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A WORD, ONLY A WORD

By Georg Ebers

Translated from the German by Mary J. Safford

Volume 1.

CHAPTER I.

"A word, only a word!" cried a fresh, boyish voice, then two hands were loudly clapped and a gay laugh echoed through the forest. Hitherto silence had reigned under the boughs of the pines and tops of the beeches, but now a wood-pigeon joined in the lad's laugh, and a jay, startled by the clapping of hands, spread its brown wings, delicately flecked with blue, and soared from one pine to another.

Spring had entered the Black Forest a few weeks before. May was just over, yet the weather was as sultry as in midsummer and clouds were gathering in denser and denser masses. The sun was still some distance above the horizon, but the valley was so narrow that the day star had disappeared, before making its majestic entry into the portals of night.

When it set in a clear sky, it only gilded the border of pine trees on the crest of the lofty western heights; to-day it was invisible, and the occasional, quickly interrupted twittering of the birds seemed more in harmony with the threatening clouds and sultry atmosphere than the lad's gay laughter.

Every living creature seemed to be holding its breath in anxious suspense, but Ulrich once more laughed joyously, then bracing his bare knee against a bundle of faggots, cried:

"Give me that stick, Ruth, that I may tie it up. How dry the stuff is, and how it snaps! A word! To sit over books all day long for one stupid word—that's just nonsense!"

"But all words are not alike," replied the girl.

"Piff is paff, and paff is puff!" laughed Ulrich. "When I snap the twigs, you always hear them say 'knack, knack,' and 'knack' is a word too. The juggler Caspar's magpie, can say twenty."

"But father said so," replied Ruth, arranging the dry sticks. "He toils hard, but not for gold and gain, to find the right words. You are always wanting to know what he is looking for in his big books, so I plucked up courage to ask him, and now I know. I suppose he saw I was astonished, for he smiled just as he does when you have asked some foolish question at lessons, and added that a word was no trifling thing and should not be despised, for God had made the world out of one single word."

Ulrich shook his head, and after pondering a few minutes, replied.

"Do you believe that?"

"Father said so," was the little girl's only answer. Her words expressed the firm, immovable security of childish confidence, and the same feeling sparkled in her eyes. She was probably about nine years old, and in every respect a perfect contrast to her companion, her senior by several summers, for the latter was strongly built, and from beneath his beautiful fair locks a pair of big blue eyes flashed defiance at the world, while Ruth was a delicate little creature, with slender limbs, pale cheeks, and coal-black hair.

The little girl wore a fashionably-made, though shabby dress, shoes and stockings—the boy was barefoot, and his grey doublet looked scarcely less worn than the short leather breeches, which hardly reached his knees; yet he must have had some regard for his outer man, for a red knot of real silk was fastened on his shoulder. He could scarcely be the child of a peasant or woodland laborer—the brow was too high, the nose and red lips were too delicately moulded, the bearing was too proud and free.

Ruth's last words had given him food for thought, but he left them unanswered until the last bundle of sticks was tied up. Then he said hesitatingly:

"My mother—you know.... I dare not speak of her before father, he goes into such a rage; my mother is said to be very wicked—but she never was so to me, and I long for her day after day, very, very much, as I long for nothing else. When I was so high, my mother told me a great many things, such queer things! About a man, who wanted treasures, and before whom mountains opened at a word he knew. Of course it's for such a word your father is seeking."

"I don't know," replied the little girl. "But the word out of which God made the whole earth and sky and all the stars must have been a very great one."

Ulrich nodded, then raising his eyes boldly, exclaimed:

"Ah, if he should find it, and would not keep it to himself, but let you tell me! I should know what I wanted."

Ruth looked at him enquiringly, but he cried laughingly: "I shan't tell. But what would you ask?"

"I? I should ask to have my mother able to speak again like other people. But you would wish...."

"You can't know what I would wish."

"Yes, yes. You would bring your mother back home again."

"No, I wasn't thinking of that," replied Ulrich, flushing scarlet and fixing his eyes on the ground.

"What, then? Tell me; I won't repeat it."

"I should like to be one of the count's squires, and always ride with him when he goes hunting."

"Oh!" cried Ruth. "That would be the very thing, if I were a boy like you. A squire! But if the word can do everything, it will make you lord of the castle and a powerful count. You can have real velvet clothes, with gay slashes, and a silk bed."

"And I'll ride the black stallion, and the forest, with all its stags and deer, will belong to me; as to the people down in the village, I'll show them!"

Raising his clenched fist and his eyes in menace as he uttered the words, he saw that heavy rain-drops were beginning to fall, and a thunder-shower was rising.

Hastily and skilfully loading himself with several bundles of faggots, he laid some on the little girl's shoulders, and went down with her towards the valley, paying no heed to the pouring rain, thunder or lightning; but Ruth trembled in every limb.

At the edge of the narrow pass leading to the city they stood still. The moisture was trickling down its steep sides and had gathered into a reddish torrent on the rocky bottom.

"Come!" cried Ulrich, stepping on to the edge of the ravine, where stones and sand, loosened by the wet, were now rattling down.

"I'm afraid," answered the little girl trembling. "There's another flash of lightning! Oh! dear, oh, dear! how it blazes!—oh! oh! that clap of thunder!"

She stooped as if the lightning had struck her, covered her face with her little hands, and fell on her knees, the bundle of faggots slipping to the ground. Filled with terror, she murmured as if she could command the mighty word: "Oh, Word, Word, get me home!"

Ulrich stamped impatiently, glanced at her with mingled anger and contempt, and muttering reproaches, threw her bundle and his own into the ravine, then roughly seized her hand and dragged her to the edge of the cliff.

Half-walking, half-slipping, with many an unkind word, though he was always careful to support her, the boy scrambled down the steep slope with his companion, and when they were at last standing in the water at the bottom of the gully, picked up the dripping fagots and walked silently on, carrying her burden as well as his own.

After a short walk through the running water and mass of earth and stones, slowly sliding towards the valley, several shingled roofs appeared, and the little girl uttered a sigh of relief; for in the row of shabby houses, each standing by itself, that extended from the forest to the level end of the ravine, was her own home and the forge belonging to her companion's father.

It was still raining, but the thunder-storm had passed as quickly as it rose, and twilight was already gathering over the mist-veiled houses and spires of the little city, from which the street ran to the ravine. The stillness of the evening was only interrupted by a few scattered notes of bells, the finale of the mighty peal by which the warder had just been trying to disperse the storm.

The safety of the town in the narrow forest-valley was well secured, a wall and ditch enclosed it; only the houses on the edge of the ravine were unprotected. True, the mouth of the pass was covered by the field pieces on the city wall, and the strong tower beside the gate, but it was not incumbent on the citizens to provide for the safety of the row of houses up there. It was called the Richtberg and nobody lived there except the rabble, executioners, and poor folk who were not granted the rights of citizenship. Adam, the smith, had forfeited his, and Ruth's father, Doctor Costa, was a Jew, who ought to be thankful that he was tolerated in the old forester's house.

The street was perfectly still. A few children were jumping over the mud-puddles, and an old washerwoman was putting a wooden vessel under the gutter, to collect the rain-water.

Ruth breathed more freely when once again in the street and among human beings, and soon, clinging to the hand of her father, who had come to meet her, she entered the house with him and Ulrich.

CHAPTER II.

While the boy flung the damp bundles of brushwood on the floor beside the hearth in the doctor's kitchen, a servant from the monastery was leading three horses under the rude shed in front of the smith Adam's work-shop. The stately grey-haired monk, who had ridden the strong cream-colored steed, was already standing beside the embers of the fire, pressing his hands upon the warm chimney.

The forge stood open, but spite of knocking and shouting, neither the master of the place, nor any other living soul appeared. Adam had gone out, but could not be far away, for the door leading from the shop into the sitting-room, was also unlocked.

The time was growing long to Father Benedict, so for occupation he tried to lift the heavy hammer. It was a difficult task, though he was no weakling, yet it was not hard for Adam's arm to swing and guide the burden. If only the man had understood how to govern his life as well as he managed his ponderous tool!

He did not belong to Richtberg. What would his father have said, had he lived to see his son dwell here?

The monk had known the old smith well, and he also knew many things about the son and his destiny, yet no more than rumor entrusts to one person concerning another's life. Even this was enough to explain why Adam had become so reserved, misanthropic and silent a man, though even in his youth lie certainly had not been what is termed a gay fellow.

The forge where he grew up, was still standing in the market-place of the little city below; it had belonged to his grandfather and great-grandfather. There had never been any lack of custom, to the annoyance of the wise magistrates, whose discussions were disturbed by the hammering that rang across the ill-paved square to the windows of the council-chamber; but, on the other hand, the idle hours of the watchmen under the arches of the ground-floor of the town-hall were sweetened by the bustle before the smithy.

How Adam had come from the market-place to the Richtberg, is a story speedily told.

He was the only child of his dead parents, and early learned his father's trade. When his mother died, the old man gave his son and partner his blessing, and some florins to pay his expenses, and sent him away. He went directly to Nuremberg, which the old man praised as the high-school of the smith's art, and there remained twelve years. When, at the end of that time, news came to Adam that his father was dead, and he had inherited the forge on the market-place, he wondered to find that he was thirty years old, and had gone no farther than Nuremberg. True, everything that the rest of the world could do in the art of forging might be learned there.

He was a large, heavy man, and from childhood had moved slowly and reluctantly from the place where he chanced to be.

If work was pressing, he could not be induced to leave the anvil, even when evening had closed in; if it was pleasant to sit over the beer, he remained till after the last man had gone. While working, he was as mute as the dead to everything that was passing around him; in the tavern he rarely spoke, and then said only a few words, yet the young artists, sculptors, workers in gold and students liked to see the stout drinker and good listener at the table, and the members of his guild only marvelled how the sensible fellow, who joined in no foolish pranks, and worked in such good earnest, held aloof from them to keep company with these hairbrained folk, and remained a Papist.

