides, why should I wish to do what would deprive me of so charming a companion?”

The Wilder Jäger in his turn was perturbed. Nothing could have made him happier than to hear such words from her lips, could he have deemed them sincere; but [130] there was an irony in her tone and a playfulness in her countenance which showed that her heart was not in her words. Yet he felt convinced she could not discover his name; and so he knew not what to think, and scarcely what to say. And the Baroness, delighting in his confusion, continued teasing him, like a cat with a mouse.

After a good deal of this bantering, in which the Wilder Jäger got quite bewildered, the Baroness rose majestically.

“Have we not had enough talking?” she said, with emphasis; “when are you going to take me home—Sir Burzinigala?”

It would be impossible to describe the effect of this word. He rose from the earth with one bound. The beauty, the calmness, the commanding air, which had at one time charmed the Baroness, had all fled. Wild, savage, and furious as he had first appeared and tenfold more, he now showed; and the sparks flew from his eyes on all around. Through the thick tops of the trees he passed, they hardly knew how; and soon the only trace of him left was that of the sparks that smouldered on the dry heath.

It only remained for the Baron and Baroness to return home, locked in each other’s arms. And they continued loving each other more than ever before to the end of their days. [131]

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THE GRAVE PRINCE AND THE BENEFICENT CAT.

There once was a king in Tirol who had three sons. The eldest was grave and thoughtful beyond his years; but he seldom spoke to any one, took no pleasure in pastimes, and lived apart from those of his age. The other two were clever and merry, always forward at any game, or at any piece of fun, and passed all their time in merry-making and enjoyment.

Now though the eldest son was, by his character, more adapted to make a wise and prudent sovereign, yet the two younger brothers, by their lively, engaging manner, had made themselves much more popular in the country; they were also the favourites of their father, but the eldest was the darling of his mother.

The king was old and stricken in years, and would gladly have given up the cares of government, and passed his declining years in peace, but he could not make up his mind to which of the brothers he should delegate his authority. The queen was [132] persuaded of the excellent capacity of her eldest son; but the two younger were always saying he was half mad, and not fit to govern, and as they had the people on their side, he greatly feared lest the kingdom should be involved in civil war, so he always put off making any arrangement.

One day, however, an ancient counsellor observed to him, that if he really feared

that there would be a dispute about the succession, it was much better to have it decided now while he was alive to act as umpire, than that it should befall when they would be left to wrangle with no one to make peace between them.

The king found the counsel good, and decided to retire from the government, and to proclaim his eldest son king in his stead. When the two younger sons, however, heard what he intended to do, they came to him and urged their old charge, that their elder brother was not fit to govern, and entreated the king to halve the kingdom between them. But the king, anxious as he was to gratify them, yet feared to displease the queen by committing so great an injustice against her eldest son; and thus they were no further advanced than before.

Then the old counsellor who had offered his advice before spoke again, and suggested that some task should be set for the three, and that whoever succeeded in that should be king beyond dispute. [133]

The three sons all swore to abide by this decision; and the king found the counsel good. But now the difficulty arose, what should he set them to do? for they had insisted so much on the weak intellect of the eldest, that the queen feared lest, after all, he should fail in the trial, and her care for him be defeated. She knew he had never practised himself in feats of strength, or in the pursuit of arms, so it was useless proposing such as these for the test, but she persuaded him to set them something much simpler.

So, having called an assembly of all the people, he proclaimed aloud that the three brothers should travel for a year and a day, and whichever of them should bring him back the finest drinking-horn, *he* should be the king—the three sons swearing to abide by his award.

The two younger brothers set out with a great retinue; and, as they did not apprehend much difficulty in surpassing their brother in whatever they might undertake, they spent the greater part of the year allowed them in amusing themselves, secure in bringing back the best, whatever they might bring.

The eldest set out alone through the forest. In his lonely wanderings he had often observed a strangely beautiful castle on a far-off mountain, concerning which he could find no record in any of his books, nor could he learn that any one living knew any thing about it. He now resolved to make his way thither, persuaded that [134]
if he was to find something surpassing the work of human hands, it was like to be in this enchanted castle.

Though it was so high-placed, the way was much easier than he thought, and he was not more than five months getting there; so that he had ample time for exploring its precincts, and yet get back within the appointed date. He had, indeed, to traverse dark forests and steep rocky paths, but when he got near the castle all these difficulties ceased. Here there were only easy slopes of greensward, diapered by sparkling flowers; broad-leaved trees throwing delicious shade; and rills that meandered with a pleasant music. Delicious bowers and arcades of foliage of sweet-scented plants invited to repose; and every where luscious fruits hung temptingly within reach. Birds sang on every branch with a soft, dreamy melody which soothed, and disturbed not the lightest slumber.

The prince thought it would have been delightful to pass the remainder of his days there, but he remembered that it was an important mission with which he was entrusted, and he passed on.

A broad flight of marble steps led from these amenities up to the palace, and every now and then a thousand little jets were turned on, to pour their tiny floods over them, and cool them for the tread of those who entered.

And yet no one was near, no one to enjoy all this magnificence! The prince entered [135]
the hall, but no one came to meet him; he passed through the long corridors—all were deserted; he entered one apartment after another—still no one. At last he came to one charming boudoir all hung with pink satin, and lace, and beautiful flowers. On a pink satin sofa covered with lace sat a large Cat with soft grey fur, and soft grey eyes—the first living thing he had met!

As he entered, the Cat rose to meet him, walking on her hind-paws, and, holding out her right front-paw in the most gracious manner, asked him, in a sweet, clear voice, if there was any thing she could do for him. Then, as if the effort was too great, she let herself down on all fours, and rubbed her soft grey head against his boots.

Finding her so friendly, he was going to take her up in his arms: this she would not allow, however, but sprang with an agile bound on to a ledge above his head. “And now tell me,” said she, “what is it you want me to do for you?”

“Really, Lady Purrer, you are so kind, you confuse me! But, to tell you the truth, I fear—”

“You fear that a poor puss can’t be of any use,” interposed the Cat, smartly, “and that your requirements are much above her feeble comprehension. But never mind, tell me all the same; there is little fear but that I can help you, and if I can’t, the telling me will do you no harm.” [136]

“Quite the contrary,” replied the prince, “it will be a great pleasure to have only your sympathy, for I am in great distress.” Her voice was so sweet and kind, that he quite forgot it was only a Cat he was talking to.

“Poor prince!” said the Cat, soothingly; “tell me all about it, then. But stop, I’ll tell you first what *I* think. I’m sure you are not appreciated at home. I saw it in your look when you first came in. You don’t look bright and enterprising, as you ought to look. You look as if you lived too much alone. Oh, you would be twice as handsome if you only looked a little more lively and energetic—” and then she stopped short, and sneezed a great many times, as if she feared she had said what was not quite proper, and some other sound would efface that of her words.

“There is a great deal of truth in what you say,” replied the prince; “they don’t care much about me at home—at least my mother does, but my father and brothers don’t. And I do live too much alone—but it’s not my fault: it’s a bad way of mine, and I don’t know how to get out of it.”

“You want some one to pet you, and spoil you, and make you very happy; and then you would be pleased to go into the society of others, because then you could say to yourself, I’ll show them that there’s some one understands me and makes a fuss about me—” and she stopped short, as before. [137]

“But who should care to spoil and pet *me*?” cried the prince, despondingly, and too much interested in her words to see any reason why she should be confused at what she had said.

“Why, a nice little wife, to be sure!” replied the Cat.

“A wife!” exclaimed the prince; “oh yes, my father’s grey-bearded counsellors will find me some damsel whom it is necessary I should marry for the peace of the kingdom; and to her I shall be tied, and, be she an idiot or a shrew, I shall have no voice in the matter.”

“But do you mean to say,” retorted the Cat, in a more excited voice, “that if you found a nice little princess—I don’t say any one they could with justice object to, but a real princess—who cared very much for you, and made you very happy, very happy indeed, so that you determined to marry her, that you wouldn’t be man enough to say to your father and all his counsellors, ‘Here is the princess I mean to make my wife; I feel Heaven intended her for me. I am sure she will be the joy of my people, as she is mine, and no other shall share my throne’?”

“*Wouldn’t* I,” exclaimed the prince, with energy, starting to his feet, and placing his hand instinctively on his sword, his eye flashing and the colour mounting in his cheek.

“Ah! if you always looked like that! Now, you are handsome indeed!” exclaimed the Cat, enthusiastically, and purred away. “But,” she added, immediately after, [138] “all this time you haven’t told me what it was you came for.”

“Ah!” said the prince, despondingly, at finding himself thus recalled to the prosaic realities of his melancholy life from that brief dream of happiness. “No; because you have been talking to me of more interesting things” (the Cat purred audibly); and then he told her what it was had really brought him there.

“You see, your mother understands your character better than all the rest,” said the Cat. “She knew you could be trusted to prove your superiority over your brothers, though the others hope you may fail. However, fail you won’t this time, for I can give you a drinking-horn which neither your brothers nor any one else on earth can match!”

With that she sprang lightly on to the soft carpet, and ran out of the room, beckoning to him to follow her. She led him through a long suite of rooms till they came to a large dining-hall all panelled with oak and filled with dark carved-oak furniture. In the centre of one end of this hall, high up in the panelling, was an inlaid safe or tabernacle curiously wrought. Puss gave one of her agile springs on to the top of this cabinet, and, having opened its folding-doors gently with her paw, disclosed to view a drinking-horn such as the prince had never seen. It was a white semi-transparent horn, but close-grained, like ivory, and all finely carved [139] with designs of curious invention; the dresses of the figures were all made of

precious stones cunningly let in, and they sparkled with a vivid lustre, like so many lamps. Then it had a rim, stand, and handle of massive gold exquisitely chased, and adorned with rows of pearls and diamonds.

“Kind Lady Purrer,” exclaimed the prince, “you are right, there is no doubt of my success! But how can I ever sufficiently thank you for what you have done for me? for I owe all to you.”

“And a little to your own discernment too,” said the Cat, archly. “And now, always look as much alive and as bright as you do now, and you will see people will think better of you.”

“But when shall I see you again, most sweet counsellor? May I come back and see you again?” pleaded the prince, and he tried to stroke her sleek fur as she rubbed her soft grey head, purring, against his boots. The stroking, however, she would by no means allow, but springing again on to the top of the cabinet, she said,—

“Oh, yes; it will not be long before you will have to come back to me, I know. But go, now; you have spent more time here than you think, and you have only just enough left to get back within the year.”

The prince turned to obey her; and the Cat jumped down, and ran by his side, purring. When he got out into the grounds again, she followed him, climbing from [140]
tree to tree; and when he came to the boundary-wall she ran all along on the coping. But here at last they had to part, to her great regret, and for many a lonely mile he still heard her low and plaintive mew.

It was true, he must have spent more time in her pleasant company than he had thought, for when he reached home he found the day of trial had arrived; the streets were deserted, and all the people gathered in the palace to see the drinking-horns his brothers had brought, and talking loudly of their magnificence. He passed through their midst without being recognized, for the people knew him so little; and thus he heard them speak of his younger brothers:—

“What bright faces they have! and what a merry laugh! it does the heart good to hear them,” said one.

“I wonder how the kingdom will be divided, and which half will be to which of them,” said another.

“For my part, I don’t care to the lot of which I fall, for both are excellent good fellows,” replied a third.

And thus they had clearly settled in their own mind that his brothers had carried the day, and they didn’t even trouble themselves to think what he would bring, or whether he would come back at all. It was the same thing all the way along. The words were varied, but the same idea prevailed every where, that the younger [141]
brothers had made good their claim; there was no question at all of the eldest. The prince’s face was growing moody again; but just then one good woman, wiping the soap-suds from her hands as she turned from her washing at the river to join the throng, exclaimed, as she heard some neighbours talking thus, “Hoity toity! it’s all very well with you and your laughing princes—a grave one for me, say I! Laughing may lead a man to throw away his money, but it won’t teach him to feed the poor, or govern a kingdom. Wait till the *Grave Prince* comes back! I’ll warrant he’ll bring the bravest drinking-horn!”

A chorus of mocking laughter greeted her defence of him.

“*He* bring the bravest drinking-horn!” said one.

“Don’t believe he knows what a drinking-horn is for—or drink either!” said another.

“No; his brothers understand *that* best, at all events. I like a man who can drink his glass.”

“And I like one who *doesn’t* drink it, whether he *can* or not; but keeps his head clear for his business,” said the good wife who had defended him before.

And as there were a good many who were too fond of the bottle in the crowd, the laugh raised at him was turned against them.

He had *one* defender, then, in all that mass of people, but all the rest judged him incapable, and without trial! He was too disheartened, to make his way into the [142]
great hall where the success of his brothers was being proclaimed, but instead trod sadly and secretly up to his mother’s chamber.

The queen was too distressed at the absence of her favourite son to take part in the jocular scene below, and was seated, full of anxiety, at her window, watching.

“What do you *here*, my son?” she exclaimed, when he entered; “you have but one short half-hour more, and the time will be expired. The sun is already gone down, and the time once past, whatever you have brought, it will avail you not! Haste, my son, to the council-hall!”

“It is useless, mother; all are against me!” cried the prince; and he laid the beautiful flagon on the table, and sank upon a chair.

In the mean time it had grown dark, but the queen, impelled by her curiosity to know what success her son had had, pulled off the wrapper that enclosed the drinking-horn, and instantly the apartment was brilliantly lighted by the light of the precious stones with which it was studded!

“My son, this is a priceless work! This is worth a kingdom! Nothing your brothers can have brought can compare with this—haste, then, my son!” and she led him along.

It was dark in the council-hall too; but when the queen had dragged her son up to the throne where the king sat, she uncovered the flagon, and the sparkling stones [143] sent their radiance into every part.

Then there was one shout of praise. The drinking-horns of the younger brothers, which had anon been so highly extolled, were no more thought of, and every one owned that the Grave Prince had won the trial.

The king declared it was too late for any more business that night, the proclamation of the new sovereign would be made the next morning; and in the meantime they all retired to rest, the Grave Prince with some new sensations of satisfaction and hope, and the queen assured of the triumph of her son.

But in the silent night, when all were wrapt in slumber, and the king could not sleep for the anxiety and perplexity which beset him as to his successor, the two young brothers came to him and complained that they had been circumvented. The Grave Prince had always shown himself so gloomy and unenergetic, it was impossible they could conceive he was going to distinguish himself, so they had taken no trouble to beat him; but if their father would but allow another trial, they would undertake he should not have the advantage of them again.

So the next day, instead of proclaiming the new sovereign, the king announced that he had determined there should be a fresh trial of skill; and whichever of the [144] princes should bring him the best hunting-whip, that day year, should have the crown.

The princes set off next day on their travels once more, the eldest son of course directing his towards the castle of the Beneficent Cat.

This time he had not to traverse a file of deserted halls before meeting her; she sat looking out for him on the coping of the wall where he had left her mewing so piteously when he last parted from her.

“I told you it would not be long before you would have to come back to me,” she said, as he approached. “What can I do for you this time?”

“My brothers are discontented at being beaten with *your* beautiful beaker,” replied the prince, gallantly, “and they have demanded another trial: this time my father sends us in quest of a hunting-whip.”

“A hunting-whip?” echoed the Cat; “that is lucky, for I can suit you with one neither they nor any one else on this earth can surpass!” and she frisked merrily along the path before him till they came to the stables; then she took him into a room where all manner of saddles, and horse-gear, and hunting-horns were stored. But on a high ledge, at the very top of the room, was a dusty hunting-whip of the most unpretending appearance. With one of her bold springs she reached the ledge, and jumped down again with this whip in her mouth.

“It is not much to look at, I own,” she said, as she observed the perplexed look [145] with which the prince surveyed the present; “but its excellent qualities are its recommendation. You have but to crack this whip, and your horse will take any thing you put him at, be it a river half a mile wide, or a tree fifty feet high. There are plenty of horses in the stable, saddle any of them you like, and make experience of it for yourself.”

The prince did as she bid him; and at sound of the enchanted whip his mount leapt with equal ease over hills and valleys.

“This is a whip indeed!” exclaimed the prince, his face flushed with the unwonted exercise, and his heart beating high at the idea of being the bearer of such a prize.

“Ah, that’s how I like to see you!” said the friendly puss; “I like to see you like that. Now you are handsome indeed!” and she scampered away, as if coyly ashamed of what she had said.

It was not long before she returned; and then she invited the prince into the next room, where an elegant dinner was laid out, of which the Cat did the honours very demurely. A high divan was arranged at the top of the table, on which she reclined, and ate and lapped alternately out of the plates ready before her, while invisible attendants served the viands and filled the glasses.

When they had finished their meal, they went out to repose in the flowery bowers; and when the heat of the day was past, the Beneficent Cat reminded her guest that [146] he must be thinking of going home, if he would not that his brothers should supplant him.

“Must I go so soon, sweet Lady Purrer?” replied the prince. “I know not how to part from you; it seems I should be happy if I were always with you. I have never felt so happy any where before!”

“You are very gallant, prince,” responded the Cat, “and you have no idea how well it becomes you to look as you do now; but the affairs of your kingdom must be your first thought. You must first secure your succession—and then we must look out for the nice little wife we talked of last time.”

“Ah,” sighed the Grave Prince, “don’t talk of that—that is not for me! No one beautiful enough for me to care about will ever care for me!”

“Not if you look desponding and gloomy, like that,” replied the Cat. “Do you know, you look quite like another being when you look so gloomy; and yet you can be *so* handsome when you look bright and hopeful! But now,” she proceeded, laying her soft paw on his arm to arrest the futile justification which rose to his lips, “before you go, I have something very important to tell you. You will now go back, and with the hunting-whip I have given you, you are safe to win the trial which is to establish your right to the kingdom. But there will be yet another trial exacted of you, and you will have to come back again to me. What you are to do then, I must [147] tell you now, for it requires great prudence and courage, and one principal thing is, that you don’t say a word to me all the time. Can you promise that?”

“Well, *that* is hard indeed,” said the prince; “but still, if you command it, I think I can promise to obey, for the sake of pleasing you.”

“Then the next thing is harder. Do you think you can do *whatever* I command?”

“Oh yes, I am sure I can promise that!” replied the prince, warmly.

“Mind, *whatever* I command, then—however hard, or however dreadful it may be?”

“Yes, *any thing*—however hard, or however dreadful!”

“But will you swear it?”

“I see you doubt my courage,” said the prince, half offended. “You take me for a fool, like the rest. But no wonder; I know I look like a fool!”

“Now don’t look gloomy again! you were so handsome just now when you said so firmly you would do ‘*any thing*.’ Will you gratify me by swearing?”

“You doubt my courage.”

“No; I don’t doubt your courage. But I know how terrible a thing I have to command you; and I know how many others have failed before you. Now will you not swear, but to please me?” [148]

“Yes; I swear,” said the prince, energetically, “to do whatever it may be that you tell me to do.”

“Now, remember, you have undertaken it solemnly. This is what you must do. When you come in, you will find me sitting on the kitchen stove; you must then seize me by my two hind-paws, and dash me upon the hearthstone till there is nothing left of me in your hands, but the fur!”

“Oh dear! I can never do *that*!” exclaimed the prince, in great embarrassment.

“But you have sworn to do whatever I told you!” replied the Cat.

“Well, but I thought you were going to order me to do something rational, something noble and manly, requiring courage and strength—not a horrible act like this.”

“If it is *the* thing that has to be done, it does not matter what it is. Besides, it *does* require courage, great courage; and that is why I would not tell you first what it was, because others have failed when they knew what it was.”

“And you expect me to have less feeling and affection for you than they?”

“No; but I expect more sense and judgment of you. I expect you to understand and believe that if I say it has to be done, it is really for the best, and that you will trust to me that it is right. And I expect that you will respect your promise, which was made without limit or exception. But now, go; you have no time to lose, if you want [149] to reach home with the hunting-whip in time for the trial.”

He rose to leave; and she followed him down the path, purring by his side. And after she had taken leave of him at the boundary-wall, he heard her mewing sad adieus as he went on for many a weary mile.

When the prince reached the council-hall, he found, as before, that his brothers were there first, and that every one seemed to have decided that they had won the day—in fact no one showed any curiosity to know what he would bring. As he had beaten them by his lustrous jewels before, they had fancied he would bring something of the same sort again; so, to conquer him on his own ground, they had sought out and found two handles of hunting-whips mounted with jewels as sparkling as those of his drinking-horn. When they saw him come in with the shabby old whip the Beneficent Cat had given him, they laughed outright in his face; and the king, in a fit of indignation, ordered him to leave the hall for venturing to insult him by bringing such a present. Some laughed him to scorn, and some abused him; but no one would listen to a word he had to say. At last the tumult was so great that it reached the queen’s ears; and when she had learnt what was the matter, she insisted that he should have a hearing allowed him. When silence had been proclaimed the Grave Prince said,— [150]

“It is true, my whip is not so splendid as that of my brothers, but jewels are out of place on a hunting-whip, it seems to me; the handle is wanted to be smooth, so that the hand may take a firm grip of it, rather than to be covered with those points and unevennesses. The merit of my whip is not in the handle, it is in the lash, which has such excellent qualities, that you have but to crack it, and your horse will immediately take you over any obstruction there may be in your way—be it a house or a mountain, or what you will. If you will allow me, I will give you proof of its powers.”

Then they all adjourned to the terrace in front of the council-hall, where was a fine avenue of lofty cypresses; and the queen ordered a horse to be brought round from the stables. The people had never seen the prince on horseback before; and when they saw him looking so gallant, and noble, and determined, they could not forbear cheering him, till his younger brothers began to fear that his real worth would soon be found out, and their malice exposed.

Then the prince cracked his whip—and away went the horse over the tops of the high trees, seeming to scrape the clouds as he passed. All the people were lost in admiration, no one had ever seen such a sight before; and while they were wondering whether it was possible he could have reached the ground in safety [151] from such a height, there was a murmur in the air, and they saw him coming back again over the tree-tops. With no more apparent effort than if he had merely taken a hedge, he came softly to the ground; and then, kneeling gracefully before his father on one knee, without a word of boasting or reproach, he laid the clever whip at his feet.

The king raised him up, and said, aloud to the people, none could deny that it was this whip that had won the trial, but that as it was now late, he must leave the ceremony of proclaiming his successor till the morrow.

All went home for the night, and the old king also went to bed; but he could not sleep for anxiety, thinking of the anger and dissatisfaction of his younger sons. And presently, in the silent hour, they came to him, and said that he must allow them another trial; that it was impossible they could conceive he meant them to bring him a fantastical whip of that sort, or of course they would have brought one which could do much better things. They thought it was the beauty of the workmanship they had to look to, and so they had provided for nothing else. They urged their suit so persistently, that the king, who was now very old and weak, agreed to let them have their way.

Accordingly, next morning he had it proclaimed that the three princes were to [152]

make one trial more; and that whichever brought back the most beautiful and virtuous princess for his wife should have the crown.

The three princes set out again early the next morning; the two younger ones providing themselves with jewels and riches, and many precious things for presents; the eldest taking nothing, but walking off alone towards the enchanted castle with a heavy heart. “It is all up with me now,” he said to himself, “after all! Why couldn’t my father have been satisfied when I had beaten them twice? Now I have to kill the Beneficent Cat—the only being that ever assisted me; and then I shall have no one to help me at all! They will come back with two beautiful princesses, and I shall come back looking like a fool, because no princess will ever come with *me*—and they will take my kingdom, and laugh at me into the bargain! If it was not for my mother, I would never come back at all; but it would break her heart if I stayed away, and she is the only one of them who understands me and cares for me.”

As he got nearer the castle, he grew more and more sad. “Why did she make me swear? If it hadn’t been for that, I could still have escaped doing it; but now I cannot break my oath;” and he trudged on.

The gardens looked more lovely than ever. The scent of the flowers seemed [153]
sweeter, and the melody of the birds more soothing. All was full of harmony—and he who had never harmed a fly must cruelly use the soft and beautiful Cat who had so befriended him!

He passed through the apartments where puss had purred round him so happily—the dining-room where they had had their pleasant repast together—the boudoir where she had given him such wise counsel.

At last he came to the kitchen; and there, sure enough, was the Cat cosily curled round, her soft grey head buried in her long grey fur.

An energy and daring he had never known before seemed suddenly to possess him. He took care not to speak, for she had particularly recommended silence; but, approaching her on tiptoe, seized her rapidly by her hind-paws before she had time to wake from her pleasant slumber, and dashed her several times upon the hearth, scarcely knowing what he did in his horror, till he perceived that he had nothing left in his hand but the soft, limp, grey fur.

He sank upon the ground in tears, and commenced laying it out tenderly before him, when he was woken from his reverie by a mellow ringing laugh, which made him look up—and there before him stood the most beautiful, fairy-like princess
that ever was seen on this earth! [154]

“Well done, kind prince! you have nobly kept your word. And see what I have gained thereby—instead of that grey fur, I now have a form which will perhaps make me meet to fulfil the condition your father has imposed on you for obtaining your throne!”

Her voice, and the glance of her soft eyes, seemed quite familiar to him—it was the voice which had first inspired him with hope and enterprise, and the mild light which had beamed on him when he said he could be happy to be always near her in her bower. How much more now, when she appeared in such matchless guise!

He remained kneeling at her feet, and asked her if it was indeed true that she could love him and be with him always as his wife.

“Nay,” she replied, raising him up; “it is I who ought to be astonished. I have nothing to refuse, for I owe you all; and as, but for you, I should still be nothing but a poor grey Cat, I belong to you, and am absolutely yours. It is I who have to be astonished, and to ask you if it is possible you who have known me as a Cat can really love me and regard me as worthy to be indeed your wife.”

“You are mocking me again, I see,” he replied; “but you do not really think me so insensible as not to appreciate your beauty, and the prudence and generosity of
which you have given me such abundant proof? No; if you will come with me, I [155]
have no fear but that I shall win the trial this time beyond all possibility of demanding another.” He spoke warmly, and his face beamed with joy. The princess was leaning on his arm, and looked up in his face as he spoke.

“Ah, now you *do* look!—No, I suppose I mustn’t say it now I have no longer my cat-disguise to hide my blushes,” she said, archly; and they passed on into the reception-hall.

The attendants were no longer invisible. Together with their mistress they had received their forms and original life; and the corridors and apartments were filled with her people bustling to serve her. A banquet was prepared in the dining-hall;

and when they had partaken of it, and had regaled themselves in the bower with happy talk, the princess reminded the prince—now no longer grave—that it was time for them to be going back to his father. A great train of carriages and horses were brought round, with mounted guards and running-footmen, and all the retinue which became a noble princess.

The princess was carried in a litter by six men in embroidered liveries, and her ladies with her; and the prince rode on horseback, close by her side.

This time, though it was near the close of the last day, his brothers had not appeared when he reached the council-hall. The king and the queen received the [156] Beneficent Princess with smiles and admiration, and all the people praised her beauty; and the queen said,—

“There is no fear, my son, that your brothers can demand another trial this time.”

Before she had done speaking, a messenger was hastily ushered into the hall, covered with dust and stains of travel. He came from the two younger princes, and had a sorrowful tale to tell.

They had striven to obtain the hands of the princesses of the neighbouring kingdom; but the king was a prudent sovereign, and discerned their envious, selfish character. When they found he repulsed their advances, they had endeavoured to carry off the princesses by force; but the king had surprised them in the midst of their design, and had had them shut up as midnight robbers.

The old king was in great distress when he heard the news, for his sons had manifestly been taken in the midst of wrong-doing, and he could not defend their acts nor avenge their shame. But the eldest son took on himself the mission of pacifying the neighbouring sovereign and delivering his brothers. Having accomplished which, they were fain to acknowledge that he was not only victor in the trials, but their deliverer also; and they swore to maintain peace with him, and obey him as his faithful subjects.

So the old king proclaimed the Grave Prince for his successor, and married him to [157] the Beneficent Princess, amid great rejoicing of all the people; and the queen had the happiness of seeing her eldest son acknowledged as the most prudent prince, and the ruler of the people, and gifted with a beautiful and devoted wife. [158]

[Contents]

KLEIN-ELSE.

The Passeier-Thal, which at the beginning of the present century sent Hofer and his famous band of peasant heroes to the defence of the fatherland, was in ancient times often involved in the wrangles between its rulers and those of Bavaria. The men of the Passeier-Thal were no less heroes then than now, but there were heroes in Bavaria too, so that the success was as often on one side as the other.

Klein-Else[58] was the daughter of a bold baron whose castle was, so to speak, one of the outposts of the valley; and as he had thus more often than others to bear the brunt of the feud, his strength became gradually diminished, and it was only by leaguing himself with his neighbours that he was enabled to repel the frequent inroads of a turbulent knight who had established himself on the other side of the old frontier, but who cultivated a strong passion for annexation. The Passeier-Thal baron did his best to strengthen his defences and keep up a watchful look-out; and [159] the moment his scouts perceived the enemy advancing, their orders were not only to bring word of the danger to their master, but to hasten at once to the other castles of the surrounding heights, and summon their owners to his support; and then the whole valley immediately bristled with valiant defenders of their country.

But inasmuch as his adversary was reckless and determined, and much better provided with men and means, he succeeded in laying his plans so well at last, that he eluded all the vigilance of the baron’s scattered handful of look-out men, and, bursting in upon his domain by surprise, carried all his defences, laid waste every thing before him, and marched upon the castle itself.

The bold baron swore he would not remain to be killed like a reptile in its hole, but sallied out with the few retainers who remained to him, to sell his life and his possessions as dearly as he might. With desperate courage he dealt the deadliest blows around which had been paid out that day. But it was all in vain. Overcome by superior numbers, he was brought back but a few hours later in piteous plight, mortally wounded.

Klein-Else bent over her father with despairing cries; and her tears fell as fast as the blood from the deep wounds she tried in vain to staunch. [160]

“Leave the bandage, Klein-Else, it boots not,” said the baron, in tones so slow and faint that she could only catch his words by putting her ear to his lips; and, as she did so, his cold breath filled her with horror.

“It boots not to staunch the blood, Klein-Else; my life is spent. But as you have ever obeyed me, listen now to my word. The enemy is at the door; you have but time to escape falling into his hands. Take this key—it opens a gate of which no one knows the secret. Count the tenth buttress in the wall, and where the ivy grows thickest, there, behind it, feel for the lock and open it. Then creep beneath; and, once on the other side, replace the branches, that no one may see they have been disturbed. You will see before you three paths: one leads down into the smiling plain, where you might think to find refuge in the houses of our people; but another destiny is for you. The second leads upwards to the thick pine forest, where you might think to lie concealed till our friends have time to come and rout out this vile usurper; but another destiny is for you. Take the path straight before you, that winds round the mountain; though it is open and exposed to view, fear not, for it leads to—to——”

And here his voice failed, so that she could no more make out *what* he said; and though he continued to exert himself to complete his directions, it was vain that she attempted to distinguish them. His power of articulation was gone. [161]

Klein-Else threw herself on his cold body, and clung to it with all her might. But he who had been her guide and guardian, her will, till now, was powerless and stark; and for all her beseeching he could not answer.

The chaplain came and raised her up, and they carried the body to the sanctuary; but Klein-Else, paralyzed with sadness and despair, stood and gazed after it as though she knew not where she was.

Suddenly wild shouts broke on her ear, and the sound of many feet, and the tumult of the servants and men-at-arms bidding her fly, for the enemy had come.

“Fly, for the enemy is here!” The words recalled her father’s counsel, and mechanically she clasped the key, his last legacy. Scarcely taking time to change her embroidered garments for a peasant’s attire, she crept along under the wall, counting ten buttresses, with a beating heart. After the tenth, she put her hand through the thick ivy, and felt, as her father had foretold, the iron bosses of the lock. It required all her strength to turn the key; but this accomplished, there was safety and rest behind the ivy’s faithful veil.

It was but just in time; the rough soldiers were close behind. [162]

“Ha! who went there?” she heard a hoarse voice say, as she noiselessly closed the door. “Saw you not the ivy move? Press through and see who passed.”

“It was but a frightened hare—I saw it run,” said another, with a less terrible voice.

“Nothing taller ever passed that branch,” said another; and the speakers passed out of hearing.

There lay the three paths: the one straight on before—but so open, so exposed, any one who happened to be passing for miles round might have seen and pursued her, while either of the others offered instant cover and security. Klein-Else was sorely tempted to try one of them.

“If I had heard *all* his instructions,” she reasoned, “it would have been different: I would then have done *all* he told me, whithersoever it might have led; but now I know not what he meant. I may go a little way along this path—and *then* what shall I do? Maybe, I shall fall into a greater danger than that from which he would have saved me!”

And she turned to seek the shelter of the friendly cottages in the valley beneath. But the words seemed to live in the air around her,—

“Another destiny is for you!”

Trembling and confused, she would have plunged into the hiding-place of the pine-forest above; but the wind that moaned through their lofty branches seemed charged with the words,— [163]

“Another destiny is for you!”

She was thus impelled forward into the open path; and, creeping close to the mountain-side, she now pursued her way along it. It was with no small relief that she noticed the sun was nearly sinking behind the opposite heights, so that soon she might hope to be safe from the gaze of men.

And yet, as darkness fell around, it became but the source of other fears. And the sense of her loneliness and abandonment took away her courage to proceed any farther.

She leant against the rock for support, and her tears fell fast and warm upon its stony side—piteously enough, you might have thought, to move and melt it.

And so it was! for see! the hard rock yielded and made way before the noble form of a knight in armour, who said, with compassionate voice,—

“Maiden, wherefore these tears?”

“Because my father is dead, and his enemies have taken his castle, and I have no shelter and nothing to eat!” sobbed Klein-Else.

“If that is all,” answered the noble knight, “it is easily made straight.” And with that he turned to the rock, and said,—

“Open, hoary rock!”

And the hoary rock opened, and disclosed a treasure of every imaginable kind of [164]
riches stored around—jewels and coin, and shining armour, and dazzling dresses.

“All this is yours, Klein-Else,” said the knight; “you have but to take what you will, when you will. It will never grow less. You have only to say, ‘Open, hoary rock!’ and these treasures will always appear at your bidding. Dispose of them as you like; only make a good use of them, for on that depends all your future happiness. I will come and see you again in seven years, and I shall see what use you have made of my gift; but you must remember my name, or woe will be to you.” So he whispered his name in her ear, and disappeared.

Klein-Else was so dazzled and startled that she hardly knew what to think, or whether what had happened was a dream or reality. To make sure, she said to the rock, “Open, hoary rock!” and the rock opened at her bidding as quickly as at the knight’s, and disclosed its glittering treasure. But it was still hard to decide all at once what to take of it; and knowing that it was in a secure store-house, and that it was dangerous to burden herself with much riches when travelling alone in the dark night, she only took a few pieces of money—enough to pay for food and lodging—and passed on with a lightened heart. The rock closed up as she went farther—but she took a note of the spot, so that she might be sure to know it [165]
again; and then made for the lights which appeared with friendly radiance at no great distance through the trees which now fringed the road, repeating the name of the knight to herself, as she went along, that she might never forget it.

Klein-Else hasted on, but was rather dismayed to find that the lights were the lights of a great castle where her money would be of no use. She could not ask for a lodging and supper for money *there*, and there was no other habitation near. So she put by her money again, and, with the humility befitting her wayworn aspect and lowly attire, begged the great man’s servants to give her some poor employment by which she might earn a place among them.

“What can a little, dirty, ragged girl like you do?” said the cook, who was just occupied in fixing the spit through a young chamois that looked so succulent and tender, one as hungry as Klein-Else might have eaten it as it was.

“I can do whatever you please to tell me,” answered Klein-Else, timidly.

“A proper answer,” replied the cook. “Let’s see if you can watch the poultry-house, then. You must be up by daybreak and go late to bed, and lie in the straw over the poultry-loft, and keep half awake all night to scare away the foxes, if any come; and if one smallest chicken is lost, woe betide you! you will be whipped and sent away. Here is a piece of dry bread for your supper. Now go, and don’t stand idling [166]
about.”

Klein-Else was so hungry that she gladly took the piece of dry black bread, and went to try to sleep on the straw in the poultry-loft. She had to get up at daybreak, when the cock crew; and she had to keep her eye on the brood all day; and late at night she had a piece of dry black bread for supper, and was sent to sleep in the straw of the poultry-loft. Her only pastime was to recall the memory of her treasure in the rock, and repeat over and over again the knight’s name, that she

might be sure never to forget it.

“But of what use is all my fine treasure,” she mused, “if I am never to be any thing but a wretched Hennenpfösl[59]? And what can I do? if I come out with handfuls of gold and fine clothes, they will take me for a thief or a witch, and I shall be worse off than now; and if I show them the treasure, who knows but they will take it from me? The knight said my happiness depended on the use I made of it, yet I can make *no* use of it!”

So she sat and counted the hens and chickens, and repeated the knight’s name, and ate her dry black bread, and slept in the straw in the poultry-loft.

Klein-Else, the Hennenpfösl.—*Page* 166.

At last Sunday came, and the glad church bells rang merrily, flinging their joyous notes all abroad; and the servants of the castle put on their best clothes to go to church. But how could Klein-Else be seen among them, all in their snow-white linen and bright-coloured ribbons—Klein-Else, the Hennenpfösl, with her poor rags? [167]

“Now, at last, I can use my treasury,” she said to herself; “I can at least get some of the pretty clothes that hang there, and go to church.” So she washed herself in the mountain-torrent, and braided her dishevelled hair in massive golden braids, and crept round to the rock, and bid it open, saying,—

“Open, hoary rock!”