He might have taken possession of the shop on the market-place directly after his father's death, but could not arrange his departure so quickly, and it was fully eight months before he left Nuremberg.

On the high-road before Schwabach a wagon, occupied by some strolling performers, overtook the traveller. They belonged to the better class, for they appeared before counts and princes, and were seven in number. The father and four sons played the violin, viola and rebec, and the two daughters sang to the lute and harp. The old man invited Adam to take the eighth place in the vehicle, so he counted his pennies, and room was made for him opposite Flora, called by her family Florette. The musicians were going to the fair at Nordlingen, and the smith enjoyed himself so well with them, that he remained several days after reaching the goal of the journey. When he at last went away Florette wept, but he walked straight on until noon, without looking back. Then he lay down under a blossoming apple-tree, to rest and eat some lunch, but the lunch did not taste well; and when he shut his eyes he could not sleep, for he thought constantly of Florette. Of course! He had parted from her far too soon, and an eager longing seized upon him for the young girl, with her red lips and luxuriant hair. This hair was a perfect golden-yellow; he knew it well, for she had often combed and braided it in the tavern-room beside the straw where they all slept.

He yearned to hear her laugh too, and would have liked to see her weep again.

Then he remembered the desolate smithy in the narrow market-place and the dreary home, recollected that he was thirty years old, and still had no wife.

A little wife of his own! A wife like Florette! Seventeen years old, a complexion like milk and blood, a

creature full of gayety and joyous life! True, he was no light-hearted lad, but, lying under the apple-tree in the month of May, he saw himself in imagination living happily and merrily in the smithy by the market-place, with the fair-haired girl who had already shed tears for him. At last he started up, and because he had determined to go still farther on this day, did so, though for no other reason than to carry out the plan formed the day before. The next morning, before sunrise, he was again marching along the highway, this time not forward towards the Black Forest, but back to Nordlingen.

That very evening Florette became his betrothed bride, and the following Tuesday his wife.

The wedding was celebrated in the midst of the turmoil of the fair. Strolling players, jugglers and buffoons were the witnesses, and there was no lack of music and tinsel.

A quieter ceremony would have been more agreeable to the plain citizen and sensible blacksmith, but this purgatory had to be passed to reach Paradise.

On Wednesday he went off in a fair wagon with his young wife, and in Stuttgart bought with a portion of his savings many articles of household furniture, less to stop the gossips' tongues, of which he took no heed, than to do her honor in his own eyes. These things, piled high in a wagon of his own, he had sent into his native town as Florette's dowry, for her whole outfit consisted of one pink and one grass-green gown, a lute and a little white dog.

A delightful life now began in the smithy for Adam. The gossips avoided his wife, but they stared at her in church, and among them she seemed to him, not unjustly, like a rose amid vegetables. The marriage he had made was an abomination to respectable citizens, but Adam did not heed them, and Flora appeared to feel equally happy with him. When, before the close of the first twelvemonth after their wedding, Ulrich was born, the smith reached the summit of happiness and remained there for a whole year.

When, during that time, he stood in the bow-window amid the fresh balsam, auricular and yellow wallflowers holding his boy on his shoulder, while his wife leaned on his arm, and the pungent odor of scorched hoofs reached his nostrils, and he saw his journeyman and apprentice shoeing a horse below, he often thought how pleasant it had been pursuing the finer branches of his craft in Nuremberg, and that he should like to forge a flower again; but the blacksmith's trade was not to be despised either, and surely life with one's wife and child was best.

In the evening he drank his beer at the Lamb, and once, when the surgeon Siedler called life a miserable vale of tears, he laughed in his face and answered: "To him who knows how to take it right, it is a delightful garden."

Florette was kind to her husband, and devoted herself to her child, so long as he was an infant, with the most self-sacrificing love. Adam often spoke of a little daughter, who must look exactly like its mother; but it did not come.

When little Ulrich at last began to run about in the street, the mother's nomadic blood stirred, and she was constantly dinning it into her husband's ears that he ought to leave this miserable place and go to Augsburg or Cologne, where it would be pleasant; but he remained firm, and though her power over him was great, she could not move his resolute will.

Often she would not cease her entreaties and representations, and when she even complained that she was dying of solitude and weariness, his veins swelled with wrath, and then she was frightened, fled to her room and wept. If she happened to have a bold day, she threatened to go away and seek her own relatives. This displeased him, and he made her feel it bitterly, for he was steadfast in everything, even anger, and when he bore ill-will it was not for hours, but months, nor at such times could he be conciliated by coaxing or tears.

By degrees Florette learned to meet his discontent with a shrug of her shoulders, and to arrange her life in her own way. Ulrich was her comfort, pride and plaything, but sporting with him did not satisfy her.

While Adam was standing behind the anvil, she sat among the flowers in the bow-window, and the watchmen now looked higher up than the forge, the worthy magistrates no longer cast unfriendly glances at the smith's house, for Florette grew more and more beautiful in the quiet life she now enjoyed, and many a neighboring noble brought his horse to Adam to be shod, merely to look into the eyes of the artisan's beautiful wife.

Count von Frohlingen came most frequently of all, and Florette soon learned to distinguish the hoof-beats of his horse from those of the other steeds, and when he entered the shop, willingly found some

pretext for going there too. In the afternoons she often went with her child outside the gate, and then always chose the road leading to the count's castle. There was no lack of careful friends, who warned Adam, but he answered them angrily, so they learned to be silent.

Florette had now grown gay again, and sometimes sang like a joyous bird.

Seven years elapsed, and during the summer of the eighth a scattered troop of soldiers came to the city and obtained admission. They were quartered under the arches of the town-hall, but many also lay in the smithy, for their helmets, breast-plates and other pieces of armor required plenty of mending. The ensign, a handsome, proud young fellow, with a dainty moustache, was Adam's most constant customer, and played very kindly with Ulrich, when Florette appeared with him. At last the young soldier departed, and the very same day Adam was summoned to the monastery, to mend something in the grating before the treasury.

When he returned, Florette had vanished; "run after the ensign," people said, and they were right. Adam did not attempt to wrest her from the seducer; but a great love cannot be torn from the heart like a staff that is thrust into the ground; it is intertwined with a thousand fibres, and to destroy it utterly is to destroy the heart in which it has taken root, and with it life itself. When he secretly cursed her and called her a viper, he doubtless remembered how innocent, dear and joyous she had been, and then the roots of the destroyed affection put forth new shoots, and he saw before his mental vision ensnaring images, of which he felt ashamed as soon as they had vanished.

Lightning and hail had entered the "delightful garden" of Adam's life also, and he had been thrust forth from the little circle of the happy into the great army of the wretched.

Purifying powers dwell in undeserved suffering, but no one is made better by unmerited disgrace, least of all a man like Adam. He had done what seemed to him his duty, without looking to the right or the left, but now the stainless man felt himself dishonored, and with morbid sensitiveness referred everything he saw and heard to his own disgrace, while the inhabitants of the little town made him feel that he had been ill- advised, when he ventured to make a fiddler's daughter a citizen.

When he went out, it seemed to him—and usually unjustly—as if people were nudging each other; hands, pointing out-stretched fingers at him, appeared to grow from every eye. At home he found nothing but desolation, vacuity, sorrow, and a child, who constantly tore open the burning, gnawing wounds in his heart. Ulrich must forget "the viper," and he sternly forbade him to speak of his mother; but not a day passed on which he would not fain have done so himself.

The smith did not stay long in the house on the market-place. He wished to go to Freiburg or Ulm, any place where he had not been with her. A purchaser for the dwelling, with its lucrative business, was speedily found, the furniture was packed, and the new owner was to move in on Wednesday, when on Monday Bolz, the jockey, came to Adam's workshop from Richtberg. The man had been a good customer for years, and bought hundreds of shoes, which he put on the horses at his own forge, for he knew something about the trade. He came to say farewell; he had his own nest to feather, and could do a more profitable business in the lowlands than up here in the forest. Finally he offered Adam his property at a very low price.

The smith had smiled at the jockey's proposal, still he went to the Richtberg the very next day to see the place. There stood the executioner's house, from which the whole street was probably named. One wretched hovel succeeded another. Yonder before a door, Wilhelm the idiot, on whom the city boys played their pranks, smiled into vacancy just as foolishly as he had done twenty years ago, here lodged Kathrin, with the big goitre, who swept the gutters; in the three grey huts, from which hung numerous articles of ragged clothing, lived two families of charcoal-burners, and Caspar, the juggler, a strange man, whom as a boy he had seen in the pillory, with his deformed daughters, who in winter washed laces and in summer went with him to the fairs.

In the hovels, before which numerous children were playing, lived honest, but poor foresters. It was the home of want and misery. Only the jockey's house and one other would have been allowed to exist in the city. The latter was occupied by the Jew, Costa, who ten years before had come from a distant country to the city with his aged father and a dumb wife, and remained there, for a little daughter was born and the old man was afterwards seized with a fatal illness. But the inhabitants would tolerate no Jews among them, so the stranger moved into the forester's house on the Richtberg which had stood empty because a better one had been built deeper in the woods. The city treasury could use the rent and tax exacted from Jews and demanded of the stranger. The Jew consented to the magistrate's requirement, but as it soon became known that he pored over huge volumes all day long and pursued no business, yet paid for everything in good money, he was believed to be an alchemist and sorcerer.

All who lived here were miserable or despised, and when Adam had left the Richtberg he told himself

that he no longer belonged among the proud and unblemished and since he felt dishonored and took disgrace in the same dogged earnest, that he did everything else, he believed the people in the Richtberg were just the right neighbors for him. All knew what it is to be wretched, and many had still heavier disgrace to bear. And then! If want drove his miserable wife back to him, this was the right place for her and those of her stamp.

So he bought the jockey's house and well-supplied forge. There would be customers enough for all he could do there in obscurity.

He had no cause to repent his bargain.

The old nurse remained with him and took care of Ulrich, who thrived admirably. His own heart too grew lighter while engaged in designing or executing many an artistic piece of work. He sometimes went to the city to buy iron or coals, but usually avoided any intercourse with the citizens, who shrugged their shoulders or pointed to their foreheads, when they spoke of him.

About a year after his removal he had occasion to speak to the file-cutter, and sought him at the Lamb, where a number of Count Frolinger's retainers were sitting. Adam took no notice of them, but they began to jeer and mock at him. For a time he succeeded in controlling himself, but when red-haired Valentine went too far, a sudden fit of rage overpowered him and he felled him to the floor. The others now attacked him and dragged him to their master's castle, where he lay imprisoned for six months. At last he was brought before the count, who restored him to liberty "for the sake of Florette's beautiful eyes."

Years had passed since then, during which Adam had lived a quiet, industrious life in the Richtberg with his son. He associated with no one, except Doctor Costa, in whom he found the first and only real friend fate had ever bestowed upon him.

CHAPTER III.

Father Benedict had last seen the smith soon after his return from imprisonment, in the confessional of the monastery. As the monk in his youth had served in a troop of the imperial cavalry, he now, spite of his ecclesiastical dignity, managed the stables of the wealthy monastery, and had formerly come to the smithy in the market-place with many a horse, but since the monks had become involved in a quarrel with the city, Benedict ordered the animals to be shod elsewhere.

A difficult case reminded him of the skilful, half-forgotten artisan; and when the latter came out of the shed with a sack of coal, Benedict greeted him with sincere warmth. Adam, too, showed that he was glad to see the unexpected visitor, and placed his skill at the disposal of the monastery.

"It has grown late, Adam," said the monk, loosening the belt he was accustomed to wear when riding, which had become damp. "The storm overtook us on the way. The rolling and flashing overhead made the sorrel horse almost tear Gotz's hands off the wrists. Three steps sideways and one forward—so it has grown late, and you can't shoe the rascal in the dark."

"Do you mean the sorrel horse?" asked Adam, in a deep, musical voice, thrusting a blazing pine torch into the iron ring on the forge.

"Yes, Master Adam. He won't bear shoeing, yet he's very valuable. We have nothing to equal him. None of us can control him, but you formerly zounds!....you haven't grown younger in the last few years either, Adam! Put on your cap; you've lost your hair. Your forehead reaches down to your neck, but your vigor has remained. Do you remember how you cleft the anvil at Rodebach?"

"Let that pass," replied Adam—not angrily, but firmly. "I'll shoe the horse early to-morrow; it's too late to-day."

"I thought so!" cried the other, clasping his hands excitedly. "You know how we stand towards the citizens on account of the tolls on the bridges. I'd rather lie on thorns than enter the miserable hole. The stable down below is large enough! Haven't you a heap of straw for a poor brother in Christ? I need nothing more; I've brought food with me."

The smith lowered his eyes in embarrassment. He was not hospitable. No stranger had rested under his roof, and everything that disturbed his seclusion was repugnant to him. Yet he could not refuse; so

he answered coldly: "I live alone here with my boy, but if you wish, room can be made."

The monk accepted as eagerly, as if he had been cordially invited; and after the horses and groom were supplied with shelter, followed his host into the sitting-room next the shop, and placed his saddle-bags on the table.

"This is all right," he said, laughing, as he produced a roast fowl and some white bread. "But how about the wine? I need something warm inside after my wet ride. Haven't you a drop in the cellar?"

"No, Father!" replied the smith. But directly after a second thought occurred to him, and he added: "Yes, I can serve you."

So saying, he opened the cupboard, and when, a short time after, the monk emptied the first goblet, he uttered a long drawn "Ah!" following the course of the fiery potion with his hand, till it rested content near his stomach. His lips quivered a little in the enjoyment of the flavor; then he looked benignantly with his unusually round eyes at Adam, saying cunningly:

"If such grapes grow on your pine-trees, I wish the good Lord had given Father Noah a pine-tree instead of a vine. By the saints! The archbishop has no better wine in his cellar! Give me one little sip more, and tell me from whom you received the noble gift?"

"Costa gave me the wine."

"The sorcerer—the Jew?" asked the monk, pushing the goblet away. "But, of course," he continued, in a half-earnest, half-jesting tone, "when one considers—the wine at the first holy communion, and at the marriage of Cana, and the juice of the grapes King David enjoyed, once lay in Jewish cellars!"

Benedict had doubtless expected a smile or approving word from his host, but the smith's bearded face remained motionless, as if he were dead.

The monk looked less cheerful, as he began again "You ought not to grudge yourself a goblet either. Wine moderately enjoyed makes the heart glad; and you don't look like a contented man. Everything in life has not gone according to your wishes, but each has his own cross to bear; and as for you, your name is Adam, and your trials also come from Eve!"

At these words the smith moved his hand from his beard, and began to push the round leather cap to and fro on his bald head. A harsh answer was already on his lips, when he saw Ulrich, who had paused on the threshold in bewilderment. The boy had never beheld any guest at his father's table except the doctor, but hastily collecting his thoughts he kissed the monk's hand. The priest took the handsome lad by the chin, bent his head back, looked Adam also in the face, and exclaimed:

"His mouth, nose and eyes he has inherited from your wife, but the shape of the brow and head is exactly like yours."

A faint flush suffused Adam's cheeks, and turning quickly to the boy as if he had heard enough, he cried:

"You are late. Where have you been so long?"

"In the forest with Ruth. We were gathering faggots for Dr. Costa."

"Until now?"

"Rahel had baked some dumplings, so the doctor told me to stay."

"Then go to bed now. But first take some food to the groom in the stable, and put fresh linen on my bed. Be in the workshop early to-morrow morning, there is a horse to be shod."

The boy looked up thoughtfully and replied: "Yes, but the doctor has changed the hours; to-morrow the lesson will begin just after sunrise, father."

"Very well, we'll do without you. Good-night then."

The monk followed this conversation with interest and increasing disapproval, his face assuming a totally different expression, for the muscles between his nose and mouth drew farther back, forming with the underlip an angle turning inward. Thus he gazed with mute reproach at the smith for some time, then pushed the goblet far away, exclaiming with sincere indignation:

"What doings are these, friend Adam? I'll let the Jew's wine pass, and the dumplings too for aught I care, though it doesn't make a Christian child more pleasing in the sight of God, to eat from the same

dish with those on whom the Saviour's innocent blood rests. But that you, a believing Christian, should permit an accursed Jew to lead a foolish lad. . . ."

"Let that pass," said the smith, interrupting the excited monk; but the latter would not be restrained, and only continued still more loudly and firmly: "I won't be stopped. Was such a thing ever heard of? A baptized Christian, who sends his own son to be taught by the infidel soul-destroyer!"

"Hear me, Father!"

"No indeed. It's for you to hear—you! What was I saying? For you, you who seek for your poor child a soul-destroying infidel as teacher. Do you know what that is? A sin against the Holy Ghost—the worst of all crimes. Such an abomination! You will have a heavy penance imposed upon you in the confessional."

"It's no sin—no abomination!" replied the smith defiantly.

The angry blood mounted into the monk's cheeks, and he cried: threateningly: "Oho! The chapter will teach you better to your sorrow. Keep the boy away from the Jew, or"

"Or?" repeated the smith, looking Father Benedict steadily in the face.

The latter's lips curled still more deeply, as after a pause, he replied: "Or excommunication and a fitting punishment will fall upon you and the vagabond doctor. Tit for tat. We have grown tender-hearted, and it is long since a Jew has been burned for an example to many."

These words did not fail to produce an effect, for though Adam was a brave man, the monk threatened him with things, against which he felt as powerless as when confronted with the might of the tempest and the lightning flashing from the clouds. His features now expressed deep mental anguish, and stretching out his hands repellently towards his guest, he cried anxiously "No, no! Nothing more can happen to me. No excommunication, no punishment, can make my present suffering harder to bear, but if you harm the doctor, I shall curse the hour I invited you to cross my threshold."

The monk looked at the other in surprise and answered in a more gentle tone: "You have always walked in your own way, Adam; but whither are you going now? Has the Jew bewitched you, or what binds you to him, that you look, on his account, as if a thunderbolt had struck you? No one shall have cause to curse the hour he invited Benedict to be his guest. See your way clearly once more, and when you have come to your senses—why, we monks have two eyes, that we may be able to close one when occasion requires. Have you any special cause for gratitude to Costa?"

"Many, Father, many !" cried the smith, his voice still trembling with only too well founded anxiety for his friend. "Listen, and when you know what he has done for me, and are disposed to judge leniently, do not carry what reaches your ears here before the chapter no, Father— I beseech you—do not. For if it should be I, by whom the doctor came to ruin, I—I...." The man's voice failed, and his chest heaved so violently with his gasping breath, that his stout leathern apron rose and fell.

"Be calm, Adam, be calm," said the monk, soothingly answering his companion's broken words. "All shall be well, all shall be well. Sit down, man, and trust me. What is the terrible debt of gratitude you owe the doctor?"

Spite of the other's invitation, the smith remained standing and with downcast eyes, began:

"I am not good at talking. You know how I was thrown into a dungeon on Valentine's account, but no one can understand my feelings during that time. Ulrich was left alone here among this miserable rabble with nobody to care for him, for our old maid-servant was seventy. I had buried my money in a safe place and there was nothing in the house except a loaf of bread and a few small coins, barely enough to last three days. The child was always before my eyes; I saw him ragged, begging, starving. But my anxiety tortured me most, after they had released me and I was going back to my house from the castle. It was a walk of two hours, but each one seemed as long as St. John's day. Should I find Ulrich or not? What had become of him? It was already dark, when I at last stood before the house. Everything was as silent as the grave, and the door was locked. Yet I must get in, so I rapped with my fingers, and then pounded with my fist on the door and shutters, but all in vain. Finally Spittelorle— [A nickname; literally: "Hospital Loura."]—came out of the red house next mine, and I heard all. The old woman had become idiotic, and was in the stocks. Ulrich was at the point of death, and Doctor Costa had taken him home. When I heard this, I felt the same as you did just now; anger seized upon me, and I was as much ashamed as if I were standing in the pillory. My child with the Jew! There was not much time for reflection, and I set off at full speed for the doctor's house. A light was shining through the window. It was high above the street, but as it stood open and I am tall, I could look in and see over the whole room. At the right side, next the wall, was a bed, where amid the white pillows lay my boy. The doctor sat by his side, holding the child's hand in his. Little Ruth nestled to him, asking: 'Well, father?'