Of all the treasures it instantly disclosed, she saw none but one beautiful garment all woven out of sunbeams and glittering with jewels of morning dew. Having put this on, and once more looking like a baron’s daughter, she made haste to reach the church.

The holy office had already begun, and the church was crowded right out into the porch. But when the people saw such a dazzling sight, they all made way for the lady in the shining apparel, none dreaming of Klein-Else. Now the only part of the church where there was any room was at the baron’s bench. For he was a young lord, and had neither mother, sister, nor wife; and all the places reserved for his family were vacant. Klein-Else, moving on till she could find where to kneel, had

thus to come and kneel by him. [168]

The young baron was as much dazzled at the sight as Klein-Else herself had been at the treasures in the rock, and at every pause in the service he could do nothing but fix his gaze on her. As soon as it was over, however, Klein-Else glided out softly, and hasting back to the rock, hung the sunbeam-dress up again; and once more assuming her rags, hid herself in the poultry-loft, almost frightened at what she had done.

All the next week she had new subjects of thought. She felt sure the young baron had looked at her and admired her; and wasn't it more meet that she, a baron's daughter, should be kneeling by the side of the young baron than sleeping in the poultry-loft, a mere Hennenpfösl? Ah, if *that* came true—if the young baron married her; *then* she would have some one to tell her good fortune to—some one to defend her treasure. Then she could make the good use of it the knight had manifestly intended. She could wipe away the tears of all those who went without shelter, as she had once; every desolate orphan who had none to defend her; every poor Hennenpfösl, the drudge of the menials. "How strange," she said to herself, "there should be people blessed with friends, and riches, and enjoyments, who live full of their own happiness, and who have no thought for the forsaken and the outcast! She would never be like them, not she! *her* happiness should be in making others happy." [169]

But, in the meantime, was she sure the baron had looked at her otherwise than out of curiosity? Was he really interested in her? and if he was, would he continue to care for her when he found she was only a Hennenpfösl? She must put him to the test; and she sat and thought how to arrange this. This was subject enough for thought; and this week was at an end only too soon.

The next Sunday came; and when the church bells rang, Klein-Else ran to her rock, took out of her store this time a garment woven out of moonbeams, and having arranged her luxuriant hair in massive tresses, once more proceeded to the church. But with all the haste she had made, she could not arrive before the holy office had begun, and the church was once more full. The people fell back again, in awe of her shining garments, and made way for her to kneel beside the baron, who could scarcely suppress a gesture of delight at beholding her once again. Nor did his joy escape Klein-Else's observation; and many a blushing glance they exchanged.

"What a noble cavalier!" thought Klein-Else; "and just such a one as my father always told me my husband should be."

"What a lovely maiden!" mused the young baron; "where can she have sprung from? Is she of earth or heaven?"

All that last week, while Klein-Else was thinking of him, he had been thinking still more of her; and had ordered his waiting-men to surround her as she came out of church, and beg her to come to him at the castle. But Klein-Else had no idea of suffering herself to be so easy a prize; so she fled so fast the baron's men could hardly approach her. And when at last she found they were gaining upon her, and that her fleet step availed her not, she threw down the pieces of money which she took the first night from the rock; and while they stopped to pick them up, pursued her way unperceived, and let the rock close on her till they had lost the trace. Then, assuming her poor rags once more, she returned silently to her poultry-loft. [170]

Her thoughts had food enough now; but it was less with the poor orphans she was to console, than with the young baron, and how to test his love, that they were occupied.

Next Sunday she chose a garment blue like the sky, and all sparkling, as with living stars. She presented herself at the church, and found herself again placed beside the young baron. At the end of the service she went out quickly, as before, only this time he contrived, as she rose to leave, to seize her hand, and slip a gold ring on her finger. Nevertheless, Klein-Else slipped out through the midst of the congregation, and though the serving-men had had stringent orders to follow her, she had prudently provided herself with gold pieces enough to disperse the whole lot of them while she escaped. [171]

The young baron sat alone in his castle, as he had sat this fortnight past, taking no notice of any one, but as if his whole soul was wrapt up in the fair apparition, and he was in despair, since her hiding-place could not be traced. He sat nursing his grief, and could neither be distracted from it, nor comforted. His friends sent for the most famous physicians of the country to attend him, but none of them could do any thing for his case; and daily he grew paler and gloomier, and none could help him. At last the Gräfin Jaufenstein, his aunt, came and insisted that some amusement must be found to divert him; but the young baron refused every

proposal, till at last she begged him to give a great banquet, to which every one from far and near should be invited, every kind of game and every kind of costly diet should be afforded, and nothing spared to make it the most magnificent banquet ever given. To the great surprise and delight of all, he consented to this; but it was because it occurred to him that inviting the whole country, the chances were that the beautiful maiden of his choice, who yet hid herself so persistently from him, might once more mysteriously appear before him too: so he gave his aunt the Countess Jaufenstein free leave to give what orders she liked, and go to what expense she liked, only providing that she should have the invitations [172] publicly published, so that there might be every chance of their reaching the ears of the mysterious maiden.

At last the day of the banquet came, and there was a running hither and thither in the baron's castle, with the preparations, such as can be better imagined than described. The guests swarmed in the halls, and the servants in the kitchen; and Klein-Else, creeping up from her poultry-loft, could hardly make her way up to the fire where the cook was preparing all manner of deliciously scented dishes.

"I don't know what ails the things!" cried the cook; "these pancakes are the only thing the baron will eat, and, as fate will have it, I cannot turn one of them to-night! Three and thirty years I have made pancakes in this castle, and never did I fail before to-night—to-night, when it is most important of all!" and she poured another into the pan. But as she did so, with a hand trembling with anxiety, the oil ran over the side of the pan, and the great heat of the stove set it on fire, so that a great flame curled over the pancake—and there was nothing left of it but a black, misshapen mass.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what *shall* I do?" cried the cook; "there is not one of the whole lot fit to send up, and if this dish is not the best, I had just as lief I had prepared no dish at all!"

"May I have a try, friend cook?" said Klein-Else, coaxingly. [173]

"*You*, indeed!" screamed the cook, indignation and envy added to her former despair; "and a little, dirty, ragged, misbegotten starveling—a vagabond—a Hennenpfösl like you, who never saw a kitchen, or a stove, or a frying-pan, or any thing else! to suppose that *you* can turn a pancake, when *I*, who have turned pancakes in this castle for three and thirty years, have failed! A likely matter indeed! What is the world coming to? Begone, with your impudence, and mind your hens! Ah! now I think of it, I believe it is you that have bewitched the eggs, and *that's* why the pancakes won't turn! Begone, I say, out of my kitchen, and out of the poultry-house too—I'll have no more of your tricks with my eggs!" and she turned, with a menacing gesture at Klein-Else, to try her luck once more.

But at the sight of the black mass in the frying-pan, she grew fairly discouraged, and throwing herself down in a chair, wrapt her face in her apron, and wept like a child.

Meantime Klein-Else advanced with light step to the stove, took up the frying-pan, and cleaned it out in a trice, then poured fresh oil into it, and held it over the stove till it boiled; then, while it spluttered cheerily, she deftly poured in the batter, gliding into it the ring which the baron had stealthily put on her hand at church, and along with it, one with a magnificent diamond, which she had taken from her treasury in the rock. [174]

The boiling oil danced and chirped merrily round the cake, the batter rose as batter never rose before; and when Klein-Else shifted it lightly on to the dish, it wore a bright, golden hue, matched only by her own radiant hair.

The cook, waking from her stupor, was in a transport of delight at beholding the effect of her skill, and sent the dish at once to the baron's table, while Klein-Else took her place in an out-of-the-way corner to hear what should befall.

Nor had she long to wait. The dish had not been gone ten minutes, when the baron's body-servant came solemnly into the kitchen, with the announcement that the baron demanded the immediate attendance of the cook. "It's because I kept him waiting for the pancakes, and because the one of that little hussey's making is not so good as those I have made for him all his life, and his father before him;" and, all trembling and afraid, she rose to follow his messenger. Espying Klein-Else watching anxiously behind a pillar as she passed along, she could not forbear calling out to her, "Ah, wretched child, it is you have got me into this scrape! But you shall pay for it! Why did I let you touch the frying-pan! Why did I let you enter the castle! You had better not come under my sight any more, or I'll soon show you where the builder made the hole in the wall[60]!" and she dragged herself along slowly, in great fear of the apprehended displeasure of the baron, but comforting [175] herself with the determination to let him know the whole fault lay with the

Hennenpfösl.

Great was her surprise, however, to find that it was with no intention of chiding that the baron had summoned her. On the contrary, the gloomy cloud his brow had lately worn had disappeared; he not only looked gay and joyous as of old, but a special radiance of pleasurable expectation lit up his countenance.

“Why, cook,” he said, “you have made me good pancakes all my life, but never one like this! Now tell me honestly who made this one?”

“Nay, but if it is so, I may as well have the credit of it,” thought the cook; “and, after all, I *did* make the batter, and that’s the chief part of the work.”

“Oh, I made it myself, baron, upon my soul! no one but myself makes any thing for the high table.”

The baron’s countenance fell. He began to look gloomy and disappointed once more—was the clue to escape him after all? He roused himself again, as with one flash of hope.

“Did no one help you to make it?”

(“If I tell that she had any part in it, it is obvious, from the tone he takes, he will give the whole merit to her. No, I’ll not mention her; and besides, she didn’t help me to *make* it.”)

“Oh, baron, it don’t want two people to make a pancake! I’ve always made [176]
pancakes for this castle these three and thirty years without help;” and she tried to talk as if she felt hurt, and thus bring the conversation to an end.

The baron passed his hand roughly across his forehead, and stamped his foot in despair.

Once more a hopeful thought flashed across his mind.

“These rings! tell me, how did they get into the pancake, if you made it?” he exclaimed, in peremptory accents.

“Those rings? I never saw those rings before,” stammered the cook, beginning to get a little confused.

“And what did you mutter as you passed the Hennenpfösl coming along, about it’s being all her fault, and making her suffer for it?” interposed the body-servant.

“Ha! said she so?” cried the baron. “Speak, woman, what meant you by those words? Beware, and speak the truth this time, for it is matter of terrible consequence!”

“Who ever would have thought such a fuss would come of turning a pancake!” thought the cook to herself; but she said out aloud, “Well, it is true, the Hennenpfösl did hold the frying-pan while it was on the stove; I didn’t know it was worth while to mention that. But what could *she* have to do with the beautiful rings?” [177]

“True,” replied the servant, “that can have nothing to do with it, as you say.”

“Nay,” replied the baron, “I’m not so clear of that. Let the Hennenpfösl, as you call her, be brought here, and let’s see what account she has to give of it.”

“But it’s impossible; she isn’t even a servant of the house. She is a little whining beggar brat, that I took in scarce three weeks ago and put in the poultry-loft, to keep her from starving.”

“Three weeks!” exclaimed the baron; “said you three weeks? Let her be brought to me instantly.”

“But she isn’t fit to come into your presence; she’s grimed with dirt, and covered in rags.”

“Reason not, but send her hither,” said the baron, his energy returning as his hopes kindled.

“If she is the maiden to whom I gave the ring, she is of no low birth: there is some mystery which I must penetrate. If she were nothing but a ‘Hennenpfösl,’ whence could she have had this brilliant ring, which puts mine to shame?” he mused within himself, as he waited impatiently for the maiden of his dreams to appear.

Klein-Else, meantime, had made no doubt that since the baron had sent for the

cook, his wisdom would enable him to discover that she must be sent for next, and had accordingly repaired to her treasury in the rock, and had taken thence a resplendent attire. It was no longer now the simple gifts of nature which furnished [178] her wardrobe; she was decked as became a baron's daughter, with all the resources of the milliner and the jeweller's art. Cavaliers and ladies-in-waiting walked beside her, and twenty pages dressed in pink and white satin, with plumed bonnets, carried her train behind, while men in rich liveries, bearing torches, ran by the side of the procession.

Gräfin Jaufenstein was at the head of the hall welcoming the guests, and doing the honours of the castle, to supply what the moody humour of its lord left lacking in courtesy. But while she courtesied to noble lords and ladies with queenly grace, and, with imperceptible asides, at the same time gave directions that every one should have his due place, and that every thing should proceed with the due order of etiquette, it never for a moment escaped her practised eye that something unusual was going on in the neighbourhood of the young baron. That he should summon the cook to his presence, probably to chide her justly for some breach of the rules of her art, if such had befallen, was indeed no unreasonable distraction for the baron's melancholy, and she hailed it as a token of returning interest in the ordinary affairs of life, which had occupied him so little of late; but when she heard him order the Hennenpfösl to be brought there in the midst of his guests, she thought it time to interfere—it became a matter of eccentricity passing all bounds. Dexterously excusing her momentary absence from her guests, she [179] accordingly made her way up to her nephew, preparing to wrap up her remonstrance in her most honeyed language, so as better to convince without provoking him. Before she could reach his chair, there was a movement of astonishment in the vast assembly, and a cry of admiration, while the heralds proclaimed,—

"Place for the most noble baron's daughter!" And then, surrounded by her shining crowd of attendants, and glittering in her jewelled robes, Klein-Else made her way with modest, but at the same time noble carriage towards the young baron.

The young baron recognized her the moment the tapestry was raised for her to pass, and instantly went forth to meet her with courteous gestures, and led her up to the seat next his own at the banquet.

The stately countess looked on a little perplexed, for the first time in her life, but with admirable serenity and self-possession inquired the name of the fair guest who did their poor banquet the honour of attending it in so great state.

"I am the poor Hennenpfösl, madame, whom your noble nephew has done the honour to summon to his presence; and I hope you will not think I disgrace his command," replied Klein-Else, with a reverence at once lowly and full of accomplished dignity.

"The Hennenpfösl!" repeated the countess, returning the salute mechanically. "But [180] surely there is some mistake—some——"

"Yes, dearest countess, some mystery there is," interposed her nephew; "but we will not seek to penetrate it till it shall please the lady herself to reveal it. Why she should have chosen to pass some time as the Hennenpfösl, I know not; but this is not the first time we have met, and I am sufficiently satisfied of her grace and discretion to know that for whatever reason she chose it, she chose aright. I have further determined this very night to lay myself and my fortune at her feet!"

Klein-Else started, with a little cry of satisfied expectation, then coloured modestly and looked down.

"But the lady will at least favour us with her name?" urged the countess, but half satisfied. Klein-Else turned to her chamberlain with dignity, and whispered an order; and then the chamberlain stood forward and proclaimed aloud the names and titles of the deceased baron of the Passeier-Thal, her father.

"Oh!" said the lady, in a tone of disparagement, "methinks his was a fortune which could scarcely be united with that of my nephew!"

"Countess!" exclaimed the young baron, furious at the suggestion; but before he could proceed the chamberlain once more intervened.

"There need be no difficulty on that score," he said; and he made a sign to the [181] attendants who were behind. They came up in brave order, two and two, each pair bearing a casket in which was a thousand crowns. "A thousand such caskets contain the dowry of the baron's daughter; and she has priceless jewels without number."

"A million crowns!" echoed the whole assembly, in chorus; "was there ever such a

fortune known?”

The countess was absolutely speechless, and turned to participate in the astonishment of her guests.

The young baron and Klein-Else, thus left to each other’s conversation, were not slow in confessing their mutual love.

“And now all our friends are gathered round us,” he exclaimed, at last, “what better time to proclaim our happiness? My friends! I present you the fair lady who has consented to become my bride!”

There was a general sound of jubilation and praise. All gathered round to felicitate the baron, and the minstrels sang the charms of the bride.

The baron begged them all to stay with him ten days, to celebrate the nuptials. And for ten days there was revelry and rapture, singing and merry-making; and when at last the guests returned home, every one carried back to his own neighbourhood the tale of the surpassing beauty, riches, and grace of Klein-Else. Every body had been won by her, there was no dissentient opinion; and even [182]
Gräfin Jaufenstein acknowledged that her nephew could not have made a nobler or better choice.

When they were left alone, the days seemed hardly long enough to tell their love. Never was there happiness equal to theirs. Before the guests left, the baron had invited them all to come back every year on the anniversary; and every year, as they gathered round, they found them more and more wrapt in each other’s love.

On the second anniversary they found that their happiness had been increased by the birth of an heir; and the next year there was a little daughter too, the delight of her parents. Year by year the children grew in beauty, and grace, and intelligence, and others were added to their numbers. And every one envied the unequalled happiness of the baron and baroness.

Meantime the years were passing away, though Klein-Else had taken no account of them. To her it was one continual round of enjoyment, uncrossed by any care; each season had its own joys, and she revelled in the fresh variety of each, but counted them not as they passed.

One day they sat together under a shady grove: the baron was weaving a chaplet of roses, Klein-Else was fondling her latest-born upon her knee; round them sported their little ones, bringing fresh baskets of roses for the chaplet the baron was weaving for Klein-Else; while Otto the heir, a noble boy who promised to [183]
reproduce his father’s stately figure and handsome lineaments, rejoiced them by his prowess with his bow and arrow.

“How the time has sped, Klein-Else!” whispered the baron; “it seems but yesterday that you first came and knelt beside me in your sunbeam garment. Then, just as now, it was happiness to feel you beside me. I knew not who was there, but as I heard the flutter of your drapery a glow of joy seemed to come from its shining folds, and I, who had never loved any one else, loved you from that moment as I love you now!”

“How well you say it, love!” responded Klein-Else. “Yes; where is the difference between to-day and yesterday, and last year and the year before that? Ever since that first day it has been one long love, nothing else! Yes; well I remember that day. I was poor, and despised, and had no one to talk to, and never thought any one would ever look at me again—except to scold me. And then I went into the church and knelt by you; and I felt as the new ivy twig must feel when it has crept and tossed about in vain, and then at last finds, close under its grasp, the strong, immovable oak, and clasps it—clasps it never to loose its hold again, never! but grows up clasping it ever closer and closer, till it grows quite one with it, and no one can separate them any more for ever!” [184]

“Yes,” replied the baron; “nothing can separate them any more—nothing can separate us now! We have grown together for years, and have only grown the closer. It is now—let me see—five, six, *seven* years, and we have only grown the closer to each other! To think it is *seven* years! no, it wants a few weeks; but it will soon be seven years. Seven—” he turned to look at her, for he perceived that as he spoke she had loosened her hold of him, and now he saw she was pale and trembling.

“But what ails you, Elschen[61]? Elschen dear! speak to me, Elschen!” he added, with anxiety, for she sank back almost unconscious against the bank.

“I shall be better presently,” stammered the baroness. “I think the scent of the flowers is too powerful. I don’t feel quite well—take me down by the side of the

water; I shall be better presently." An attendant took the babe from her arms—and the baron remembered afterwards, that as she parted from it she embraced it with a passionate flood of tears; then he led her to the side of the stream, and bathed her burning forehead in the cooling flood.

Suddenly voices in angry altercation were heard through the trees, and the servants summoned the baron with excited gesticulations, saying there was a strange knight, all in armour, who claimed to see the baroness. [185]

Klein-Else was near fainting again when she heard them say that.

"Claims to see the baroness, say you?" replied their lord, with menacing gesture. "Where is he? Let him say that to *me*!" and he darted off to meet him, without listening to the faint words Klein-Else strove to utter.

Now she was left alone by the side of the stream where, as the Hennenpfösl, she had first washed away the stains of servitude and dressed herself to meet him who was to teach her to love. It was beside that stream she had sat, and her tears had mingled with it, as she had vowed that if ever such joy was hers as now she owned, her treasure should be for those who were outcast and suffering as she had been, and her happiness should be in making others happy!

How had she fulfilled her vow? From that time to this it had passed out of her mind. Filled with her own gratification, she had left the orphan in her bereavement, the suffering in their misery, nor stretched out a helping hand.

The seven years were spent, and there was no doubt the knight was come to seek an account of the treasure he had entrusted to her. She had not only to meet him with shame for its misuse, but even his name she had forgotten! And he had said, [186] "Woe be to you, if you have forgotten that name!"

But she *had* forgotten it. She pressed her hands against her throbbing temples as if to force it from her brain, and swept away the mantling hair—if but the cool breeze might waft it back to her! But the forgotten name came not.

Suddenly the knight stood before her, and terrible he was to look at in his shining armour! As she saw him she screamed and swooned away.

But he touched her, and bade her rise, then beckoned her to follow him; and she could not choose but obey. He led her over the stream and along the path in the mountain-side where the trees fringed the way; and when they reached the rock she knew so well, with its treasury whence all her means of happiness had been derived, he said in solemn accents,—

"Open, hoary rock!"

But to her he said,—

"Look!"

Then she could not choose but look. But oh, horror! in place of the coin and jewels, armour and apparel, it was filled with wasted forms bowed with misery and distress! the tear-worn orphan, the neglected sick. Here she saw lying a youth, wan and emaciated, struck down in all the promise of boyhood, and his mother tore her hair in agony by his side. And there stood a father, gaunt and grey, vainly [187] grappling with Hunger, who was stealing away his children one by one from before his face. Here——

But she could bear no more. She sank upon the ground, and hid her face for very shame.

"The ransom of *these*, it is, you have spent upon yourself!" thundered the pitiless knight; and every word was a death-knell....

The baron and his servants continued their search for the unknown knight, but for long they found him not; one said he had seen him go this way, and another that. Till at last an artless peasant maiden told them she had seen him take the path of the mountain, across the stream, and the baroness following behind with weak and unsteady steps. The baron hasted his steps to pursue the way she pointed.

But he only found the lifeless body of Klein-Else kneeling against the hoary rock! [188]

[Contents]

PRINCE RADPOT[62].

Radpot succeeded early to the throne of his fathers. When on his deathbed, his sire had called him to his side, and said to him, “In leaving you my kingdom, I leave you a counsel with it which is worth the kingdom itself. In all things be guided by the advice of my wise counsellor Rathgeb, and you shall do well.”

But Radpot had a stepmother who hated him, and was determined to destroy him if possible; so she devised a plot against him, the first step of which was to get him out of the kingdom. She therefore advised that he should take a year’s journey to perfect himself in knowledge of the world, before assuming the reins of government.

Radpot was not devoid of shrewdness, and readily suspecting some evil intention [189]
in his stepmother’s advice, at first resisted following it; but afterwards, submitting the matter to Rathgeb, according to his father’s desire, he received from him a different counsel from that which he had expected.

“Though your stepmother may have evil intentions,” he said, “you need not therefore be afraid; we shall be able to baffle them. In the meantime, it is well that you should travel to see the world, and learn experience. We will so establish a council of regency that the queen shall not be able to do great mischief during your absence.”

Radpot was nothing loath to follow this advice, as he was of an adventurous disposition; so, all things being ordered for the due conduct of the affairs of the kingdom, he set out with Rathgeb for his year’s journey.

During all the days of preparation for the journey, the queen, who had always heretofore shown herself harsh and hostile to Radpot, behaved with the utmost tenderness and devotion, which the young prince ascribed to her satisfaction at his having followed her advice, and returned her advances with an ingenuous cordiality. She, in turn, received his deference with an increase of solicitude, and nothing could be more affectionate than their leave-taking. Every thing the thoughtfulness of a fond mother could have suggested was provided by her for his safety and comfort on the journey; and as he had his foot in the stirrup she still [190]
had one more token of her care of him.

“Take this vial,” she said, “it is a precious cordial; and when you are worn and wearied with heat and travel, a few drops of its precious contents will suffice to restore you to strength and vigour. Farewell! and when you taste of it, think of me.”

Radpot, with all the openness of his generous nature, assured her that he should never forget her kindness for him, and stowing away the vial in his belt, waved his hand to her as he rode away.

Two days and two nights Radpot and his trusty counsellor journeyed through the cool forest; and then for another day along its border, exposed to the heat of the sun upon the mountain-sides, till they came to a vast plain where there was no shelter of hill or tree, no hospitality of human dwelling. With unbroken courage, however, the young prince commenced crossing it. It was only when, after three days’ more hard riding, they still seemed as far as ever from a place of rest, that, wearied and dispirited, he took out his stepmother’s vial, to try the effect of her cordial.

It was the moment Rathgeb had feared. He had observed how completely the queen had lulled Radpot’s suspicions, and that every attempt at suggesting there was any hypocrisy in her conduct had appeared to vex him. To have now spoken of any danger in trying her cordial would probably have provoked his resentment— [191]
Rathgeb took another way of saving his charge.

“Think you not our mounts deserve more than we to taste this precious restorative? whatever labour we have endured, theirs has been tenfold.”

“True,” said the good-natured prince; and, dismounting, he opened the mouth of his steed, and poured some drops of the liquid on his tongue. He had scarcely done so, however, when the poor beast stretched out his long neck with an air of agony, then fell over on its side, and expired!

Rathgeb left the incident to produce its own effect on the mind of his pupil, who stood gazing as one bewildered.

“What can it be that killed my good horse?” he exclaimed, at length; “it could not be the cordial! no, never! the queen could not have been so base! It was, that he has been so long unused to exercise, this terrible journey has overcome him, and the cordial was too late to save him.”

“Try it on mine,” answered Rathgeb; “he is a battle-charger, used to endurance,

and delighting in labour. See," he said, jumping to the ground, and patting his neck, "he is as fresh now as when we started, not a hair turned!"

"Be it so," replied Radpot, not without some asperity. "I would not suffer the trial, could I suspect it possible the queen could be capable of so horrible a plot as you evidently suppose; but I cannot believe it—so give the cordial to your horse." [192]

Rathgeb took the vial, and poured not more than three drops on the tongue of his thirsty beast. Both watched the effect with a tension akin to awe.

In the first few moments no change was apparent, but Radpot was too generous to give utterance to the triumph he began to experience.

Suddenly the faithful beast started as if it had been transfixed with the sharpest arrow, directed one piteous look towards the master it had served so well, and fell down lifeless by the side of its companion.

"There is no doubt it is as you say," Radpot now confessed, at once. "Forgive me for the haste with which I spoke."

"Nay, prince, there is no need of excuse. Though it behoved me to stand on guard and see no harm befell you, it became you to trust her whose duty it was to befriend, not to harm you."

"And now try this cordial of *mine*, maybe it will fulfil what the other promised."

The prince gladly accepted the proffered gift; and both, wonderfully restored by its effects, continued their journey on foot.

They had not gone far when three ravens passed them on the wing. The prince and his companion turned back to watch their flight, and saw them alight on the [193] carrion of their dead horses, immediately after tasting of which they all three fell to the earth dead, by the side of the dead horses.

"There may be some profit to be gained from these," said Rathgeb; and going back to the spot, he picked up the dead ravens and took them with him.

Their journey was without further incident, till they at last espied a welcome hut completely sheltered in the border of a vast stretch of forest land.

The sight gave them courage for renewed exertion; and in a few minutes more they stood before the door. An old woman came out to ask them in, but observing the youth and noble mien of the prince, she seemed to be moved with compassion, and cried out, with great earnestness, entreating them not to come in, for the place was the resort of a band of twelve robbers, and that no one could deliver them out of their hands. They would not be home till the next day for dinner; in the meantime, by a path she indicated, the travellers could easily make good their escape.

The prince would have rewarded her for her advice, and have set out again to find a safer shelter; but Rathgeb remarked to him, that a prince should rather find means to overcome a danger than fly from it, and promised to carry him through this one, if he would be guided by him. Radpot, mindful of his father's desire, promised to do all he proposed. [194]

"Then, when the robbers come in, do exactly as I do," said Rathgeb; "in the meantime keep up your courage." And so they supped on what the old woman set before them, and went to bed and slept peacefully. The next day, an hour before dinner-time, Rathgeb went into the kitchen and handed the three ravens to the old woman to cook, giving her very particular directions as to the sauces that were to accompany it, as if it were a dish for which they had a particular liking, and wished dressed entirely for themselves. He was still watching the confection of the dish when the twelve robbers came back. They gave the two strangers a friendly reception, and invited them to dinner. This, the old servant had told Rathgeb, was their custom, and that after dinner they fell upon their guests and slew them at the moment when they least expected any onslaught.

Rathgeb accepted the invitation, with the proviso that he and his companion should be allowed to eat their own food, being some game they had brought down by the way. The robbers made no objection, and they sat down to table. While waiting for the repast to be brought, the robbers entertained their guests with lively conversation, in which Rathgeb joined with great show of cordiality, the young prince sustaining his part admirably.

When the dishes were brought, the old woman was careful to set the three ravens before Rathgeb, as he had bidden her; but the chief robber interposed, and said [195] they must really allow him to offer him and his young friend of their hospitality.

Rathgeb made a little courteous difficulty; and the robber-chief, whose object was not to thwart his guests in any thing, but make a show of the greatest civility, said he must really consent to exchange dishes, and not deprive him of the pleasure of providing in one way or another for his guests. After holding out for some pressing, Rathgeb consented, and each set to work to help himself to what was before him, the dish which had been before the robber-chief having been exchanged with that which was before Rathgeb.

Rathgeb helped the prince without appearing to take any notice of what befell the robbers; and Radpot, understanding how important it was to engender no suspicion, fell with a hunter's appetite upon the viands without taking his eyes from his plate, after the manner of a famished man. Before he had devoured many mouthfuls, however, the poison of the ravens had done its work; one after another, or rather all together, the robbers fell under the table as suddenly as the horses and the ravens themselves—all but one. For one of the robbers had felt suspicious of the unusual circumstance of guests bringing their own food with them; when he pointed this out to his companions, they said it was clear there could be no guile in the matter, seeing the guests had so manifestly prepared it for their own eating. [196]
But he had abstained from incurring the risk himself, and now alone stood erect amid the dead bodies of his companions.

"Draw, prince," said Rathgeb, "and rid us of this scum of the earth! cross not your sword with the defiled one, but smite him down as a reptile."

Radpot did not wait to be twice told; before Rathgeb had done speaking he had hewn down the swaggering bully, who had thought to make easy work of an unpractised foe.

Radpot and his counsellor lost no time in continuing their journey. The store of the robbers they left to the old woman who had befriended them, and took only a provision of wine and bread with them for their necessities by the way.

Skirting along the borders of the forest, they shortly came to a fine city, where they established themselves at the first inn. They sat down in the Herrenstübchen[63] while other guests came in. "What news is there?" asked Rathgeb of the new comers.

"News?" asked the person addressed; "it's always the *old* story here—but that's as strange for those who don't know it as any news."

"What may it be, then?" pursued Rathgeb.

"Why, the princess to whom all this country belongs is going on with her old mad pranks. She is perpetually propounding some new stupid riddle, promising her [197]
hand and kingdom to whomsoever divines it. But no one *can* divine the meaning of her nonsense; and the penalty is, that whoever attempts and fails is dressed like a fool or jester, with long ears and bells, and is made to ride backwards all through the city, with all the people hooting and jeering him."

Rathgeb then informed himself as to the appearance and character of the princess.

"Oh, as to that, she is charming in appearance—radiant as the sun, dazzling all beholders; that is how so many heads are turned by her. And as for her mind, there is no fault there either, except that just because she is more gifted than all other women, she is thus proud and haughty and unbearable."

Rathgeb had heard enough, and went out with the prince to make acquaintance with the city and people, and to talk to him of the plans which had suggested themselves to him for courting and taming the princess. Radpot, who had been much pleased with the account of the princess they heard repeated all around, entered fully into his projects.

As the princess was much interested in conversing with foreigners, it was not difficult for Rathgeb and the prince to obtain admission to her. Rathgeb then proposed the prince to her as suitor; but on the condition that, instead of the princess proposing the riddle for him to guess, he should propose one for the [198]
princess to guess, and that if she failed, she must marry his prince.

Two motives urged the princess to accede to this arrangement: first, she felt her credit was staked on not refusing the trial; and then, she was so struck by the appearance of the handsome young suitor, that she was very glad to be saved the chance of losing him by his not guessing her riddle.

Rathgeb's riddle was: "What is that of which one killed two, two killed three, and three killed eleven?"

The princess asked for three days to consider her answer; during which time she

consulted all her clever books and all the wise men of the kingdom, but she was unable to arrive at any answer which had a chance of proving to be the right one.

The third day came, and with it Rathgeb and the prince. The princess was obliged to acknowledge herself vanquished, but found an over-payment for her vexation in having to marry the handsome prince, who, however, had, by Rathgeb's advice, not told her that he was a prince, and they passed for two travelling pedlars.

At first all went well enough. In the happiness of living with a husband she loved, the Princess forgot many of her haughty ways, and as the prince governed the kingdom wisely, under Rathgeb's advice, every body was content. [199]

This happy state of things was not destined to last. By degrees the princess's old habits of self-sufficiency, haughtiness, and bad temper came back, and Radpot found he had hard lines to keep peace with her. From day to day this grew worse; and at last he found it hardly possible to endure her continual reproaches and causeless vituperation.

In the meantime Rathgeb received the intelligence from the council of regency that the queen, Radpot's stepmother, was dead, and that all the people were impatient that he should return and place himself at the head of the nation.

In communicating this news to the prince, the old counsellor propounded a scheme for reducing his wife to a better frame of mind which pleased him well. In accordance with it, Radpot absented himself from the palace for several days. At the end of that time he returned; but instead of waiting to listen to the fierce invectives with which the princess met him on his return, he interrupted her at the beginning of the discourse by informing her that he had been engaged on important affairs which did not concern her. Before she had time to recover from her surprise at his audacity in treating her thus, he went on to say that this absence was only the prelude to a much longer one, as he was now called home by his mother, who was a very old woman, and who entreated him to remain with her during the rest of her days; that he was about to set out, therefore, to go to her, [200] and he could not say if he should be able ever to come back again—so he must bid her adieu.

The princess could not for a long time be induced to believe that he was serious; but when she really found him making preparations for his departure, without any allusion to the idea of her accompanying him, she was so softened and distressed that, but for a sign from Rathgeb, he would have forgiven her at once, and told her all.

By Rathgeb's advice, he determined to put her change of demeanour to the test before giving in, and he told her it was impossible to take her with him.

At this, her pleading to accompany him became still more earnest.

"But if you came with me, you would not have a palace-full of servants to wait upon you; you would have to live in a poor hut with a cross old woman, to whom I could not bear that you should answer a cross word, however peevish she might be; you would have to live on the poorest fare, and to earn something towards the support of your life."

The princess, who really loved Radpot devotedly, and was of a good and noble nature, having erred chiefly through thoughtlessness and want of self-control, accepted all these hard terms cheerfully, rather than be separated from her husband.

So they set out the next day. And when they got near Radpot's capital, Rathgeb [201] went on before to a poor cottage in the outskirts, where there lived a lone old woman whom he could trust to carry on his plan by acting as Radpot's mother, without her ever knowing who he really was.

When Radpot and the princess arrived before this cottage, by Rathgeb's instruction, the old woman came out and welcomed him as her son, and Radpot introduced the princess to her as his wife.

"Not much like the wife of an honest workman either!" grumbled the old woman, according to Rathgeb's instructions. "That's the kind of wife a man picks up when he goes to foreign parts—a pert, stuck-up minx! But she'll have to learn to dress like a sober woman, and make some use of her fingers, now she's come here, I can tell her!"

The princess could have thrust these words back down the old woman's throat in an instant, but Radpot imposed silence by a severe look; and then he reminded her that she had promised submission and obedience to his mother, adding that, if she desired it, and shrank from sharing his poverty and hard fare, his friend Rathgeb

would even now take her back to her own country.

But the very idea of parting from him produced immediate submission; and the old lady happening to be leaning against the table, as if tired of the exertion of welcoming her son, she even fetched and placed a chair for her, and helped her gently into it. [202]

But still, bad habits cannot be changed all at once, and before the day was out Radpot had had to put on his severe look to arrest her angry answer many a time.

The next morning, as soon as they had breakfasted, he said he was going out for his work as a mason's labourer, and she must choose what work she would do, as no one must be idle in his house. The princess timidly replied that she knew many kinds of fine embroidery, which she thought would sell for a great price, and as she had some such with her, she would set to work to finish a piece of it, so that Rathgeb might take it into the town and get it sold.

Radpot came back in the evening, and flung down a few pence on the table, which he said was the amount of his daily wage, and told her to go out and get the supper with it. It was little she knew of how to buy a workman's supper; and what she brought Radpot was so dissatisfied with that (having dined himself in the palace) he threw it out of window, so that she had to go supperless to bed. Before she went up-stairs, however, Radpot told her to show him her day's work; and when she brought it, expecting him to admire its delicacy and finish, he at once threw it on one side, saying he was sure such coarse stuff would not sell there.

The princess spent the night more in weeping than in sleeping. In the morning she had to get up and prepare the breakfast, in doing which she not only burnt her hands, but, by her general awkwardness at the unusual work, incurred a storm of vituperation from the old mother such as she had often been wont to bestow, while no rough word had ever been spoken *to* her before in her whole life. [203]

All through the day she had to attend to all the old woman's whims; and in the evening when Radpot came home it was nearly the same thing again with the supper, and he would scarcely suffer her to snatch more than a few mouthfuls, so angry he showed himself at her mistakes in the manner of preparing it. He told her, too, that so long as she did not know how to earn her food, she must not expect to have much of it. This made her the more desirous that Rathgeb should take her work to the town. When he had done so, however, he brought it back, saying no one would buy such coarse, common work there. Then she tried other kinds, each finer and more delicate than the last; but all were brought back to her with the same answer. At last they gave her a basket of common pottery, and told her to go and sell it to the poor people in the market-place. This answered rather better than the work. There were plenty of people who wanted to buy crockery, and the most of them came to her basket in preference to others', because of her beautiful face all bathed in tears. But just as she was reckoning up what a nice sum we should now have to take home, and that it would be acknowledged she had done something right at last, a smartly caparisoned cavalier came riding past, and, without heed to her cries, upset the whole of her stock upon the road, smashing every thing to atoms, and scattering her heap of halfpence into the gutter. She was so bewildered she hardly thought to look at him, and yet, from the single glance, he appeared so like Radpot that she almost called to him by name; he dashed away, however, so quickly, that he was out of hearing in a minute. [204]

In the evening, when she came to detail her mishap to him, he appeared to be very angry at her ill success in every thing she attempted, adding, "I'm afraid you'll never be any use to a poor man—we must get Rathgeb to take you back home again."

But at this she threw herself at his feet in despair, begged him so piteously to do any thing but that, promised so earnestly to apply herself to any mode of life he prescribed for her, provided only he would keep her by him, that he could hold out no longer, and determined to put an end to her trial.

"I will give you one chance more," he said, trying to assume a tone of indifference: "you shall bring me my dinner while I am at work to-morrow; that will save me the time of going to get it, and will be worth something—only mind, now, don't make any mistake this time! I am working at the palace; bring the dinner there, and ask for the mason's labourer." [205]

The next day she took good care to have the dinner ready in time; and though she was filled with confusion at having to go through the public streets carrying the humble provision of the labourer's dinner, and every one gazing after her beautiful, tearful face, she yet went her way bravely, and came at last to the palace.

The moment she asked at the door for the mason's labourer, a page was sent with her, who conducted her through suites of apartments vaster and more magnificent than those of her own palace; and, while she was lost in bewilderment, the page suddenly stopped short and pointed to a drapery hanging, saying, "Pull that aside, and you will find within, him you seek," and then darted away.

She scarcely dared do as she was bid; but then the clocks began to strike the midday hour, and, fearful of keeping her husband waiting, she lifted the drapery with a trembling hand.

On a royal throne, and habited in royal state, there sat Radpot himself, Rathgeb standing respectfully by his side. The princess thought to have fainted at the sight, for she could in no way understand how they came to be there.

"Come in, princess!" said Radpot, encouragingly; and Rathgeb went to the door, and conducted her up to him. He bid her welcome, and kissed her tenderly, told [206] her frankly what had been his plans with her, then led her into an adjoining room, where there were ladies-in-waiting ready to attire her in a robe of cloth-of-gold and coronet of diamonds, which they held in readiness, with many choicest ornaments of gold and precious stones. When she was ready, pages in court suits went before her, and heralds proclaimed her aloud.

As soon as the prince saw her arrive, he ordered his high council to be called in, and presented his consort to them, declaring her as virtuous as she was fair.

After this they lived together many years in great happiness, for the princess had had a life-long lesson, and never relapsed into her foolish ways. [207]

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THE THREE BLACK DOGS.

The wind roared through the tall fir-trees, and swept the snow-flakes in masses against the window-panes; the rafters rattled and the casements clattered; but dismally, above the roaring and the clattering, sounded the howling of three black dogs at the cottage-door; for their good master lay on the pallet within, near his end, and never more should he urge them on to the joyous hunt.

The old man was stark and grey; one bony hand held fast the bed-clothes with convulsive clutch, and one rested in benediction on the dark locks of his only son kneeling by his side. Long he lay as if at the last gasp. Then suddenly raising his weary head from the pillow, he exclaimed, "Jössl, my son, forget not to pray for your father when he is no more." And Jössl sobbed in reply.

"Jössl," continued the old man, with painful effort, "you know fortune has never favoured me in this world: you are my noble boy, and I would have left you rich [208] enough to be a great man, as your looks would have you—but it was not to be! Jössl, it was not to be!" and the old man sank back upon the bed, and hid his face and wept.

"Father, you have taught me to labour, to be honest, to face danger, and to fear God!" said the brave youth, throwing himself upon him and caressing his hollow cheeks; "that was the best inheritance you could leave me."

"Well said! my noble son," replied the father. "But you are young to rough the world by yourself; and I have nothing to leave you but the Three Black Dogs—my faithful dogs—they are howling my death-knell without. Let them in, Jössl—they are all you have now in the world!"

Jössl went to let them in; and as he did so the old man's eyes glazed over and his spirit fled, and Jössl returned to find only a corpse.

The Three Black Dogs ceased their howling when they saw his grief, and came and fawned upon him and licked his hands. For three days they remained mourning together; and then the men came and buried the father. Other people came to live in the cottage, and Jössl went out to wander over the wide world, the Three Black Dogs following behind.

When there was a day's work to be done they fared well enough. Though he had so fair a face and so noble a bearing, Jössl was always ready to apply his stalwart limbs to labour, and what he earned he shared with the Three Black Dogs, who [209] whined and fawned and seemed to say,—

"We are eating your bread in idleness now; but never mind, the day will come when we will earn you yours."

But when there was no work to be had, when the storm beat and the winter wind raged, Jössl was fain to share a peasant's meal where he could find pity by the way, and many there were who said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son," when they saw his comely face; but the Black Dogs slunk away, as if ashamed that their master's son should have to beg, not only for himself, but for them also.

Better times came with the spring; and then there was the hay-cutting, and the harvesting, and the vintage, and Jössl found plenty of work. But still he journeyed on, and the Three Black Dogs behind.

At last he saw in the distance the towers of a great city, and he hasted on, for all his life he had lived in the mountains, and had never seen a town.

But when he reached it, he found that though it was a vast city, it was empty and desolate. Broad well-paved roads crossed it, but they were more deserted than the mountain-tracks. There were workshops, and smithies, and foundries, and ovens, but all silent and empty, and no sound was heard! Then he looked up, and saw that every house was draped with black, and black banners hung from the towers and palaces. [210]

Still not a human being appeared, either in the public squares or at the house-windows; so he still wandered on, and the Three Black Dogs behind.

At last he espied in the distance a waggoner with his team coming through the principal road which traversed the city, and lost no time in making his way up to him and asking what this unearthly stillness meant.

The waggoner cracked his whip and went on, as if he were frightened and in a hurry; but Jössl kept up with him. So he told him, as they went along, that for many years past a great Dragon had devastated the country, eating up all the inhabitants he found in the way, so that every one shunned the streets; nor should he be going through now, but that need obliged him to pass that way, and he got through the place as quickly as he could. But, he added, there was less danger for him now, because lately they had found that if every morning some one was put in his way to devour, that served him for the day, and he left off teasing and worrying others as he had been used to do; so that now a lot was cast every day, and upon whomsoever of the inhabitants the lot fell, he had to go out upon the highway early the next morning that the dragon might devour him and spare the rest.

Just then a crier came into the street, and proclaimed that the lot that day had fallen on the king's daughter, and that to-morrow morning she must be exposed to the dragon. [211]

The people, who had come to the windows to hear what the crier had to say, now no longer kept within doors. Every one was so shocked to think that the lot had fallen on their beautiful young princess, that they all came running out into the streets to bewail her fate aloud; and the old king himself came into their midst, tearing his clothes and plucking out his white hair, while the tears ran fast down his venerable beard.

When Jössl saw that, it reminded him of his own father, and he could not bear to see his tears.

Then the king sent the crier out again to proclaim that if any one would fight the dragon, and deliver his daughter, he should have her hand, together with all his kingdom. But the fear of the dragon was so great on all the people of the city that there was not one would venture to encounter it, even for the sake of such a prize.

Every hour through the day the crier went out and renewed the proclamation. But every one was too much afraid of the dragon to make the venture, and Jössl, though he felt he would have courage to meet the dragon; could not find heart to come forward before all the people of the king's court, and profess to do what no one else could do. So the hours went by all through the day and all through the night, and no one had appeared to deliver the princess. [212]

Then daybreak came, and with it the mournful procession which was to conduct the victim to the outskirts of the city; and all the people came out to see it, weeping. The old king came down the steps of the palace to deliver up his daughter; and it was all the people could do to hold him back from giving himself up in her place.

But when the moment of parting from her came, the thought was so dreadful that he could not bring himself to make the sacrifice; and when he should have given her up he only clasped her the tighter in his arms. Then the people began to murmur. They said, "The hour is advancing, and the dragon will be upon us, and make havoc among us all. When the lot fell upon one of us, we gave up our wives, and our fathers, and our children; and now the same misfortune has visited you,

you must do no less;” and as the time wore on they grew more and more angry and discontented.

This increased the distress and terror of the king, and he raved with despair.

When Jössl found matters as bad as this, he forgot his bashfulness, and coming forward through the midst of the crowd, he asked permission to go out to meet the dragon; “and if I fail,” he added, “at least I shall have prolonged the most precious life by one day;” and he bent down and kissed the hem of the princess’s garment. [213]

When the princess heard his generous words she took heart, and looked up, and was right glad to see one of such noble bearing for her deliverer. But the old king, without stopping to look at him, threw himself on his neck and kissed him with delight, and called him his son, and promised him there was nothing of all the crier had proclaimed that should not be fulfilled.

The discontent of the people was changed into admiration; and they accompanied Jössl to the city gates with shouts of encouragement as he went forth to meet the dragon, and the Three Black Dogs behind.

If the king’s daughter had been pleased with the appearance of her deliverer, Jössl had every reason to be no less delighted with that of the lady to whom he was about to devote his life.

Full of hope and enthusiasm, he passed on through the midst of the people—regardless of their shouts, for he was thinking only of her—and the Three Black Dogs behind.

It was past the time when the dragon usually received his victim, and he was advancing rapidly towards the city walls, roaring horribly, and “swinging the scaly horrors of his folded tail.” The fury of the monster might have made a more practised arm tremble, but Jössl thought of his father’s desire that he should be a great man, and do brave deeds, and his courage only seemed to grow as the danger approached. He walked so straight towards the dragon, with a step so firm and so unlike the trembling gait of his usual victims, that it almost disconcerted him. When they had approached each other within a hundred paces, Jössl called to his dog Lightning, “At him, good dog!” At the first sound of his voice Lightning sprang to the attack, and with such celerity that the dragon had no time to decide how to meet his antagonist. [214]

“Fetch him down, Springer!” cried Jössl next; and the second dog, following close on Lightning’s track, sprang upon the dragon’s neck, and held him to the ground.

“Finish him, Gulper!” shouted Jössl; and the third dog, panting for the order, was even with the others in a trice, and fixing his great fangs in the dragon’s flesh, snapped his spine like glass, and bounded back with delight to his master’s feet.

Jössl, only stopping to caress his dogs, drew his knife, and cut out the dragon’s tongue; and then returned to the city with his trophy, and the Three Black Dogs behind.

If the people had uttered jubilant shouts when he started, how much more now at his victorious return! The king and his daughter heard the shout in their palace, and came down to meet the conqueror. [215]

“Behold my daughter!” said the old king: “take her; she is yours, and my kingdom with her! I owe all to you, and in return I give you all I have.”

“Nay, sire,” interposed Jössl; “that you give me permission to approach the princess is all I ask, and that she will deign to let me think that I may be one day found not unworthy of her hand. But as regards your kingdom, that is not for me. I am but a poor lad, and have never had any thing to command but my Three Black Dogs: how should I, then, order the affairs of a kingdom?”

The king and all the people, and the princess above all, were pleased with his modesty and grace; and they sounded his praises, and those of his Three Black Dogs too, and conducted them with him to the palace, where Jössl received a suit of embroidered clothes and the title of duke, and was seated next the princess.

The king, finding that he was resolute in refusing to accept the crown, determined to adopt him for his son; and had him instructed in every thing becoming a prince, so that he might be fit to succeed him at his death. To the Three Black Dogs were assigned three kennels and three collars of gold, with three pages to wait on them; and whenever Jössl went on a hunting-party, his Three Black Dogs had precedence of all the king’s dogs.

As time wore on Jössl had other opportunities of distinguishing himself; and by [216]

little and little he came to be acknowledged as the most accomplished courtier and the most valiant soldier in the kingdom.

The princess had admired his good looks and his self-devotion from the first, but when she found him so admired and courted by all the world too, her esteem and her love for him grew every day, till at last she consented to fulfil the king's wish, and they were married with great pomp and rejoicing. Never was there a handsomer pair; and never was there a braver procession of lords and ladies and attendants, than that which followed them that day, with music and with bells, and the Three Black Dogs behind.

⁂ There are countless spots in Tirol in which tales are traditional of brave peasants, hunters, and woodmen delivering the place out of some need or danger, symbolized as "a dragon," similar in the main to the above, but with varieties of local colouring. I gave the preference to the above for the sake of the Three Black Dogs. [217]

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OTTILIA AND THE DEATH'S HEAD; OR, "PUT YOUR TRUST IN PROVIDENCE."

In the little town of Schwatz, on the Inn, the chief river of Tirol, there lived once a poor little peasant-girl named Ottilia. Ottilia had been very fond of her dear mother, and cried bitterly when she had the great misfortune to lose her. She tried hard to do all she had seen her mother do: she swept the house and milked the cow, and baked the bread, and stitched at her father's clothes; but she could not, with all her diligence, get through it all as her mother did. The place began to get into disorder, and the pigs and the fowls fought, and she could not keep them apart, and she could not manage the spinning; and what was worst of all, she could not carry in the loads of hay, by which her mother had earned the few pence that eked out her father's scanty wages. [218]

To keep the house straight, the good man found himself obliged to take another wife; and one day he brought home the tall Sennal, and told Ottilia she was to be her mother.

When poor little Ottilia heard the tall, hard, bony woman called "her mother," she burst out into passionate tears, and declared she should never be her mother, and she would never pay her obedience!

Now the tall Sennal was not a bad woman, but she was angry when the child set herself against her; and so there was continual anger between the two. When she told Ottilia to do any thing, Ottilia refused to do it, lest she should be thought to be thereby regarding her as her mother, which seemed to her a kind of sacrilege; and when she tried to do any of the work of the house, her childish inexperience made her do it in a way that did not suit the tall Sennal's thrift, so there was nothing but strife in the house. Yet the good father contrived, when he came home of an evening, to set things straight, and make peace; and though Ottilia had little pleasure, like other children of her years, yet she had a good woollen frock to keep out the cold, and bread and cheese and milk enough to drive away hunger, and, what she valued most, a father's knee to sit on of an evening in the well-warmed room, while he kissed her and told her weird stories of the days long gone by. [219]

But a day came—a day darkened by a terrible storm—on whose evening no father came home. The long Sennal went out with the neighbours with lanterns and horns, but the fierce winds extinguished their lights and drowned the sound of their horns; and Ottilia knelt by the side of her father's chair, praying and crying.

She prayed and wept, and only slept a little now and then, all through the night; and in the morning some carters came in, and brought her father's dead body, which they had found on their mountain way, under the snow, where it lay buried.

But Ottilia still knelt by her father's chair, and felt like one in a dream, while they put him in his coffin and carried him to the churchyard ground, and the sad bells mourned.

"Go, child, and feed the pig!" exclaimed the harsh voice of the tall Sennal—and it sounded harsher than ever now, for there was none left to apply the curb. "Crying's all very well for a bit; but you're not going on like that all your life, I suppose?"

Ottilia felt her helplessness, and therefore resented the admonition. Without stopping to consider its reasonableness, she retorted, fiercely,—

"'Child!' I am no child of yours! I've told you so before, a thousand times; and it's not because my father's dead that you're going to come over me. You think you'll make me forget him by forbidding me to cry for him; but never, never will I forget [220] him! nor shall you forget how he made you behave properly to me!"

The tall Sennal had more patience with her than might have been expected, and said no more for that time; but Ottilia was not won by her forbearance, and only reckoned it as a victory.

It was strife again the next day, and the next, and there was no good father to make peace. And at last the tall Sennal's patience fairly gave way, and one day, in her provocation, she drove the child from the door, and bid her never come under her eyes again!

Her anger cooled, she could have recalled the words, but Ottilia was already far away up the mountain-path, and out of sight, gone she knew not whither.

Ottilia had no experience of want, and knew not what it was to be alone upon the mountains; all her full heart felt at the moment was, that it would be a boon to get away from the reproaches her conscience told her were not undeserved, and be alone with her parent's memory.

Thus she wandered on, with no more consciousness of her way than just to follow it to the spot where her father died, and which had been marked by pious custom with a wayside cross, on which was painted in vivid strokes the manner of his end.

Ottilia gazed at the cruel scene till fresh tears started to her eyes, and she threw [221] herself on the ground beside it, and cried till she knew no more where she was. Then it seemed to her as if the ground were again covered with snow, and that from under it she heard her father's voice; and he talked to her as he used to talk of an evening by the fireside, when she was on his knee after work and he made her peace with the tall Sennal. And now he brought home to her all her naughty, senseless ways, not scolding without reason, but making all allowance for the filial love which had been at the bottom of the strife. Ottilia seemed to herself to be listening to him with great attention, but her heart misgave her. She was ready to own now that she had been very wrong, very unreasonable, and she felt really sorry for it all—so sorry that, had her home still been his, she felt that she could have brought herself to obey Sennal, so that she might not grieve him; but now—now that he was not there—suppose he should require of her that she should go back now and live with the tall Sennal, all alone! But he did not require it of her; or, at all events, in her excitement she woke with his last words sounding in her ear, which were nothing more severe than, "Put your trust in God, and all will yet be well."

The sun had already sunk behind the mountains, the chill night air began to penetrate Ottilia's clothing, and hunger stared her in the face. She felt very [222] humble now, but she had no mind to go back. She rose and walked on, for numbness, as of death, was creeping over her, and she knew the mountain-folk said that to yield to that lethargy of cold was death.

On she walked, and on, and the darkness gathered thicker and thicker round her; but she thought of her guardian angel, and she was not afraid. Still the way was weary, and the air was keen, and her strength began to fail. Then suddenly, on a neighbouring peak, she descried the broken outline of a castellated building standing out against the now moonlit sky.

Gathering fresh force from hope, she picked her way over steep and stone, guiding her steps by the friendly light which beamed from a turret window. She had had time to realize her whole desolation. If heaven vouchsafed her another chance of finding a home, she mentally resolved, she would behave so as to win its blessing, with all her might.

When at last she reached the castle-gate her courage once more began to fail—what would the great people at the castle say to a poor little half-starved peasant-girl, who came without friend or warrant to disturb their rest? "Where is your trust in Providence?" said a voice within, which sounded like a memory of her father's, and rekindled her courage.

A horn hung beside the broad portal; and when, after many timorous efforts, [223] Ottilia had succeeded in making a note resound, she stood anxiously wondering what stern warder or fierce man-at-arms would answer the summons.

None such appeared, however. But after some moments of anxious waiting, the window whence the friendly light beamed was opened, with noise enough to make

her look up, and then—what do you think she saw?

Nothing but a *Death's Head* looking out of the window! Almost before she had time to be frightened, it asked her, in a very kindly voice, what was her pleasure.

"A night's lodging and a bit of bread, for the love of Christ!" said Ottilia, faintly; and then she looked up again at the Death's Head, and she could not resist a sense of horror and faintness that crept over her. "Put your trust in God," whispered her father's voice, and she made an effort to stay her teeth from chattering together.

Meantime, the Death's Head had answered cheerily enough, "Will you promise to carry me up here again faithfully, if I come down and draw the bolt for you, and let you in?" and scarcely knowing what she said, Ottilia gave an assent.

"But think what you are saying, and swear that I can rely on you," persisted the Death's Head, "for, you see, it is a serious matter for me. I can easily roll down the steps, but there are a good many of them, and I can't get up again by myself." [224]

"Of course you may rely on me," now answered Ottilia, for she saw it was but her bounden duty to perform this return of kindness—and conscience seemed to have a reproach for her courageous alacrity, saying, "The tall Sennal never required of you any thing so hard as this." "I know she didn't," answered Ottilia, humbly; "and this is my punishment."

All this time the Death's Head was coming rumbling down the stone stairs—and a hard, dismal sound it was. Clop, clop, clop, first round the turret spiral; then r-r-r-r-r-roll along the long echoing corridor; and then, clop, clop, clop once more all down the broad main staircase; then another r-r-r-r-r-roll; and finally, klump! bump! it came against the massive door.

Ottilia felt her heart go clop, clop, clop, clop, too, but she struggled hard; and the cold, and the faintness of hunger made her yet feel rejoiced to hear the Death's Head take the bolt between its grinning teeth and draw it sharply back. The great door flew open, and Ottilia trod timidly within the welcome shelter. The memory of her father's fate was fresh upon her, and the Death's Head was less terrible than the pitiless snow.

Not without some difficult mental struggles Ottilia faithfully fulfilled her promise. A temptation, indeed, came to let the skull lie. It could not pursue her—it could not [225] possibly climb up all those stairs, though it could roll down them; besides, it had declared its incapacity for the task. She could let it lie and enter into possession of the castle—it was clear there was no one else there, or the skull would not have put itself in danger by coming to the door. But honest little Ottilia repelled the thought with indignation, and, bending down, she picked up the skull, and carried it carefully up the stairs folded in her apron.

"Lay me on the table," said the Death's Head, when they got into the turret-chamber where the light was; "and then go down into the kitchen and make a pancake. It won't be for want of eggs and flour and butter if it is not good, for they are there in plenty."

"What! go all the way down to the kitchen alone, in this great strange place?" said poor little trembling Ottilia to herself. "This is worse than any thing the tall Sennal ever gave me to do indeed;" but she felt it was a punishment and a trial of her resolution, and she started to obey with brave determination.

It was a harder task even than she had imagined, for if the Death's Head was safe up-stairs in the turret tower, the "cross-bones" were at large in the kitchen, and *would* get in her way whatever she turned to do. [226]

True, her impulse for a moment was to turn and scream, and run away, but there came her father's voice, bidding her trust in God, "And besides," she said to herself, "what is there so very dreadful about the sight of dead bones, after all? and what harm can they do me?" So she took no notice of what was going on around her, but beat her eggs and mixed her batter, and put it on to fry, till the appetizing odour and the warmth of the fire brought back life and renewed her courage.

When Ottilia brought the pancake up into the turret-room, and laid the dish with it on the table, she observed that the side of the pancake which was turned towards the skull became black, while that nearest herself retained its own golden colour; so that her curiosity was piqued, and she was much inclined to ask about it, but she managed to keep quiet and eat her share in silence. When she had finished she took the dish and washed it up, and put all away carefully; and she was just feeling very tired when the Death's Head said to her, "If you go up that staircase on the left, you will come to a little bedroom where you may sleep. About midnight a skeleton will come to your bedside, and try to pull you out of bed; all you have to

do is not to be afraid of it, and then it can do you no harm."

So Ottilia thanked the skull, and went up to bed. She had not been in bed more than three hours when she heard a great noise and rattling in the room, much like [227] the noise the cross-bones had made in the kitchen while she was cooking the pancake. Then she heard the skull call up to her, "It is just midnight—remember you have only to be brave!" And as it spoke she saw a great skeleton come and stand in the bright moonbeam by her bedside! It stretched one of its long bare arms out towards her, and pulled off the bed-clothes with one bony hand and seized her by the hair with the other. But Ottilia listened for her father's voice bidding her put her trust in Providence; and she remained quite quiet in her bed, giving no sign of fear. When the skeleton found that she was so brave, it could do nothing against her, but, after two or three ineffectual tugs, turned and went away; and she saw nothing more of it, but slept out the rest of the night in peace.

When she woke the next morning the bright sun was pouring cheerfully into the room, and by the bedside, where the skeleton had stood the night before, was a beautiful form of a woman, all clothed in white and surrounded by golden rays, to whom Ottilia said, "What do you want me to do, bright lady?"

And the vision answered, "I was the mistress of this castle, who, for my pride and vanity, was condemned to dwell in my bare bones on the same spot where I had sinned by my extravagance in dress, and other wanton habits, until one should come, for the sake of whose thrifty, humble ways, and steadfast trust in God, I [228] should be set free.

"This you have accomplished, and now I can go to my rest; while, in gratitude, I endow you with this castle and all its lands and revenues."

With that the bright form disappeared; and a moment afterwards Ottilia saw, through the window, a milk-white dove winging its upward flight towards heaven.

So Ottilia became a rich countess, and mistress of the lordly castle which she had entered as a suppliant. But no sooner was she installed than she sent for the long Sennal; and, having besought her pardon for all the trouble she had given her, begged her to come up to the castle and be with her. So they lived very happily together for the rest of their lives. [229]

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THE TWO CASKETS.

It was a summer holiday; the sun shone with burning rays on the newly-mown banks; the roads and paths seemed knee-deep with dust; the flowers by the wayside hung their heads, as if praying for the refreshing shower; the very waters of the streamlet were heated as they passed along, and Franzl, lying indolently on its bank, plunged his hands beneath its bright surface, but found no cooling. With a peevish exclamation, he rose and sauntered away, and wished there were no holidays.

"Nay, don't wish that!" said a gentle fair-haired maiden by his side; "and just on this one, too, which I have been longing for, to fill the basket I made for mother with fresh strawberries from the wood."

"Not a bad idea of yours, Walburga; they all call you the 'wise' Walburga," replied Franzl. "There's shade in the wood, and the strawberries will be cooler and more refreshing than this nasty stream." [230]

And with that he strolled away towards the wood.

The cottage of Franzl and Walburga was nestled into the side of a steep hill, the summit of which was mantled with a forest of lofty pines; and up the precipitous path, which wound past the very chimneys of the cottage, Franzl now strolled alone, without troubling himself to offer his hand to the patient little maiden who toiled painfully behind him, with many a slip upon the loose stones and sunburnt moss.

This was Franzl's character. He was always thus: his own amusement, his own enjoyment, and his own ease, were his sole care. Nor had the example of Walburga's loving thoughtfulness for others any effect upon him. If he took any notice of her at all, it was only to laugh and rail at her for it, till her silence shamed his reproaches.

At the pinnacle of the path there was a venerable stone cross, shaded from the

weather by a little pent-house covered with ivy. Walburga knelt before it as she passed, and prayed for help to be always a good, obedient child, and a blessing to her dear parents. Franzl raised his hand to his cap mechanically, because it was the custom, but no holy thought crossed his mind.

“At last there is some coolness after all this horrid heat! and now we are close to those nice refreshing strawberries.” These were his only ideas. [231]

To Walburga, as she knelt, there came sweet lessons she had been taught to associate with the cross—of abnegation of self, obedience to higher powers, and loving devotion to others.

Franzl looked with all his eager eyes to discern the bright red berries where the shade lay diapered with the light darting between the thick clothing of the pine-trees, without so much as casting a glance at the sacred token.

“Oh, what a splendid haul!” he cried, and plunged through the thick leafage to where the ripe, rich berries clustered closest, and, without troubling himself to learn whether Walburga was as well supplied, began helping himself to his heart’s content.

Walburga lined her basket with fresh green leaves, and laid the strawberries in tasteful order upon them, only now and then taking the smallest and most worthless for herself.

Though possessed with different objects, both were equally eager in the pursuit, and they pushed deeper and deeper into the thick pine forest, Walburga always keeping near Franzl, by reason of her tender, confiding spirit, which loved to be near those dear to her, though he, intent on his own gratification, had no cheerful word to enliven her.

At last they came to where the dark pines closed thick overhead—so thick that no golden rays pierced through; all was shade and silence. But here the strawberries were no longer ripe and red, for there was no sun to bring them to maturity, so [232] Franzl peevishly turned to go, and Walburga followed gently behind. Suddenly their progress was arrested by a bright light—brighter than the burning summer sun shining beneath the gloom of the dark pines—and in the centre of that light stood a beautiful queen, and the light seemed to come from the diadem on her forehead and the garments that encompassed her!

“What are you doing here?” she said, in soft sweet accents, addressing herself to Walburga.

And Walburga, dropping her eyelids with maiden modesty, replied, hardly able to force her voice above a whisper, “Gathering strawberries for mother dear.”

The beautiful Lady smiled a smile of approval; and the bright light seemed brighter when she smiled, and a sweet and balmy breeze stirred the air when she spoke again.

“Here, my child,” she said, “take this casket;” and she handed her a casket made just like the strawberry-basket she had woven for her mother, only it was all of pure gold filigree, and, in place of the piled-up strawberries, it had a lid of sparkling carbuncles. “Take this, my child; and when you open it think of me.”

“And what are *you* doing?” she said, with something less of mildness, to Franzl, who, having his hat full of strawberries, was so busy devouring them that he had [233] not even noticed the beautiful present his sister had received.

Nor did he stop now even to reply to her; but between throwing away one chuck and picking out another fruit, he muttered, rudely,—

“I should think you might see that, without asking!”

The beautiful Lady looked at him sadly, and tears like pearls fell fast down her fair cheeks, as she gave him a dark iron casket, with the same words she had used to Walburga.

The light disappeared, and the fair Lady was seen no more.

“Who can that bright Lady be? and what can these caskets be that she has given us?” said Walburga, timidly. “Let us come home quick, and show them to mother;” and she ran onwards gaily, calling out, “Mother, mother dear, see what I have got!”

“Stuff!” replied Franzl; “I’m not going to wait for that: I want to see what’s in them now.” But Walburga had passed on out of hearing.

He pulled the lid off his dark iron casket; and immediately there wriggled out two great black ugly snakes, which grew bigger and longer, dancing round him; nor could he escape from their meshes. Then, finally, they closed their coils tightly round him, and carried him away through the thick, sunless forest, and no one ever saw him again!

Meantime Walburga was making her way home with all the speed she could down [234]
the dangerous mountain track, her strawberry-basket in one hand and the golden casket in the other. Her mother sat spinning in the luxuriant shade of the climbing plants over-shadowing the broad cottage-eaves.

“Mother, dear mother!” cried the child; “see what I have got. Here is a basket of fresh cool strawberries I have gathered for you in the wood, and here is a golden casket which a beautiful Lady brought me, with a great shining light! But stop till Franzl comes home, for he is coming behind, and she gave him a dark iron casket too, and we will open them both together; so eat the strawberries, mother dear, till Franzl comes.”

The mother kissed her child fondly, and stroked her fair, soft, curling hair, but turned her head and wept, for she knew what had befallen.

But Franzl came not; and when Walburga had sought him every where, she said, “He must be gone round by the woodman’s track to meet father, so let us open the casket, mother dear.”

So she put the casket in her mother’s lap, and lifted the beautiful carbuncle lid. And see! there flew thereout two tiny beings, all radiant with rainbow light, and they grew bigger and bigger, fluttering round her till they appeared two holy angels, who folded the child softly in their arms, then spread their wings and flew away with her, singing enchanting melodies, above the clouds! [235]

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THE PRUDENT COUNSELLOR.

Alois Zoschg was a peasant of the Sarnthal; his holding was inconsiderable, but it sufficed for all his needs; his cottage was small, but his family consisted of only himself and his daughter, and they found room for all their requirements.

Katharina was bright enough, however, to make any home happy. Though she shared the cottage with her father alone, she never seemed to feel the want of younger companions; thoughtful and prudent beyond her years, and thrifty and notable with all the work of the place, she was at the same time always ready with her joke and her song. It was no wonder that her father doated on her, and looked forward all through the day’s toil to the evening spent in cheerful conversation with her.

There were thus the elements of a pleasant existence in Alois’ lot, but there were two disturbing causes also. One was his own temper, which was violent and ungovernable at times, when he was seriously provoked. The other was the [236]
jealousy and animosity of a rich peasant neighbour, Andrä Margesin, the owner of a considerable Hof[64] situated at no great distance from Zoschg’s cottage, *auf der Putzen*.

Circumstances had constantly brought the two neighbours into collision; the fault generally lay, in the first instance, on the side of the rich Andrä Margesin, who was grasping and overbearing, but Alois Zoschg once roused, would never let a quarrel rest, and his irritability and revengeful spirit were oftentimes enough to disturb the peace of the whole neighbourhood. No one could say where such quarrels might have ended, what crimes might perhaps have been the result, but for the wise interposition of Katharina, who knew how to soothe her father’s ruffled spirit without ever exceeding the limits of filial respect, as well as how to conciliate the rich neighbour, without condescending to the use of any servile arts.

By her extraordinary good sense and good temper alone, she would, time after time, bring both the men back to sober reason from the highest reach of fury.

Once, however, they had a dispute which was beyond her competence to decide for them, for it involved a question of law. Andrä Margesin accused Alois Zoschg of an encroachment, while Alois Zoschg maintained he was justified in what he had [237]
done, by prescriptive right. The dispute raged high, but all Katharina could do in this case to restore peace, was to exact a promise from both parties that they would cease from all mutual recrimination, and carry the matter to be decided for them by the judge in Botzen.

When the day of hearing came on, the two disputants went up to Botzen to plead their cause; but each was so determined not to give way, and had so much to say in defence of his own position, and to the disparagement of his antagonist, that they carried their pleadings on for six days, and yet there seemed no chance of arriving at a decision which should be thoroughly justified by the evidence, so contradictory was it. At last, the judge, getting tired of the prolonged controversy, and finding it impossible to moderate the virulence of the combatants, told them that he could have no more wrangling, they had so confused the case with their statements and counter-statements, that it was impossible to say which of them was right, or, rather, which of them was least in the wrong; but he gave them one chance of obtaining a decision of the matter, and that was by accepting a test, which he would propound, of their ability and judgment, and whichever succeeded in that, he should pronounce was the one who was in the right in the original pleading. [238]

The rivals looked somewhat disconcerted at this mode of procedure, but, as they found they could not get the affair decided on any other terms, they at last agreed to accept the proposal.

“You must tell me, then,” said the judge, “by to-morrow morning at this hour, what is that which is the Strongest, the Richest, and the most Beautiful;” with these words he left the judgment-seat, and the two peasants were left standing opposite each other, looking very foolish, for they both thought that it would be impossible ever to answer such a question.

After a few moments’ consideration, however, Andrä Margesin, who was a very vain man, bethought himself of an answer which, to his mind, seemed indisputably the right one. “To be sure! Of course! I wonder I didn’t see it at once! There can be no doubt about it!” he exclaimed, aloud; and clapping his hands, and making other triumphant gesticulations, he stalked off homewards, telling all his friends that he had no doubt of the result.

But poor Alois Zoschg, the more he thought, the more puzzled he got, and the boasts of Andrä Margesin only made him more furious. There he stood, crying out against the judge, and against his ill-luck, against his poverty and the opulence of Margesin, till it became necessary to close the court, and his friends prevailed on him to go home. But all the way his passion grew more and more outrageous, and [239] by the time he reached his cottage he was raging like a maniac; the other men could do nothing with him, and slunk away one by one, some in disgust, some in despair.

It was now Katharina’s turn; and Katharina came out to meet him with her brightest smile and her filial greeting, just as if he had been in the best humour in the world.

But, for the first time, the sight of Katharina seemed rather to increase than allay his anger; for he found her dressed in all her festal attire—a proceeding which was quite out of character with his present disposition.

There was he, worn out with the long dispute, the weariness of the delayed decision, the provocation of his enemy’s insulting mien, and still more, perhaps, by his own ill-humour; and there she stood, all smiles and bright colours, as for a joyful occasion—the white *Stotzhaube*[65] coquettishly set on her braided hair, the scarlet bodice tightly embracing her comely shape, with “follow-my-lads[66]” streamers from her shoulder-knot, the bright red stockings showing under her short black skirt, and the blue apron over it, in place of the white apron of working days! Could any thing be more incongruous? was it not enough to increase his [240] madness?

Nevertheless, Katharina’s judgment so uniformly approved itself to his better reason, that, the first impulse passed, he gulped down the rising exclamation of annoyance until he had heard what Katharina had to say.

“Well, father, so you’re all right! and I’m the first to congratulate you,” she cried, and flung her arms round him with an embrace, of which, even in his present state of excitement, he could hardly resist the tenderness and effusion, and as if she did not perceive the traces of his ill-humour.

“‘Right,’ wench! what mean you? all *wrong* you *should* say.”

“No, no, I mean it is all right; and it only remains for you to hear it pronounced by the judge to-morrow—and haven’t I put on my gala suit to celebrate your success?”

“Success! speak! what mean you?” cried Alois, eagerly, his stormy vexation melting away before the sunbeam of her encouragement.

“Why, what has the judge told you to do, to decide the case?” asked Katharina, who had heard it all from a neighbour who came home hours before, while Alois was still standing perplexed in the court.

“That I should tell him by to-morrow morning,” replied Alois, softened already by her consoling manner, “what it is which is the strongest, the richest, and the most [241] beautiful—and how am I ever to guess all *that*? And what’s more,” he continued, relapsing into his former state of vexation, “that fellow Andrä Margesin has guessed it—guessed it already! and is gone off proclaiming his triumph!”

“No, father!” exclaimed Katharina, with a mocking laugh, all of fun, however, not of scorn; “you don’t mean to say you believe that great bully Andrä Margesin could have guessed the right answer?”

“But he *said* so! he went off telling every one so,” rejoined Alois, positively.

“Oh, you dear, good, simple father! do you really believe it is so because he boasts of it? Do rest easy; *he’s* not got it.”

“Well, but if he hasn’t, I haven’t either. How am I to guess such captious absurdities? Why couldn’t the man judge the thing on its merits, instead of tormenting one to this extent?” and Alois was getting cross again.

“Why, it is the best chance in the world, you couldn’t have been more favoured! As to Andrä, he’ll never guess it. Now just think what answer you’ll give.”

“Oh, *I* should never guess any, if I thought till doomsday! But you”—and he started with the clever thought—“*you*, of course, who always find a way out of every thing —what do *you* say?” [242]

“Why,” answered Katharina, readily, “what is Stronger than the earth on which we stand, which bears up our houses and buildings, our rocks and mighty mountains, which all our united efforts could not suffice to move one inch from its place, and on which we all rest secure, confident that none is strong enough to displace it? What more Beauteous than spring, with its fresh, soft tints on sky and mountain, on alp[67] and mead, on blossom and flower—spring, with its promise and its hope? And what Richer than autumn, with its gifts which make us glad for all the year—its bursting ears of grain, its clustered grapes, its abundant olives and luscious fruits?”