The man smiled. Do you know him, Pater? He is about thirty years old, and has a pale, calm face. He smiled and said so gratefully, so-so joyously, as if Ulrich were his own son: 'Thank God, he will be spared to us!' The little girl ran to her dumb mother, who was sitting by the stove, winding yarn, exclaiming:

'Mother, he'll get well again. I have prayed for him every day.' The Jew bent over my child and pressed his lips upon the boy's brow—and I, I—I no longer clenched my fist, and was so overwhelmed with emotion, that I could not help weeping, as if I were still a child myself, and since then, Pater Benedictus, since...." He paused; the monk rose, laid his hand on the smith's shoulder, and said:

"It has grown late, Adam. Show me to my couch. Another day will come early to-morrow morning, and we should sleep over important matters. But one thing is settled, and must remain so—under all circumstances: the boy is no longer to be taught by the Jew. He must help you shoe the horses to-morrow. You will be reasonable!"

The smith made no reply, but lighted the monk to the room where he and his son usually slept. His own couch was covered with fresh linen for the guest—Ulrich already lay in his bed, apparently asleep.

"We have no other room to give you," said Adam, pointing to the boy; but the monk was content with his sleeping companions, and after his host had left him, gazed earnestly at Ulrich's fresh, handsome face.

The smith's story had moved him, and he did not go to rest at once, but paced thoughtfully up and down the room, stepping lightly, that he might not disturb the child's slumber.

Adam had reason to be grateful to the man, and why should there not be good Jews?

He thought of the patriarchs, Moses, Solomon, and the prophets, and had not the Saviour himself, and John and Paul, whom he loved above all the apostles, been the children of Jewish mothers, and grown up among Jews? And Adam! the poor fellow had had more than his share of trouble, and he who believes himself deserted by God, easily turns to the devil. He was warned now, and the mischief to his son must be stopped once for all. What might not the child hear from the Jew, in these times, when heresy wandered about like a roaring lion, and sat by all the roads like a siren. Only by a miracle had this secluded valley been spared the evil teachings, but the peasants had already shown that they grudged the nobles the power, the cities the rich gains, and the priesthood the authority and earthly possessions, bestowed on them by God. He was disposed to let mildness rule, and spare the Jew this time—but only on one condition.

When he took off his cowl, he looked for a hook on which to hang it, and while so doing, perceived on the shelf a row of boards. Taking one down, he found a sketch of an artistic design for the enclosure of a fountain, done by the smith's hand, and directly opposite his bed a linden-wood panel, on which a portrait was drawn with charcoal. This roused his curiosity, and, throwing the light of the torch upon it, he started back, for it was a rudely executed, but wonderfully life-like head of Costa, the Jew. He remembered him perfectly, for he had met him more than once.

The monk shook his head angrily, but lifted the picture from the shelf and examined more closely the doctor's delicately-cut nose, and the noble arch of the brow. While so doing, he muttered unintelligible words, and when at last, with little show of care, he restored the modest work of art to its old place, Ulrich awoke, and, with a touch of pride, exclaimed:

"I drew that myself, Father!"

"Indeed!" replied the monk. "I know of better models for a pious lad. You must go to sleep now, and to-morrow get up early and help your father. Do you understand?"

So saying, with no gentle hand he turned the boy's head towards the wall. The mildness awakened by Adam's story had all vanished to the winds.

Adam allowed his son to practise idolatry with the Jew, and make pictures of him. This was too much. He threw himself angrily on his couch, and began to consider what was to be done in this difficult matter, but sleep soon brought his reflections to an end.

Ulrich rose very early, and when Benedict saw him again in the light of the young day, and once more looked at the Jew's portrait, drawn by the handsome boy, a thought came to him as if inspired by the saints themselves—the thought of persuading the smith to give his son to the monastery.

CHAPTER IV.

This morning Pater Benedictus was a totally different person from the man, who had sat over the wine the night before. Coldly and formally he evaded the smith's questions, until the latter had sent his son away.

Ulrich, without making any objection, had helped his father shoe the sorrel horse, and in a few minutes, by means of a little stroking over the eyes and nose, slight caresses, and soothing words, rendered the refractory stallion as docile as a lamb. No horse had ever resisted the lad, from the time he was a little child, the smith said, though for what reason he did not know. These words pleased the monk, for he was only too familiar with two fillies, that were perfect fiends for refractoriness, and the fair-haired boy could show his gratitude for the schooling he received, by making himself useful in the stable.

Ulrich must go to the monastery, so Benedictus curtly declared with the utmost positiveness, after the smith had finished his work. At midsummer a place would be vacant in the school, and this should be reserved for the boy. A great favor! What a prospect—to be reared there with aristocratic companions, and instructed in the art of painting. Whether he should become a priest, or follow some worldly pursuit, could be determined later. In a few years the boy could choose without restraint.

This plan would settle everything in the best possible way. The Jew need not be injured, and the smith's imperiled son would be saved. The monk would hear no objections. Either the accusation against the doctor should be laid before the chapter, or Ulrich must go to the school.

In four weeks, on St. John's Day, so Benedictus declared, the smith and his son might announce their names to the porter. Adam must have saved many florins, and there would be time enough to get the lad shoes and clothes, that he might hold his own in dress with the other scholars.

During this whole transaction the smith felt like a wild animal in the hunter's toils, and could say neither "yes" nor "no." The monk did not insist upon a promise, but, as he rode away, flattered himself that he had snatched a soul from the claws of Satan, and gained a prize for the monastery-school and his stable—a reflection that made him very cheerful.

Adam retrained alone beside the fire. Often, when his heart was heavy, he had seized his huge hammer and deadened his sorrow by hard work; but to-day he let the tool lie, for the consciousness of weakness and lack of will paralyzed his lusty vigor, and he stood with drooping head, as if utterly crushed. The thoughts that moved him could not be exactly expressed in words, but doubtless a vision of the desolate forge, where he would stand alone by the fire without Ulrich, rose before his mind. Once the idea of closing his house, taking the boy by the hand, and wandering out into the world with him, flitted through his brain. But then, what would become of the Jew, and how could he leave this place? Where would his miserable wife, the accursed, lovely sinner, find him, when she sought him again? Ulrich had run out of doors long ago. Had he gone to study his lessons with the Jew? He started in terror at the thought. Passing his hands over his eyes, like a dreamer roused from sleep, he went into his chamber, threw off his apron, cleansed his face and hands from the soot of the forge, put on his burgher dress, which he only wore when he went to church or visited the doctor, and entered the street.

The thunder-storm had cleared the air, and the sun shone pleasantly on the shingled roofs of the miserable houses of the Richtberg. Its rays were reflected from the little round window-panes, and flickered over the tree-tops on the edge of the ravine.

The light-green hue of the fresh young foliage on the beeches glittered as brightly against the dark pines, as if Spring had made them a token of her mastery over the grave companions of Winter; yet even the pines were not passed by, and where her finger had touched the tips of the branches in benediction, appeared tender young shoots, fresh as the grass by the brook, and green as chrysope and emerald.

The stillness of morning reigned within the forest, yet it was full of life, rich in singing, chirping and twittering. Light streamed from the blue sky through the tree-tops, and the golden sunbeams shimmered and danced over the branches, trunks and ground, as if they had been prisoned in the woods and could never find their way out. The shadows of the tall trunks lay in transparent bars on the underbrush, luxuriant moss, and ferns, and the dew clung to the weeds and grass.

Nature had celebrated her festival of resurrection at Easter, and the day after the morrow joyous Whitsuntide would begin. Fresh green life was springing from the stump of every dead tree; even the rocks afforded sustenance to a hundred roots, a mossy covering and network of thorny tendrils clung

closely to them. The wild vine twined boldly up many a trunk, fruit was already forming on the bilberry bushes, though it still glimmered with a faint pink hue amid the green of May. A thousand blossoms, white, red, blue and yellow, swayed on their slender stalks, opened their calices to the bees, unfolded their stars to deck the woodland carpet, or proudly stretched themselves up as straight as candles. Grey fungi had shot up after the refreshing rain, and gathered round the red-capped giants among the mushrooms. Under, over and around all this luxuriant vegetation hopped, crawled, flew, fluttered, buzzed and chirped millions of tiny, short-lived creatures. But who heeds them on a sunny Spring morning in the forest, when the birds are singing, twittering, trilling, pecking, cooing and calling so joyously? Murmuring and plashing, the forest stream dashed down its steep bed over rocks and amid moss-covered stones and smooth pebbles to the valley. The hurrying water lived, and in it dwelt its gay inhabitants, fresh plants grew along the banks from source to mouth, while over and around it a third species of living creatures sunned themselves, fluttered, buzzed and spun delicate silk threads.

In the midst of a circular clearing, surrounded by dense woods, smoked a charcoal kiln. It was less easy to breathe here, than down in the forest below. Where Nature herself rules, she knows how to guard beauty and purity, but where man touches her, the former is impaired and the latter sullied.

It seemed as if the morning sunlight strove to check the smoke from the smouldering wood, in order to mount freely into the blue sky. Little clouds floated over the damp, grassy earth, rotting tree-trunks, piles of wood and heaps of twigs that surrounded the kiln. A moss-grown but stood at the edge of the forest, and before it sat Ulrich, talking with the coal-burner. People called this man "Hangemarx," and in truth he looked in his black rags, like one of those for whom it is a pity that Nature should deck herself in her Spring garb. He had a broad, peasant face, his mouth was awry, and his thick yellowish-red hair, which in many places looked washed out or faded, hung so low over his narrow forehead, that it wholly concealed it, and touched his bushy, snow-white brows. The eyes under them needed to be taken on trust, they were so well concealed, but when they peered through the narrow chink between the rows of lashes, not even a mote escaped them. Ulrich was shaping an arrow, and meantime asking the coal-burner numerous questions, and when the latter prepared to answer, the boy laughed heartily, for before Hangemarx could speak, he was obliged to straighten his crooked mouth by three jerking motions, in which his nose and cheeks shared.