“Katharina, girl, I believe you’ve found it!” said her father, with enthusiasm. “My bonny girl has saved me this time also!” and he clasped her in his arms. Though misgivings would come back when he recalled Andrä’s assurance, he yet went to bed happy in the consciousness of at least having a good chance of not being beaten.

In the morning he was up betimes, and, having taken great pains to learn what he had to say from Katharina, who walked a good stretch of the way through the valley with him, he arrived at the court in tolerably good humour.

Andrä was there before him, and in high good humour too; taking for granted that, [243] as the richer and more important man, and, moreover, as the victor (so he felt assured), he had the right to speak first. As soon as the judge had taken his seat, and even before he had called on him for his answer, he began,—

“Sir judge, I have the answer to your enigma; and as soon as I have told it, you will please give judgment in my favour. It was indeed easy enough to find, so I claim no merit in the discovery,” he added, with the pride that apes humility. “The most Beautiful thing on earth is my wife, of course; the Strongest, are my oxen; and the Richest, am I.”

The judge listened without moving a muscle of his countenance, as became a judge, and for those who were too obtuse to perceive the fine irony of the smile with which he bowed to the speaker at the conclusion of his harangue—and among these was certainly Andrä himself—it seemed as if he was quite satisfied with the answer. Nevertheless, he turned to Alois, and said,—

“Well, my man, and what is *your* answer?”

“But the judgment, good sir judge! would your honour be pleased to pronounce the sentence in my favour, seeing I have given your worship the answer?” interposed Andrä Margesin, fussily.

“Gently and fairly!” replied the judge; “wait only a little: we must hear what friend Alois has to say. He *might* have an answer, you know; and, anyhow, we must give [244] him the opportunity.”

Andrä chafed, but could not resist; and, at an encouraging word from the judge, Alois stood forward and repeated word for word the answer Katharina had taught him.

Though the judge had preserved his imperturbability through the expression of Andrä's silly bombast, this answer of Alois was too much for his composure. He had only proposed the enigma as the means of getting rid of a perplexing case. He had no idea but that both peasants would bring an answer of which he could easily expose the folly; and thus, neither having fulfilled the prescribed terms, the case would fall through of itself, and he be saved from further trouble. But he saw nothing to reply to Alois' solution of his question, nor any means of escaping from giving judgment in his favour. Every body acquiesced in the justice of the decision; and even Andrä himself had nothing to say, but, crestfallen, and in very different style from his confidence of the day before, he made his exit while people were yet engaged with the discussion of Alois' success, so as to avoid alike scorn and condolence.

The session over, the judge called Alois aside, and inquired how he had come to find so accurate an answer; upon which Alois, who burnt to proclaim the merit of his child, at once referred the honour to Katharina. [245]

"That is it, is it?" replied the judge. "I have often seen the girl at church, and am not surprised that so comely a form is inhabited by so clever a mind. Now, go home, and tell your daughter that if she finds out the way to come to me without any clothes on, and yet not naked; not by day, and yet not by night; and by a way which shall be neither a high-road nor yet a by-path, I shall take the opportunity of her so coming to ask her to be my wife."

Alois lost no time in returning home to tell the good news to his daughter. "I suppose you'll find one of your clever ways of doing it, though, for myself, I confess I don't understand a word of it."

"But do you really mean that that good, noble, handsome judge really means to make his wife of a poor peasant girl like me?"

"He might do worse," answered her father, with archness and pride. "But there is no doubt he was in earnest. You should have seen the fire in his eye when he spoke!"

"In that case, you may depend I will find the way to fulfil his directions: trust me for that!"

Nor was she long in finding a way which satisfied the judge completely. She took off all her clothes, and then covered herself with fishing-nets; this for the first condition. Then, for the second, she timed her journey in the dusk of evening, which is neither called day nor night; and, for the third, she had previously had the road covered with boards, and upon these she walked, so that she neither trod the high-road nor yet a by-path. [246]

Delighted at acquiring such a prize, and having so clever a maiden for his future companion through life, the judge married Katharina before the end of the month. There were great rejoicings at the wedding, to which all the country-side was invited; and then the poor peasant girl was installed in the judge's house. The judge, however, had exacted of her one condition, which was that she should never interfere with any of her clever suggestions in any case brought before him for decision, but let justice take its free and uninterrupted course.

Years passed by happily enough. The judge rejoiced more and more every day over the wisdom of his choice, and Katharina sedulously observed the condition imposed upon her, and never interfered with her husband's dealings in the court.

Nevertheless, it happened one day that a peasant whom she had known from her infancy had a case before the judge which was nearly as perplexed as that of her father had been, and, despairing of making his right apparent, the peasant came to Katharina, and begged her, by their lifelong friendship, to give him one of those good counsels for which she had been so famous at home in the days gone by. [247]

Katharina urged her promise to her husband, and for a long time refused to break it; but the wily peasant contrived to work on her vanity so effectually, that at last, in an evil moment, she consented this once to give her advice, exacting first a promise he would never tell any one she had done so.

The case was this. Her friend's *Senner*[68] had been visited in the night by a *Saligen Fraulein*[69], who had promised to milk his cow for him, and every one knew that when a *Saligen Fraulein* milked a cow, it gave three times as much milk as the wont. But being a poor man, and having only one cow, he eked out his living by

taking in cows to graze on his allotment; and he also only had one milking-pail. The *Saligen Fraulein*, therefore, when she had milked his pail full, had been obliged to take a pail belonging to the man to whom the other cows belonged, who was a rich man, and had a store of all sorts of utensils. But the milk being in one of his pails, his *Senner* swore that it had been milked from one of his cows, and refused to give it up, though he had no right to it whatever; and he had declined payment for the use of the pail.

Though the case had been argued since the first thing that morning, they were no nearer arriving at a decision. Now the disputants had been ordered to stand back while another case was called, but it would come on again immediately; and in the [248] meantime the poor peasant entreated Katharina's counsel as his only chance of rescuing his milk before it turned sour.

"I see one means, I think, of bringing him to his senses," said Katharina, after she had yielded to her poor friend's importunity. "When your case is called on again, show as much indifference about the result as you have hitherto shown anxiety; then tell your adversary that during this interval, which you spent in the shade of the woods, a Saligen Fraulein had appeared to you and advised you not to use any of the milk the one who appeared to the Senner had milked for you, because she was a mischievous one, and the milk she milked was bewitched, so that all who drank of it, or of any milk mixed with it—were it only one drop of it—would be turned into asses. Then add, 'But of course, if your pailful is really the milk of your own cow, you have nothing to fear; so there's an end of the dispute.' Then he will probably be so frightened by the threat of this calamity that he will probably have nothing more to do with the pail; and that will suffice to prove that it is not the milk of his cow, and expose his deceit."

The peasant was so delighted with the wise counsel that he hardly knew how to thank his benefactress, and readily gave her the promise she required of not letting any one know he had even seen her. [249]

He had scarcely got back to the court when the case was called on again. The peasant carried out the advice he had received with great shrewdness, and found it answer completely. Every body applauded the craft by which he had confounded his would-be oppressor, and the judge himself was very much pleased to see the end of such a troublesome case.

A few minutes' thought, however, suggested to him that there was more than a peasant's shrewdness in the matter, and he was not slow to discern the guiding of his wife in it; so he called the peasant apart, and had little difficulty in wringing from the simple clown a confession of who had been his prompter.

The discovery made the judge set off homeward in great anger. His wife had broken her promise—the fundamental condition of their union; and he would have nothing more to say to her! Out of his house she must go, whithersoever she would, but far away out of his sight.

Katharina, who had so often calmed her father's anger by her prudent reasoning, exerted herself to the utmost to bring her husband back to a better mind; but in vain. And all the concessions he would yield were, to consent that they should eat their last dinner together, and that she should take away with her one thing out of the house, whatever she had most fancy for. It was not much to obtain when [250] required to part for ever from her home, and her hopes, and all to which she had grown united and attached—but it was all she could obtain.

Dinner-time came, and the judge, who was devotedly fond of his wife, seemed lost in sorrow at the calamity about to befall him; still he would not yield. Though she caressed him and entreated him to forgive her, he still said he could not depart from his word, and he would not allow her to speak of it. They sat down to their silent meal; and as the time of separation drew nearer he grew more sombre and sad, and at last determined to console himself with the red wine that sparkled by his side. Katharina encouraged him to drink, and as his bottle got exhausted deftly replaced it by a full one, so that he was quite unconscious of the depth of his potations.

Presently the steward came into the room ready to drive Katharina to whatever destination she should select, and, as he had heard it stipulated that she was to take with her whatever she liked best, proffered his services to assist in the removal—for she had won the respect and affection of all her dependants, and they delighted to be occupied for her.

Katharina rose to depart, thanked the man for his attention, and, in answer to his question as to the object she would take with her, pointed to her husband, who [251] now lay helpless across his settle, his head drooping over the table.

The steward could scarcely believe his eyes, but Katharina had a way of giving orders which did not admit of being questioned. The first surprise over, too, it struck him as a capital device, and he entered heartily into the spirit of the scheme. With the help of a couple of serving-men the judge was deposited safely in the lumbering old carriage, and Katharina having taken her place beside him, they drove away by her direction over one of the worst and most uneven roads in the neighbourhood. The shaking of the vehicle presently awakened the sleeper, who was, of course, quite at a loss to conceive where he was, but, perceiving that he cut a rather silly figure, was ashamed to ask his wife, who sat by his side as if there was nothing amiss, and said nothing.

At last his curiosity got the better of his self-respect, and he begged her to tell him what all this trundling and shaking meant.

Katharina in a few words recalled to him his cruel decree, at the same time reminding him of his promise that she might take with her what she liked best, and, throwing her arms round him, asked him if there could be any doubt as to what *that* could be.

The judge perceived that his wife had once more shown her sense and judgment, and was not sorry to find she had contrived this opportunity of making up their [252]
difference. On renewing her petition for forgiveness, he frankly gave her his pardon; and they drove back home to live together in love and union to the end of their days. [253]

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THE GEESEHERDS.

There was once a peasant who had three sons, Karl, Stefan, and Josef; but, as he was very poor, they often had scarcely enough to eat, and were always complaining. So one day he told them that they should go out, one at a time, into the world, and see whether they could do better for themselves than he could do for them; and, having drawn lots which should go first, it fell upon the youngest.

Josef was not altogether sorry to see a little of what the world was made of, and started with break of day next morning on his travels. He went begging about the country, but for a long time could find nothing to make a living by. At last he came to a splendid mansion on the borders of a large forest. When he asked his usual question, whether there was any place vacant for him, the servants took him into the big house; and, after conducting him through a number of apartments, each more beautiful than the other, he was ushered into a vast hall, all panelled round [254]
with carved wood, with windows of painted glass, and filled with handsome furniture. Reclining in an easy-chair, sat an aged nobleman, the owner of the mansion, who, when he heard Josef’s request, took compassion on him, and told him he would take him into his service, beginning with giving him a very easy employment, and if he proved himself faithful in that, he would promote him to something higher. At first, then, he would only have to keep his geese; but there was one condition he would bid him observe.

Josef was so delighted with the prospect that he hastily interposed a promise of obeying it, before it was even uttered.

And that condition was, that if at any time he should hear any music or singing in the forest, he should never listen to it, however much he might be inclined, for that if he did, he would inevitably lose his place.

Josef repeated his promise, and swore that he would never listen to the music. He was then led down to the place where the other servants were gathered for supper, and as there was a whole crowd of them, and plenty of good food and drink, Josef began to think that he had fallen on to his feet indeed!

After supper, Josef was shown into a tidy little room as big as his father’s whole cottage, where was a nice little white bed, and a suit of clothes ready to put on [255]
when he got up. Though Josef liked good food and a good bed, he was by no means an idle boy, but rose very early in the morning for his new employment; and, having received from the cook his breakfast, and his wallet of provisions for the midday meal, turned out the geese, and drove them before him to the meadow skirting the forest.

Josef had never seen so many geese together before, and all the morning long he was never tired of looking at them, and counting them, observing their ways, fancying he discerned various peculiarities in each, by which to know one from another henceforth; and he began to give them all different names. When one

showed an inclination to stray, what fun it was to drive her back, and see her flap her great, soft, white, awkward wings, and stretch out her great yellow bill, as with awkward gait she shambled back to the flock! So the morning went by; and it was long past the hour of dinner before Josef found any need of it, but when he did, he was astonished at the abundant supply which had been provided for him. “Truly, I did well to come out into the world,” he thought, as he lounged upon the greensward, eating the good food. “What a contrast between having this splendid mansion to live in, and my father’s poor cabin; between the dry crusts we had to eat there, and the princely food allowed to us here; between the toil and slavery [256] there, and this easy kind of work, which might more properly be called a pastime! My father thought to punish me for grumbling, he would be astonished if he could see what a fine exchange I have made!” and he laughed aloud, though all alone. But presently the effects of the full meal, the heat of the afternoon, and the excitement of his new position brought on sensations of lassitude and somnolence —and soon you might have seen him stretched upon the grass at full length, and snoring to his heart’s content.

It is uncertain how long he had slept, but erewhile his slumber was disturbed by the sound of the most enchanting strains of music. Josef raised himself on his elbow, and listened; he had never imagined any thing so beautiful! and when he had listened a little while, he grew so rapt that he could not forbear going a little way into the forest to hear it better, and then a little farther, and farther, till, by the time it ceased, he was a long way from his charge. Then, as he perceived this, for the first time he remembered the condition his master had laid upon him, and his own positive promise to observe it! In shame and confusion he hasted back; but in place of his splendid flock of geese, there were but half a dozen, and those the worst favoured, to be seen! It was vain he called after them, and tore his hair, and ran hither and thither—no geese appeared! and as it began to get dark, he found [257] his best plan was to hurry home with the few that remained.

When he arrived a servant was waiting to conduct him to the master. He no longer wore the benevolent smile with which he had first instructed Josef in the terms of his service. He looked so black and angry that the boy was frightened to approach him—too frightened to find a word in his defence.

“I had pity on you,” said the master, “because you entreated me to try you: you have broken your word, and I can trust you no more. I told you the penalty; now you have chosen to incur it, you must go.”

Josef could do nothing at first but cry, as he contemplated this sudden extinction of his dreams of ease and plenty, but he took courage to throw himself on his knees, and entreat one more trial. The master was inexorable—only, as he was rich and generous, he would not let him go away empty-handed, and he took out of a casket before him a gold pin, as a memorial of his good intention, and dismissed the boy with a gesture which admitted of no further parleying.

Josef was allowed to sleep in the mansion that night, but the next morning, instead of carrying on his agreeable occupation of geeseherd, he had to leave the place ignominiously, his rags being returned to him in place of the smart livery of the [258] castle. Uncertain whither next to bend his steps, he determined to go home in the first instance and show his gold pin, and then take a fresh start in search of another chance.

As he toiled up a steep Joch[70], feeling so thirsty that his eyes went searching every where for a cottage where he might beg a sup of milk, a hay-maker turned off the Hoch Alp[71] on to the road just in front of him, with a cartload of hay he was hastening to take home before rain fell. But, for all his urging, the oxen could not turn the cart, and there it stuck in the edge of the road. Seeing our stout youth coming along, the man called to him to help him lift the wheel, promising him a bowl of milk in return. Josef was a good-natured lad, and, as we have said, by no means indisposed for exertion, so he set to work with a will, and the team was very soon put in motion. He travelled on by the side of the cart, and when they reached the Hof for which it was destined, Josef received a bowl of milk, which refreshed him for the rest of the journey.

As he got near his father’s cottage he went to take out the gold pin with glee, to have it ready to display. Great was his vexation, therefore, at discovering he had it [259] no longer—nor could his searching bring it back any more than the geese! Josef burst into tears, and joined the family meal at home, which was just prepared as he arrived, with his head low bowed, as if he sought to hide himself for very shame.

When his father saw him in such melancholy plight, his compassion warmed to him, and he asked him kindly what had befallen. Josef told all his adventures, crying afresh as he came to the narration of how he had lost on the way the gold pin, to display which he had come home before starting in search of another

chance of employment.

“Such chances don’t grow as thick as black-berries,” said Stefan, the second son: “instead of your going in search of another, I’ll go to the same grand house; and *I* won’t lose such a fine situation for the sake of ‘tweedle-dum,’ I can tell you! And whatever I get for wages, you may depend, I won’t stick it in my belt where it is sure to be brushed away, but on the brim of my hat, to be sure!”

Josef, who had had enough of trying to provide for himself, and was not sorry to be at home again, even with its scanty means, made no objection, and their father, thinking it well Stefan should have *his* experience of life too, approved the plan.

Stefan set out next morning, therefore; and by following Josef’s directions soon [260]
discovered the stately palace for which he was bound. The noble owner received him as kindly as Josef, and sent him out to the same employment, first binding him to observe the same condition. Stefan readily promised to keep it, and was formally installed into his office of geeseherd.

All went well enough at first, as with Josef; but it was at an even earlier period of the day than with him that his curiosity was roused by the fairy-like music. Then he, too, followed it through the forest; and when it ceased at sound of the church bells ringing the *Ave*, he found not more than three or four geese left of all his flock!

On his return the master was full of anger at his breach of trust, and inexorably resolved to turn him away; but not to let him go empty-handed, he gave him a little lamb to take home.

Stefan was pleased enough with his prize, but was somewhat embarrassed as to the manner of carrying it safely home. He had declared that whatever he got he would bring home on his hat, and though he had never thought of so embarrassing a present falling to him, at the time he spoke, he resolved to keep his word, and so used his best endeavours to fix the little creature round the brim.

He carried it thus great part of the way in safety, but having to cross a somewhat rapid stream, a projecting bough of a tree lifted his hat from his head—and both [261]
hat and lamb fell in, and were carried fast away by the torrent!

Stefan came back even more crestfallen than Josef; and, having told his story, Karl, the eldest, with great indignation at the carelessness of his brothers, declared that he would make the trial next. He would not stick his prize in his belt or his hat, not he! he would carry it by a string, and then it couldn’t get loose; and as for the music, he had no fear of being led away by that. Josef, indeed, had had some excuse, as the strains took him by surprise, but to be so foolish as Stefan, after the warning example of another, was perfectly contemptible. *He* couldn’t be so silly as *that*, not he!

He started on his way betimes, and toiled along not without some misgivings lest he should find so good a post already occupied by another. But it was not so: the owner of the mansion gave him the same reception, the same charge, and the same warning as the other two; and, full of confidence in his superiority, he went forth to his work.

The weather was cool, and he had no need to seek the shade of the forest trees; and for more than a week he brought the full tale of geese home day by day. “What idiots those were to throw away their place for the sake of a little music!” he thought to himself one day later. “I told them I should not be so foolish—not I! I told them I shouldn’t be led away by it, and I haven’t been.” [262]

But it was hotter that day, and in the afternoon, when the sun’s power was greatest—forgetting the warning of his brothers’ example, or rather setting it at defiance, with the assurance that though he sought the shade he need not listen to the music—he crept within the border of the cool forest, and lay down.

He had hardly done so when his senses were rapt by the delicious but deceitful strains. “The woods must be full of fairies!” he cried; “this can be no earthly music —I must follow it up and see what manner of instruments they are, for never on earth was heard the like!” But as he went on, the music always seemed farther off, and farther again, till at last the church bells rang the *Ave*, and the music ceased.

Then Karl woke to a sense of his weakness and folly; and though he ran every step of the way back to his geese, only two were there! Though he had now found the same fate befall himself as his brothers, in all particulars, yet he could not forbear searching for the lost geese; but of course it was in vain, and he had to return to the castle with but two. Nothing could look more miserable, or more ludicrous, than this diminished procession—Karl at the head of his two geese, who had gone out in the morning with such a goodly flock. [263]

He would have gladly slunk away without exchanging a word with any one, but he could not escape being taken before the master, who scolded him in the same words in which he had chided his brothers, but gave him a fine rich cake to take home.

The cake was round, and it was very inconvenient to attempt to secure it by means of a string, but Karl had declared he would bring home his reward that way, and so it was a point of honour with him to do it. But passing by a Hof, on his way home, where was a large and powerful watch-dog on guard, he set off running to escape its grip. This was the very way to attract the beast's notice, however; and off it set in pursuit, much faster than Karl's legs could carry him away—and then, having jumped upon him and knocked him down, seized his cake, and devoured it before his eyes!

Karl had now to go home as empty-handed as his brothers, and as full of tears; but his father comforted him, and checked the rising gibe of his youngers by reminding them that all had failed equally; so they all joined in a good-humoured laugh in which there was nothing of bitterness.

The father then asked them if any of them wished to go out into the world and seek fortune again; but they all agreed that there was nothing to be gained by the move, and that though there were positions which at first sight seemed more brilliant and more delectable than their own, yet that each had its compensatory [264] trials, and that they were best where God had placed them.

Henceforth, however, they were ashamed of renewing their grumblings, but, each making the best of his lot, they became noted as the most contented and, therefore, happiest family of the whole valley. [265]

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ST. PETER'S THREE LOAVES[72].

In the days when our Lord and Saviour walked this earth with His apostles, it happened one day that He was passing, with St. Peter for His companion, through a secluded valley, and that discoursing, as was His wont, of the things of the Kingdom of God, and raising the mind of His disciple from the earthly to the heavenly, they noticed not how the hours went by. Nevertheless, they had been [266] walking since daybreak over rough mountain tracks and across swollen torrents many a weary mile, and had eaten nothing all day, for their way had led them far from the haunts of men; but as noon came down upon them they approached the precincts of a scattered hamlet. The bells of all the large farm-houses were ringing to call in the labourers from the field to their midday meal, and announced a community of sensations in the world around akin to those with which St. Peter had for a long time past been tormented. The heat increased, and the way grew more weary, and St. Peter found it more and more difficult to keep his attention alive to his Master's teaching.

The merciful Saviour was not slow to perceive what ailed His disciple, and kept on the look-out for any opportunity of satisfying him as anxiously as if the need had been His own; and thus, while St. Peter was still wondering how long he would [267] have to go on fasting, He remarked to him the smell of fresh-baked loaves proceeding from a cottage at the bottom of the valley.

St. Peter could as yet perceive neither the scent nor the cottage. Nevertheless, used as he was to trust his Lord's word implicitly, he started at His bidding, following the direction pointed out just as if both had been patent to himself.

The way was so steep and rough that St. Peter, in his eagerness, had many falls, but at last, without much damage, reached nearly the foot of the mountain range along the side of which they had been journeying; and then suddenly the smell of a wood fire, mingled with the welcome odour of fresh-baked bread, greeted him. The roof of the cottage was just beneath his feet, and the smoke was curling up through the chimney, telling of a well-provided stove, burning to good purpose, close at hand. One or two more winds of the road, and only one more slip over the loose stones, brought him to the door.

A comely peasant wife opened it at his knock with a cheerful greeting: "*Gelobt sei Jesus Christus*[73]*!*" [268]

The apostle, having given the customary response, "*In Ewigkeit! Amen*," the peasant wife asked him to come in and rest—an offer which St. Peter gladly accepted.

The peasant woman wiped a chair, and presented it to him, and, with some pleasant words about his journey, returned to her occupation at the fire. The moment had just arrived when she should take her loaves from the oven, and nothing could smell more tempting to a man whose appetite was seasoned by a long walk in the fresh mountain air.

“Good woman, I come from far, and the whole of this blessed morning,” he exclaimed, speaking as one of the people, “I have tasted nothing! ... nor my companion,” he added, with some embarrassment lest he should seem encroaching, yet full of anxiety to provide for his Master’s needs as well as his own.

“Tasted nothing all this morning!” exclaimed the compassionate peasant wife, scarcely leaving him time to speak; “poor soul! Why didn’t you say so at first? Here, take one of these loaves; they are the best I have, and, if humble fare, are at all events quite fresh. And your companion too, did you say? Take one for him also;” and then, as if she found so much pleasure in the exercise of hospitality that she could not refrain from indulging it further, she added, “and take this one too, if you will; maybe you may want it before the journey is out.” [269]

St. Peter thanked her heartily for her generosity, and hasted to take the loaves to the Master, that He might bless and break them. But as they were hot, being just out of the oven, he had to wrap them in the folds of his coarse grey mantle, to be able to hold them without burning his hands.

As he toiled up the steep, the thought came to him, “It will most likely be long before we have a chance of meeting with provisions again, and I always seem to want food sooner than the Master; I might very well keep this third loaf under my cloak, and then in the night, while He is lost in heavenly contemplation, and I am perishing with hunger, I shall have something to satisfy it. I do Him no wrong, for He never feels these privations as I do—at all events,” he added, with some misgivings, “He never *seems* to.”

With that he reached the place where he had left the Saviour. He was still kneeling beneath the shade of a knoll of pines. As St. Peter approached, however, though He was not turned so as to see him coming, He rose, as if He knew of his presence, and, coming to meet him, asked him cheerfully what success he had in his catering.

“Excellent success, Lord,” replied St. Peter. “I arrived just at the right moment. The woman was taking the loaves out of the oven, and, being a good-hearted soul, she gave me one; and when I told her I had a companion with me, she gave me another, without requiring any proof of the assertion; so come, and let us break our fast, for it is time.” But he said no word about the third loaf, which he kept tight in a fold of his mantle under his arm. [270]

They sat down on a rock by the side of a sparkling rivulet, hasting along its way to swell the far-off river, and its cool crystal waters supplied the nectar of their meal.

St. Peter, who had now long studied in the school of mortification of his Master, was quite satisfied with this frugal repast, and, no longer tortured by the cravings of nature, listened with all his wonted delight and enthusiasm to every word which fell from the Lord’s lips, treasuring them up that not one might be lost. It was true that he could not suppress some little embarrassment when the thought of the third loaf occurred to him; “But,” he said, to himself, “there could be no possible harm in it; the woman had clearly given it to him; his Lord didn’t want it, and he was only keeping it for his needs. True, if *He* were to suspect it, He would not quite like that; but then, why should He? He never suspects any one.”

Never had the Saviour been more familiar, more confiding. St. Peter felt the full charm of His presence and forgot all his misgivings, and the cause of them, too, in the joy of listening to Him. Then came a friendly bird, and hopped round Him, feeding on the crumbs that had fallen. The Saviour, as He watched its eagerness, fed it with pieces from His own loaf. Another bird was attracted at the sight—another, and another, and another, till there was a whole flock gathered round. The Saviour fed them all, and yet He seemed to take His own meal too. [271]

“It is just as I thought,” St. Peter reasoned with himself; “His needs are not as our needs. Decidedly I do Him no wrong in keeping the loaf for my own.” And he felt quite at ease.

The simple repast was at an end; the birds chirped their thanks and flew away; and the disciple and the Master rose from their rocky seat.

St. Peter, leaning on his staff, set out to resume the journey, but the Lord called him back.

“Our Father in heaven has fed us well, shall we not thank Him as is our wont?”

St. Peter laid aside his staff, and cheerfully knelt down.

“But as He has dealt with particular loving-kindness in the abundance with which He has provided us this day, let us address Him with arms outstretched, in token of the earnestness of our gratitude,” continued the Saviour; and as He spoke He flung His arms wide abroad, as if embracing the whole universe and its Creator, with an expression of ineffable love.

He knelt opposite St. Peter, who was not wont to be slow in following such an exhortation. [272]

“He only suggested it; He didn’t command.” reasoned St. Peter to himself. “I need not do it.”

But a furtive glance he could not repress, met the Master’s eye fixed upon him with its whole wonted affection—there was no resisting the appeal. With the spontaneity of habitual compliance, he raised his arms after the pattern of his Lord; but the loaf, set free by the motion, fell heavily to the ground beneath the Master’s eye.

The Master continued praying, as though He had perceived nothing, but St. Peter’s cheeks were suffused with a glow of shame; and before they proceeded farther he had told Him all. [273]

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THE TWO COUSINS OF ST. PETER[74].

St. Peter had two young cousins whom he sought to bring up in the way of righteousness according to Christian doctrine. As they were very docile, and listened gladly to his word, he strove to lead them in the way of all perfection; and to this end counselled them to give themselves up entirely to serve God in a community of His handmaidens, where they should live for the Divine spouse of their souls, and for Him alone.

The work of the Church called St. Peter away from the East, and he was already gone to establish the faith in Rome before the maidens had decided as to their vocation. It was not till many years after that St. Peter heard, to his surprise, on occasion of St. Timothy coming to visit St. Paul in Rome, that while the youngest indeed had fulfilled his expectations, and had given herself up to the religious life, [274] the elder had married and established herself in the world, and become the mother of a large family.

During his long confinement in the dark dungeon of the Mamertine prison, St. Peter’s thoughts would often revert from the immense cares of his sublime office to the quiet hours he had passed in the lowly dwelling by the Lake of Tiberias, where his pious cousins had so often sat at his feet listening to his instructions. And he found a peaceful pleasure in recalling the way in which they had responded to them; the spontaneity with which they had apprehended the maxims of the new religion; their fervour in applying them to their own rule of life; their readiness to go beyond what was bidden them, that so they might testify their love for their Divine Master; their delight in all that reminded them of God and His law.

“And to think that one of them should have gone back from all this! should have been content to give up these exalted aspirations! How sadly her ardour must have cooled! What could have worked this change?” the apostle would muse, in his distress, and pray silently for her forgiveness and guidance; but his thoughts would revert with greater affection and satisfaction to the more favoured state of the soul of the younger sister.

It was not long before the terrible decree of Nero consigning St. Peter to the death of the cross was pronounced, and from the height of the Janiculum he was received into the celestial mansion to keep the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven. [275]

He had not exercised this office many years when our Lord called him to Him one day, and bid him open the gate of heaven to its widest stretch and deck its approaches as for a high festival, for that one of the holiest of earth and the dearest to Himself was to be received into the abode of the Blessed.

“That must be my youngest cousin,” said St. Peter, “there is no doubt; she who

generously gave up a world in which she was so well adapted to shine, to live a life of perfection with God above only for its object;" and he strained his eyes to see far along the approach to Paradise, that he might catch the first glimpse of her glorified soul and greet it with the earliest welcome.

How great was his surprise then, when roused by the melodious strains of the angelic host escorting her, to hear in the refrain of their chant the name of the *Sorellona*[75], not of the younger of the sisters! Meantime the celestial cortége was wafted by, and the beautiful spirit was welcomed by the Divine Master Himself, and placed on one of the highest seats in His kingdom. [276]

Not many days after our Lord called St. Peter to Him again, and told him to open the gate a little, very little way, and to make no preparations for rejoicing, for He had promised admission to a soul who, though of his family, yet had only escaped being excluded by a hair's breadth.

St. Peter went away perplexed, for he knew there was no one of his family who could be coming to heaven just at that time except the younger of the two cousins, and how could the Lord's words apply to *her*?

He durst do no more than open the gate a very little way, but stationed himself opposite that small cleft to obtain the earliest information as to who the new comer really was.

Presently a solitary angel came soaring—the only escort of a trembling soul—and, as he approached, without chorus or melody, he begged admission for one whom, by the name, St. Peter discerned was actually the *Sorellotta*[76] he had deemed so meritorious! With great difficulty, and by the help of the angel who conducted her, and of St. Peter himself, she succeeded in passing the sacred portal; and after she had been led to the footstool of the Heavenly Throne in silence, He who sat on it pointed to a very little, low, distant seat, as the one assigned to her.

When St. Peter afterwards came to discourse with the Lord about His dealings with the two souls, he learnt that she who performed her duty with great exactness and perfection in the world was more pleasing in His sight than she who, while straining after the fulfilment of a higher rule, yet fell short of correspondence with so great a grace. [277] [278]

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LUXEHALE'S WIVES.

The Devil goes wandering over the earth in many disguises, and that not only to hunt souls; sometimes it is to choose for himself a wife, but when he goes on these expeditions he calls himself "Luxehale."

There was once a very beautiful princess, very proud of her beauty, who had vowed she would never marry any but the handsomest prince. Numbers of princes, who heard the fame of her beauty, came to ask her hand, but directly she saw them she declared they were not handsome enough for her, and drove them out of the city. Her parents were in despair, for there was scarcely any young prince left in the world whom she had not thus rejected.

One day the trumpeters sounded the call by which they were wont to announce the arrival of a visitor.

The princess sat with her mother in an arbour.

"Ah!" said the queen, "there is another come to ask your hand. How I wish he may be the really handsome one you desire, this time!" [279]

"It is all useless, mother; I don't mean to see any more of them—they are all uglier, one than the other."

The queen was about to answer by instancing several noted paragons of manly beauty whom she had rejected like the rest, but the chamberlain came in with great importance just at that moment, to say that the prince who had just arrived appeared to be a very great prince indeed, and that he was in a great hurry, and demanded to see the princess instantly.

The princess was very indignant at this abrupt proposal, and refused absolutely to see him; but at last the queen got her to consent to place herself in a hollow pillar in the great reception-hall, and through a little peephole, contrived in the decorations, take a view of him without his knowing that she did so.

When the princess thus saw the stranger, she was dazzled with the perfection of his form and the surpassing beauty of his countenance, and she could hardly restrain herself from darting from her hiding-place and offering him her hand at once; in order to preserve herself from committing such a mistake, she immediately let herself down through a little trap-door into the room below, where it had been agreed that her mother should meet her. [280]

“Well, what did you think of him?” said the queen, who did not keep her long waiting.

“Oh! I think he *might* do,” said the princess, with an assumed air of indifference, for she was too proud to acknowledge how much she admired him.

The queen was overjoyed that at length she consented to marry, and so put an end to the anxiety she was in to see her established before she died. That she might not take it into her head to go back from what she had said, her parents hastened on the wedding preparations, and the prince seemed very anxious, too, that no delay should occur. As soon as the festivities were over, he handed his bride into a magnificent gold coach, and drove off with her, followed by a retinue which showed he was a very great prince indeed.

Away they rode many days’ journey, till at last they reached a palace of greater magnificence than any thing the princess had ever conceived, filled with crowds of servants, who fulfilled her least wish almost before it was uttered, and where every pleasure and every gratification was provided for her in abundance.

The prince took great pleasure in conducting her frequently over every part of the palace, and it was so vast that, after she had been over it many times, there was still much which seemed strange to her; but what was strangest of all was, there was one high door, all of adamant, which the prince never opened, and the only cross word he had spoken to her was once when she had asked him whither it led. [281]

After some time it happened that the prince had to go on a considerable journey, and before he left he confided to his wife the keys of all the apartments in the palace, but she observed the key of the adamant door was not among them, and ventured to ask why it was not.

“Because no one passes through that door but myself; and I advise you not to think any thing more about that door, or you may be sure you will repent it,” and he spoke very sternly and positively.

This only whetted her curiosity still more; and she was no sooner sure he was at a safe distance, than she determined to go down and see if some of the keys would not open this door. The first she tried in it showed there was no need of any, for it was unlocked, and pushed open at her touch. It gave entrance to a long underground passage, which received a strange lurid light from the opening at the far end.

The princess pursued the ominous corridor with beating heart; and, when she reached the other end, made the frightful discovery that it was—the entrance to hell!

Without losing a moment, she rushed up-stairs, regained her own apartment, and sat down to contrive her escape, for she now perceived that it was the Devil, disguised as a beautiful prince, that she had married! [282]

As she sat, pursued by a thousand agonizing thoughts, the gentle cooing of two pigeons in a cage soothed her, and reminded her of home.

Her father’s fondness had suggested that she should take the birds with her that she might have the means of communicating to him how it fared with her in her married home. Quickly she now wrote a note to tell him of the discovery she had made, and begging him to deliver her. She tied the note to one of the pigeons, and let them fly.

The Devil came back in the same disguise, and was profuse in his caresses; and he never thought of her having opened the door. But all the princess’s affection and admiration for him were gone, and it was with the greatest difficulty she contrived to keep up an appearance of the fondness she had formerly so warmly and so sincerely lavished.

Meantime the pigeons went on their way, and brought the note home. The king and queen were having dinner on the terrace, and with them sat a young stranger, named Berthold, conversing with them, but too sad to taste the food before him. He was one of those the princess had rejected without seeing, but as he had seen her, he was deeply distressed at the present separation. The pigeons flew tamely in narrowing circles round the king’s head, and, at last, the one which carried the [283]

note came fluttering on to the table before him. He would have driven them away, the rather, that they were all distressed and bleeding, and with scarcely a feather left, but the young stranger's eye discovered the note, which was quickly opened and read.

"Oh, help me! What can I do?" exclaimed the king; "give me some counsel. How can I ever reach the Devil's palace—and how could I fight him, if even I did get there?"

"May I be permitted to undertake the deliverance?" asked the stranger.

"Oh, in heaven's name, yes!" cried the king.

"And shall I have your permission to pay my addresses to her when I bring her back?"

"Why, she will be yours—yours of right, if you succeed in rescuing her; altogether yours!"

"That must depend on herself. Nevertheless, if I have your consent to ask her in marriage, that is all I desire."

"Go, and succeed!" devoutly exclaimed the king. "And whatever you stand in need of, be it men or money, or arms, you have but to command, and every thing shall be given you that you require."

But the prince, who knew not what sort of enemy he had to encounter, or which way he had to go, knew not what assistance to ask for, but set out, trusting in God and his own good sense to guide him. [284]

As he passed out of the castle enclosure his eyes were rejoiced to see lying on the ground some of the white feathers of the carrier-pigeons, and then he perceived that, not having been duly matched, they had fought all the way, and that the whole track was marked with their feathers. But as they, of course, had come by the directest course, it led him over steep precipices and wild, unfrequented places; still Berthold pursued his way through all difficulties without losing courage, and ever as he went pondering in his own mind with what arts he should meet the Devil.

He was passing through a desolate stony place, which seemed far from any habitations of men, when he saw a man crouching by the wayside, with his ear close against the rock.

"What are you doing there?" said Berthold.

"I am listening to what is going on in the Devil's house," answered the man, "for my sense of hearing is so fine, it carries as far as that."

"Then come with me," said Berthold; "I will find work for you which shall be well repaid."

So the man left off listening, and walked on behind him.

A little farther on, he observed a man sitting on a ledge of the precipice, with his back to the road, and with all the world before him; and he gazed out into the far distance. [285]

"What are you staring at?" said Berthold.

"I am gazing into the Devil's house," said the man, "for my sight is so sharp, it carries as far as that."

"Then come along with me; I will give your eyes work that shall be well paid." said Berthold.

So the man left off gazing, and turned and walked behind him.

"But stop!" said the prince; "let me have some little proof that you are as clever as you say. If you can see and hear into the Devil's house, let me know what the Devil's wife is doing."

Then the first man crouched down with his ear against the rock; and the second man sat himself astride on a jutting projection of the precipice, and gazed abroad over the open space—Berthold taking care that they should be far enough apart not to communicate with each other.

"What do you see?" he said, when the second man had poised himself to his own satisfaction.

“I see a vast apartment, all of shining crystal, and the Devil lying fast asleep on a ledge of the flaming spar, while the Devil’s wife sits with averted face, and weeps.”

“And what do *you* hear?” he said, returning to the first man.

“I hear the Devil snore like the roaring of a wild beast, and I hear great sighs of a [286] soft woman’s voice; and every now and then she says, ‘Why was I so foolish and haughty, as to send away all those noble princes whom I might have learnt to love? and above all, Berthold, whom I would not see, and who my mother said was better than them all; and I would not see him! If I could but see him now, how I would love him!’”

When Berthold heard that, he could not rest a minute longer, but told them he was satisfied; and hurried on so fast that they could scarce keep up with him.

On they went thus; and presently they saw a man amusing himself with lifting great boulders of rock, which he did so deftly that no one could hear him move them.

“You have a rare talent,” said Berthold; “come along with me, and I will pay your service well.”

So the man put down a great mass of rock he had in his arms, and walked on behind the prince.

Presently there were no more pigeons’ feathers to be seen, and Berthold wrung his hands in despair at losing the track.

“See!” said the man with the sharp sight, “there they lie, all down this steep, and along yonder valley, and over that high mountain! it will take three months to traverse that valley.”

“But it is impossible to follow along there at all!” cried all the men. But Berthold [287] said they must find their way somehow.

While they were looking about to find a path to descend by, they saw a great eagle soaring round and round, flapping her wings, and uttering plaintive cries.

“I’ll tell you what’s the matter,” said the man with the sharp hearing: “one of her eggs has fallen down this ledge, and it is too narrow for her to get it out; I can hear the heart of the eaglet beating through the shell.”

“Eagle,” said the prince, “if I take out your egg, and give it to you, will you do something for me?”

“Oh, yes, any thing!” said the eagle.

“Well, that is a hot, sunny ledge,” said the prince; “your egg won’t hurt there till we come back—I have seen in my travels some birds which hatch their eggs entirely in the hot sand. Now you take us all on your back, and fly with us along the track wherever you see the pigeons’ feathers, and wait a few minutes while we complete our business there, and then bring us back; and then I’ll take your egg out of the fissure for you.”

“That’s not much to do!” said the eagle; “jump up, all of you.”

So they all got on the eagle’s back, the prince taking care so to arrange his men [288] that the great neck and outstretched wings of the eagle should hide them from the Devil’s sight, should he have happened to be outside his house.

It took the eagle only two or three hours to reach the journey’s end, and by this time it was night.

“And now it is dark,” said Berthold, to the sharp-visioned man, as they alighted from the eagle’s back, “you cannot help us any more with your sight.”

“Oh, yes; the crystals of the Devil’s apartment always glitter with the same red glare by night or day. I see the Devil rolled up in bed fast asleep, and his wife sits on a chair by his side, and weeps.”

“And what do you hear?” he said, addressing the first attendant.

“I hear snoring and weeping, as before,” said the man addressed.

“Now you, who are so clever at lifting weights without being heard,” said the prince, “lift the great door off its hinges.”

“That’s done,” replied the man, a minute later, for he had done it so quietly

Berthold was not aware he had moved from the spot.

“Since you have done this so well, I’m sure you’ll do the next job. You have now to go up into the Devil’s room, and bring the lady down without the least noise; if you show her this token, she will recognize it for her father’s device, and will come with you.”

The sharp-visioned man told him how he would have to go, for he could see all the [289]
inside of the house, lighted up as it was with the glaring crystals. But just as he was about to start,—

“Stop!” cried the man with the sharp ears; “I hear the Devil turn in his bed; our talking must have disturbed him.” So they all stood stock still in great fear.

“He seems to be getting up,” whispered the man with the sharp sight. “No; now he has turned round and rolled himself up once more.”

“And now he is snoring again,” continued the other.

“Then we may proceed,” replied the prince; and the third attendant went his way so softly that no one heard him go.

“Get up on the eagle’s back,” said Berthold to the other two, “that we may be ready to start immediately.” So the men took their places.

They had hardly done so when the man came back bearing the princess, and at a sign from Berthold sprang with her on to the eagle’s neck. The prince got up behind, and away flew the eagle—so swiftly that had he been less collected he might have lost his balance before he had secured his seat.

By daybreak they had reached the spot where the eagle’s egg had fallen. Berthold willingly exerted himself to restore her treasure to her, and she was so grateful
that she proposed to fly with them home the remainder of the journey—an offer [290]
which they gladly accepted.

The Devil was still sleeping and snoring, they were assured by the clever attendants; and away they sped, reaching home just as the king and queen were sitting down to breakfast.

Great was the rejoicing in all the palace. The princess gladly acknowledged Berthold’s service by giving him her hand; and to all three attendants high offices were given at court. To the eagle was offered a gold cage and two attendants to wait on her, but she preferred liberty on her own high mountain, and flew away, accepting no reward but a lamb to carry home to her young ones.

When Luxehale woke next morning great was his fury to find that the princess was gone.

“Order out a troop of horse, and send and demolish her palace, and kill all belonging to her, and bring her home again,” was the advice of his chamberlain.

“No,” replied Luxehale; “I hate violence: I have other ways at command which I find answer better. There are people enough in the world glad enough to follow me willingly. It is not worth while to give myself much trouble with those who resist.” And he dressed himself, and walked out.

This time his steps were not directed towards a grand palace. He didn’t care
particularly about birth or cultivation. There was a cottage situated just above one [291]
of the alleys of his pleasure-grounds where lived three beautiful peasant girls with an old father. Luxehale had often listened to their merry laugh and thought how he should like to have one of them for his wife; but he never could find any means of getting at them, as they were very quiet and modest, and never would enter into conversation with any stranger.

As he now walked along he heard their voices in earnest talk.

“It’s great nonsense of father selling all the celery, and not letting us have a taste of it!” said one, in a discontented voice.

“Yes, it is; I don’t mean to submit to it either,” said another.

“Oh, but you wouldn’t disobey father!” said the first.

“Well, it’s not such a great matter,” replied the other; “only a foot of celery[77]!”

Luxehale was very glad when he heard that, for he had never been able to catch

them in an act of disobedience before. He placed himself under the celery-bed and watched all the roots. The moment one began to shake, showing that they were pulling it up, Luxehale took hold of the root, and held it hard, so that, instead of their pulling it up, he contrived to drag down the girl who was trying to gather it. [292]

It was the peasant's eldest daughter Lucia; and much surprised was she, after passing through the hole Luxehale had made in the earth, to find herself in the arms of a handsome cavalier, who lavished the greatest care on her! Lucia had never been spoken to by such a good-looking gallant before, and felt much pleased with his attention. She begged him, however, to let her go; but he told her that was impossible. She was his captive, and he never meant to let her go again; but if she would only be quiet and reasonable she would be happier than any queen; that he would take her to a magnificent palace where she would have every thing she desired, and be as happy as the day was long, for he would make her his wife. In fact, he succeeded in dazzling her so with his promises that she began to feel a pleasure in going with him.

Nor did he break these promises. She was installed into all the enjoyments of which we have seen the former wife in possession; and as the Devil admired her beauty, and flattered and fondled her, she did not altogether regret her captivity. But when the time came that he had to go upon earth about his business, he brought her all the keys of the place, with the express recommendation that she was never to attempt to open the adamant door; then he plucked a red rose, and placed it in her bosom, as a memorial of him, which he promised should not fade [293] till his return, and departed.

Lucia amused herself very well at first with various occupations and amusements the palace afforded, and which were new to her; but as the days fled by she began to grow weary, and at last, from being tired and out of spirits with her loneliness, she became possessed with so intense a curiosity to see what lay hid behind the adamant door, that she could not resist it.

Accordingly she went down at last, with the bunch of keys in her hand, and with trembling steps made her way up to it. But, without even trying one of the keys, she found her touch pushed it open, and made the terrible discovery, that it was the gate of hell! She turned to escape, and rushed back to her apartment, to weep bitterly over her forlorn condition.

Two or three days later a train of waggons came laden with beautiful presents Luxehale had bought and sent home to amuse her, and she became so interested in turning them all over, that when he returned she was as bright and smiling as if nothing had happened.

Luxehale ran to embrace her, but suddenly observed that the rose had withered on her bosom! When he saw that, he pushed her from him. He had given it to her as a test to ascertain whether she had gone through the adamant door, for the heat of the fire was sure to tarnish it—and now he knew she was in possession of his [294] secret.

"You have opened the adamant door!" he exclaimed, fiercely; and she, seeing him so fierce, thought it better to deny it.

"It is useless to deny it," he replied; "for nothing else would have tarnished that rose." And saying that, he dragged her down to it and thrust her within its enclosure, saying, "You wanted to know what there was behind the adamant door; now you will know all about it."

Luxehale now had to look out for another wife. He at once bethought him of Lucia's sisters, and went pacing up and down under their garden, as before. The two sisters were talking with some warmth.

"I don't see why father should have forbidden us to look through the trellis!" said the voice which had spoken first on the former occasion.

"Nor I," said the other. "And I don't mean to be kept in in that style either," said the other.

Quick as thought the Devil transformed himself into a serpent and worked his way up through the earth to the other side of the trellis, where he waited till the maiden put her head through, as she had threatened. She had no sooner done so than he caught her in his coils and carried her down under the earth. Before she had time to recover from her surprise, he had transformed himself back into the [295] handsome cavalier who had charmed Lucia.

It was the second sister, Orsola; and her opposition to his advances was as easily

overcome as Lucia's. She lived in the palace as Lucia had done, and learnt to feel great delight in its pleasures. At last the day came when the Devil had to go upon earth about his business, and he left her with the same charge about the adamant door, and placed a red rose on her breast, which he promised should not fade till his return. After a time her weariness induced Orsola to peep through the fatal door; and the hot blast which escaped as she opened it would have been sufficient to drive her away, but that it came charged with the sound of a familiar voice!

"Lucia!" she screamed, in a voice thrilled with horror.

"Orsola!" returned her unhappy sister, in a tone of agony.

Orsola knew enough. She did not dare venture farther; and as she made her way back to her apartment she saw in the court below the retinue which had escorted her husband back. Assuming as composed a mien as possible, she went out to meet him, and he ran towards her with every appearance of affection—but his eye caught the withered rose.

"You have opened the adamant door," he said, sternly. "There is no help for you; those who once pass it cannot live up above here any more. You must go back, and [296] live there for ever!" And, regardless of her entreaties and cries, he dragged her down, and thrust her into the burning pit.

Luxehale now had to search for another wife, and he determined it should be no other than the third of the sisters. "But," he reflected, as he walked towards her cottage, "now she has no one left to talk to, how shall I manage? Ah, well, I generally find a way to do most things I take in hand—and if I don't catch her I needn't break my heart; there are plenty of girls in the world whom I have arts to enthrall."

But he did hear her voice. As he got near she was singing, very sadly and sweetly, a verse which told her regrets for her sisters, and called on them to return.

"That's all right!" said Luxehale, "she is sure to come to the spot where she last saw her sister. I'll be there!"

So, transforming himself once more into a serpent, he wriggled through the earth and took up his place of observation beside the trellis. He had not been there long, when she actually came up to it, singing the same melancholy strains; and then she stopped to call, "Lucia! Orsola! Lucia! Orsola!" till the woods rang again. Then she seemed to get weary with calling, and she leant against the trellis.

"Ha! she'll soon put her head through now," chuckled Luxehale. And so she did, [297] sure enough; and no sooner did her head appear on the other side than he twisted his coils round her and dragged her down under the earth.

Before she recovered herself he once more appeared as a handsome cavalier.

It was Regina, the youngest and best-conducted of the sisters.

"Let me go! let me go!" she cried, refusing to look at him.

"I thought I heard you calling for your sisters," he replied, soothingly; "don't you want to see them?"

"Oh, yes! tell me where they are."

"I can't tell you where they are," he answered; "and if I did, it would be of no use, because you would not know the way to where they are. But if you come with me, it is possible we may be able to hear something about them some day. One thing is certain, no one else is so likely to be able to hear of them as I."

Regina was terribly perplexed, something within her said she ought not to speak to the stranger gallant. "And yet, on the other hand, if, by going with him, I can do any thing to recover my dear sisters," she thought, "I ought to risk something for that."

When he saw her hesitate, he knew his affair was won; and, indeed, it required little persuasion to decide her now. As they went along he said so many soft and [298] flattering things as to make her forget insensibly about her sisters. But when they got to the palace there were such a number of beautiful things to occupy her attention, so much to astonish her—a poor peasant maid who had never seen any of these fine things before—that she soon got habituated to her new life, and the fact of her having come for her sisters' sake went quite out of her remembrance.

Luxehale was delighted to have brought things so far; and in proportion to the difficulty he had had in winning her, was the satisfaction he felt in being with her; thus he spent a longer time with her than he had with either of the other sisters. But the time came at last when he had to go upon earth about his business; and then he gave her the same charge as the others about the keys and the adamant door, and the rose which was not to fade till his return.

It was not many days either before the desire to see what was hid behind it took possession of her; but as she approached it she already perceived that the air that came from it was dry and heated, and as she really regarded the rose as a token of affection, she was concerned to keep it fair and fresh, so she went back and placed it in a glass of water, and then pursued her investigation of the secret of the adamant door. [299]

She had learnt enough when she had but half opened it, and smelt the stifling fumes of sulphur which issued from the pit it guarded, and would have turned to go, but then her sisters' voices, wailing in piteous accents, met her ear.

"Lucia! Orsola!" she cried.

"Regina!" they replied; and then, courageously advancing farther by the light of the lurid flames, which burnt fitfully through the smoke, now red with a horrid glare, now ashy grey and ghastly, she descried the beloved forms of her sisters writhing and wailing, and calling on her to help them.

She promised to use all her best endeavours to release them, and, in the meantime, bid them keep up their courage as best they might, and be on the look-out to take advantage of the first chance of escape she could throw in their way. With that she returned to her apartment, replaced the rose in her bosom, and looked out for the return of Luxehale. Nor did he keep her long waiting; and when he saw the rose blooming as freshly as at the first he was delighted, and embraced her with enthusiasm. In fact, he was so smiling and well inclined that she thought she could not do better than take advantage of his good humour to carry out the plan she had already conceived.

"Do you know," she said, "I don't like the way in which your people wash my things; they dry them in a hot room. Now I've always been accustomed to dry them [300] on the grass, where the thyme grows, and then they not only get beautifully aired, but they retain a sweet scent of the wild thyme which I have always loved since the days when I was a little, little girl, and my mother used to kiss me when she put on my clean things."

"It shall be done as you like," said Luxehale. "I will order a field of thyme to be got ready immediately, and your things shall always be dried upon it. Is there nothing else, nothing more difficult, I can do for you?"

"Well, do you know," she replied—for this would not have answered her purpose at all—"do you know, I don't fancy that would be quite the same thing either; there is something peculiar about the scent of our grass and our thyme at home which is very dear to me. Wouldn't it be possible to send the things home?"

Luxehale looked undecided.

"It's the *only* thing wanted to make this beautiful place perfectly delightful," she continued.

He couldn't resist this, and promised she should do as she liked.

Regina then ordered a large box to be made, and packed a quantity of her things into it. But in the night when all slept she went down to the adamant door, and called Lucia.

Both sisters came running out. "One at a time!" she said. "Lucia has been in longest; it will be your turn next." So she took Lucia up with her, and hid her in the [301] box under the clothes, and told her what she had to do. She was to send all the linen back clean at the end of the week, and well scent it with thyme, and to fill up the vacant space with more linen, so that it might not seem to return with less in it than when it went. She told her also, if the porter who carried the box should take into his head to peep in, "all you have to say is, 'I see you!' and you will find that will cure him." Then she went to bed, and slept quietly till morning.

Early next day Luxehale called a porter to carry the box, to whom she overheard him giving secret instructions that, as soon as he had got to a good distance, he should search the box, and let him know what was in it before he sent him up to her for final orders.

Regina told him all about the situation of her father's cottage. "But," she added,

“I’ve had my eye on you a long time—you’re not a bad sort of fellow, but you’re too curious.”

“Why, I’ve never been where your worship *could* see me!” answered the porter; “I’ve always worked in the stables.”

“I can see *every where*!” replied Regina, solemnly. “I can see you in the stables as well as I can see you here, and as well as I shall be able to see you all the way you are journeying; and if an impertinent curiosity should take you to look at my clothes, I shall see you, you may be sure, and shall have you properly punished, so beware!” [302]

The porter planted the chest on his strong shoulders and walked away. He was a devil-may-care sort of fellow, and didn’t altogether believe in Regina’s power of seeing “*every where*,” and, as his master’s injunction to look into the box accorded much better with his own humour than Regina’s order to abstain from opening it, before he had got halfway he set it down on the ground, and opened it.

“I see you!” said Lucia, from within; and her voice was so like her sister’s that the fellow made no doubt it was Regina herself who really saw him as she had threatened; and, clapping the box to again in a great fright, lifted it on to his shoulders with all expedition.

“I’ve brought your daughter’s linen to be washed!” cried the porter, when he arrived at the cottage, to the father of the Devil’s wives, who was in his field “breaking” Indian corn. “I’ve got a message to carry about a hundred miles farther and shall be back by the end of the week, so please have it all ready for me to take back when I call for it.”

The good peasant gave him a glass of his best Küchelberger[78], and sent him on his way rejoicing.

He had no sooner departed than Lucia started up out of the box of linen, and hastily told her father all the story. The peasant’s hair stood on end as he listened, but they felt there was no time to be lost. All the linen Regina had sent, and all that remained in the cottage, was washed and well scented with thyme, and packed smoothly into the box for the porter to take back with him. They had hardly got it all ready when he came to the gate to ask for it. [303]

“Here you are!” said the peasant; and the porter lifted the box on to his strong shoulders, and made the best of his way home.

“What did you find when you looked into the box?” asked the Devil, the first time he could catch the porter alone.

“Oh! nothing whatever but dirty linen,” replied he, too much of a braggadocio to confess that he had been scared by a woman’s voice.

After receiving this testimony the Devil made no sort of obstacle any more to his wife sending a box home whenever she would, and as soon as she collected sufficient to justify the use of the large chest she ordered the porter to be ready over night, and then went down and called Orsola.

Orsola came quickly enough, and was packed into the linen chest as her sister had been, and with the same instructions. “Only, as I don’t mean to stay here much longer behind, there is no reason why we should lose all our best linen, so don’t send a great deal back this time, but fill up the box with celery, of which Luxehale is very fond.”

The porter, feeling somewhat ashamed of his pusillanimity on the last occasion, determined this time to have a good look into the box, for the effect of his fright had worn off, and he said to himself, “It was only a foolish fancy—I couldn’t really have heard it.” [304]

So he had hardly got half way when he set the box down, and lifted the lid.

“I see you!” exclaimed Orsola, in a voice so like Regina’s that the lid slipped out of his hand, and fell upon the box with a crash which startled Orsola herself. He loaded the box on his shoulders once more, nor stopped again till he reached his destination.

Hearty was the greeting of the two sisters and their father as soon as he was gone; and then they set to work to get the washing done.

“The weather has been so bad,” said the father, when the porter returned, “that we could not dry all the linen, please to say to your mistress, but we hope to have it ready to go back with next week’s; beg her acceptance, however, of the celery

which I have packed into the box in its place."

"Did you look into the box this time?" said Luxehale, as soon as he got the porter alone.

The porter did not like to acknowledge that he had been scared by a woman, and so declared again that there was nothing in the box but linen.

It was more difficult to arrange for her own escape, but Regina had a plan for all. The box had now gone backwards and forwards often enough for the porter to need no fresh directions, so she told him over-night where he would find it in the morning; and he, finding it seem all as usual, loaded it on his shoulders, and walked off with it by the usual path. [305]

He had not performed half the journey when he determined to have a serious look into the box this time, and be scared by no one. Accordingly he lifted the lid, but this time the words,—

"I see you!" came out of the box so unmistakably in Regina's voice, that there was no room for doubt of her power of seeing him, and with more haste than ever he closed it up again, and made the best of his way to the peasant's cottage.

Both sisters and their father greeted Regina as their good angel and deliverer when she stepped out of the box; and they went on talking over all their adventures with no need to make haste, for Regina had brought away with her money and jewels enough to make them rich for the rest of their lives, so that they had no need to work any more at all.

When the porter returned to ask for the linen-chest, the peasant came out with a humorous smile, and bid him tell his master that they had not time to do the washing that week.

"But what shall I tell my mistress?" asked the man. [306]

As he said so, Regina and her sisters came into the room, striking him dumb with astonishment.

"No, you had better not go back to him," she said, compassionating him for the treatment that would have awaited him, had he returned without her; "Luxehale would doubtless vent his fury on you for my absence. Better to stay here and serve us; and you need not fear his power as long as you keep out of his territory."

After this, Luxehale determined to give up young and pretty wives, since they proved sharp enough to outwit him, as he had before given up rich and titled ones, who were like to have knights and princes to deliver them.

This time he said he would look out for a bustling woman of good common sense, who had been knocked about in the world long enough to know the value of what he had to offer her.

So he went out into the town of Trient, and fixed upon a buxom woman of the middle class, who was just in her first mourning for her husband, and mourned him not because she cared for him, for he had been a bad man, and constantly quarrelled with her, but because, now he was dead, she had no one to provide for her, and after a life of comparative comfort, she saw penury and starvation staring her in the face.

He met her walking in the olive-yard upon the hill whence her husband's chief means had been derived. "And to think that all these fine trees, our fruitful *arativo*, and our bright green *prativo*[79], are to be sold to pay those rascally creditors of my brute of a husband!" she mused as she sat upon the rising ground, and cried. "If he had nothing to leave me, why did he go off in that cowardly way, and leave me here? what is the use of living, if one has nothing to live upon?" [307]

The Devil overheard her, and perceived she was just in the mood for his purpose, but took care to appear to have heard nothing.

"And are you still charitably mourning because the Devil has taken your tyrant of a husband?"

"Not because he has taken him, but because he didn't take me too, at the same time!" answered the woman, pettishly.

"What! did you love the old churl as much as all that?" asked Luxehale.

“Love him! what put *that* into your head? But I didn’t want to be left here to starve, I suppose.”

“Come along with me then, and you shan’t starve. You shall have a jollier time of it than with the old fool who is dead—plenty to eat and drink, and no lack, and no work!”

“That’s not a bad proposition, certainly; but, pray, who are you?” [308]

“I am he who you regretted just now had not taken you. I *will* take you, if you wish, and make you my wife.”

“*You* the Devil!” exclaimed the woman, eyeing the handsome person he had assumed from head to foot; “impossible, you can’t be the Devil!”

“You see the Devil’s not so black as he’s painted,” replied Luxehale. “Believe me that is all stuff, invented by designing knaves to deceive silly people. You can see for yourself if I don’t look, by a long way, handsomer and taller than your departed spouse, at all events.”

“There’s no saying nay to *that*,” responded the widow.

“Nor to my other proposition either,” urged Luxehale; and, as he found she ceased to make any resistance, he took her up in his arms, and, spreading his great bat’s wings, carried her down to his palace, where he installed her as lady and mistress, much to her own satisfaction.

As she was fond of luxury and ease, and had met with little of it before, the life in the Devil’s palace suited her uncommonly well, and yet, though she had every thing her own way, her bad temper frequently found subject for quarrel and complaint.

It was on one occasion when her temper had thus been ruffled, and she had had an angry dispute with Luxehale, who to avoid her wrangling had gone off in a sullen [309] mood to bed, that some one knocked at the door. All the servants were gone to bed, so she got up, and asked who was there.

“I, Pangrazio Clamer of Trient,” said a somewhat tremulous voice.

“Pangrazio Clamer of Trient!” returned the widow; “come in, and welcome. But how did you get here?”

“It’s a longish story; but, first, how did *you* get here, and installed here too, it seems? Ah, Giuseppa, you had better have married me!”

“I’ve forbidden you to talk of that,” answered Giuseppa. “Besides, I had not better have married you, for I have married a great prince, who is able to keep me in every kind of luxury, and give me every thing I can wish. You couldn’t have done that.”

“No, indeed,” he sighed.

“Well, don’t let’s talk any more about that. Tell me how every one is going on in Trient.”

“By-and-by, if there is time. But, first, let me tell you about myself, and what brought me here. That’s strange enough.”

“Well, what was it, then?”

“You know that you refused to have me, because I was poor——”

“I have already forbidden you to allude to that subject.”

“You must know, then, that though I worked so hard to try and make myself rich enough to please you, I only got poorer and poorer; while at the same time, there [310] was Eligio Righi, who, though his father left him a good fortune to begin with, kept on getting richer and richer, till he had bought up all the mines and all the olive-grounds, and all the vineyards and mulberry-trees that were to be sold for miles round—yours among the rest.”

“That too?”

“Yes; and I often felt tempted to envy him, but I never did. One day he came to me while I was hard at work, and said, ‘You know, Pangrazio Clamer, that I am very rich;’ and I thought he didn’t need to have come and said that to me, who had all the labour in life to keep off envying him, as it was. ‘Pangrazio,’ says he, ‘I am not only rich, but I have every thing I can wish, but one thing; and if I meet any one

who will do that one thing, I will take him to share my riches while I live, and make him my heir at my death. I come first to ask you.' 'Tell me what it is,' says I; 'I can't work harder, or fare worse, than I do now, whatever it may be—so I'm your man.' 'Well, then, it's this,' he continued. 'My one great unfulfilled wish through life has been to give the Devil three good kicks, as some punishment for all the mischief he does in the world; but I have never had the courage to make the attempt, and now I have got old, and past the strength for adventures, so if you [311] will do this in my stead, I will put you in my shoes as far as my money is concerned.' Of course, I answered I would set out directly; and, as he had made the road by which men get hither his study, for this very purpose, all through his life, he could give me very exact directions for finding the Devil's abode.

"But, to get here, I had to traverse the lands of three different sovereigns; and, as I had to go to them to get my passport properly in order, they learned my destination, and each gave me a commission on his own account, which I accepted, because if I should fail with Eligio Righi's affair, I should have a chance of the rewards they promised me to fall back on."

"And what were these three commissions?"

"The first king wants to know why the fountain which supplied all his country with such beautiful bright water has suddenly ceased to flow. The second king wants a remedy for the malady of his only son, who lies at the point of death, and no physician knows what ails him. And the third king wants to know why all the trees in his dominions bear such splendid foliage, but bring forth no fruit."

"And you expect me to help you in all this?" said the Devil's wife.

"Well, for our old acquaintance' sake, and the bond of our common home," said Clamer, "you might do that; and for the sake of the nearer bond that *might* have [312] united us."

"I would have refused you all you ask, to punish you for going back to that story," said Giuseppa, "but I really desire to see old Luxehale get a good drubbing, just now, for he has been very tiresome to-day. I daren't give it him myself, but I'll help you to do it, if you have a mind."

"Never mind the motive, provided you give me the help," replied Clamer. "And will you help me to trick him out of the answers for the three kings, as well as to give him a good drubbing?"

"That will I; for it will be good fun to counter-act some of his mischief."

"How shall we set about it then?"

"I am just going to bed; he is asleep already. You must conceal yourself in the curtains, and bring a big stick with you; and when I make a sign, you must, without a moment's notice, set to and give it him. Will that do for you?"

"Admirably! Only, remember, I have to do it three times, or I shan't get my guerdon."

"And do you think you are certain of getting all Eligio Righi's fortune?" said Giuseppa, earnestly.

"Oh, as sure as fate!" replied Clamer; "he's a man who never goes back from his word. But I must fulfil all he says with equal exactness."

"And when I've helped you with half your labour, I don't see why I shouldn't have [313] half your guerdon."

"Nor I! You'll always find me faithful and true; and what I offered you when I was poor, I offer you with equal heartiness when I have the prospect of being the richest man in Trient."

"When you have done all you have to do, then, will you take me back with you?"

"Nothing would make me happier than your consent to come with me. And when I'm rich enough to be well fed and clothed, you'll find I'm not such a bad-looking fellow, after all."

"Ah, you'll never be so handsome as Luxehale! But then I don't half trust him. One never knows what trick he may take into his head to play one. I think I should have more confidence of being able to manage you."

"Then it's agreed; you come back with me?"

"Yes; I believe it's the best thing, after all. And now we must make haste and set

about our business."

She crept up-stairs with soft steps, and Clamer still more softly after her. The Devil was sleeping soundly, and snoring like the roar of a wild beast. Giuseppa stowed Clamer away in the curtains, and went to bed too. When she heard what she reckoned one of the soundest snores, she lifted the bed-curtains, and whispered, "Now's your time!"

Clamer did not wait to be told twice, but raised his stick, and, as Giuseppa lifted [314]
the bed-clothes, applied it in the right place, with a hearty good will.

Luxehale woke with a roar of pain, and Clamer disappeared behind the curtains.

"Forgive me, dear lord!" said Giuseppa; "I had such a strange dream, that it woke me all of a start, and I suppose made me knock you."

"What did you dream about?" said Luxehale, thinking to catch her at fault; but Giuseppa had her answer ready.

"I thought I was travelling through a country where all the people were panting for want of water, and as I passed along, they all gathered round me, and desired me to tell them, what had stopped their water from flowing, saying, 'You are the Devil's wife, so you must know!' and when I couldn't tell them, they threw stones at me, so that I seemed to have a hard matter to escape from them."

The Devil burst out into a loud laugh, which absorbed all his ill-humour, as he heard this story, and Giuseppa made a sign to Clamer to pay attention to what was to follow.

"You see, you never tell me any thing," she continued, pretending to cry; "I never know any thing about your business, and, you see, all those people expected I knew every thing my husband knew, as other wives do." [315]

"I didn't suppose you'd care to know any thing about it," replied Luxehale, trying to soothe her; "and really there was nothing to tell! It's an every-day matter. There was a pilgrimage chapel near the city, to which the people used to go in procession every year; and as long as they did that, I never could get past to get at the fountains. But now they have left off the procession, and so I got by, and had the fun of stopping the water."

Clamer winked to Giuseppa, to show he understood what the remedy was, and Giuseppa said no more, so that the Devil very soon fell off to sleep again.

When he began to snore again very soundly, she lifted the bed-clothes, and made the agreed sign to Clamer. Clamer came forward, and applied his stick with a hearty will in the right place, and the Devil woke with a shout of fury.

"Oh, my dear husband!" cried Giuseppa, deprecating his wrath by her tone of alarm; "I have had another dreadful dream!"

"What was it?" growled the Devil.

"I thought I was going through a great city where all the people were in sorrow, and sat with ashes on their heads. And when they saw me pass, they said they sat so because the king's son was at the point of death, and no one could tell what ailed him, and all the doctors were of no use; but that as I was the Devil's wife, I must know all about it. When I couldn't tell them, they began pelting me; as they [316]
kept putting fresh ashes on their heads each had a pan of fire by his side, in which they were making, and they actually took the red-hot cinders out of the pan of fire to pelt me with, and my clothes were all on fire; so you may believe if I tried to run away fast—and it is no wonder if I knocked you a little."

The Devil's fancy was more tickled than before with this story, and he laughed fit to split his sides, as she proceeded, so that he forgot all about the beating.

"It is all very well for you to lie there and laugh, but you wouldn't have laughed if you had been treated as I was, I can tell you!" sobbed Giuseppa. "And it's all because you never tell me any thing, as other husbands do."

"Bosh!" answered the Devil; "I should have enough to do, if I told you all the stories like that! Why, it's the commonest thing in the world. That king's son was a good young man, obedient to all the advice of his elders. But after a time he got with bad companions, who introduced him to some of my people. After they had played him a number of tricks, one day one of them took into his head to give him a stunning good illness, to punish him for some luck he had had against them at cards. And that's the history of that—there's nothing commoner in life."

Giuseppa made a sign to know if Clamer had heard all he wanted to know, and, finding he was satisfied, let the Devil go to sleep again. [317]

As soon as he began to snore very soundly, Giuseppa lifted the bed-clothes, and Clamer once more applied his stick. Whether by getting used to the work and therefore less nervous, he really hit him harder, or whether the previous blows had made the Devil more sensitive, he certainly woke this time in a more furious passion than ever, and with so rapid a start that it was all Clamer could do to get out of his sight in time.

“What have you been dreaming now?” he exclaimed, in his most fearful voice. “I declare, I can scarcely keep my hands off you!”

“Don’t be angry,” answered Giuseppa; “it is I who have had the worst of it. I dreamt I was passing through a country where the trees had given up bearing fruit; and when the people saw me go by, they all came round me, and said, as I was the Devil’s wife, I must know what ailed their trees; and when I couldn’t tell them, they cut down great branches, and ran after me, poking the sharp, rough points into my sides! You may believe if I tried to run away fast.”

The Devil had never had such a laugh since he had been a devil, as at this story, and the whole palace echoed with his merriment.

When Giuseppa found him once more in such good humour, she went on,—

“And why do you do such mischievous things, and make people so savage? It isn’t fair that they don’t dare to touch you and all their ill-will falls on me.” [318]

“As it happens, it’s not my doing at all this time; at least, I didn’t go out of my way to do it for any sort of fun. It all came about in the regular way of business.”

“What do you mean?” pursued Giuseppa, who knew it was necessary to probe the matter to the bottom.

“Why, the king of that country is a regular miser. He is so afraid that any body should get any thing out of their gardens without paying the due tribute to him first, that he has built such high walls round all the orchards, and vine-gardens, and olive-yards, that no sun can get at them. And he is so stingy, he won’t pay people to dig round them and manure, and prune, and attend to the property; so how can the fruit grow? As long as he defrauds the poor people of their work, he can have no fruit. It’s not my fault at all!

“But, really, I’ve had enough of this. You’d better go and sleep somewhere else for the rest of the night, for I can’t stand being woke up any more. If you do it again, I am sure I shall strangle you—and that would be a pity! Go along, and dream somewhere else—and I hope you may get properly punished before you wake next time!”

Giuseppa desired no command so much; but pretending to cry and be much offended, she got up and went to lie down in another bed till the Devil began to snore soundly again. Then she rose up, and, taking all her fine clothes and jewels, went out softly, and beckoned to Clamer to follow her. [319]

“Suppose the Devil wakes before we get far away?” said Clamer, beginning to get frightened as the time of trial approached.

“Never fear!” answered Giuseppa; “when he gets disturbed like that, he sleeps for a week after it.”

Then she clapped her hands, and a number of great birds came flapping round. She helped Clamer on to the back of one, and, loading her jewels on to another, sprang on to a third, and away they flew, while she beckoned to three more to follow behind.

When they came to the first kingdom, Clamer left the strange *cortége* behind a mountain, and went alone up to the court, to tell the king he was a miser, and that if he gave up his sordid ways and set the people, who were starving for want of work, to pull down half the height of his walls, and to dig, manure, and prune his trees, he would have as good a crop of fruit as any in the world. Then the king acknowledged his fault, and praised Clamer for pointing it out, and gave him a great bag of gold as his reward.

Clamer packed the sack of gold on to the back of one of the birds which were following them, and away they sped again. When they arrived at the second kingdom, Clamer hid his *cortége* in a pine forest, and went alone to the court, to tell the king that if his son would give up his bad companions, and live according to the advice of his elders, he would be all well again as before. The prince was [320]

very much astonished to find that Clamer knew about his bad behaviour, for he had concealed it from his parents and all about him, but this convinced him that he must be right in what he said, so he promised to alter his life and behave according to the wise counsel of his elders in future. From that moment he began to get better; and the king, in joy at his restoration, gave Clamer a great sack of gold, which he laded on to the back of the second bird; and away they flew again.

When they arrived at the third kingdom, Clamer hid his retinue in the bed of a dried lake and went alone to the court, to tell the king that if he would order the procession to the pilgrimage chapel to be resumed, the Devil would not be able to get in to stop the fountains. The king at once ordered the grandest procession that had ever been known in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and all the people went out devoutly praying. Immediately the springs and fountains began to flow again; and the king was so pleased that he gave Clamer a great sack of gold, which he packed on to the back of the third bird; and away they flew again, till they [321]
reached the gloomy shades of the Val d'Ombretta, under the cold, steep precipices of the Marmolata[80].