An important matter was being discussed between the two strangely dissimilar companions.

After it grew dark, Ulrich was to come to the charcoal-burner again. Marx knew where a fine buck couched, and was to drive it towards the boy, that he might shoot it. The host of the Lamb down in the town needed game, for his Gretel was to be married on Tuesday. True, Marx could kill the animal himself, but Ulrich had learned to shoot too, and if the place whence the game came should be noised abroad, the charcoal-burner, without any scruples of conscience, could swear that he did not shoot the buck, but found it with the arrow in its heart.

People called the charcoal-burner a poacher, and he owed his ill-name of "Hangemarx" to the circumstance that once, though long ago, he had adorned a gallows. Yet he was not a dishonest man, only he remembered too faithfully the bold motto, which, when a boy, one peasant wood-cutter or charcoal-burner whispered to another:

"Forest, stream and meadow are free."

His dead father had joined the Bundschuh,—[A peasants' league which derived its name from the shoe, of peculiar shape, worn by its members.]—adopted this motto, and clung fast to it and with it, to the belief that every living thing in the forest belonged to him, as much as to the city, the nobles, or the monastery. For this faith he had undergone much suffering, and owed to it his crooked mouth and ill name, for just as his beard was beginning to grow, the father of the reigning count came upon him, just after he had killed a fawn in the "free" forest. The legs of the heavy animal were tied together with ropes, and Marx was obliged to take the ends of the knot between his teeth like a bridle, and drag the carcass to the castle. While so doing his cheeks were torn open, and the evil deed neither pleased him nor specially strengthened his love for the count. When, a short time after, the rebellion broke out in Stuhlingen, and he heard that everywhere the peasants were rising against the monks and nobles, he, too, followed the black, red and yellow banner, first serving with Hans Muller of Bulgenbach, then with Jacklein Rohrbach of Bockingen, and participating with the multitude in the overthrow of the city and castle of Neuenstein. At Weinsberg he saw Count Helfenstein rush upon the spears, and when the noble countess was driven past him to Heilbronn in the dung-cart, he tossed his cap in the air with the rest.

The peasant was to be lord now; the yoke of centuries was to be broken; unjust imposts, taxes, tithes and villenage would be forever abolished, while the fourth of the twelve articles he had heard read aloud more than once, remained firmly fixed in his memory "Game, birds and fish every one is free to catch." Moreover, many a verse from the Gospel, unfavorable to the rich, but promising the kingdom of

heaven to the poor, and that the last shall be first, had reached his ears. Doubtless many of the leaders glowed with lofty enthusiasm for the liberation of the poor people from unendurable serfdom and oppression; but when Marx, and men like him, left wife and children and risked their lives, they remembered only the past, and the injustice they had suffered, and were full of a fierce yearning to trample the dainty, torturing demons under their heavy peasant feet.

The charcoal-burner had never lighted such bright fires, never tasted such delicious meat and spicy wine, as during that period of his life, while vengeance had a still sweeter savor than all the rest. When the castle fell, and its noble mistress begged for mercy, he enjoyed a foretaste of the promised paradise. Satan has also his Eden of fiery roses, but they do not last long, and when they wither, put forth sharp thorns. The peasants felt them soon enough, for at Sindelfingen they found their master in Captain Georg Truchsess of Waldberg.

Marx fell into his troopers' hands and was hung on the gallows, but only in mockery and as a warning to others; for before he and his companions perished, the men took them down, cut their oath-fingers from their hands, and drove them back into their old servitude. When he at last returned home, his house had been taken from his family, whom he found in extreme poverty. The father of Adam, the smith, to whom he had formerly sold charcoal, redeemed the house, gave him work, and once, when a band of horsemen came to the city searching for rebellious peasants, the old man did not forbid him to hide three whole days in his barn.

Since that time everything had been quiet in Swabia, and neither in forest, stream nor meadow had any freedom existed.

Marx had only himself to provide for; his wife was dead, and his sons were raftsmen, who took pine logs to Mayence and Cologne, sometimes even as far as Holland. He owed gratitude to no one but Adam, and showed in his way that he was conscious of it, for he taught Ulrich all sorts of things which were of no advantage to a boy, except to give him pleasure, though even in so doing he did not forget his own profit. Ulrich was now fifteen, and could manage a cross-bow and hit the mark like a skilful hunter, and as the lad did not lack a love for the chase, Marx afforded him the pleasure. All he had heard about the equal rights of men he engrafted into the boy's soul, and when to-day, for the hundredth time, Ulrich expressed a doubt whether it was not stealing to kill game that belonged to the count, the charcoal-burner straightened his mouth, and said:

"Forest, stream and meadow are free. Surely you know that."

The boy gazed thoughtfully at the ground for a time, and then asked:

"The fields too?"

"The fields?" repeated Marx, in surprise. "The fields? The fields are a different matter." He glanced as he spoke, at the field of oats he had sown in the autumn, and which now bore blades a finger long. "The fields are man's work and belong to him who tills them, but the forest, stream and meadow were made by God. Do you understand? What God created for Adam and Eve is everybody's property."

As the sun rose higher, and the cuckoo began to raise its voice, Ulrich's name was shouted loudly several times in rapid succession through the forest. The arrow he had been shaping flew into a corner, and with a hasty "When it grows dusk, Marxle!" Ulrich dashed into the woods, and soon joined his playmate Ruth.

The pair strolled slowly through the forest by the side of the stream, enjoying the glorious morning, and gathering flowers to carry a bouquet to the little girl's mother. Ruth culled the blossoms daintily with the tips of her fingers; Ulrich wanted to help, and tore the slender stalks in tufts from the roots by the handful. Meantime their tongues were not idle. Ulrich boastfully told her that Pater Benedictus had seen his picture of her father, recognized it instantly, and muttered something over it. His mother's blood was strong in him; his imaginary world was a very different one from that of the narrow-minded boys of the Richtberg.

His father had told him much, and the doctor still more, about the wide, wide world-kings, artists and great heroes. From Hangemarx he learned, that he possessed the same rights and dignity as all other men, and Ruth's wonderful power of imagination peopled his fancy with the strangest shapes and figures. She made royal crowns of wreaths, transformed the little hut, the lad had built of boughs, behind the doctor's house, into a glittering imperial palace, converted round pebbles into ducats and golden zechins—bread and apples into princely banquets; and when she had placed two stools before the wooden bench on which she sat with Ulrich her fancy instantly transformed them into a silver coronation coach with milk-white steeds. When she was a fairy, Ulrich was obliged to be a magician; if she was the queen, he was king.

When, to give vent to his animal spirits, Ulrich played with the Richtberg boys, he always led them, but allowed himself to be guided by little Ruth. He knew that the doctor was a despised Jew, that she was a Jewish child; but his father honored the Hebrew, and the foreign atmosphere, the aristocratic, secluded repose that pervaded the solitary scholar's house, exerted a strange influence over him.

When he entered it, a thrill ran through his frame; it seemed as if he were penetrating into some forbidden sanctuary. He was the only one of all his playfellows, who was permitted to cross this threshold, and he felt it as a distinction, for, in spite of his youth, he realized that the quiet doctor, who knew everything that existed in heaven and on earth, and yet was as mild and gentle as a child, stood far, far above the miserable drudges, who struggled with sinewy hands for mere existence on the Richtberg. He expected everything from him, and Ruth also seemed a very unusual creature, a delicate work of art, with whom he, and he only, was allowed to play.

It might have happened, that when irritated he would upbraid her with being a wretched Jewess, but it would scarcely have surprised him, if she had suddenly stood before his eyes as a princess or a phoenix.

When the Richtberg lay close beneath them, Ruth sat down on a stone, placing her flowers in her lap. Ulrich threw his in too, and, as the bouquet grew, she held it towards him, and he thought it very pretty; but she said, sighing:

"I wish roses grew in the forest; not common hedgeroses, but like those in Portugal—full, red, and with the real perfume. There is nothing that smells sweeter."

So it always was with the pair. Ruth far outstripped Ulrich in her desires and wants, thus luring him to follow her.

"A rose!" repeated Ulrich. "How astonished you look!"

Her wish reminded him of the magic word she had mentioned the day before, and they talked about it all the way home, Ulrich saying that he had waked three times in the night on account of it. Ruth eagerly interrupted him, exclaiming:

"I thought of it again too, and if any one would tell me what it was, I should know what to wish now. I would not have a single human being in the world except you and me, and my father and mother."

"And my little mother!" added Ulrich, earnestly.

"And your father, too!"

"Why, of course, he, too!" said the boy, as if to make hasty atonement for his neglect.

CHAPTER V.

The sun was shining brightly on the little windows of the Israelite's sitting-room, which were half open to admit the Spring air, though lightly shaded with green curtains, for Costa liked a subdued light, and was always careful to protect his apartment from the eyes of passers-by.

There was nothing remarkable to be seen, for the walls were whitewashed, and their only ornament was a garland of lavender leaves, whose perfume Ruth's mother liked to inhale. The whole furniture consisted of a chest, several stools, a bench covered with cushions, a table, and two plain wooden arm-chairs.

One of the latter had long been the scene of Adam's happiest hours, for he used to sit in it when he played chess with Costa.

He had sometimes looked on at the noble game while in Nuremberg; but the doctor understood it thoroughly, and had initiated him into all its rules.

For the first two years Costa had remained far in advance of his pupil, then he was compelled to defend himself in good earnest, and now it not unfrequently happened that the smith vanquished the scholar. True, the latter was much quicker than the former, who if the situation became critical, pondered over it an unconscionably long time.

Two hands more unlike had rarely met over a chess-board; one suggested a strong, dark plough-ox, the other a light, slender-limbed palfrey. The Israelite's figure looked small in contrast with the smith's gigantic frame. How coarse-grained, how heavy with thought the German's big, fair head appeared, how delicately moulded and intellectual the Portuguese Jew's.

To-day the two men had again sat down to the game, but instead of playing, had been talking very, very earnestly. In the course of the conversation the doctor had left his place and was pacing restlessly to and fro. Adam retained his seat.

His friend's arguments had convinced him. Ulrich was to be sent to the monastery-school. Costa had also been informed of the danger that threatened his own person, and was deeply agitated. The peril was great, very great, yet it was hard, cruelly hard, to quit this peaceful nook. The smith understood what was passing in his mind, and said:

"It is hard for you to go. What binds you here to the Richtberg?"

"Peace, peace!" cried the other. "And then," he added more calmly, "I have gained land here."

"You?"

"The large and small graves behind the executioner's house, they are my estates."

"It is hard, hard to leave them," said the smith, with drooping head. "All this comes upon you on account of the kindness you have shown my boy; you have had a poor reward from us."

"Reward?" asked the other, a subtle smile hovering around his lips. "I expect none, neither from you nor fate. I belong to a poor sect, that does not consider whether its deeds will be repaid or not. We love goodness, set a high value on it, and practise it, so far as our power extends, because it is so beautiful. What have men called good? Only that which keeps the soul calm. And what is evil? That which fills it with disquiet. I tell you, that the hearts of those who pursue virtue, though they are driven from their homes, hunted and tortured like noxious beasts, are more tranquil than those of their powerful persecutors, who practise evil. He who seeks any other reward for virtue, than virtue itself, will not lack disappointment. It is neither you nor Ulrich, who drives me hence, but the mysterious ancient curse, that pursues my people when they seek to rest; it is, it is... Another time, to-morrow. This is enough for to-day."

When the doctor was alone, he pressed his hand to his brow and groaned aloud. His whole life passed before his mind, and he found in it, besides terrible suffering, great and noble joys, and not an hour in which his desire for virtue was weakened. He had spent happy years here in the peace of his simple home, and now must again set forth and wander on and on, with nothing before his eyes save an uncertain goal, at the end of a long, toilsome road. What had hitherto been his happiness, increased his misery in this hour. It was hard, unspeakably hard, to drag his wife and child through want and sorrow, and could Elizabeth, his wife, bear it again?

He found her in the tiny garden behind the house, kneeling before a flower-bed to weed it. As he greeted her pleasantly, she rose and beckoned to him.

"Let us sit down," he said, leading her to the bench before the hedge, that separated the garden from the forest. There he meant to tell her, that they must again shake the dust from their feet.

She had lost the power of speech on the rack in Portugal, and could only falter a few unintelligible words, when greatly excited, but her hearing had remained, and her husband understood how to read the expression of her eyes. A great sorrow had drawn a deep line in the high, pure brow, and this also was eloquent; for when she felt happy and at peace it was scarcely perceptible, but if an anxious or sorrowful mood existed, the furrow contracted and deepened. To-day it seemed to have entirely disappeared. Her fair hair was drawn plainly and smoothly, over her temples, and the slender, slightly stooping figure, resembled a young tree, which the storm has bowed and deprived of strength and will to raise itself.

"Beautiful!" she exclaimed in a smothered tone, with much effort, but her bright glance clearly expressed the joy that filled her soul, as she pointed to the green foliage around her and the blue sky over their heads.

"Delicious-delicious!" he answered, cordially. "The June day is reflected in your dear face. You have learned to be contented here?"

Elizabeth nodded eagerly, pressing both hands upon her heart, while her eloquent glance told him

how well, how grateful and happy, she felt here; and when in reply to his timid question, whether it would be hard for her to leave this place and seek another, a safer home, she gazed at first in surprise, then anxiously into his face, and then, with an eager gesture of refusal, gasped "Not go—not go!" He answered, soothingly:

"No, no; we are still safe here to-day!"

Elizabeth knew her husband, and had keen eyes; a presentiment of approaching danger seized upon her. Her features assumed an expression of terrified expectation and deep grief. The furrow in her brow deepened, and questioning glances and gestures united with the "What?—what?" trembling on her lips.

"Do not fear!" he replied, tenderly. "We must not spoil the present, because the future might bring something that is not agreeable to us."

As he uttered the words, she pressed closely to him, clutching his arm with both hands, but he felt the rapid throbbing of her heart, and perceived by the violent agitation expressed in every feature, what deep, unconquerable horror was inspired by the thought of being compelled to go out into the world again, hunted from country to country, from town to town. All that she had suffered for his sake, came back to his memory, and he clasped her trembling hands in his with passionate fervor. It seemed as if it would be very, very easy, to die with her, but wholly impossible to thrust her forth again into a foreign land and to an uncertain fate; so, kissing her on her eyes, which were dilated with horrible fear, he exclaimed, as if no peril, but merely a foolish wish had suggested the desire to roam:

"Yes, child, it is best here. Let us be content with what we have. We will stay!—yes, we will stay!" Elizabeth drew a long breath, as if relieved from an incubus, her brow became smooth, and it seemed as if the dumb mouth joined the large upraised eyes in uttering an "Amen," that came from the inmost depths of the heart.

Costa's soul was saddened and sorely troubled, when he returned to the house and his writing-table. The old maid-servant, who had accompanied him from Portugal, entered at the same time, and watched his preparations, shaking her head. She was a small, crippled Jewess, a grey-haired woman, with youthful, bright, dark eyes, and restless hands, that fluttered about her face with rapid, convulsive gestures, while she talked.

She had grown old in Portugal, and contracted rheumatism in the unusual cold of the North, so even in Spring she wrapped her head in all the gay kerchiefs she owned. She kept the house scrupulously neat, understood how to prepare tempting dishes from very simple materials, and bought everything she needed for the kitchen. This was no trifling matter for her, since, though she had lived more than nine years in the black Forest, she had learned few German words. Even these the neighbors mistook for Portuguese, though they thought the language bore some distant resemblance to German. Her gestures they understood perfectly.

She had voluntarily followed the doctor's father, yet she could not forgive the dead man, for having brought her out of the warm South into this horrible country. Having been her present master's nurse, she took many liberties with him, insisting upon knowing everything that went on in the household, of which she felt herself the oldest, and therefore the most distinguished member; and it was strange how quickly she could hear when she chose, spite of her muffled ears!

To-day she had been listening again, and as her master was preparing to take his seat at the table and sharpen his goose-quill, she glanced around to see that they were entirely alone; then approached, saying in Portuguese:

"Don't begin that, Lopez. You must listen to me first."

"Must I?" he asked, kindly.

"If you don't choose to do it, I can go!" she answered, angrily. "To be sure, sitting still is more comfortable than running."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Do you suppose yonder books are the walls of Zion? Do you feel inclined to make the monks' acquaintance once more?"

"Fie, fie, Rahel, listening again? Go into the kitchen!"

"Directly! Directly! But I will speak first. You pretend, that you are only staying here to please your wife, but it's no such thing. It's yonder writing that keeps you. I know life, but you and your wife are

just like two children. Evil is forgotten in the twinkling of an eye, and blessing is to come straight from Heaven, like quails and manna. What sort of a creature have your books made you, since you came with the doctor's hat from Coimbra? Then everybody said: 'Lopez, Senor Lopez. Heavenly Father, what a shining light he'll be!' And now! The Lord have mercy on us! You work, work, and what does it bring you? Not an egg; not a rush! Go to your uncle in the Netherlands. He'll forget the curse, if you submit! How many of the zechins, your father saved, are still left?"

Here the doctor interrupted the old woman's torrent of speech with a stern "enough!" but she would not allow herself to be checked, and continued with increasing volubility.

"Enough, you say? I fret over perversity enough in silence. May my tongue wither, if I remain mute to-day. Good God! child, are you out of your senses? Everything has been crammed into your poor head, but to be sure it isn't written in the books, that when people find out what happened in Porto, and that you married a baptized child, a Gentile, a Christian girl....."

At these words the doctor rose, laid his hands on the servant's shoulder, and said with grave, quiet earnestness.

"Whoever speaks of that, may betray it; may betray it. Do you understand me, Rahel? I know your good intentions, and therefore tell you: my wife is content here, and danger is still far away. We shall stay. And besides: since Elizabeth became mine, the Jews avoid me as an accursed, the Christians as a condemned man. The former close the doors, the latter would fain open them; the gates of a prison, I mean. No Portuguese will come here, but in the Netherlands there is more than one monk and one Jew from Porto, and if any of them recognize me and find Elizabeth with me, it will involve no less trifle than her life and mine. I shall stay here; you now know why, and can go to your kitchen."

Old Rahel reluctantly obeyed, yet the doctor did not resume his seat at the writing-table, but for a long time paced up and down among his books more rapidly than usual.

CHAPTER VI.

St. John's day was close at hand. Ulrich was to go to the monastery the following morning. Hitherto Father Benedict had been satisfied, and no one molested the doctor. Yet the tranquillity, which formerly exerted so beneficial an effect, had departed, and the measures of precaution he now felt compelled to adopt, like everything else that brought him into connection with the world, interrupted the progress of his work.

The smith was obliged to provide Ulrich with clothing, and for this purpose went with the lad and a well-filled purse, not to his native place, but to the nearest large city.

There many a handsome suit of garments hung in the draper's windows, and the barefooted boy blushed crimson with delight, when he stood before this splendid show. As he was left free to choose, he instantly selected the clothes a nobleman had ordered for his son, and which, from head to foot, were blue on one side and yellow on the other. But Adam pushed them angrily aside. Ulrich's pleasure in the gay stuff reminded him of his wife's outfit, the pink and green gowns.

So he bought two dark suits, which fitted the lad's erect figure as if moulded upon him, and when the latter stood before him in the inn, neatly dressed, with shoes on his feet, and a student's cap on his head, Adam could not help gazing at him almost idolatrously.