"Here will be a good place to hide all this treasure," said Giuseppa; "it will never do to take it into Trient all at once. We will bury it here where foot of man seldom falls, and my birds will keep good watch over it and defend it, and yet by their services we shall be able to fetch down any portion of it as we want it."

Clamer saw there was some good in the proposal, but he hardly liked giving up the possession of the treasure to Giuseppa's birds, neither did he like to show any want of confidence.

"Don't you think it an excellent plan?" asked Giuseppa, as she saw him hesitate.

"I think I could stow it away as safely in an old well at home," said Clamer. "This is an uncanny place of evil renown, and I had just as lief have nothing to do with it."

"What's the matter with the place?" asked Giuseppa.

"Oh, you know, the Marmolata was as fertile as any pasture of Tirol once," answered Clamer; "and because the people had such fine returns for their labour [322]
from it, they grew careless and impious, and were not satisfied with all the week for working in it, but must needs be at it on Sundays and holidays as well. One Sunday an ancient man came by and chid them for their profanity. 'Go along with your old wives' stories!' said a rich proprietor who was directing the labourers; 'Sunday and working-day is all alike to us. We have sun and rain and a fine soil, what do we want with going to church to pray?' And they sang,—

'Nos ongh el fengh en te tablà,
E i autri sul prà[81]!'

"The old man lifted up his finger in warning, and passed on his way; but as he went it came on to snow. And it snowed on till it had covered all the ground; covered all the hay up to the top; covered over the heads of the labourers and their masters; snowed so deep that the sun has never been able to melt it away again! A curse is on the place, and I had rather have nothing to do with it."

"Oh, I've lived long enough where curses abound to care very little about them," answered Giuseppa, "or I could tell you the real story about that, for you've only got the wrong end of it. But it doesn't do to think of those things. The only way is to laugh at all that sort of thing, and make yourself jolly while you can." [323]

"My story's the right one," replied Clamer, "and you won't laugh me out of believing it."

"Oh, dear no; the right story is much more serious than that! But I lose my patience with people who trouble themselves about those things."

"I don't believe there's any more of the story," continued Clamer, who was dying to hear it, and knew that the best way to get at it was by provoking her. Had he merely begged her to tell it, she would have found a perverse pleasure in disappointing him.

Giuseppa was very easily provoked. "The right story proves itself," she cried, pettishly; and Clamer chuckled aside to see his plan succeed. "Your way of telling it only accounts for the snow; how do you account for the ice?"

"Oh, there's no way of accounting for *that*," replied Clamer, with a malicious laugh.

"Yes, there is," rejoined Giuseppa, fairly caught. "It wasn't an old man at all who came to give the warning. It was a very young man, for it was no one else but St.

John.”

“St. John!” cried Clamer; “how could that be?”

“Don’t you know any thing, then?” retorted Giuseppa. “Don’t you know that there was a time when our Lord and His Apostles went walking over the earth, preaching the Gospel?” [324]

“Yes, of course I know *that*,” replied Clamer, much offended.

“Well, then, in process of travelling they came here just the same as every where else—why shouldn’t they? The Apostles had been sent on to prepare a lodging for the night, and St. John, being the youngest and best walker, outstripped the rest, and came by first. But he was so soft and gentle in his warning that the labourers laughed at him, and he went on his way sighing, for he saw that their hearts were hardened.

“Then St. Peter and St. Paul came by——”

“But St. Paul—” interposed Clamer.

“Don’t interrupt, but listen,” said Giuseppa. “St. Peter and St. Paul, though not younger than the others like St. John, were always in the front in all matters, because of their eagerness and zeal, and the important post which was assigned them in the Church. They came next, therefore; but they, seeing the men working on Sunday, were filled with indignation, and chid them so fiercely that they only made them angry, and they took up stones to throw at them, and drove them out of the ground. One by one the other Apostles all came by and warned them, but none of them seemed to have the right way of getting at their hearts. And they went on working, with a worse sin on them for having been warned.

“Last of all, the Lord Himself came by, and His heart was moved with compassion by the perversity of the people. He saw that all the preaching of all His Apostles had been in vain, and He resolved to save them in another way, and prove them, to see if there was any charity or any good in them at all. [325]

“Instead of threatening and warning, He came leaning on His staff, weary and way-sore.

“‘You have a fine Berg-Segen[82], my friends,’ He said, sweetly, as He sat on a great heap of fresh hay placed ready to load the returning wain.

“‘Oh, yes! first-rate crops,’ replied the rich proprietor, with a look of contempt at the travel-stained garments of the wayfarer; ‘but they’re not meant to serve as beds for idle fellows who go prowling about the country and live by begging instead of by work, so you just get up and take yourself off!’

“Our Lord looked at him with a piteous glance, but his heart was not softened. ‘Move off quicker than that, or you’ll taste my stick!’ he cried, assuming a threatening attitude.

“Our Lord passed on, without uttering a word of complaint, till He reached the holding of the next proprietor.

“‘Where there are such fine pastures there must be fine cattle and a fine store of produce,’ He said.

“‘Oh, yes, I’ve plenty of stores!’ said the man addressed; ‘and that’s just why I don’t like to have loafing vagabonds about my place; so please to move on quicker than you came.’ [326]

“‘But I’m weary, my good man, and have come a long journey this day, and have nothing to eat: give me, now, but one sup of milk from your bountiful provision there.’

“‘Give!’ answered the man; ‘I’ve nothing to give away. I work hard for all I gain, and I don’t encourage those who don’t work.’

“‘But you won’t miss the little I ask—and I have travelled very far and am very weary,’ replied our Lord, condescending to speak very piteously, to see if He could not by any means move the man’s heart.

“‘Hola! you there! Domenico, Virgilio, Giacomo, Rocco, Pero! come along here, and throw this fellow out!’ shouted the proprietor.

“The men turned with their pitchforks, and drove the wayfarer rudely away, without pity, notwithstanding that His legs trembled with weariness and the way was so steep.

“Our Lord uttered not a word, and hasted on, that He might not increase their condemnation by resistance.

“But the heavens grew black with anger at the sight; the storm-clouds gathered in vengeance; grey and leaden, mass above mass, they thickened over the devoted peak of the Marmolata; the sun ceased to smile, and a horrible darkness fell around.

“Closer and closer lowered the clouds, till they fell, enveloping the mountain-top [327] with white fields of snow.

“‘Nay!’ cried the Saviour, compassionately; ‘Father, stay Thine hand!’ And for a moment the convulsion of the angry element was stilled. ‘They knew not what they did,’ He pleaded; and He passed down the path to the next holding.

“‘See,’ He said to the proprietor, who was watching the strange storm with some alarm, ‘see how terrible are the judgments of God! Give Him praise for the blessing He has poured out on you, and save yourself from His anger.’

“‘What have I to do with the misfortunes of others? Every thing goes right with me.’

“‘But it may not always. Be wise betimes, and render praise to God.’

“‘What do I know about God?’ answered the man; ‘I’ve enough to do with taking care of the earth; I don’t want to puzzle my head about heaven!’

“‘All good gifts are from heaven.’ replied the Lord, faintly; and He sank upon the ground exhausted.

“‘See!’ cried a woman who had come out with her husband’s dinner, ‘see, He has fallen; will you do nothing to restore Him?’ And she ran to raise Him up.

“‘Let Him lie.’ said her master, pushing her roughly away; ‘it were better the earth were rid of such idle fellows.’

“He had filled up the measure of his iniquity. ’Hard and icy as his heart has been, [328] so shall his pasture be!’ proclaimed the Angel of Judgment. And as he spread his arms abroad, the clouds fell over the sides of the mountain; the cold blast turned them into ice, and it became a barren glacier for evermore.

“But the angels carried the Lord to the place the Apostles had prepared for Him. And the woman who had pitied Him alone escaped and recorded the story.”

A shudder had fallen over Clamer, and he seemed hardly inclined to break the silence which reigned around. There was not a bird to chirp a note, nor a leaf to flutter, nor a blade of grass to gladden the eye. Meantime they had reached the Fassathal, which, though so fruitful farther along, is scarcely more smiling at its east end.

“Were it not well, Pangrazio,” urged Giuseppa, “to bury our treasure *here*, before we get nearer the habitations of men? Ah!” she added, “I see what it is, it is not of the weird neighbourhood that you are shy, it is that you trust not me! you think if my birds guard the treasure you will have less control over it than I!”

“Oh, no!” answered Clamer, ashamed to have been found out; “it is not that; but there are as many weird warnings rife here as concerning the Marmolata. Does not the Feuriger Verräther[83] haunt this place? and does not the Purgametsch [329] conceal a village which was buried for its sins? Is it not just here that lurk the Angane and the Bergostanö[84]?”

“Really, I can undertake to defend you against all these chimerical fancies,” replied Giuseppa, scornfully; “but if you don’t feel any confidence in me, it is absurd our attempting to live together.”

“It is not that—I have told you it is not that!” cried Clamer.

“Then shall we do it?” urged she. Thus driven, Clamer could not choose but give in; and Giuseppa sent her monster birds to conceal the treasure they bore, in the hole she pointed out high up in the rocks, and remain in guard over it.

This done they sped over the pleasant *Fleimserthal* and Cembrathal to Trient.

Eligio Righi received his returning envoy with a hearty welcome, and listened without wearying to his frequent repetition of the tale of his adventures. The part where he described the manner in which he had administered the chastisement on the Devil was what delighted him most, and the account of the roaring of the Devil with the pain.

Moreover, he kept his word, and opened his house and his purse to Clamer, who shared every thing as if it had been his own, and even obtained his sanction to [330] bring home his wife, though he durst not tell him how he obtained her.

Giuseppa had now not only a fine house and broad lands, and plenty of servants and clothes, and every thing she wished for, but she had only to send one of her birds to the treasury in the Fassathal to supply all her caprices as well as wants—yet she was always complaining and quarrelling. Pangrazio often found her quite unbearable; but he remembered she was his wife, and he forgave her, though the more he gave in, the more unreasonable she got.

In the meantime, it must not be supposed that Luxehale had never awaked. True, he slept on for a good week, as Giuseppa had predicted, but that over, he woke up in a pretty passion at finding she had escaped.

With all her evil temper, Giuseppa had suited him very well; he rather enjoyed an occasional broil, it was much more to his taste than peace and amity—and besides, he was sure always to get the best of it. So he determined that this time, instead of going in search of a new wife, he would get the old one back.

“Those who come to me in the way she did,” he reflected, “don’t escape so easily. The others I more or less deceived. They came with me thinking I was one of their own sort; but she followed me with her eyes open—she knew all about me before she came. Besides, they hated the place the moment they found out where they [331] were, but she knew what it was, and yet liked it all along. No, I don’t think she’s of the sort that go back in thorough earnest.”

So he dressed himself up in his best, put a plume in his hat and a flower in his button-hole, and went off to Trient. He had not watched the house where Giuseppa lived many days before he heard her voice raised to that angry key he knew so well.

“That’ll do for me,” he said, rubbing his hands. “It’s all going on right.”

“What do you want more?” he heard Clamer plead. “If there is any thing I can do to please you, I will do it!”

“You are a fool! and there’s nothing in you *can* please me,” screamed Giuseppa, too angry to be pacified; “you’re not like Luxehale. Why did you ever take me away from him? *He* was something to look at!”

“It’s going on all right!” said Luxehale, chuckling.

“Why did you come away?” said Pangrazio, quietly.

“I didn’t know what I was about! Would that I had never done it!” she added.

“Oh, don’t say that!” replied Pangrazio, imploringly. But instead of being won by his kindness she only grew the more noisy, till at last Pangrazio could stand it no [332] longer, and he went out to avoid growing angry.

“Now is my time!” said the Devil; and he slipped round to the window. Giuseppa was still fretting and fuming, and invoking Luxehale at the top of her voice.

“Here I am!” said Luxehale. “Will you come back with me, and leave this stupid loafer?”

“What *you* there!” cried Giuseppa, rushing to the window, and kissing him. “Of course I’ll go with you. Take me away!”

“All right; jump down!” said Luxehale, helping her over the window-sill. Giuseppa threw herself into his arms, and away they walked. Arrived outside the town, Luxehale lifted her up, spread his black bat’s wings, and carried her off.

“Go through the *Fleimserthal* and the Fassathal,” said Giuseppa; “I’ve got something to show you there.”

“Any thing to please you!” answered Luxehale.

“Oh, it’s not to please *me*!” cried Giuseppa, taking offence.

“Now don’t begin again; it won’t do with me!” replied Luxehale, with a sternness he had never before exercised. “Mind, I don’t mean to allow any more of it.”

“Oh, if that’s to be it,” said Giuseppa, “I’ll go back again to Pangrazio.”

“No, you won’t!” replied Luxehale; “you don’t go back any more, I’ll take good [333]

care of that! And now, what did you want to come by the Fassathal for?”

“Only because it’s the way I passed with Pangrazio, and it renewed a sweet memory of him.”

“That won’t do for me! What was the real reason?”

“What will you give me if I tell you?”

“Nothing. But if you *don’t* tell me, I shall know how to make you.”

Giuseppa’s courage failed her when she heard him talk like this. She knew she had given herself to him of her own will, and so she belonged to him, and she could not help herself; and now, the best course she could think of was to tell him of the treasure, and trust to the good humour it would put him in, for he was very avaricious, to get her forgiveness out of him.

Clamer came back from a walk outside the town—where he had gone to get cool after his wife’s scolding—just in time to see Luxehale spread his wings and fly away with Giuseppa in his arms. He called to her, but she did not hear him; and all he could do was to stand watching them till they were out of sight.

He came back so gloomy and dejected that his friend Eligio Righi was quite distressed to see him. He was so sympathizing, indeed, that Pangrazio could not [334] forbear telling him the whole story. “Then, if that is so, you need not regret being quit of her,” moralized his sage friend: “she was no wife for an honest man. And as for the treasure, you have enough without that. It was but ill-gotten gain which came to you for knowledge obtained from such a source.” [335]

[Contents]

ZOVANIN SENZA PAURA[85];
OR,
THE BOY WHO WENT OUT TO DISCOVER WHAT FEAR MEANT.

Zovanin was a bold boy, and never seemed to be afraid of any thing. When other children were afraid lest Orco[86] should play them some of his malicious tricks, when people cried out to him, “Take care, and don’t walk in those footprints, they may be those of Orco!” he would only laugh, and say, “Let Orco come; I should like to see him!” When he was sent out upon the mountains with the herds, and had to be alone with them through the dark nights, and his mother bid him not be afraid, [336] he used to stare at her with his great round eyes as if he wondered what she meant. If a lamb or a goat strayed over a difficult precipice, and the neighbours cried out to him, “Let be; it is not safe to go after it down that steep place,” he would seem to think they were making game of him, and would swing himself over the steep as firmly and as steadily as if he were merely bestriding a hedge. He saw people shun passing through the churchyards by dark, and so he used to make it his habit to sleep every night on the graves; and as they said they were afraid of being struck blind if they slept in the moonlight, he would always choose to lie where the moonbeams fell. Nor thunder, nor avalanche, nor fire, nor flood, nor storm seemed to have any terror for him; so that at last people set him to do every kind of thing they were afraid to do themselves, and he got so much wondered at, that he said, “I will go abroad over the world, and see if I can find any where this same Fear that I hear people talk of.”

So he went out, and walked along by the most desolate paths and through frightful stony wildernesses, till he came to a village where there was a fair going on. Zovanin was too tired to care much for the dance, so instead of joining it he asked for a bed.

Zovanin and the Maniac.—*Page* 337.

"A bed!" said the host; "that's what I can give you least of all. My beds are for regular customers, and not for strollers who drop down from the skies;" for, being [337] full of business at the moment, he was uppish and haughty, as if his day's prosperity was to last for ever.

While Zovanin was urging that his money was as good as another's, and the host growing more and more insolent while repeating that he could not receive him, a terrific shouting of men, and screeching of women made itself heard, and pell-mell the whole tribe of peasants, pedlars, and showmen came rushing towards the inn, flying helter-skelter before a furious and gigantic maniac brandishing a formidable club. Every one ran for dear life, seeking what shelter they could find. The inn was filled to overflowing in a trice, and those who could not find entrance there hid themselves in the stables and pig-styes and cellars. But no one was in so great a hurry to hide himself as mine host, who had been so loud with his blustering to a defenceless stranger anon. Only, when he saw the baffled madman breaking in his doors and windows with his massive oaken staff, he put his head dolefully out of the topmost window, and piteously entreated *some one* to put a stop to the havoc.

Zovanin was not quick-witted: all this noisy scene had been transacted and it had not yet occurred to him to move from the spot where he originally stood; in fact, he had hardly apprehended what it was that was taking place, only at last the [338] host's vehement gesticulations suggested to him that he wanted the madman arrested.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Zovanin. "All right, I'm your man!" and walking up coolly to the cause of all this disturbance, he said, in the tone of one who meant to be obeyed, "Give me your club."

The poor imbecile was usually harmless enough; he lived in an out-of-the-way hut with his family, where he seldom saw a stranger. They had incautiously brought him up to the *fête*, where he had first become excited by the sight of the unwonted number of people; then some thoughtless youths had further provoked him by mocking and laughing at him; and when the people ran away in fear of his retaliation, he had only yielded to a natural impulse in running after them. But when Zovanin stood before him, fearless and collected, and said, in his blunt, quiet way, "Give me your club," his habitual obedience prevailed over the momentary

ebullition, and he yielded himself up peaceably to the guidance of the young giant. Zovanin first secured the club, and then desired the madman to bestow himself in an empty shed, of which he closed and made fast the door. When the landlord and people saw the coast clear they all came out again, the latter losing no time in going back to their games, the former to resume his preparations for the entertainment of his guests.

"Well," said Zovanin, "I suppose *now* you'll make no difficulty in providing me a [339]
bed? I think that's the least you can do for me, after my befriending you as I have. I have earned it, if any one has."

"What! you think that such a great feat, do you?" said the landlord, who, deeming the madman well secured, felt no compunction in disowning Johnny's service. "Do you suppose any other couldn't have said, 'Give me your club,' just as well as you?"

"Perhaps you would like to try," replied our hero; and he went to unbar the shed-door.

"For heaven's sake, no!" screamed the cowardly landlord, preparing to run away. "Don't let him loose on any account; I'll do *any thing* for you sooner than that!"

"Well, you know what I want; it's not much, and reasonable enough," replied Fearless Johnny, relaxing his hold of the door.

"But that's just *the one* thing I *can't* do," lamented the host. "My beds are bespoken to customers who come every year to the fair, and if I disappoint any of them I'm a ruined man."

"Very well then, here goes!" and Zovanin once more prepared to open the shed-door.

"Oh, no; stop!" roared the landlord. "Perhaps there is a way, after all."

"Ah!" ejaculated Johnny; "I thought as much."

"There is a room, in fact a whole suite of rooms, and a magnificent suite of rooms, [340]
I daren't give to any one else, but I think they will do for you, as you are such a stout-hearted chap."

"Where are they?" said Johnny.

"Do you see that castle on the tip of the high rock yonder, that looks like an eagle perched for a moment and ready to take flight?"

"I should rather think I did, seeing it's one of the most remarkable sights I have met with in all my travels."

"Well, that castle was built by a bad giant who lived here in former times; and he balanced it like that on the tip of the rock, and only he had the secret of walking into it. If any one else steps into it, they are pretty sure of stepping on the wrong place, and down will go the whole castle overbalanced into the abyss. When he was once inside it, he had an iron chain by which he made it fast to the rock; and when he went out he used to set it swinging as you see, so that no one might dare to venture in and take back possession of the booty which he seized right and left from all the country round. If you don't mind trying your luck at taking possession of the castle, you can lodge there like a prince, for there are twelve ghosts, who come there every night, who will supply you with every thing you can ask for. So there is all you desire to have, and more, provided only the idea does not strike you with fear." [341]

"Fear, say you?" said Zovanin, opening his great round eyes; "do you say I shall find 'Fear' in yonder castle?"

"Most assuredly. Every body finds it in merely listening to the story."

"Then that's what I came out to seek; so show me the way, and there I will lodge."

The host stared at his crack-brained guest, but, glad to be rid of his importunity for a night's lodging in the inn, made no delay in pointing out the path which led to the giant's castle.

Zovanin trudged along it without hesitation, nor was he long in reaching the precariously balanced edifice. Once before the entrance, he had little difficulty in seeing what was required in order to take possession. Just in the centre of the building a large stone stood up prominently, and though at a great distance from the threshold, was probably not more than a stride for the giant of old—as a further token, it was worn away at the edge, evidently where he had stepped on to

it. Zovanin saw it could be reached by a bold spring, and, having no fear of making a false step, he was able to calculate his distance without disturbance from nervousness. Having balanced himself successfully on the stone, he next set himself to fix the chain which attached his airy castle to the rock, and then made his way through its various apartments. Every thing was very clean and in good order, for the twelve ghosts came every night and put all to rights. Zovanin had [342] hardly finished making his round when in they came, all dressed in white.

“Bring me a bottle of wine, and some bread and meat, candles and cards,” said Fearless Johnny, just as if he had been giving an order to the waiter of an inn; for he remembered that the landlord had said they would supply him, and he felt no fear which should make him shrink from them.

“I wonder where this same Fear can be?” he said, as the ghosts were preparing his supper; “I have been pretty well all over the castle already, and can see nothing of him. Oh, yes! I will just go down and explore the cellars, perhaps I shall find him down there.”

“Yes; go down and choose your wine to your own taste, and you will find him there, sure enough,” said the twelve ghosts.

“Shall I, though?” said John, delighted; and down he went.

The bottles were all in order, labelled with the names of various choice vintages in such tempting variety that he was puzzled which to choose. At last, however, he stretched his hand out to reach down a bottle from a high shelf, when lo and behold a grinning skull showed itself in the place where the bottle had stood, and asked him how he dared meddle with the wine! Without being in the least disconcerted at its horrid appearance, Fearless Johnny passed the bottle into his [343] left hand, and with his right taking up the skull, flung it over his shoulder to the farthermost corner of the cellar. He had no sooner done so, however, than a long bony arm was stretched out from the same place, and made a grab at the bottle. But Fearless John caught the arm and flung it after the skull. Immediately another arm appeared, and was treated in the same way; then came a long, lanky leg, and tried to kick him on the nose, but Johnny dealt with it as with the others; then came another leg, which he sent flying into the corner too; and then the ribs and spine, till all the bones of a skeleton had severally appeared before him, and had all been cast by him on to the same shapeless heap.

Now he turned to go, but as he did so a great rattling was heard in the corner where he had thrown the bones. It was all the bones joining themselves together and forming themselves into a perfect skeleton, which came clatter-patter after him up the stairs.

Zovanin neither turned to look at it nor hurried his pace, but walked straight back, bottle in hand, into the room where the supper was laid ready, and the pack of cards by the side, as he had ordered. All the while that he was supping, the skeleton kept up a wild dance round him, trying to excite him by menacing gestures, but Fearless Johnny munched his bread and meat and drank his wine, and took no more notice than of the insects buzzing round the sconces. [344]

When he had done he called to the ghosts in the coolest way imaginable to clear away the things, and then dealt out the cards, with one hand for a “dummy” and one for himself. He had no sooner done this than the skeleton sat down, with a horrid grimace of triumph, and took up the “dummy’s” hand!

“You needn’t grin like that,” said Johnny; “you may depend on it I shouldn’t have let you take the cards if it hadn’t pleased me. If you know how to play, play on—it is much better fun than playing both hands oneself. Only, if you don’t know how to play, you leave them alone—and you had better not give me reason to turn you out.”

The skeleton, however, understood the game very well, and with alternate fortune they played and passed away the hours till it was time to go to bed. Johnny then rose and called the twelve ghosts to light him up to bed, which they did in gravest order. He had no sooner laid himself to sleep than, with a great clatter, the skeleton came in and pulled the bedclothes off him. In a great passion Fearless Johnny jumped up, and brandishing a chair over his head, threatened to break every one of his bones if he didn’t immediately lay the clothes straight again. The skeleton had no defence for his bones, and so could not choose but obey; and Johnny went quietly to bed again. [345]

“It was a pity I didn’t ask the poor fellow what ailed him, though,” said Johnny, when he was once more alone. “Perhaps he too is tormented by this ‘Fear’ that every one thinks so much of, and wanted me to help him. Ah, well, if he comes again I will ask him;” and with that he rolled himself up in the quilt, and went to

sleep again. An hour had hardly passed before the skeleton came in again, and this time he shook the bedpost so violently that he woke Johnny with a start.

“Ah! there he is again!” cried Johnny; “now I’ll ask him what he wants;” so he jumped out of bed once more, and addressed the skeleton solemnly in these words:—

“Anima terrena,
Stammi lontana tre passi,
E raccontami la tua pena[87]!”

Then the skeleton made a sign to him to follow it, and led him down to the foundations of the castle, where there was a big block of porphyry.

“Heave up that block,” said the skeleton.

“Not I!” replied Johnny; “I didn’t set it there, and so I’m not going to take it up.”

So the skeleton took up the block itself, and under it lay shining two immense jars full of gold.

“Take them, and count them out,” said the skeleton. [346]

“Not I!” said Johnny; “I didn’t heap them up, and so I’m not going to count them out.”

So the skeleton counted them out itself, and they contained ten thousand gold pieces each.

When it had done, it said, “I am the giant who built this castle. I have waited here these hundreds of years till one came fearless enough to do what you have done to-night, and now I am free, because to you I may give over the castle; so take it, for it is yours, and with it one of these jars of gold, which is enough to make you rich, but take the other jar of gold and build a church, and let them pray for me, and learn to be better men than I.”

With that he disappeared, and Fearless Johnny slept quietly for the rest of the night.

In the morning, when the sun was up, and the birds began to sing cheerily on the branches, the landlord began to feel some compunction for having abandoned such a fine young Bursch to a night by himself among the unquiet spirits; so he summoned all his courage, and all his servants, and all his neighbours, and, thus prepared, he led the way up to the haunted castle. Finding that it was firmly fixed by the chain, they all entered in a body, for none durst be the first; and the entrance, having been made for the giant, was big enough for all.

Zovanin having had such a disturbed night was still fast asleep, but their footsteps and anxious whisperings woke him. In answer to all their questionings he gave an account of what had happened to him, but still complained that, after all, he had not been able to find Fear! [347]

Zovanin was now a rich man, and had a mighty castle to live in where he might have ended his days in peace, but he was always possessed by the desire of finding out what Fear was, and this desire was too strong to let him rest.

The neighbours, however, told him he might find Fear out hunting; and many were the hunting-parties he established, and wherever the wild game was shyest, there he sought it out. Once, as he sprang over a chasm his horse made a false start, and was plunged into the abyss, but Fearless Johnny caught at the bough of a birch-tree that waved over the mountain-side. The branch cracked, and it seemed as if nothing could save him, but Fearless Johnny only swung himself on to another on the ledge below, and climbed back by its means to the path. Another time, as he was pursuing a chamois up a precipitous track, a great mass of loose rock, detached from the height above, came thundering down upon him. An ordinary hunter, scared at the sight, would have given himself up for lost, but Fearless Johnny stood quite still and let it bound over his head, and he came to no harm.

So he still was unable to find Fear. After some years, therefore, he once more went abroad to seek it. This time, however, he provided himself with a fine suit of armour and a prancing charger, and a noble figure he cut as he ambled forth. [348]

After a long journey, with many adventures, he came one hot day, as he was very thirsty, to a fountain of water in the outskirts of a town, and as he dismounted to drink he observed that the whole place looked sad and deserted; the road was grass-grown, and the houses seemed neglected and empty. As he went up to the fountain to drink, a faint voice called to him from the wayside, “Beware, and do it

not! Think you that we all should be lying here dying of thirst if you could drink at that fountain?”

Then he looked round, and saw that, as far as eye could reach, the banks of the wayside were covered with dying people heaped up one on the other, and all gazing towards the fountain!

“Know you not,” continued the weary voice, “that a terrible dragon has taken possession of all the fountains; and that the moment one goes to drink of them he appears, as though he would eat you up, so that you are bound to run away for very fear?”

“‘Fear!’” cried Zovanin; “is Fear here at last?” and he joyfully ran to the side of the well.

All the weary, dying people raised themselves as well as they could, to see what should befall him who was not afraid of the terrible dragon.

But Fearless Johnny went up to the fountain’s brim to dip his hand into the cooling [349]
flood. Before he could do so, however, the terrible dragon put his head up through the midst, with a frightful howl, and spueing fire out of his nostrils. Zovanin, instead of drawing back, instantly took out his sword and, with one blow, severed the monster’s head from the trunk! Then all the people rushed to the fountain, hailing him as their deliverer. But ere they had slaked their thirst, the dragon, which had sunk back into the depth of the water, reappeared with a new head, already full grown, and more terrible than the last, for it not only spued out fire from its nostrils, but darted living sparks from its eyes.

When the people saw this they all ran away screaming, and Zovanin was left alone; but, as usual, he did not lose heart, and with another well-aimed blow sent the second head of the monster rolling by the side of the first!

The people came back, and began to drink again when they saw the huge trunk disappear beneath the surface; but it was not many minutes before another head cropped up, more terrible than either of the preceding, for it not only spued fire from its nostrils and darted living sparks from its eyes, but it had hair and mane of flames, which waved and rolled abroad, threatening all within reach. All the people fled at the sight, and Zovanin was once more left alone with the monster. Once more he severed the terrible head; and after this the dragon was seen no more. [350]

“That must be very wonderful blood out of which three heads can spring,” thought Fearless Johnny; and he filled a vial with the dragon’s blood, and journeyed farther.

After a time he came to the outskirts of another town. It was not deserted like the last. The streets were full of people making merry—in fact, every one was so very merry that they seemed a whole community of madmen. Another might have been afraid to encounter them at all; but not so Fearless Johnny, he spurred his horse and rode right through their midst. But for all his seeming so fearless and self-possessed, the people got round him, and seized his horse’s bridle, and dragged him from the saddle.

“What do you want with me, good people?” cried Zovanin; “let me hear, before you pull me to pieces.”

When they found him so cool, spite of the wild way in which they had handled him, they began to respect him, and loosed their hold.

“If you want to know,” answered one, “it is soon told. We are all in this town wholly given up to amusement. We have done with work and toil, and do nothing but dance, and drink, and sing, and divert ourselves from morning to night. But after enjoying all this a long time, we begin to find it rather wearisome, and we are [351]
almost as tired of our pastime as we used to be of our labour. So the king has decreed that every stranger who comes by this way shall be caught, and required to find us a quite new diversion, and if he cannot do that, we will make him dance on red-hot stones, and flog him round the town, and get some fun out of him that way, at all events; as you don’t look very likely to find us a new pastime, we may as well begin with putting you on your death-dance.”

“Don’t make too sure of that!” said Fearless Johnny, not at all disconcerted; “take me to your king, and I’ll show you a diversion you never heard of before.”

When he came to the king, the king laughed, and would hardly listen to him, because he looked so broad and heavy, and not at all like one who could invent a merry game.

But Johnny protested that if they would let him cut off any one’s head, he would

stick it on just as before, and the man should be never the worse.

The king was greatly delighted with the idea, and most anxious to see the performance, promising that he would not only let him go free if he succeeded, but would load him with honours and presents into the bargain. Zovanin professed himself quite ready to prove his skill, but no one could be found who was willing to let the experiment be tried on him.

This angered the king greatly; and at last he called forward his jester, and ordered [352]
Zovanin to make the trial on him.

The jester, however, objected as much as any one else, only, as he belonged entirely to the king, he could not disobey him. “But think, your majesty,” said the poor hunchback, “what will your majesty do without his jester, if this quack does not succeed in his promises?”

“But I *shall* succeed!” thundered Fearless Johnny; and he spoke with such assurance, that the king and all the people were more desirous than ever to see the feat, and cried to him to commence. When the jester found that all hope of wriggling out of the cruel decree was vain, he threw himself on his knees, and begged so earnestly that the king would grant him two favours, that he could not resist. The two favours were, that he should have the satisfaction of repeating the trick on Johnny, if he allowed him to try his skill on him, and also that he should first give proof of what he could do on the ape, with whose pranks he was wont to amuse the king.

The king and Zovanin both agreed to the two requests, and the poor ape was brought forward, and delivered over to make the first essay.

Zovanin did not keep the breathless multitude long in suspense; with one blow he severed its head, threw it up high in the air, that all might see it was well cut off, and then placed it on again, smearing in some drops of the dragon’s blood by way [353]
of cement. The head and trunk were scarcely placed together again, with the dragon’s blood between, than the ape bounded up as well as before, and just as if nothing had been done to him; but, on the contrary, finding himself the object of great attention, and excited by the shouts of the people, he sprang and gambolled about from side to side with even greater alacrity than his wont.

“Now, Sir Hunchback!” cried Zovanin, “it is your turn. You see it’s not very bad; so come along, and no more excuses.”

“Go it, hunchback!” said the king; and all the people shouted, “The hunchback’s head! the hunchback’s head!” with such vehemence that it was evident there was no means of getting out of the trial. It was true, Zovanin had proved he *could* put a head on again; but the jester shrank from the cold steel nevertheless, and it was only with a look which concentrated all his venom that he yielded himself up. Fearless Johnny struck off his head in a trice, then threw it up high in the air, as he had done the ape’s, and then cemented it on again with the dragon’s blood as well as ever.

“Now for you!” screamed the hunchback, when he found his head back in its right place once more.

Zovanin had no fear, but sat down on the ground instantly, so that the hunchback might reach him more conveniently. “This is all you have to do,” he said: “take my [354]
sword in your two hands, and swing it round across my throat. Then pour the contents of this vial over the stump of the throat, and clap the head down on it again.”

“Yes, yes! I think I ought to know how it’s done, as well as you,” answered the dwarf, hastily; and he swung the sword round with a will, sending Johnny’s head rolling at the king’s feet. The people caught it up and handed it round; and it might soon have got lost in the crowd, but that the king shouted to them to bring it back, because he wanted to see it stuck on again. So they gave it back to the jester, and he smeared the rest of the dragon’s blood over the stump of the throat—but in putting the head on, took care to turn it the wrong way, which, as he managed to bend over Johnny’s recumbent body, no one observed till he rose to his feet. Then all the people screeched, and yelled, and shouted, so that John could not make out what was the matter, but, getting angry, demanded his horse, that he might ride away from them all.

The king ordered his horse to be brought, and Johnny sprang into the saddle, and the cries of the people made the beast start away faster even than Johnny himself wished; only Johnny could not make out why he seemed to him, for all his urging, always to go backwards.

At last, he got quite away from the shouts of the people, into a calm, quiet place,

where there was a lake shut in by high hills, which, with the mulberry-trees, and vines, and grassy slopes, were all pictured in the lake's smooth face. [355]

Zovanin was hot with his ride, and so was his mount; so he walked him into the shallow water, while he himself dismounted, and bent down to drink.

At the sight that met his gaze in the water, a shout burst from his lips more terrible than the shouts of all the people. He gazed again, and couldn't think what had befallen him; but, so horrified was he at the sight of his own back where he was wont to see his breast, that he fell down and died of fear on the spot! And thus Fear visited him at last—in a way which would certainly never have occurred, if the jester had put his head on again in the way nature designed for it. [356]

[Contents]

THE DOVE-MAIDEN.

In the days when heathenism still disputed the advance of Christianity in Tirol, there lived a nobleman in a castle, of which no trace now remains, overlooking the egg-shaped Lago di Molveno. The nobleman and his family had embraced the teaching of St. Vigilius, and were among his most pious and obedient disciples. Eligio, his eldest son, however, had two faults which led him into great trouble, as our story will show; but as he was of a good disposition, and was always desirous to make amends for his wrong-doing, he found help and favour, which kept him right in the main. His two faults were—an excess of fondness for card-playing and an inclination to think he knew better than his elders, which led him to go counter to good advice.

It so happened that whenever he played at cards he always won; and this made it such a pleasure that he could not be persuaded to leave it off, though he knew he was wasting all the time he ought to have devoted to more manly pursuits. Nor [357] was there for a long time any lack of people to play with him, for every one said his luck must turn at last, and each thought he should be the fortunate person in whose favour this would happen. But when at last they found he still won, and won on, they got shy of the risk, and refused to incur it any more.

When Eligio found this to be the case, he determined to travel abroad, and play against strangers. His parents tried to make use of the opportunity to lead him to break with his bad habit, but it was of no avail, and, as experience is a good school, they agreed to let him go forth and see what the world was made of.

It was a brave sight as he descended the terrace of the castle accoutred in the noble array befitting his rank, and with a retinue of followers handsomely attired too. But his lady mother watched him depart with a boding heart, and then went into the chapel to pray that he might be preserved amid all dangers.

Nothing particular occurred to mar the pleasure of travel for several days, till he came to a large and fertile plain, studded with many towns, whose white stone-built houses sparkled in the sun. "Ha! now we come to life and human kind again!" cried Eligio; and putting spurs to his steed he rode joyously to the first of these smiling towns. It had no lofty towers, no heaven-pointing spires—nowhere was seen the sign of the saving cross, which from boyhood he had been taught to [358] reverence and to see planted every where before him in consecration of every affair of life. But there were sounds of mirth and revelry, as of a perpetual feast, and all around the place was gay with dancers and mummers, musicians, dice-throwers, and card-players. Eligio wandered about till he saw a number of these making up a fresh party, and courteously asked to be allowed to join them. They accepted his company willingly, and fortune favoured him as usual. Again and again he tried, and it was always the same. It was as much as his train of followers, numerous as they were, could do to gather in and take charge of all his gains. The stranger's unvarying luck became the talk of the place, and all the people collected to see him play.