The tavern-keeper whispered to the smith, that it was long since he had seen so handsome a young fellow, and the hostess, after bringing the beer, stroked the boy's curls with her wet hand.

On reaching home, Adam permitted his son to go to the doctor's in his new clothes; Ruth screamed with joy when she saw him, walked round and round him, and curiously felt the woollen stuff of the doublet and its blue slashes, ever and anon clapping her hands in delight.

Her parents had expected that the parting would excite her most painfully, but she smiled joyously into her playmate's face, when he bade her farewell, for she took the matter in her usual way, not as it really was, but as she imagined it to be. Instead of the awkward Ulrich of the present, the fairy-prince he was now to become stood before her; he was to return without fail at Christmas, and then how delightful it would be to play with him again. Of late they had been together even more than usual,

continually seeking for the word, and planning a thousand delightful things he was to conjure up for her, and she for him and others.

It was the Sabbath, and on this day old Rahel always dressed the child in a little yellow silk frock, while on Sunday her mother did the same. The gown particularly pleased Ulrich's eye, and when she wore it, he always became more yielding and obeyed her every wish. So Ruth rejoiced that it chanced to be the Sabbath, and while she passed her hand over his doublet, he stroked her silk dress.

They had not much to say to each other, for their tongues always faltered in the presence of others. The doctor gave Ulrich many an admonitory word, his wife kissed him, and as a parting remembrance hung a small gold ring, with a glittering stone, about his neck, and old Rahel gave him a kerchief full of freshly-baked cakes to eat on his way.

At noon on St. John's day, Ulrich and his father stood before the gate of the monastery. Servants and mettled steeds were waiting there, and the porter, pointing to them, said: "Count Frohlinger is within."

Adam turned pale, pressed his son so convulsively to his breast that he groaned with pain, sent a laybrother to call Father Benedict, confided his child to him, and walked towards home with drooping head.

Hitherto Ulrich had not known whether to enjoy or dread the thought of going to the monastery-school. The preparations had been pleasant enough, and the prospect of sharing the same bench with the sons of noblemen and aristocratic citizens, flattered his unity; but when he saw his father depart, his heart melted and his eyes grew wet. The monk, noticing this, drew him towards him, patted his shoulder, and said: "Keep up your courage! You will see that it is far pleasanter with us, than down in the Richtberg."

This gave Ulrich food for thought, and he did not glance around as the Father led him up the steep stairs to the landing-place, and past the refectory into the court-yard.

Monks were pacing silently up and down the corridors that surrounded it, and one after another raised his shaven head higher over his white cowl, to cast a look at the new pupil.

Behind the court-yard stood the stately, gable-roofed building containing the guest-rooms, and between it and the church lay the school-garden, a meadow planted with fruit trees, separated from the highway by a wall.

Benedictus opened the wooden gate, and pushed Ulrich into the playground.

The noise there had been loud enough, but at his entrance the game stopped, and his future companions nudged each other, scanning him with scrutinizing glances.

The monk beckoned to several of the pupils, and made them acquainted with the smith's son, then stroking Ulrich's curls again, left him alone with the others.

On St. John's day the boys were given their liberty and allowed to play to their hearts' content.

They took no special notice of Ulrich, and after having stared sufficiently and exchanged a few words with him, continued their interrupted game of trying to throw stones over the church roof.

Meantime Ulrich looked at his comrades.

There were large and small, fair and dark lads among them, but not one with whom he could not have coped. To this point his scrutiny was first directed.

At last he turned his attention to the game. Many of the stones, that had been thrown, struck the slates on the roof; not one had passed over the church. The longer the unsuccessful efforts lasted, the more evident became the superior smile on Ulrich's lips, the faster his heart throbbed. His eyes searched the grass, and when he had discovered a flat, sharp-edged stone, he hurriedly stooped, pressed silently into the ranks of the players, and bending the upper part of his body far back, summoned all his strength, and hurled the stone in a beautiful curve high into the air.

Forty sparkling eyes followed it, and a loud shout of joy rang out as it vanished behind the church roof. One alone, a tall, thin, black-haired lad, remained silent, and while the others were begging Ulrich to throw again, searched for a stone, exerted all his power to equal the 11 "greenhorn," and almost succeeded. Ulrich now sent a second stone after the first, and, again the cast was successful. Dark-browed Xaver instantly seized a new missile, and the contest that now followed so engrossed the attention of all, that they saw and heard nothing until a deep voice, in a firm, though not unkind tone, called: "Stop, boys! No games must be played with the church."

At these words the younger boys hastily dropped the stones they had gathered, for the man who had shouted, was no less a personage than the Lord Abbot himself.

Soon the lads approached to kiss the ecclesiastic's hand or sleeve, and the stately priest, who understood how to guide those subject to him by a glance of his dark eyes, graciously and kindly accepted the salutation.

"Grave in office, and gay in sport" was his device. Count von Frohlinger, who had entered the garden with him, looked like one whose motto runs: "Never grave and always gay."

The nobleman had not grown younger since Ulrich's mother fled into the world, but his eyes still sparkled joyously and the brick-red hue that tinged his handsome face between his thick white moustache and his eyes, announced that he was no less friendly to wine than to fair women. How well his satin clothes and velvet cloak became him, how beautifully the white puffs were relieved against the deep blue of his dress! How proudly the white and yellow plumes arched over his cap, and how delicate were the laces on his collar and cuffs! His son, the very image of the handsome father, stood beside him, and the count had laid his hand familiarly on his shoulder, as if he were not his child, but a friend and comrade.

"A devil of a fellow!" whispered the count to the abbot. "Did you see the fair-haired lad's throw? From what house does the young noble come?"

The prelate shrugged his shoulders, and answered smiling:

"From the smithy at Richtberg."

"Does he belong to Adam?" laughed the other. "Zounds! I had a bitter hour in the confessional on his mother's account. He has inherited the beautiful Florette's hair and eyes; otherwise he looks like his father. With your permission, my Lord Abbot, I'll call the boy."

"Afterwards, afterwards," replied the superior of the monastery in a tone of friendly denial, which permitted no contradiction. "First tell the boys, what we have decided?"

Count Frohlinger bowed respectfully, then drew his son closer to his side, and waited for the boys, to whom the abbot beckoned.

As soon as they had gathered in a group before him, the nobleman exclaimed:

"You have just bid this good-for-nothing farewell. What should you say, if I left him among you till Christmas? The Lord Abbot will keep him, and you, you...."

But he had no time to finish the sentence. The pupils rushed upon him, shouting:

"Stay here, Philipp! Count Lips must stay!"

One little flaxen-headed fellow nestled closely to his regained protector, another kissed the count's hand, and two larger boys seized Philipp by the arm and tried to drag him away from his father, back into their circle.

The abbot looked on at the tumult kindly, and bright tear-drops ran down into the old count's beard, for his heart was easily touched. When he recovered his composure, he exclaimed:

"Lips shall stay, you rogues; he shall stay! And the Lord Abbot has given you permission, to come with me to-day to my hunting-box and light a St. John's fire. There shall be no lack of cakes and wine."

"Hurrah! hurrah! Long live the count!" shouted the pupils, and all who had caps tossed them into the air. Ulrich was carried away by the enthusiasm of the others; and all the evil words his father had so lavishly heaped on the handsome, merry gentleman—all Hangemarx's abuse of knights and nobles were forgotten.

The abbot and his companion withdrew, but as soon as the boys knew that they were unobserved, Count Lips cried:

"You fellow yonder, you greenhorn, threw the stone over the roof. I saw it. Come here. Over the roof? That should be my right. Whoever breaks the first window in the steeple, shall be victor."

The smith's son felt embarrassed, for he shrank from the mischief and feared his father and the abbot. But when the young count held out his closed hands, saying: "If you choose the red stone, you shall throw first," he pointed to his companion's right hand, and, as it concealed the red pebble, began the contest. He threw the stone, and struck the window. Amid loud shouts of exultation from the boys,

more than one round pane of glass, loosened from the leaden casing, rattled in broken fragments on the church roof, and from thence fell silently on the grass. Count Lips laughed aloud in his delight, and was preparing to follow Ulrich's example, but the wooden gate was pushed violently open, and Brother Hieronymus, the most severe of all the monks, appeared in the playground. The zealous priest's cheeks glowed with anger, terrible were the threats he uttered, and declaring that the festival of St. John should not be celebrated, unless the shameless wretch, who had blasphemously shattered the steeple window, confessed his fault, he scanned the pupils with rolling eyes.

Young Count Lips stepped boldly forward, saying beseechingly:

"I did it, Father—unintentionally! Forgive me!"

"You?" asked the monk, his voice growing lower and more gentle, as he continued: "Folly and wantonness without end! When will you learn discretion, Count Philipp? But as you did it unintentionally, I will let it pass for to-day."

With these words, the monk left the court-yard; and as soon as the gate had closed behind him, Ulrich approached his generous companion, and said in a tone that only he could hear, yet grateful to the inmost depths of his heart:

"I will repay you some day."

"Nonsense!" laughed the young count, throwing his arm over the shoulder of the artisan's son. "If the glass wouldn't rattle, I would throw now; but there's another day coming to-morrow."

CHAPTER VII.

Autumn had come. The yellow leaves were fluttering about the school play-ground, the starlings were gathering in flocks on the church roof to take their departure, and Ulrich would fain have gone with them, no matter where. He could not feel at home in the monastery and among his companions. Always first in Richtberg, he was rarely so here, most seldom of all in school, for his father had forbidden the doctor to teach him Latin, so in that study he was last of all.

Often, when every one was asleep, the poor lad sat studying by the ever-burning lamp in the lobby, but in vain. He could not come up with the others, and the unpleasant feeling of remaining behind, in spite of the most honest effort, spoiled his life and made him irritable.

His comrades did not spare him, and when they called him "horse-boy," because he was often obliged to help Pater Benedictus in bringing refractory horses to reason, he flew into a rage and used his superior strength.

He stood on the worst terms of all with black-haired Xaver, to whom he owed the nickname.

This boy's father was the chief magistrate of the little city, and was allowed to take his son home with him at Michaelmas.

When the black-haired lad returned, he had many things to tell, gathered from half-understood rumor, about Ulrich's parents. Words were now uttered, that brought the blood to Ulrich's cheeks, yet he intentionally pretended not to hear them, because he dared not contradict tales that might be true. He well knew who had brought all these stories to the others, and answered Xaver's malicious spite with open enmity.

Count Lips did not trouble himself about any of these things, but remained Ulrich's most intimate friend, and was fond of going with him to see the horses. His vivacious intellect joyously sympathized with the smith's son, when he told him about Ruth's imaginary visions, and often in the play-ground he went apart with Ulrich from their companions; but this very circumstance was a thing that many, who had formerly been on more intimate terms with the aristocratic boy, were not disposed to forgive the new-comer.

Xaver had never been friendly to the count's son, and succeeded in irritating many against their former favorite, because he fancied himself better than they, and still more against Ulrich, who was half a servant, yet presumed to play the master and offer them violence.

The monks employed in the school soon noticed the ill terms, on which the new pupil stood with his companions, and did not lack reasons for shaking their heads over him.

Benedictus had not been able to conceal, who had been Ulrich's teacher in Richtberg; and the seeds the Jew had planted in the boy, seemed to be bearing strange and vexatious fruit.

Father Hieronymus, who instructed the pupils in religion, fairly raged, when he spoke of the destructive doctrines, that haunted the new scholar's head.

When, soon after Ulrich's reception into the school, he had spoken of Christ's work of redemption, and asked the boy: "From what is the world to be delivered by the Saviour's suffering?" the answer was: "From the arrogance of the rich and great." Hieronymus had spoken of the holy sacraments, and put the question: "By what means can the Christian surely obtain mercy, unless he bolts the door against it—that is, commits a mortal sin?" and Ulrich's answer was: "By doing unto others, what you would have others do unto you."

Such strange words might be heard by dozens from the boy's lips. Some were repeated from Hangemarx's sayings, others from the doctor's; and when asked where he obtained them, he quoted only the latter, for the monks were not to be allowed to know anything about his intercourse with the poacher.

Sharp reproofs and severe penances were now bestowed, for many a word that he had thought beautiful and pleasing in the sight of God; and the poor, tortured young soul often knew no help in its need.

He could not turn to the dear God and the Saviour, whom he was said to have blasphemed, for he feared them; but when he could no longer bear his grief, discouragement, and yearning, he prayed to the Madonna for help.

The image of the unhappy woman, about whom he had heard nothing but ill words, who had deserted him, and whose faithlessness gave the other boys a right to jeer at him, floated before his eyes, with that of the pure, holy Virgin in the church, brought by Father Lukas from Italy.

In spite of all the complaints about him, which were carried to the abbot, the latter thought him a misguided, but good and promising boy, an opinion strengthened by the music-teacher and the artist Lukas, whose best pupil Ulrich was; but they also were enraged against the Jew, who had lured this nobly-gifted child along the road of destruction; and often urged the abbot, who was anything but a zealot, to subject him to an examination by torture.

In November, the chief magistrate was summoned, and informed of the heresies with which the Hebrew had imperiled the soul of a Christian child.

The wise abbot wished to avoid anything, that would cause excitement, during this time of rebellion against the power of the Church, but the magistrate claimed the right to commence proceedings against the doctor. Of course, he said, sufficient proof must be brought against the accused. Father Hieronymus might note down the blasphemous tenets he heard from the boy's lips before witnesses, and at the Advent season the smith and his son would be examined.

The abbot, who liked to linger over his books, was glad to know that the matter was in the hands of the civil authorities, and enjoined Hieronymus to pay strict attention.

On the third Sunday in Advent, the magistrate again came to the monastery. His horses had worked their way with the sleigh through the deep snow in the ravine with much difficulty, and, half-frozen, he went directly to the refectory and there asked for his son.

The latter was lying with a bandaged eye in the cold dormitory, and when his father sought him, he heard that Ulrich had wounded him.

It would not have needed Xaver's bitter complaints, to rouse his father to furious rage against the boy who had committed this violence, and he was by no means satisfied, when he learned that the culprit had been excluded for three weeks from the others' sports, and placed on a very frugal diet. He went furiously to the abbot.

The day before (Saturday), Ulrich had gone at noon, without the young count, who was in confinement for some offence, to the snow-covered play-ground, where he was attacked by Xaver and a dozen of his comrades, pushed into a snow-bank, and almost suffocated. The conspirators had stuffed icicles and snow under his clothes next his skin, taken off his shoes and filled them with snow, and meantime Xaver jumped upon his back, pressing his face into the snow till Ulrich lost his breath, and

believed his last hour had come.

Exerting the last remnant of his strength, he had succeeded in throwing off and seizing his tormentor. While the others fled, he wreaked his rage on the magistrate's son to his heart's content, first with his fists, and then with the heavy shoe that lay beside him. Meantime, snowballs had rained upon his body and head from all directions, increasing his fury; and as soon as Xaver no longer struggled he started up, exclaiming with glowing cheeks and upraised fists:

"Wait, wait, you wicked fellows! The doctor in Richtberg knows a word, by which he shall turn you all into toads and rats, you miserable rascals!"

Xaver had remembered this speech, which he repeated to his father, cleverly enlarged with many a false word. The abbot listened to the magistrate's complaint very quietly.

The angry father was no sufficient witness for him, yet the matter seemed important enough to send for and question Ulrich, though the meal-time had already begun. The Jew had really spoken to his daughter about the magic word, and the pupil of the monastery had threatened his companions with it. So the investigation might begin.

Ulrich was led back to the prison-chamber, where some thin soup and bread awaited him, but he touched neither. Food and drink disgusted him, and he could neither work nor sit still.

The little bell, which, summoned all the occupants of the monastery, was heard at an unusual hour, and about vespers the sound of sleigh-bells attracted him to the window. The abbot and Father Hieronymus were talking in undertones to the magistrate, who was just preparing to enter his sleigh.

They were speaking of him and the doctor, and the pupils had just been summoned to bear witness against him. No one had told him so, but he knew it, and was seized with such anxiety about the doctor, that drops of perspiration stood on his brow.

He was clearly aware that he had mingled his teacher's words with the poacher's blasphemous sayings, and also that he had put the latter into the mouth of Ruth's father.

He was a traitor, a liar, a miserable scoundrel!

He wished to go to the abbot and confess all, yet dared not, and so the hours stole away until the time for the evening mass.

While in church he strove to pray, not only for himself but for the doctor, but in vain, he could think of nothing but the trial, and while kneeling with his hands over his eyes, saw the Jew in fetters before him, and he himself at the trial in the town-hall.

At last the mass ended.

Ulrich rose. Just before him hung the large crucifix, and the Saviour on the cross, who with his head bowed on one side, usually gazed so gently and mournfully upon the ground, to-day seemed to look at him with mingled reproach and accusation.

In the dormitory, his companions avoided him as if he had the plague, but he scarcely noticed it.

The moonlight and the reflection from the snow shone brightly through the little window, but Ulrich longed for darkness, and buried his face in the pillows. The clock in the steeple struck ten.

He raised himself and listened to the deep breathing of the sleepers on his right and left, and the gnawing of a mouse under the bed.

His heart throbbed faster and more anxiously, but suddenly seemed to stand still, for a low voice had called his name.

"Ulrich!" it whispered again, and the young count, who lay beside him, rose in bed and bent towards him. Ulrich had told him about the word, and often indulged in wishes with him, as he had formerly done with Ruth. Philipp now whispered:

"They are going to attack the doctor. The abbot and magistrate questioned us, as if it were a matter of life and death. I kept what I know about the word to myself, for I'm sorry for the Jew, but Xaver, spiteful fellow, made it appear as if you really possessed the spell, and just now he came to me and said his father would seize the Jew early to-morrow morning, and then he would be tortured. Whether they will hang or burn him is the question. His life is forfeited, his father said—and the black-visaged rascal rejoiced over it."

"Sileutium, turbatores!" cried the sleepy voice of the monk in charge, and the boys hastily drew back into the feathers and were silent.

The young count soon fell asleep again, but Ulrich buried his head still deeper among the pillows; it seemed as if he saw the mild, thoughtful face of the man, from whom he had received so much affection, gazing reproachfully at him; then the dumb wife appeared before his mind, and he fancied her soft hand was lovingly stroking his cheeks as usual. Ruth also appeared, not in the yellow silk dress, but clad in rags of a beggar, and she wept, hiding her face in her mother's lap.

He groaned aloud. The clock struck eleven. He rose and listened. Nothing stirred, and slipping on his clothes, he took his shoes in his hand and tried to open the window at the head of his bed. It had stood open during the day, but the frost fastened it firmly to the frame. Ulrich braced his foot against the wall and pulled with all his strength, but it resisted one jerk after another; at last it suddenly yielded and flew open, making a slight creaking and rattling, but the monk on guard did not wake, only murmured softly in his sleep.

The boy stood motionless for a time, holding his breath, then swung himself upon the parapet and looked out. The dormitory was in the second story of the monastery, above the rampart, but a huge bank of snow rose beside the wall, and this strengthened his courage.

With hurrying fingers he made the sign of the cross, a low: "Mary, pray for me," rose from his lips, then he shut his eyes and risked the leap.

There was a buzzing, roaring sound in his ears, his mother's image blended in strange distortion with the Jew's, then an icy sea swallowed him, and it seemed as if body and soul were frozen. But this sensation overpowered him only a few minutes, then working his way out of the mass of snow, he drew on his shoes, and dashed as if pursued by a pack of wolves, down the mountain, through the ravine, across the heights, and finally along the river to the city and the Richtberg.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

He was steadfast in everything, even anger

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A WORD, ONLY A WORD — VOLUME 01 ***

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