Towards evening there came amid the crowd a tall man of serious mien, who, having watched his play with much attention, said to him, as he saw him complete a game which gave him once more the benefit of a considerable haul,—

"Truly, you are an expert player, young man; I had thought myself hitherto the best of our countryside, but I doubt me if I should be right to measure my skill with yours. However, you must be tired with your long travel and with the excitement of the day's play, and if you will honour my poor board with your presence at dinner I will ask you afterwards to let me try my power against yours [359] with the cards."

Eligio thanked him for his courteous speech, and assured him he should have the greatest pleasure in doing as he wished.

The stranger then led him to his abode, which was appointed with a sumptuousness such as had never entered into Eligio's dreams in his mountain home. Marble courts and fountains, surrounded by bowers of exquisite flowers, formed the approach, and then they passed beneath endless-seeming arcades of polished marble into a vast alcove encrusted with alabaster of many colours, the dim light only reaching through its clear golden veins, no sound disturbing its still repose but the cool murmur of a fountain which fed a marble lake. Here noiseless attendants advanced, and, having helped Eligio and his host to undress, afforded him a delicious bath, complete with ministrations of unguents and scents—very different from the plunge into the icy waters of the Lago di Molveno, which was his greatest luxury at home.

They now arrayed him in an entirely new suit of superb attire; and then, to the sound of hushed music, led him and his host through the arched corridors to a banqueting-hall, where every thing of the choicest was ready laid.

Nothing could have been more delightful than the charming and accomplished conversation of his hospitable entertainer, who, when the long succession of [360] various viands was at length exhausted, proposed that they should repair to an upper room and commence their game.

Delighted as Eligio had been with his extraordinary entertainment, he was yet burning to try his luck with his obliging host, and accordingly followed him with alacrity to a divan spread on the roof, having for its only covering a leafy *pergola*[88], and lighted by lamps contrived with such art that they seemed to be the very bunches of grapes themselves which gave the rays.

The cards were brought, and the friends set to work. The first game was a long one; the host seemed to be in great fear of not succeeding, and pondered every throw. Eligio played in his own rough-and-ready style, expecting luck to come as it always had—he never troubled himself *how*.

But this time luck did *not* come to him, and his entertainer was the winner! The stakes were large, but his hospitable friend had been so urbane throughout, that he could not show any ill-will. His attendants were called in, and paid the debt.

The winner put up the cards as though he did not wish to play again.

"Come, you must give me my revenge," said Eligio.

"Oh, certainly, *if you wish it*," he replied; and they played again. This time Eligio [361] paid more attention to his style, and calculated every card he played; but it was of no use, he was beaten again. Caring more for the disappointment than the loss, he saw the money counted out without a sigh; but the unusual sense of having been overcome rankled in his mind. He had offered to play high because it seemed required by the princely character of the house where he had been so sumptuously received; and of all the treasure he had brought with him, and of all he had won through a day's undeviating luck, there only remained enough to repeat the stakes. Nevertheless he pledged the same sum once more, and they played again.

This time fortune seemed to have come back to him. All went right up to the end; Eligio's heart felt lightened. So luck was coming back, was it? He played with an interest which he had almost ceased to find—but his adversary threw down his last card which reversed every thing, and once more he was the winner!

Eligio called in his followers, and ordered them to pay out the last farthing of his treasure; but even this distressed him less than having nothing more to stake, whereby to have a chance of retrieving his luck. "Let be," said his new friend, soothingly; "perhaps to-morrow your luck will turn. Come down with me to supper, and have a quiet night's rest, and think no more about the play." [362]

"I can't rest, and I can't eat!" said Eligio; "I can do nothing till my luck turns. I must stake *something*. Ah! there's my horse—but that's not enough. Put along with it all my retainers. If I lose, they shall be yours, and serve you."

"Since you insist, I have no objection," said his host. "My men know their service well, and will not shame you if you win and I have to render you an equal number of them; and for your horse, I can match him, how good soever he may be, with the swiftest Arab in the whole world."

Eligio sat down, hardly heeding his words, intent only on re-establishing his success. But his pains were vain; the game went against him like the last, and, scarcely mastering his vexation, he called in his retainers and told them they had passed into the service of the new master.

But this only left him in the same position as before. Still he wanted to retrieve his fortune, and again he had no stake.

“Leave it for to-night,” recommended his host; “better times will come with the morrow.” But Eligio would not hear of it; the passion and excitement were too strong within him; he could not turn to other thoughts.

“Myself! my life! that is all I have left to play. Will you accept the wager of my life?”

“If you insist,” replied his host, “I have no objection, but it is an odd sort of play. I really never heard of such a thing before; but any thing to oblige you—though I [363] really advise you to leave it till the morning, when you are cooler.”

And all the time he was a magician of the heathen, who had invited Eligio for the express purpose of bringing him to this strait; but, as he saw how impetuous and excited he was, he knew that he would but fall into his snare the more surely for whetting his ardour with a little opposition.

Eligio would, indeed, listen to no mention of delay, and they sat down and played—with the same result as before! His life was now at the magician’s disposal, and he stood in a desponding attitude, waiting to hear what the magician decided to do with him.

As he stood there, however, a great cry rose in the room beyond—a cry of a young maiden’s voice in distress—and from under the *usciale*[89] came running, in terror for its life, a sleek white rat, and behind it, in close pursuit, a bouncing cat. “Save my rat! oh, save my white rat!” cried the maiden’s voice; and her steps approached as if she would have run into the room after her pet. “Keep back, child! keep back! Enter not, for your life!” cried the magician, sternly; and nothing more was heard but the gentle maiden’s sobs.

Quick as thought, however, Eligio had started from his despondent attitude at the sound of her distressful voice, and with one blow had stamped the life out of the [364] treacherous cat. The little white rat, freed from fear of its tormentor, returned softly to its mistress, and an exclamation of joy was Eligio’s reward.

“Who have you got there, father? Mayn’t I come in and thank him?” said the maiden, prettily pleading.

“On no account. Don’t think of it!” was the magician’s angry reply.

“Then you must do something for him instead. Ask him what he wants, and do it for him, *whatever* it is.”

“Very well, that’ll do; go back to your own apartment,” replied the magician, impatiently.

“No, it won’t do, like that. You don’t say it as if you meant it. Promise me you will give him something nice, and I will go. It’s only fair, for he has done me a great pleasure, and you mustn’t be ungrateful.”

“It is enough reward, fair maiden, to hear from your sweet voice that you are satisfied with me,” Eligio ventured to say; but this made the magician more angry, and, to ensure his daughter’s departure, he promised he would do as she wished, but forbade either of them to speak a single word more to the other.

“I have promised my daughter to give you a good gift,” he said, when he had satisfied himself that she was gone to a distance; “and under present [365] circumstances I do not see that I can give you a better boon than to grant you a year of the life which you have lost to me. Go home and bid adieu to your friends, and be sure that you are back here by this day year, or woe be to your whole house!”

Eligio now began to suspect that he had fallen into the power of one of those against whom he had been often warned. No ordinary mortal could have cared to win his life; no ordinary mortal could have threatened woe on his whole house. But the more convinced he felt of this, the more terrible he felt was the spell that bound him.

Sad and crestfallen he looked as he toiled his way back to the castle on the Lago di Molveno, and very different from the brave order with which he had started.

When his parents saw him all alone, and looking so forlorn, they knew that his bad habit had got him into trouble, but he looked so sad that they said nothing; but by little and little he told them all. It was a year of mourning that succeeded that day; a year so sad that it seemed no boon the maiden had procured him, but a

prolonged torment, yet when that thought came he spurned it from him, as ungrateful to her who had meant him well. In fact his only solace was to recall that clear, ringing voice so full of sympathy, and to picture to himself the slender throat [366] and rosy lips through which it must have passed, the softly-blushing cheeks between which those lips must have been set, and the bright, laughing, trusting eyes that must have beamed over them, till he seemed quite to know and love her.

But then, again, of what use? was not his year nearly run out? Was not her father determined they should not meet? Was it not a greater torture to die knowing there was one left behind he might have loved, than to have died that night alone, as he had been then?

Meantime the year was drawing to a close, and, not to give an appearance of shrinking from his plighted word, Eligio started betimes to render his life up to him who had won it of him. It was a sad parting with his parents, but he held up through it bravely; and when they advised him to take a large sum of money with him to buy himself off, though he felt it would be of no use, he would not say them nay, as he had so often done before.

With a heavy heart he set out; and first he stopped at the chapel of St. Anthony, at the foot of the hill, where dwelt an old hermit, to make his peace with heaven before he was called to lay down his life. Then he rose and pursued his way.

As he journeyed farther he met a hermit coming towards him who he thought was the same he had spoken with in the chapel. “Tell me, father,” he said, “how comes it that you, whom I left behind me in the chapel, are now coming towards me on [367] the road?”

“I am not the hermit whom you left behind you in the chapel,” replied the advancing figure, gravely. “But I have heard all you confided to him, for I am St. Anthony; and because I am satisfied with the good disposition I have observed in you, I am come to give you help.”

Eligio fell on his knees full of thankfulness, for never had he felt more in need of help than now.

“Something I know, my son, of the ways of these men who hunt the lambs of our flock to destroy them, and I am minded to save you from the one into whose power you have fallen, and with you the fair maiden whose voice charmed you in his house.”

Eligio started with joyful surprise, and clasped the saint’s feet in token of gratitude.

“She is not his daughter, as you have supposed,” continued the saint, “but a child of our people, whom he stole from us. And now you must attend to my bidding, and do it exactly, or you will fail, and lose her life as well as your own.”

Eligio felt the reproach, for he knew how often he had preferred his own way to the advice of his elders, but he was humble now in his distress, and listened very attentively to the directions prescribed to him.

“Continue this public road towards the city,” then said St. Anthony, “till you get to the last milestone; then count the tenth tree that you pass on the right hand and [368] the eleventh on the left hand, and you will see a scarcely perceptible track through the brake to the right. Follow that track till you come to a knoll of ilex-trees, there lie down and rest; but to-morrow morning awake at daybreak and lie in wait, and you shall see a flock of white doves come before you. They will lay aside their feathers and hide them, but you must watch them very closely, for they are the magician’s daughters; but among them will be she whom I commission you to deliver. You must observe where she puts her feathers, for the maidens will all then go away for the rest of the day in their own natural form. As soon as they are gone, take her feathers from their hiding-place and possess yourself of them. In the evening they will all come back and resume their dove form and fly away, but your maiden will continue seeking hers; then come forward and tell her that you want her help to overcome the sorceries of the magician. Remember this well, my son, and for the rest do as she bids you.” So saying, the saint raised his hands in blessing, and passed on his way to the chapel, where he had to instruct the hermit in the conduct he had to pursue in the manifold dangers with which he was surrounded from the malice of the heathen.

Eligio walked briskly along, once more filled with the hope and energy incident to his youth and character. “Why should I count the trees?” he said to himself; [369] “surely, it will do if I look out for the track when I come to the brake!” But the terrible warning he had had was too recent that he should forget its lessons already. “Perhaps it’s better to keep to the letter. The saint laid great stress on my

doing exactly as he bid me; it is better to be on the safe side, for another worthier life than mine is concerned with me, this time."

So he walked on steadily till he came to the last mile, and then counted the trees conscientiously, till he found the path through the brake, and made his way to the ilex grove, where he laid him down and slept peacefully. But long before daybreak he was awake with the anxiety not to be behindhand, and closely he watched for the arrival of the enchanted doves.

With the first streaks of daylight they came flying, as the saint had predicted, and, having flung off their covering of white feathers, each sought out a snug place under the heather where to deposit them. It required close watching, indeed, to make out which was *his* maiden; but, as they all chatted together, after the manner of maidens, Eligio knew he could trust himself to recognize her voice, and, guided by that, he kept his eyes hard fixed on her whose tones he recognized, that he might be sure to distinguish where she laid by her disguise. It was not light enough to satisfy himself whether her features corresponded with the idea he had [370]
built up in his own mind; but the grace of her form, as she passed by in her simple white, loosely-flowing dress, with a chaplet of roses for her only ornament; only made him the more anxious to behold her face.

The maidens walked away, and Eligio took possession of the feathery covering, which he laid up in his bosom as a precious token, and took it out again and gazed at it, and kissed it, and laid it by again a thousand times, for it was his only solace through the long day of waiting.

At last evening came, and he resumed his post of observation. The maidens returned; each sought out and resumed her dove's feathers and flew away; only the one was left, seeking hers in vain. Then Eligio came forward, and said, respectfully, "Fair lady, I know what it is you seek, and I will help you to find it; but first promise to do me a great favour."

The maiden started, for she too recognized his voice. Their eyes met, and both owned, in the depth of their own hearts, that the other bore the very image which for a year past their fancy had conjured up.

"That will I, willingly, good sir!" she replied, in her sweetest tones; "for, an' I mistake not, I owe you a debt of gratitude before to-day. The treacherous cat that you killed so opportunely was no cat, but a cruel Angana[90]; and the white rat [371]
concerned me so nearly, because it was no rat, but my dear nurse, whom the magician turned into a rat when he stole me from my father's house. So believe if I was not anxious to save her, and if I ought not to be grateful to him who preserved her to me! so tell me, what can I do to help you, and, whatever it may be, I will do it to the utmost of my power."

"St. Anthony appeared to me as I came along this way," rejoined Eligio, "and he told me that you had been stolen from Christian parents and brought up by this heathen mage, and that you would help me to get out of his power; but he also seemed to say that I should have the happiness of helping you to leave this dreadful abode, and restoring you to Christendom."

"Said he so?" answered the maiden, with intense earnestness; "then my heart did not deceive me when I first heard your voice: you are indeed he with the thread of whose life mine is woven, and without whom I could not be set free."

When Eligio heard that, he was full of gladness, and he said, "Let us escape, then! What should prevent us from leaving this country together? When I saw the magician before, the laws of hospitality made him sacred to my sword; but now—now that I have learnt I have a right to defend *your* life—I defy him, and all his arts!"

"You are brave, I see; and it is well," she replied; "but it is not so you can discard [372]
his power. By your own error you gave him power over you, and now you are his; you can only be free by his will."

"By his will!" cried Eligio, in despair; "then shall I never be free!"

"Art must be met by art," she continued. "His art is all round you, though you see not its meshes; and by art we must bring him to renounce his claim on you. Trust me, and I will show you how it is to be done. He would force me to learn his arts when I begged him not, and now I know many things which will serve us. I can see the threads of his toils woven all around you; you cannot escape from them till he speaks you free."

"Tell me, then, what I must do," said Eligio; and he mentally resolved as he spoke, that he would this time implicitly obey what she told him.

She remained thinking for a time, as if reckoning out a problem. Then she said, “For this first time I must act. On the fatal day you must present yourself according to your oath. I will take care to be with him when they tell him you are come; and when I hear your name, I will plead, as I did before, that he should not sacrifice you at once, but give you some hard trial in which, if you succeed, he shall speak you free. To silence my importunity, he will agree to this, intending to give you so hard a trial that you should not succeed. But you come to me in my [373] bower, cooing three times like a dove, for a signal, at this same evening hour, and tell me what it is, and I will find the means in my books to carry you through the trial. So that, whatever he proposes to you, be not disconcerted, but accept and undertake it with a good heart. And now, give me my dove’s feathers quickly, for already they will be questioning why I am so long behind.” And without waiting to let him take so much as another gaze at her, she assumed her dove shape, and flew away.

The next day Eligio went, with a lighter heart than he had borne for a long time past, to give himself up to the magician. The magician, won over by the maiden’s importunity, offered him his liberty on condition of his performing successfully the difficult feat that he should impose on him.

“Any thing you please to impose on me, I am ready to perform,” replied Eligio.

The magician smiled, with a ghastly, sardonic smile, while he paused, and tried to think of the most terrible trial he could impose.

“Since you were here last,” he said, at length, “I have grown a little deaf, and I am told that the only cure there is for me is the singing of the phœnix-bird. The first thing you have to do is to find me the phœnix-bird, that its singing may heal me.”

“I will do my best; and hope I may be the means of curing your malady,” said [374] Eligio, courteously; but the magician, seeing him of such good courage, began to fear he really might succeed, and added, hastily, “But, mind, I only allow you three days for your search!”

“Three days are but little to find the phœnix-bird,” replied Eligio; “nevertheless, I will do my best;” and without waiting to listen to any further restrictions, he started on his way, saying, “If I have only three days, I have no time to lose.”

At the approach of the evening hour Eligio found his way to his maiden’s bower, and having attracted her attention by cooing three times like a dove, told her what was the trial the magician had imposed.

“The phœnix-bird!” she said, and she looked rather blank; “he has chosen a difficult task indeed. But wait a bit; I think I can find it out;” and she went back and took down scroll after scroll, and turned them over so long, that Eligio began to fear that she would not be able to help him after all. At last she came back to him, looking grave.

“It is more difficult even than I thought,” she said; “and three days is but short time to do it in. You must start this night, without losing a minute. Set out by the stony path outside the town, and ride ahead till you come to a forest, where a bear will come out upon you. The moment you see him, spring from your horse, and cut its throat with your hunting-knife; but if you hesitate a moment he will fall upon [375] you, and devour you. If, however, you kill your horse dexterously, as you will, the bear will be satisfied with its flesh. You must wait standing by till he has eaten his fill, and watch for the moment when he is about to turn away again, then spring on his back, and he will take you to the castle where the phœnix-bird is kept; but if you lose that particular moment, he will return to his cave, and you will never have a chance of reaching the phœnix-bird!”

“Rely on me; your directions shall be punctually obeyed,” said Eligio, and he stooped to kiss her hand. But she would not allow this, and told him he had not an instant to spare.

Eligio mounted his horse, and rode away over the stony path outside the city, and pursued it all night, till at daybreak he reached the thick forest, when a bear came out upon him; Eligio sprang deftly from his horse, and plunging his hunting-knife into his throat, flung the carcase across the path. The bear fell upon the dead horse, and Eligio watched for the moment when he should have finished his repast; but, as he was long about it, he thought to himself, “Why not jump upon him at once? and then I shall be ready to start with him when he has done, without so much anxiety about catching the right instant.” So said, so done; but the bear was not at all the docile animal he had expected. [376]

“Don’t disturb me when I’m feeding!” he growled, and shook our hero off into a bed of nettles.

Eligio owned to himself he would have done better to follow the directions of those wiser than he, and waited, with as much patience as the stinging of the nettles would allow him, till the brute was ready to start, and then made a bold leap on to his back, which made him turn round.

“Well sprung, this time!” growled the bear; “and as you have managed that part of the business so well I have no objection to do what you require. But you must attend to what I have to tell you. Keep your seat steadily, for I have to go swiftly; but speak not a word, and when I bring you to the palace where the phœnix-bird is kept, look not to the right hand or the left, but walk straight before you, through terrace, and galleries, and corridors, till you come to a dismal, deserted-looking aviary, where the phœnix-bird evermore sits on his perch. Put this hood over him, and bring him away with you; but listen not to the songs of the other birds all around, and, above all, touch not the golden owl which sits in the shade above!”

Eligio promised to attend to all the bear told him, and took a firm seat on his back. The bear bounded away with an awkward gait, but Eligio was an accomplished cavalier, and was nothing daunted. After many hours’ rough riding, they came to a vast palace, which he understood by the bear’s halting was the abode of the [377] phœnix-bird; so he dismounted, and walked straight along the terraces, and galleries, and corridors, till he came to a sorry aviary where a thousand birds of gay plumage fluttered and chirped around. Faithful to his promise, Eligio stopped to look at none of them; but walked straight up to the perch of the phœnix-bird. When, however, he saw him, he began to reason in place of obeying. “What can be the use of taking a shabby old bird like that? he looks like a fowl plucked ready for cooking! surely, some of these gay-plumaged birds are better worth taking!” and then his eye caught the golden owl snugly ensconced in the shady bower above. “Ah! that’s a bird worth having, *that* is now! that’s worth coming a perilous journey for; something to be proud of when you’ve got it! That’s the bird for me!” and, springing upon a ledge of rock, he threw the hood the bear had given him over the head of the golden owl, and brought it down. He had scarcely touched the golden owl, however, when the whole assemblage of other birds, which had taken no notice of him before, suddenly began screeching forth their highest notes. Their cries brought a crowd of servants, who surrounded him and held him fast, while the lord of the palace came down, and severely asked an account of his conduct.

Eligio told his story with a frankness which, in some measure, conciliated the old [378] lord; but the offence was too great to be passed over. “The phœnix-bird,” he said, “might have been taken by him who had courage to take it after the prescribed manner; but the other birds it was sacrilege to meddle with, and the golden owl he had been expressly forbidden, of all others, to touch; and though he granted him his life, he condemned him to perpetual durance.” The servants dragged him off to a deep dungeon, where he had nothing to do but to bewail his folly.

Night fell around, and nothing could be more hopeless than his position. His cell was hewn out of the earth; the iron door through which he had been thrust had been made fast with bolts and chains, and the only window which admitted the free air was strongly fitted with iron bars.

Eligio was generous enough, in his utter desolation, to grieve more over his unfulfilled mission and wasted opportunities, than over his personal hardships. “Oh, my beautiful Dove-Maiden!” he exclaimed, “shall I, then, never see you again? Must you be left for aye to the power of the horrid pagan enchanter, because I, by my insensate folly, have failed in restoring you to the brightness of the Christian faith?” and when he thought of her fate, he wept again.

“St Anthony! St. Anthony!” he cried, a little after, “you befriended me once; give me one chance again! This once but send me forth again with the mission of [379] liberating *her*, and then let me come back and pass my life in penance; but let not her suffer through my fault!”

By a mechanical instinct he had placed himself near the window, as the type of freedom to him, and now he thought he heard a low grunt on the other side of it, close to his ear. The sound was not melodious, but yet he fancied there was something friendly in its tone. He raised himself up, and saw two white boar’s tusks between the bars. His solitude was so utter that even the visit of a wild boar was a solace of companionship; but much greater was his pleasure when he found that his uncouth visitor was grubbing up the earth round the iron bars and the stones which held them, and had already loosened one.

“How now, good boar!” cried Eligio; “are you really come to release me?”

“Yes,” said the boar, as he paused for a moment to take breath; “St. Anthony has heard you, and has sent me to give the fresh chance you ask for; and if you this time but keep your promise, and do as you are bid, he will not exact the performance of the lifelong penance you offer to perform; but after you have

released the Dove-Maiden, you shall live with her the rest of your life in holy union and companionship."

In a transport of delight Eligio set to work to co-operate with the boar in [380]
unearthing the massive stanchions; and when they had loosened three he was able to force himself through the narrow opening.

"Now return to the aviary," said the boar; "look neither to right nor left, but bring away the phœnix-bird; and speak not a word, but mount on my back, and I will carry you back to the city. But make all haste, or the three days will have expired, and then all will be lost!"

This time Eligio followed his instructions implicitly, and got back to the town just in time to present the magician with the phœnix-bird before the expiring of his three days' grace. The magician was surprised indeed to find he had been successful, but could not recall his word, so he was forced to pronounce him free; and Eligio immediately repaired to the Dove-Maiden to thank her for her succour, and to ask what was next to be done to set her free too, that they might go away together to Christian lands, and live for each other in holy union.

"As for me," replied the maiden, blushing, "I shall be free by virtue of your freedom when you have performed one trial well, and without altering according to your own ideas the directions prescribed for you. And now the first thing is, to obtain the release of my dear nurse from the horrid form in which the magician has disguised her. To keep her in that shape, she is forced to eat a live mouse [381]
every week; and as nothing else is given her that she can eat, and as she is very ravenous by the time the week comes round, she is forced to eat the mouse. But if the mouse be killed by a sword consecrated to Christian chivalry, and it is dead before she eats it, the spell will be broken, and she will resume her natural form."

Eligio said this was an easy matter. She had only to tell him on what day the feeding took place, and where.

"It has its difficulties, too," replied the Dove-Maiden; "for if any blood of the mouse be spilt, the magician will know that I have instructed you, and he will play us some bad turn. To prevent this, you must cut the mouse in two by drawing your sword towards you; then all the blood will be caught on the sword, and you must make the rat lick it off afterwards." Then she showed him where the mouse was brought, and told him to be on the watch at sunset that very night.

Sunset accordingly found Eligio in close watch, his sword ready in his hand. But he thought, "As for how to use a sword, my pretty Dove-Maiden knows nothing about that. Who ever heard of drawing a sword towards one? Why, if any one saw me they would laugh, and say, 'Take care of your legs!' I know how to cut a mouse in two so quickly that no blood shall be spilt; and that's all that matters." So, you see, [382]
he would do it his own way; and the consequence was that three drops of blood were spilt on the ground However, the white rat got a dead mouse to eat instead of a live one, and immediately appeared in her proper woman's form.

When Eligio went to visit the Dove-Maiden after this, she spoke no word of reproach, but she told him she knew some trouble would befall them in consequence of those three drops of blood. She could not tell what it would be: they must do their best to provide against it when the time came. The next thing he had to do was, to go by midnight to the magician's stables under the rock, and take out thence the swiftest horse in the whole world, and he was to know it by the token that it was the thinnest horse he ever saw; its eyeballs and its ribs were all that could be seen of it; and its tail was only one hair! This he was to saddle and bring under her window; and then all three would ride away on it together.

Eligio went down into the magician's stable under the rock by midnight, and there he saw the lean horse, with his protruding ribs and eyeballs, and whose tail was only one hair. But he said to himself, "My pretty Dove-Maiden hasn't much experience in horseflesh; *that* can't be the swiftest horse in the world. Why, it would sink to the ground with our weight alone, let alone trying to move under us! [383]
That high-couraged chestnut there, with the powerful shoulders—*that* is the horse to hold out against fatigue, and put miles of distance behind you! I think I know a good horse to go when I see one!" So he saddled the high-couraged chestnut, and led it under the Dove-Maiden's window.

When she saw the stout chestnut instead of the lean horse, she could not suppress a cry of disappointment.

"What have you done?" she said. "You have left the swiftest horse in the world behind; and now the magician can overtake us, nor can we escape him!"

Eligio hung his head, and stammered out a proposal to go and change the horse.

But she told him it was too late; the stable-door was only open at midnight. He could not now get in till the next night; and if they left their escape till then, the magician would find out the disenchantment of the white rat, and from that suspect their scheme; and would then surround them with such a maze of difficulties, that it would take her years to learn how to solve them; whereas she had promised St. Anthony to have nothing more to do with the books of magic, but to burn them all, and go and live with a Christian husband, far from all these things. There was nothing to be done, therefore, but to start at once with their best speed, only keeping on the watch for the pursuer, who would inevitably come. [384]

Away went the high-couraged chestnut, with the speed of the wind, and as if his threefold burden had been light as air. But how swiftly soever he went, the lean horse was swifter; and before the end of the second day's journey they saw, at no distance, his fire-darting eyeballs and smoking ribs, and his tail of one hair stretched out far behind.

When the Dove-Maiden saw the magician coming after them on this weird mount, she called to her companions to jump down; and she turned the horse into a wayside chapel of St. Anthony, and herself into a peasant girl weaving chaplets on the grass outside.

"Have you seen a chestnut steed pass this way, with a young man and maiden, pretty child?" said the magician, bending low over his horse's neck to pat the peasant girl's cheek, but without recognizing her. The Dove-Maiden started aside from his touch; but she answered,—

"Yes, good sir; they are gone into the chapel; and if you will go in, there you will find them."

"Oh! I've got into the land of the Christians, have I?" said the magician to himself. "I think I had better make the best of my way home, and not trust myself there." So he mounted his fiery steed, and rode away.

Then the Dove-Maiden restored herself and her companions to their former shapes, and they soon reached home, where Eligio was received with joyful acclamations by all. But to his intense surprise and disappointment, his mother did not welcome his beautiful Dove-Maiden with any thing like satisfaction. [385]

"That is because of the three drops of the mouse's blood incautiously spilt," she whispered, when he deplored it to her; "but I have a spell against that also. Let me into your mother's room when she is asleep, to-night, and I will anoint her eyes with an ointment with shall make her look on me for ever after with a loving glance. It was done as she said, and next morning Eligio's mother received her lovingly to her arms as a daughter.

After this, the Dove-Maiden burnt her magic books, and her nuptials with Eligio were celebrated with great rejoicings throughout the valley. They lived together for the rest of their days, in holy union, and the poor Christians of the whole countryside blessed their charity. [386]

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KRISELDA.

Long, long ago, in the days when the light of Christian teaching yet struggled with the gloom of heathendom, there lived in the Edelsitz of Ruggburg, by Bregenz, a most beautiful maiden—Kriselda by name. So fair she was that, from far and near, knights and nobles came to ask her hand; but though she was not proud or haughty, she would have none of them, because there was not one of them all that came up to her expectations. It was not that she said they were not good enough for her, but high or noble, or rich or renowned, as they might be, they all failed to satisfy her longings; and with gentle words and courteous demeanour, she dismissed them all. And yet she looked out with hope, too, that the next should supply the bright ideal of her heart; but when that other came he always still fell short of what she had imagined.

One evening she went out to walk amid the dark pines, where the golden light of the setting sun gleamed between their bare stems. At the foot of one of them lay a poor wayworn beggar woman, fainting with hunger and fatigue. [387]

Kriselda was full of compassion for her sad state, and sent her maidens to fetch restoratives, and ministered them to her with her own hands.

But the beggar woman, instead of cringing with gratitude and surprise at the

interest the noble lady had shown in her, was no sooner able to speak than she reproached her bitterly.

“It is well for you,” she said, “who live daintily, and have your will every day, now and then to show a little charity for those who suffer! but what is it, think you, to suffer every day, and to have your own will *never*?”

“It must be very sad!” said Kriselda, compassionately; “that is not your case, I hope?”

“How can you know it is sad? How can you hope any thing about it?” retorted the beggar woman, sternly; “you who know not what it is to suffer. Believe me, it is not fine clothes and a grand palace, a beautiful face, or deeds of fame which make one great. Those to whom all these things appertain are, for the most part, little worth. To do well is so easy to them, that what merit have they to boast? The truly great is one who suffers, and *yet* does well; who goes through toil and travail, sorrow and grief, and bears it in silence, and in secret, and has no fame and no praise of [388] men to sound sweetly in his ears.”

Kriselda listened to her words full of excitement, for it seemed as if a chord in her heart had been touched which none had ever reached before. And the picture the old beggar woman had drawn was nearer her mind’s bright ideal than any image she had approached heretofore.

“What, then, is this same travail and grief?” she asked, with simplicity.

“If you really desire to know with good desire,” answered the beggar woman, “take this end of a hank of yarn, and follow its leading, winding it up as you go along, till you come to the bobbin, where it is made fast; and when you arrive there you will know what travail and grief are. But you must go forth alone.”

Kriselda dismissed all her maidens, and taking the yarn, cheerfully followed the steep path through which it led. On it led her, and on and on. Her light garments were rent by the thorns and briars, and her hands and delicate cheeks too; her feet were cut by the stones of the way, and her knees began to tremble with fatigue. Darkness fell around, and loneliness crept over her, with fear, for she had never been in the forest by night alone before; but still the yarn led on, and on, and it was thick night before she reached the bobbin, where it was made fast.

When she reached the place a dim light gleamed around, and in the midst of the [389] dim light a Kreuzstöcklein[91]: and on the cross, One fairer than the sons of men, but wan and wayworn, even as the fainting beggar woman; His brow rent by thorns, even as her own; His knees bent with weariness; His body wasted by want.

But in His face the majesty and sweetness she had sought so long; the perfect ideal of her heart, which none who had approached her had ever presented before.

“This, then, is He for whom my soul longed!” she cried, and clasped her hands. “I have found Him, and will not leave Him more! But who is He? what does He here? and is it He who knows travail and grief?”

“In truth, have I known travail and grief!” He sighed, and the silvery tones of His plaintive voice filled her with unutterable joy; “and, in truth, must all those who would abide with Me know travail and grief too!”

She strained her ears that she might hear those sweet notes again, but she listened in vain; only its echoes seemed to live on in her heart, as though they would never die there. But without, there was no sound, save of the terrible Föhn[92] moaning through the tall black pines, and drifting round her masses of [390] heaped-up snow, which had long lain by the wayside. Even the Kreuzstöcklein she saw no more, nor the dim light, nor knew how to find the way home. All alone, with terror only for her companion, she stood and wondered what that cross could mean, and who He could be who hung thereon. Soon she ceased to wonder, for numbness crept over her, and unconsciousness which was not sleep.

When she opened her eyes again the grey light of morning had fallen around, and there was a sound as of men in deadly combat. A terrible sound, yet less terrible than the deathly stillness of the night.

It was a hermit and a giant who strove, as men who give no quarter, and yet neither prevailed against the other. The giant was accoutred in burnished steel; and his polished weapons flashed with angry fire. The hermit bore no arms—or rather, those he bore were invisible, for when he wielded them you saw the giant shrink, though you saw not the blow; and, in like manner, many a stroke of the giant’s sword was harmlessly warded off, though no shield was seen.

“Wherefore fight you so furiously?” said Kriselda, at length. “Put up your arms,

and be at peace."

"We fight for you, fair maiden!" said both, speaking together. [391]

"For me!" cried Kriselda.

"Yes, even for you," said the giant; "anon you were lying here asleep, and I would have carried you to rule over my castle, when up started this puny man in brown, and dared me to lay finger on you; and till you have pronounced which of us you approve, neither can prevail. Say only one word, and I will hurl him down the cliff, like this pebble, with one spurning of my foot; and you shall come and reign with me in my castle, where I will fulfil your every desire."

A brave enthusiasm kindled his eye as he spoke; his well-knit frame, terrible in its strength, was bowed to hear her word; and his arms, anon so furiously raised, were now folded before her, seemingly awaiting his life to be rekindled at her lips.

Kriselda looked at him, and met his rapt gaze, and asked herself was there not here the strength, the majesty, the nobility, her soul had desired. Almost she had spoken the word he craved. But first she addressed the hermit.

"And you—why measured you your strength with him for my sake?"

"Because," said the hermit, meekly, "I am the servant of Him who knows travail and grief; because you have lifted up your eyes to Him, and to all such He sends help, that they may be strengthened to follow Him."

Then the dim light seemed once more present to Kriselda's mind, and she recalled [392] the Kreuzstöcklein, and the majesty and beauty of Him who hung thereon; and the musical tones of His plaintive voice which said, "Truly I have known travail and grief; and all they who would abide with Me must know grief and travail too!"

The giant's nobility paled before the thought; she looked at him again, and his strength and his power had lost their charm, for the image of One stronger than he was present to her mind. Then she turned and followed the hermit, and said, "Where is He whom I seek? Take me to Him."

The hermit raised his hand and beckoned her to follow still higher up the steep path.

But the giant was forced to sheathe his sword and to depart alone; Kriselda had spoken, and he knew he could not prevail against the hermit contrary to her will. He turned away sorrowful, casting in his mind who it could be whose attractions were more powerful on Kriselda than his own; and as he walked he determined he would not sleep or eat till he had found out Him who hung upon the Kreuzstöcklein, and knew travail and grief.

Kriselda, meantime, followed the hermit to where the crystal brook flowed, and there he signed her with the token of Him who knew travail and grief. Then he took her to where other maidens dwelt who loved that same ideal; and there she lived many years, waiting for the time when the hermit promised her she should be [393] united with Him for ever.

That day came at last; and she called her sisters round her, and told them the joy of her soul. Already she saw a dim light, as on that first night under the black pines, and she knew it was the dawn of the bright unending day, and the soft voice that had spoken to her there was calling to her to come to Him.

But when they carried her earthly form out to burial, they found one already lying in the grave. It was the giant, who had journeyed thus far, and had there laid him down and died in the place where Kriselda should be laid; and he held, clasped to his breast, the Kreuzstöcklein of the black pine-forest. [394]

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THE GOLDEN PEARS.

There was once a poor peasant of Bürs who had nothing in the world but three sons, and a pear-tree that grew before his cottage.

But as his pears were very fine, and the Kaiser was very fond of them, he said to his sons one day, that he would send the Kaiser a basket of them for a present.

So he plaited a nice Krattle[93] and lined it with fresh leaves, and laid the pears on them, and sent his eldest son with it to make a present to the Kaiser, giving him

strict charge to take care and not let any one rob him of them by the way.

“Leave me alone, father!” replied the boy; “I know how to take care of my own. It isn’t much any one will get out of me by asking; I can find as good an answer as any one.”

So he closed up the mouth of the basket with fresh leaves and went out to take the pears to the Kaiser. [395]

It was autumn, and the sun struck hot all through the midday hours, and at last coming to a wayside fountain, he sat down to drink and rest.

A little doubled-up old woman was washing some rags at the same fountain, and singing a ditty all out of tune. “A witch, I’ll be bound!” said the boy to himself. “She’ll be trying to get my pears, by hook or by crook, but I’ll be even with her!”

“A fair day, my lad!” said the little old wife; “but a heavy burden you have to carry. What may it be with which you are so heavily laden?”

“A load of sweepings off the road, to see if I can turn a penny by it,” replied the boy, in a moody tone, intended to arrest further questioning.

“Road-sweepings?” repeated the hag, incredulously. “Belike you don’t mean it?”

“But I *do* mean it,” retorted the boy.

“Oh, well, if you mean it, no doubt it is so. You will see when you get to your journey’s end!” and she went on washing and singing her ditty that was all out of tune.

“There’s mischief in her tone,” said the boy to himself, “that’s clear. But at all events I’m all right: I haven’t even let her look at the fruit with her evil eye, so there’s no harm done.” But he felt perplexed and uneasy, so it was no good taking rest, and he went on to the end of his journey. [396]

Though he was only a country lad, the Kaiser was so fond of pears that he had only to say he had brought some to obtain immediate admittance to his presence.

“You have brought me some pears, have you, my boy?” said the Kaiser, in a tone of satisfaction; and he licked his lips with pleasurable expectation.

“Yes, your majesty; and some of the finest golden pears in your majesty’s whole empire.”

The Kaiser was so delighted to hear this that he removed the covering of leaves himself. But proportionately great was his fury when he found that under the leaves was nothing but offensive sweepings off the road! The attendants who stood by were all equally indignant, and waited not for an order from the Kaiser to carry the boy off to close prison, in punishment for so great an insult as he appeared to have offered.

“It is all that old hag by the fountain,” he said to himself, the first day and the second; but when the penitential discipline of the prison led him to think more closely over his own conduct, he acknowledged that he had himself been in the wrong in telling a falsehood.

Meantime, his father, finding he did not return, said to his other sons, “You see what it is to be as wide-awake as your elder brother; he has obviously taken care of his basket of golden pears, and so pleased the Kaiser that he has given him some great office near his person, and made him a rich man.” [397]

“I am just as sharp as he,” said the second brother: “give me a Krattle of the pears, and let me take them to the Kaiser, and become a rich man too; only I won’t keep it all for myself. I will send for you, and make you a rich man too.”

“Well said, my son,” replied the father; “for I have worked hard for you all my life, and it is meet that in my old age you should share your ease, which I helped you to attain, with me.”

And as the season for pears had just come round again, he plaited another Krattle, like the first, and lined it with fresh leaves, and laid in it a goodly show of the golden pears.

The second son took the basket, and went his way even in better spirits than his elder brother, for he had the conviction of his success to encourage him. But the sun was as hot as it had been the previous year, and when, in the middle of the third day, he came to the fountain by the wayside he was glad to sit down to rest and refresh himself.

The doubled-up old woman stood washing her rags at the fountain and singing her ditty all out of tune. She stopped her croaking, however, to ask him the same question as she had asked his brother; and, as he and his brother had agreed together on what they considered a clever answer, he now gave her the same, which she received by repeating the menace she had ejaculated the first time. And [398] when he brought his basket to the Kaiser it also was found to be filled with street-sweepings instead of pears! With even more of indignation they hurried him off to prison, putting him in the next cell to his brother.

Meantime the year was wearing away, and the promised tidings of good fortune not reaching the father, he got very uneasy. The third son had no pretension to the sharpness his brothers boasted. He was a very dull boy, and often had to endure being laughed at by the others for his slow parts.

“What a pity it is you are so heavy and stupid!” his father now would often say. “If I only dared trust you, how glad I should be to send you to see what has befallen your brothers!”

The lad was used to hear himself pronounced good-for-nothing, and so he did not take much notice of these observations at first, but seeing his father really in distress, his affectionate heart was moved, and he one day summoned courage to say he would go and see if he could not find his brothers.

“Do you really think you can keep yourself out of harm’s way?” exclaimed his father, glad to find him propose to undertake the adventure.

“I will do whatever you tell me,” replied the lad.

“Well, you shan’t go empty-handed, at all events,” said the father. And, as the pears were just ripe again, he laid the choicest of the year’s stock in another [399] Krattle, and sent him on his way.

The boy walked along, looking neither to right nor left, but with his heart beating, lest he should come across the “harm” out of the way of which he had promised to keep himself. All went smoothly, however, except that he got terribly scorched by the sun, and when he reached the fountain, he was glad to sit down to rest and refresh himself.

The old wife was washing her rags in the water, and singing, as she patted the linen, a ditty all out of tune. “Here comes a third of those surly dogs, I declare!” she said to herself, as she saw him arrive with another lot of the magnificent pears. “I suppose he’ll be making game of me too—as if I didn’t know the scent of ripe golden pears from road-sweepings! a likely matter! But if they enjoy making game of me, I have a splendid revenge to enjoy upon them, so I oughtn’t to complain.”

“Good-morrow, little mother!” said the boy, in his blunt way, ere he sat down, at the same time not omitting to doff his cap, as he had been taught, because she happened to be old and ugly—matters of which he had no very nice appreciation.

“He’s better mannered than the other louts, for all he doesn’t look so bright-faced,” said the hag to herself; and she stopped her discordant song to return his greeting.

“May I sit down here a bit, please, good mother? asked the boy, thinking in his [400] simplicity the fountain must belong to her.

“That you may, and take a draught of the cool water too,” replied the dame, wondrously propitiated by his civility.

“And what may it be with which you are so laden, my pretty boy?” she continued. “It ought to be a precious burden to be worth carrying so far as you seem to have come. What have you in your Krattle?”

“Precious are the contents, I believe you,” replied the simple boy; “at least, so one would think from the store my father sets by them. They are true golden pears, and he says there are no finer grown in the whole kingdom; and I am taking them to the Kaiser because he is very fond of them.”

“Only ripe pears, and yet so heavy?” returned the old wife; “one would say it was something heavier than pears. But you’ll see when you come to your journey’s end.”

The boy assured her they were nothing but pears, and as one of his father’s injunctions had been not to lose time by the way, he paid the old dame a courteous greeting and continued his journey.

When the servants saw another peasant boy from Bürs come to the palace with the story that he had pears for the king, they said, “No, no! we have had enough of that! you may just turn round and go back.” But the poor simple boy was so disappointed at the idea of going back to be laughed at for not fulfilling his message, that he sank down on the door-step and sobbed bitterly, and there he remained sobbing till the Kaiser came out. [401]

The Kaiser had his daughter with him, and when she saw the boy sobbing, she inquired what ailed him; and learnt it was another boy from Bürs come to insult the Kaiser with a basket of road-sweepings, and asked if they should take him off to prison too.

“But I *have* got pears!” sobbed the boy; “and my father says there are no finer in the empire.”

“Yes, yes; we know that by heart. That’s what the others said!” replied the servants, jeering; and they would have dragged him away.

“But won’t you look at my pears first, fair lady? the pears that I have brought all this long way for the Kaiser? My father will be so sorry!” for he was too ignorant to feel abashed at the presence of the princess, and he spoke to her with as much confidence as if she had been a village maiden.

The princess was struck by the earnestness with which he spoke, and decided to see the contents of his basket. The moment he heard her consent, he walked straight up with his Krattle, quite regardless of the whole troop of lacqueys, strong in the justice of his cause.

The princess removed the covering of leaves, and discovered that what he had brought were golden pears indeed, for each pear, large as it was, was of solid shining metal! [402]

“These are pears indeed worthy to set before the Kaiser!” she said, and presented them to her father.

The Kaiser was pleased to see his favourite fruit so splendidly immortalized, and ordered the pears to be laid up in his cabinet of curiosities; but to the boy, for his reward, he ordered that whatever he asked should be given.

“All I want is to find my two brothers, who hold some great office at court,” said the boy.

“Your brothers hold office in prison, if they are those I suspect,” said the Kaiser, and commanded that they should be brought. The boys immediately ran to embrace each other; and the Kaiser made them each recount all their adventures.

“You see how dangerous it is to depart from the truth!” he said, when they had done. “And never forget that, with all your cleverness, you might have remained in prison to the end of your days but for the straightforward simplicity of him you thought so inferior to yourselves.”

Then he ordered that the tree which brought forth such excellent pears should be transplanted to his palace; and to the father and his three sons he gave places among his gardeners, where they lived in plenty and were well content. [403]

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HOW THE POOREST BECAME THE RICHEST[94].

There was once a poor peasant, named Taland, who lived in a poor cottage in the Walserthal, a valley of Vorarlberg. He was as poor in wits as in fortune, so that he was continually making himself the laughing-stock of his neighbours; yet, as he possessed a certain sort of cunning, which fortune was pleased to favour, he got on better in the long run than many a wiser man. [404]

Plodding along steadily, and living frugally, Taland, in process of time, laid by enough money to buy a cow; and a cow he bought without even stopping to consider that he had no means of pasturing it.

The cow, however, provided for that by her own instinct; there were plenty of good pastures in the neighbourhood, and the cow was not slow to discover them. Wherever the grass was freshest and sweetest, thither she wandered, and by this token Taland had no difficulty in finding her out at milking time; and in the whole country round there was no sleeker or better-favoured animal.

But the neighbours at whose expense she fed so well in course of time grew angry; and finding remonstrance vain, they met together and determined to kill the cow; and, that none might have to bear the blame of killing her more than another, every one of them stuck his knife into her. By this means, not only was poor Taland's cow destroyed, but even the hide was riddled with holes, and so rendered useless.

Nevertheless, Taland skinned his cow, and plodded away with the hide to the nearest tanner, as if he had not the sense to be conscious that it was spoilt. The tanner was not at home, but his wife was able to decide without him, that there was no business to be done with such goods, and she sent him away with a mocking laugh, bidding him remember she dealt in hides, and not in sieves. [405]

Taland, however, had come a long way, and having no money to buy food, he begged so piteously for a morsel of refreshment, that the good wife could not refuse, and having spread a table before him with good cheer, went on about her business.

Taland, delighted with the spread, determined to do justice to it; and as he sat and ate he saw the tanner's son, an urchin full of tricks, hide himself, while his mother's back was turned, in an old corn-bin which stood before the door. He went on eating and drinking, and watching the corn-bin, and still the boy never came out, till at last, he rightly judged, he had fallen asleep. Meantime, having finished his meal, he turned to take leave of the tanner's wife; and then, as he went away, he said, quite cursorily, "If you have no use for that old corn-bin yonder—it's just the thing I want—you may as well give it to me, and you won't have sent me away empty-handed."

"What! you want that lumbering, rotten old corn-bin?" cried the tanner's wife; and she laughed more heartily than even at the riddled cow-hide. "And you would carry it all the way home on your shoulders?"

The peasant nodded a stupid assent, without speaking. [406]

"Then take it, pray, and be welcome; for I just wanted to get rid of the unsightly old rubbish!"

Taland thanked her, and loaded the chest on his shoulder, but carefully, lest he should wake the child too soon. And carefully he continued to walk along with it till the tan-yard was left far, far out of sight. Then he stopped short, and, setting the corn-bin down with a jerk calculated to wake its inmate, he holloaed out,—

"I be going to fling the old corn-bin down the precipice!"

"Stop, stop! I'm inside!" cried the child, but with a tone of conviction that he had only to ask, to be let out. This was not Taland's game, who wanted to give him a thorough frightening; so he shouted again, taking no heed of the child's voice,—

"I be going to fling the old corn-bin down the precipice!"

"Stop! stop! I tell you; I'm inside it!" repeated the boy, in a louder tone, thinking he had not made himself heard before.

"Who be you? and what be you to me?" replied Taland, in a stupid tone of indifference. "I be going to chuck the old corn-bin down the precipice."

"Oh, stop! for heaven's sake, stop!" screamed the now really affrighted child; "stop, and spare me! Only let me out, and mother will give you ever such a heap of gold!" [407]

"It's a long way back to 'mother,'" replied the peasant, churlishly. "I'd much rather chuck the old thing over, and have done with it. You're not worth enough to repay the trouble."

"Oh, but I am though!" answered the boy, in a positive tone. "There's nothing mother wouldn't give to save my life, I know!"

"What would she give, d'you think? Would she give five hundred thalers, now?"

"Ay, *that* she would!"

"Well, it's a longsome way; but if you promise I shall have five hundred thalers, I don't mind if I oblige you."

"You shall have them, safe enough, never fear!"

On this promise, Taland took the boy home, and made up a story of his surprise at finding him at the bottom of the old chest, and how hardly he had saved his life.

The mother, overjoyed at the idea of her son being restored to her under such circumstances, readily counted out the five hundred thalers, and sent Taland home a richer man than when his fortune consisted of a cow.

Elated with his good fortune, our hero determined to have a bit of fun with his spiteful neighbours, and accordingly sat himself down in an arbour, where there was a large round table, in front of the Wirthshaus, and spreading his heap of gold before him, amused himself with counting it out. Of course the sight attracted all the peasants of the place, who were just gathering for a gossip on their way home [408] from work.

“And where did you get such a heap of gold from?” asked a dozen excited voices at once.

“From the sale of the cow-hide, to be sure,” replied Taland, in an inanimate voice.

“What! the cow-hide all riddled with holes?” vociferated his interlocutors, in a chorus of ridicule.

“To be sure; that’s just what made it so valuable,” persisted Taland, confidently.

“What! the tanner gives more for a hide all full of holes than for a sound one?”

“What’s the use of asking so many silly questions?” returned the imperturbable peasant “Do you see the money? and should I have got such a sum for an ordinary cow-hide? If you can answer these two questions of mine, you can answer your own for yourselves;” and gathering up his gold, he walked away with a stolid look which defied further interrogations.

The village wiseacres were all struck with the same idea. If riddled cowhides fetched five hundred thalers apiece, the best way to make a fortune was to kill all the cows in the commune, pierce their skins all over with holes, and carry them to the tanner. Every one went home to calculate what he would make by the venture; and the morning was all too long coming, so eager were they to put their plan into execution. [409]

Taland, having now plenty of money, had nothing to do next day but to dress himself in his feast-day clothes and play at dominoes in the Bier-garten; but though this was a favourite enjoyment, far sweeter was that of observing the running hither and thither of his spiteful, mocking neighbours, slaughtering their sleek kine—the provision of their future lives—skinning them, and destroying the very skins out of which some small compensation might have been earned.

Taland hardly knew how to contain his inclination to laugh, as he saw them caught in his trap so coarsely baited; and the good landlord, as he saw the irrepressible giggle again and again convulse his stupid features, thought that the gain of the five hundred thalers had fairly turned his weak head.

The peasants had gone off to the tan-yard with their riddled cow-hides, merrily shouting and boasting; and Taland sat at home, drinking and laughing. But it was a different story by-and-by. There was a sound like the roar of a wild beast, which stopped even Taland’s inclination to laugh, and made him shrink in his chair. It was the lament of the long file of peasants returning from the tan-yard from their bootless errand, filling the air as they went along with yells of fury at their ruin, and imprecations and threats of vengeance on him who had led them into the snare. [410]

Taland had meant to have had his laugh over their discomfiture, but finding them in this mood, he thought his wisest course was to keep out of their sight, lest they should take summary vengeance on him. So he found a corner to hide himself in; and he thus overheard their debate on the means of punishing their deceiver.

“He’s such shifts for getting out of every thing, that one doesn’t know where to have him,” said the noisiest speaker; and the rest re-echoed the sentiment.

“Ay; it’ll never do to let him get scent of what we’re up to!”

“But how to avoid it?”

“Take him asleep.”

“Ay; take him when he’s asleep; that’s the way!”

“Go up the stairs and rattle at his window, and when he comes out, knock him on the head!”

“And every one have a go at him, as we did at his cow.”

“That’s the plan!”

“And the sooner the better.”

“This very night, before we go to bed!”

“To be sure; we won’t sleep tamely upon such an affront.”

“No; we’ll make an end of it, that we will!”

“And it’s time we did.”

“Another day would be unbearable!” [411]

“Another hour is bad enough; but we must keep quiet till he’s well asleep.”

“Yes; there’s nothing to be done till midnight.”

“We’ll meet again at midnight, then.”

“All right; we shall all be there!”

“Good-bye, then, till midnight!”

“Good-bye, till midnight; good-bye!”

They all spoke at once, and the whole dark plan was concocted in a few minutes; then they dispersed to their homes with resolute steps.

Taland listened to the sound with beating heart, and as soon as silence once more prevailed, he stole stealthily homewards.

His wife was sitting over her spinning-wheel.

“I’ve caught a cold wearing these holiday clothes out of their turn,” said Taland; “will you do me the favour to sleep in the window-sill, and keep that flapping shutter close, good wife?”

“With all my heart,” responded the compliant spouse; and thus disposed, they went to rest.

At midnight the villagers came, faithful to their appointment, in a strong body, and mounted the stairs[95] as quietly as might be. The foremost pushed open the shutter, and exclaimed, “Why, here’s the old idiot lying ready for us, across the window-sill!” [412]

“Then we’re spared the trouble of hunting for him,” exclaimed the next.

“So here goes!” cried all together; and they showered their blows on the devoted body of the old wife, while Taland, comfortably enveloped in his coverlet, once more laughed at the success of his deceit, and the discomfiture of his foes.

Towards morning he rose, and taking up the dead body, placed it in a chair, and bore it along, together with the old spinning-wheel, a good distance down the high road; and there he left it, while he sat behind a bush to see what would happen.

Presently a fine lord came along the road driving a noble chariot.

“Holloa, good woman! get out of the way!” shouted the lord, while yet at a considerable distance; for he thought the old woman was silly, spinning in the roadway. But the corpse moved not for his shouting.

“Holloa! holloa, I say! you’ll be killed! move, can’t you?” he cried, thinking she was deaf, and hadn’t heard his first appeal. But still the corpse moved not.

“Get out of the way! get out of the road! can’t you?” at last fairly screamed the lord; for, never dreaming but that the woman would move in time, he had not reined in his fiery steeds—and now it was all too late! On one side went the old lady in the chair, and on the other side the fragments of the spinning-wheel, while the chariot dashed wildly on between them. [413]

“What have I done?” said the lord, alighting from his chariot as soon as he could stop, and looking round him in wild despair.

“Why, you’ve run over and killed my old mother! *that’s* what you’ve done!” said Taland, emerging from his hiding-place. “And now you must come with me before the judge.”

“Really, I meant no harm,” pleaded the good lord; “I called to her to get out of the

way, and I couldn't help it if she was deaf. But I'll make you what compensation you like. What do you say to accepting my chariot full of gold, and the horses and all, to drive home with?"

"Why, if you say you couldn't help it, I suppose you *couldn't*," replied Taland. "I don't want to hurt you; and since you offer fair terms, I'm willing to accept your chariot full of gold, and the horses to drive it home. I'll square the account to your satisfaction."

So the lord took him home to his castle and filled up the chariot with gold, and put the reins in his hands, and sent him home richer and merrier than if the neighbours had never attempted his life.

When these same envious neighbours, however, saw him coming home in the chariot full of gold, driving the prancing horses quite *gravitêtisch*[96], they knew not what to make of it. And that, too, just as they were congratulating themselves that they had made an end of him! [414]

"It must be his ghost!" they cried. There was no other way of accounting for the reappearance. But as he drove nearer, there was no denying that it was his very self in flesh and blood!

"Where do you come from? where did you get all that heap of money from? and what story are you going to palm off on us this time?" were questions which were showered down on him like hail.

Taland knew how easily they let themselves be ensnared, and that the real story would do as well this time as any he could make up, so he told them exactly what had happened, and then whipped his horses into a canter which dispersed them right and left, while he drove home as *gravitêtisch* as before.

Nor was he wrong in expecting his bait to take. With one accord the peasants all went home and killed their wives, and set them, with their spinningwheels before them, all along the road. Of course, however, no lucky chance occurred such as Taland's—no file of noblemen driving lordly chariots, and silly enough to mistake the dead for the living, came by; and while Taland was rich enough to marry the best woman in the place, they had all to bury their wives and live alone in their desolated homes. [415]

To have been so tricked was indeed enough to raise their ire; and the only consolation amid their gloom was to meet and concoct some plan for taking signal and final vengeance. This was at last found. They were to seize him by night, as before; but this time they were not to beat him to death in the dark, but keep him bound till daylight, and make sure of their man, then bind him in a sack and throw him over the precipice of the Hoch Gerach.

As Taland was not by to overhear and provide against the arrangement, it was carried out to the letter this time; and all tied in a sack the struggling victim was borne along in triumph towards the Hoch Gerach. They had already passed the village of St. Gerold, and the fatal gorge forced through the wall of living rock by the incessant world-old wear of rushing torrents was nearly reached. Taland, paralyzed with fear and exhaustion, had desisted from his contortions for very weariness.

The Häusergruppe[97] of Felsenau, standing like a sentinel on guard of the narrow hollow, had yet to be passed. It was near midday, and the toil of the ascent had been great. Not one of the party objected to take a snatch of rest and a sip of brandy to give them courage to complete the deed in hand. [416]

While they sat drinking in the shade of the cottage which stood Felsenau in lieu of a Wirthshaus, Taland was left lying on a grassy bank in the sun. About the same time a goatherd, driving his flock into Bludenz to be milked, came by that way, and seeing the strangely-shaped sack with something moving inside, arrested his steps to examine into the affair. Taland, finding some one meddling with the mouth of the sack, holloaed out,—

"List'ee! I'll have nothing to do with the princess!"

"What princess?" inquired the goatherd.

"Why, the princess I was to marry. B'aint you the king?"

"What king?" again asked the goatherd, more and more puzzled.

"I can't talk while I'm stifled in here," replied Taland. "Let me out, and I'll tell you all about it."

The curious goatherd released the captive from the bag, and he told his tale as follows. “The king has got a beautiful daughter—so beautiful that such a number of suitors come after her she cannot decide between them all. At last the king got tired, and said he would decide for her; and this morning he proclaimed that whoever could bear being carried about for seven hours in this sack should have her, be he peasant or prince. So I thought I might try my luck at it as well as another; and those chaps you hear talking in the little house yonder have been [417] carrying me about for three hours, but I can’t stand more of it, and away I go;” and he looked up anxiously to see if the bait had taken; for he wanted the other to propose to get into the sack, as, if he had walked away and left it empty, he knew the villagers would pursue and overtake him. Nor was he mistaken in his calculation.

“It doesn’t seem so hard to bear,” said the goatherd, after some moments’ consideration.

“Would you like to try?” inquired Taland, anxiously; “it won’t be so bad for you, as, if you get in now, the men won’t perceive we have changed places, and you’ll get the benefit of three hours for nothing.”

“You’re really very kind!” responded the goatherd, drawing the sack over him; “I don’t know how to thank you enough. I’m sure I can stand four hours easily enough, for the sake of being reckoned a king’s son at the end. I shan’t want the goats, however, when I’m married to a princess, so pray take them at a gift—only make fast the cords of the sack so that the men may not perceive that it has been meddled with.”

Taland tied up the sack exactly as it had been before, and drove home the flock of goats.

He was scarcely out of sight when the men, now well rested, came out, and having taken up the sack again, carried it up the Hoch Gerach; and just as the unhappy [418] goatherd within fancied he was reaching the top of some high terrace leading to the royal palace, bang, bang from rock to rock he found himself dashed by the relentless villagers!

Confident that the job was now effectually completed, they trooped home full of rejoicing over their feat.

The first thing that met their eye, however, was Taland seated before his door, just as if nothing had happened, milking the goats which browsed around him, making a goodly show.

Too much awed at the sight to rush at and seize him, they once more asked him to give explanation of his unlooked-for return, and of how he became possessed of such a fine herd of goats.

“Nothing easier!” replied Taland, *gravitêtisch*. “Where shall I begin?”

“From where you were thrown over the mountain-side.”

“All right!” pursued Taland. “Well, then, as you may suppose, I struggled hard to get out of the sack, but it was too tough, and I could do nothing with it at first; but, by-and-by, from knocking against the jutting rocks again and again, it got a rent, and this rent I was able to tear open wide, so that by the time I got to the bottom there was a big hole, big enough to get out by. And where do you think I found myself when I got out? In the enchanted regions of the underground world, where [419] the sky is tenfold as blue as it is here, and the meadows tenfold as green! It was so beautiful to look at that I gladly wandered on a little space. Presently I found a way that led up home again; but I had no mind to come away from the beautiful country till I saw, climbing the rocks by the side of the path, numbers of goats, much finer than any goats we ever see in these parts.”

“So they are! so they are!” chimed in the gullible multitude.

“Then I thought it would be fine to bring a flock of such fine goats home—and, after all, it was easy to go back again when I wanted to see that deep blue sky and those rich pastures again; so home I came. Here am I, and here are the goats; and if you don’t believe I got them there, you can go and fetch some thence and compare them.”

“But shall we really find such goats if we go?” eagerly inquired the credulous villagers.

“To be sure you will—and sheep, and oxen, and cows too, without number.”

“Cows too! Oh, let’s come and supply ourselves, and make good our losses! But

first show the way you came up by.”

“Oh, it’s a long, steep, weary way, and would take you two days to get down! Much the nearest way is to jump down the side of the Hoch Gerach.” [420]

“But are you sure we shan’t hurt ourselves? Didn’t you get hurt at all?”

“Not a bit. Feel me; I’m quite sound.”

“To be sure, you couldn’t hurt falling on to such soft, beautiful meadows!” they replied; and off they set, only eager which should reach the Hoch Gerach first, and which should be the first to make the bold spring, and which should have the first pick and choice of the fair flocks and herds in the enchanted world underground!

Slap! bang! plump! they all went over the side of the Hoch Gerach, one after the other, never to return! And Taland thus alone remained to inherit the houses and goods of the whole village, all for himself—and, from being the poorest of all, became possessed of the riches of all.

THE END.

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1 “Schliess die Kammer fein,
Sonst kommt der Norg herein.”

2 The *Meierhof* was the homestead of a small proprietor standing midway between the peasant and the noble.

3 Mistress of the Meierhof.

4 Literally, “high lakes;” i. e. lakes on a high mountain level. There are three such in the valley of Matsch, the inundations of which often work sad havoc.

5 “Morgen oder Heut
Kommt die Zahlzeit.”

6 The “home of the wolves;” a nickname given to Matsch, because still infested by wolves.

7 On Midsummer-day.

8 The local names of two favourite kinds of grass.

9 St. Martin is considered the patron of mountain pastures in Tirol.

10 That the Norgs should be at one time represented as incapable of comprehending what death was, and that at another their race should be spoken of as dying out, is but one of those inconsistencies which must constantly occur when it is attempted to describe a supernatural order of things by an imagery taken from the natural order.

11 From *tarnen*, to conceal, and *Haut*, skin; a tight-fitting garment which was supposed to have the property of rendering the wearer invisible. It was likewise sometimes supposed to convey great strength also.

12 Literally, “crystal palace.” *Burg* means a palace no less than a citadel or fortress; the imperial palace in Vienna has no other name.

13 Ignaz von Zingerle, in discussing the sites which various local traditions claim for the Rosengarten of King Lareyn, or Laurin, says, “Whoever has once enjoyed the sight of the Dolomite peaks of the Schlern bathed in the rosy light of the evening glow cannot help fancying himself at once transported into the world of myths, and will be irresistibly inclined to place the fragrant Rose-garden on its strangely jagged heights, studded by nature with violet amethysts, and even now carpeted with the most exquisite mountain-flora of Tirol.”

14 Cornfield.

15 Nobleman’s residence.

16 In the mediæval poems the shade of the *Lindenbaum* is the favourite scene of gallant adventures.

17 The heroes of the old German poetry are frequently called by the epithet “sword”—*ein Degen stark*; *ein Degen hehr*; *Wittich der Degen*, &c., &c.

18 Hildebrand, son of Duke Herbrand and brother of the Monk Ilsau, one of the persons of the romance of “Kriemhild’s Rose-garden,” is the Nestor of German myths. He was the instructor of Dietrich von Bern (Theodoric of Verona). We find him sought as the wise counsellor in various undertakings celebrated in the mediæval epics; he is reputed to have lived to the age of 200 years.

19 This was commonly the office of the daughter of the house.

20 This would appear to have been the usual custom in the middle ages after a meal.

21 See note, p. 35.

22 The German legends are inclined to extol the heroism of Dietrich von Bern, better known to us as Theodoric, King of the Visigoths, who, after his conquests in Italy, built a palace at Verona, and made it his seat of government; but the traditions of Verona ascribe his great strength and success, both as a hunter and warrior, to a compact with the Evil One. His connexion with the Arians, his opposition

towards the Popes, and his violent destruction of the churches of Verona, were sufficient to convince the popular mind at his date that his strength was not from above. Procopius relates that his remorse for the death of Symmachus haunted him so, that one day when the head of a great fish was served at table, it appeared to him as the head of his murdered relative, and he became so horrified that he was never able to eat any thing afterwards. The Veronese tradition is, that by his pact with the devil, evil spirits served him in the form of dogs, horses, and huntsmen, until the time came that they drove him forth into their own abode (*Mattei Verona Illustrata*). In the church of St. Zeno at Verona this legend may be seen sculptured in bas-relief over the door. In the mythology of some parts of Germany he is identified, or confounded, with the Wild Huntsman (Börner, *Sagen aus dem Orlagau*, pp. 213, 216, 236). In the *Heldenbuch* he is called the son of an evil spirit. He is there distinguished by a fiery breath, with which he overcomes dwarfs and giants; but he is said to be ultimately carried off into the wilds by a demon-horse, upon which he has every day to fight with two terrible dragons until the Judgment Day. Nork cites a passage from Luther's works, in which he speaks of him (cursorily) as the incarnation of evil, showing how he was regarded in Germany at his day ("It is as if I should undertake to make Christ out of Dietrich von Bern"—*Als wenn ich aus Dietrich von Bern Christum machen wollte*).

23 Wigand, man of valour.

24 We often find the heroes' trusty swords called by a particular name: thus Orlando's was called *Durindarda*, it is so inscribed in his statue in the porch of the Duomo at Verona; and the name of King Arthur's will occur to every one's memory.

25 Him of Verona.

26 This hardening power of dragons' blood was one of the mediæval fables.

27 Bearing a red banner thus was equivalent to a declaration of hostile intent.

28 These it was knightly custom for the vanquished to surrender to him who had overcome him.

29 The Styrian.

30 A *Schirmschlag* was a scientifically-manœuvred stroke, by which he who dealt it concealed himself behind his shield while he aimed at any part of his adversary's body which presented an undefended mark. But Theodoric drew the stroke without even having a shield for his own defence.

31 The Norgs are not always spoken of as pagans; many stories of them seem to consider them as amenable to Christian precepts. The ancient church of the village of St. Peter, near the Castle of Tirol, is said by popular tradition to have been built by them, and under peculiar difficulties; for while they were at work, a giant who lived in Schloss Tirol used to come every night and destroy what they had done in the day, till at last they agreed to assemble in great force, and complete the whole church in one day, which they did; and then, being a complete work offered to the service of God, the giant had no more power over it.

32 It was an old German custom that no flagons or vessels of the drinks should be put on the table; but as soon as a glass was emptied it was refilled by watchful attendants.

33 *Lautertrank*, by the description of its composition, seems to have been nearly identical with our claret-cup. *Moras* was composed of the juice of mulberries mixed with good old wine.

34 Concerning Theodoric's fiery breath, see note, p. 39. All the myths about him mention it. The following description of it occurs in the legends of "Criemhild's Rosengarten:"—

> "Wie ein Haus das dampfet, wenn man es zündet an,
> So musste Dietrich rauchen, der zornige Mann.
> Man sah eine rothe Flamme geh'n aus seinem Mund."

["As a house smokes when it is set on fire, so was the breath of Theodoric, the man of great anger; a red flame might be seen darting from his mouth."]

35 The power of the Norgs to pass in and out through the rock is one of the characteristics most prominently fabled of them. Sometimes we hear of doors which opened spontaneously at their approach, but more often the marvel of their passing in and out without any apparent opening is descanted on.

36 The value and efficacy ascribed in the old myths to a virgin's blessing is one form in which the regard for maiden honour was expressed.

37 The dwarfs who were considered the genii of the mineral wealth of the country were a sub-class of the genus dwarf. Their myths are found more abundantly in North Tirol, where the chief mines were worked.

38 A deserted mine is called in local dialect *taub*.

39 Miners.

40 i.e. Joseph of Goign, a village near St. Johann. Such modes of designation are found for every one, among the people in Tirol.

41 Ann.

42 Every body wears feathers according to their fancy in their "Alpine hats" here, but in Tirol every such adornment is a distinction won by merit, whether in target-shooting, wrestling, or any other manly sport; and, like the medals of the soldier, can only be worn by those who have made good their claim.

43 *Hof*, in Tirol, denotes the proprietorship of a comfortable homestead.

44 To Spaniards the outline of a mountain-ridge suggests the edge of a saw—*sierra*; to the Tirolese

the more indented sky-line familiar to them recalls the teeth of a comb.

45 Garnets and carbuncles are found in Tirol in the Zillerthal, and the search after them has given rise to some fantastic tales—of which later.

46 Carbuncle.

47 Pray for him.

48 District.

49 Wild Georgey.

50 In some parts of Tirol where the pastures are on steep slopes, or reached by difficult paths—particularly the Zillerthal, on which the scene of the present story borders—it is the custom to decide which of the cattle is fit for the post of leader of the herd by trial of battle. The victor is afterwards marched through the commune to the sound of bells and music, and decked with garlands of flowers.

51 "Just as I wanted you."

52 Little Frederick.

53 A local expression for a village fête.

54 The old race of innkeepers in Tirol were a singularly trustworthy, honourable set, acting as a sort of elder or umpire each over his village. This is still the case in a great many valleys out of the beaten track.

55 "Have mercy on them!"

56 The cry which in South Germany is equivalent to our "hurrah!"

57 Page 76.

58 Little Elizabeth.

59 A local word in the Passeier-Thal for a poultry-maid.

60 "*Ich zeige Sie wo der Zimmermann das Loch gemacht hat.*" A Tirolese saying for, "I'll soon show you the way to the door."

61 Another form of Klein-Else: *Else*, with the diminutive, *chen*.

62 This curious name was borne by a Margrave of Istria, and three other princes at least who ruled over part of Tirol, and who figure in the authentic history of the country. It does not appear that the present story, however, is referable to traditions of the life of any of these.

63 The best public room in a Tirolese inn is so called.

64 The homestead of a peasant proprietor.

65 The local name of the holiday cap of the Sarnthaler women.

66 Lieblingsbänder.

67 *Alp* is used in Tirol for the green mountain pastures.

68 Alpine herdsman.

69 See Preface.

70 *Joch* is used in Tirol when speaking of a moderately high mountain; in most other mountain districts of Germany it means only a pass or col.

71 A high-lying range of mountain pasture-land.

72 The stories of our Lord's life on earth, treated with perfect idealism, sketching His character as He was pleased to manifest it, or His miraculous acts, pervade the popular mythology of all Catholic peoples. I have given one from Spain, by the title of "Where One can Dine, Two can Dine," in "Patrañas," of the same character as this Tirolese one; and perhaps it is not amiss to repeat the observation I felt called to make upon it,—that it would be the greatest mistake to imagine that anything like irreverence was intended in such stories. They are the simple utterances of peoples who realized so utterly and so devoutly the facts recorded in the Gospels that the circumstances of time and place ceased to occupy them at all, and who were wont to make the study of our Lord's example their rule of conduct so habitually, that to imagine Him sharing the accidents of their own daily life came more natural to them than to think of Him in the far-off East. These stories were probably either adapted from the personal traditions which the first evangelists may well be thought to have brought with them unwritten, or invented by themselves, in all good faith, as allegories, by means of which to inculcate by them upon their children the application of His maxims to their own daily acts. They demand, therefore, to be read in this spirit for the sake of the pious intention in which they are conceived, rather than criticised for their rude simplicity or their anachronisms.

73 "Praised be Jesus Christ!" This was formerly the universal greeting all over Tirol in the house or on the road, for friend or stranger, who answered, "For ever and ever. Amen." It is still in common use in many parts.

74 I must beg my readers to apply the apology contained in the note to the last story, in its measure to this one also.

75 *Sorella*, sister; with the augmentative *ona*, the bigger or elder sister.

76 The little, or younger, sister.

77 We say, "a head of celery;" in Italy they say, "a foot of celery."

78 A favourite vintage of Tirol.

79 *Arativo* and *prativo* are dialectic in Wälsch Tirol for arable and pasture land.

80 “On our right soared the implacable ridges of the Marmolata,” writes a modern traveller; “the sheer, hard smoothness of whose scarped rocks filled one with a kind of horror only to look at them.”

81 “We have hay in the stables, and more also in the meadow.”

82 Berg-Segen (literally “mountain-blessing”) is the form in which Tirol in its piety expresses the ordinary word crop.

83 See Preface.

84 Two kinds of more or less mischievous *strie*, or wild fairies.

85 “Fearless Johnny.” John is a favourite name in Wälsch Tirol, and bears some twenty or thirty variations, as Giovannazzi, Gianaselli, Gianot, Zanetto, Zanolini, Zuani, Degiampietro (John Peter), Zangiacomi (John James), &c.

86 The Latin name of the god of hell remains throughout Italy, and holds in its nurseries the place of “Old Bogie” with us.

87 “Earthly soul, stand off three paces, and tell me your grief.”

88 Vine-trellis.

89 Tapestry hanging before a door.

90 Witch.

91 A wayside cross under a little penthouse, such as is to be met at every turn of the road in Tirol.

92 The south wind, which does much mischief at certain times of the year, and is most dreaded in Vorarlberg.

93 Dialectic for a basket in Vorarlberg.

94 It has been my aim generally, in making this collection, to give the preference to those stories which have a moral point to recommend them; my readers will not, perhaps, take it amiss, however, if I present them with this specimen of a class in which this is wanting, and which aims only at amusement. It is, moreover, interesting from the strong evidence it bears of extremely remote origin; for the light way in which putting people to death, deception, and selfishness are spoken of prove it has a pre-Christian source, while the unimportant accessories show how details get modified by transmission.

95 It must be understood that it is an *outside* staircase that is here alluded to, and the shutter of an unglazed window on its landing serving for a door also.

96 In a lordly manner.

97 A cluster of houses too small to be designated a village.

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