

AUERBACH BERTHOLD

JOSEPH IN THE SNOW,
AND THE CLOCKMAKER.
IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

Berthold Auerbach

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The Clockmaker. In
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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST NAIL KNOCKED IN, PEACE IN THE HOUSE, AND THE FIRST SUNDAY GUEST

Next day Annele seemed quite satisfied again with Franzl – she was such a capital servant, and Annele said: "I have not yet given you any thing, Franzl; do you prefer a gown or money?"

"I should like money best."

"There are two crown dollars for you."

Lenz was very much pleased when Franzl told him this – she is a spoiled, hasty, dear, good child, thought he – and Franzl's idea was: "She is like our young bailiff's wife at home, of whom the balancemaker's wife once said: She has always seven visitors in her head, but only six chairs, so one must always stand, or walk about, while the others are sitting down." Lenz laughed, and Franzl continued: "We Kunslingers are sharp enough, but see how nicely your wife has already put every thing into order; any one else would have taken three days to complete it, and stumbled at least seventeen times, and broken half the things into the bargain. Your wife is not left-handed."

Lenz told Annele that Franzl declared she had two right hands, and Annele was delighted with this praise. Annele now displayed a new qualification. Lenz begged her to put in a nail in the wall above his father's file. She hit the nail straight on the head, and Lenz hung up his mother's picture on the first nail that Annele had knocked in at home. "So far well," said Lenz. "Even if it is not quite her own face, still these are her own eyes, which, please God, shall look down on a peaceful, good, and happy life in this house. Let us always live, so that my mother can gaze at us with satisfaction."

Annele was on the point of saying: "Oh! pray don't make a pattern saint of the good woman;" but she gulped it down.

The whole week – it was now only Wednesday – was kept like a half holiday; Lenz worked for a couple of hours, but, apparently, only to remind him of his calling; and he was always in better spirits after he had been busy at work. The various events, during the marriage festivities, were naturally recalled and commented on. It was certainly not a little amusing to hear the way in which Annele could imitate and quiz them all. The landladies of the "Bear," the "Lamb" and the "Eagle," were to the very life; Faller in particular she could take off exactly, in the way in which he constantly stroked his moustaches, till one could almost have believed that there were the same appendages on Annele's pretty mocking face. She intended no malice in these tricks – but she enjoyed any kind of fun, and was always well amused at the Carnival merry making, and now nothing but good humour shone forth, and she exclaimed: "Oh! how agreeable it is here in the hills, and how still and quiet! I had no idea that there could be such perfect peace. When I am seated here, and see and hear nothing of the world, and have no one to give an answer to, I almost feel as if I were sleeping with my eyes open – and sleeping pleasantly too; below there, it is like being constantly in a busy mill; up here, it is like another existence: I think I could actually hear my heart beat. I will not go down into the village for the next fortnight; I will accustom myself by degrees to give up going there, and it will be no hardship to me; they have no idea below there what enjoyment there is in being out of the bustle, and strife, and tumult of life. Oh Lenz, I don't think you know how fortunate you have been all your life!"

Annele was seated one morning beside Lenz, uttering all these exclamations of happiness and contentment, and the husband replied, with a glad face: "This is just as it should be; I knew you would like this house; and, believe me, I feel thankful to God, and to my parents, that I have been permitted to pass my life hitherto here. But, my dear little wife, we must not remain here for fourteen days, cut off from everybody. At all events, we must go to church together next Sunday; indeed, I think that we ought to go to see your parents for a little today."

"Just as you like; and, fortunately, we don't take with us the delightful peace we enjoy here, but we find it awaiting us when we come home again. I cannot realize that I have been here so short a time, it seems to me as if I had lived up here all my life; indeed, such quiet, happy hours count for as much as years elsewhere."

"You explain everything so well, you are so clever. Recall this feeling, if the day comes when you find it dull up here. Those people, who would not believe that you could be happy in solitude, will be surprised."

"Who refused to believe that? No doubt it was Pilgrim, that great artist: a pretty fellow he is; if he does not find angels, he immediately fancies them devils; but, I tell you fairly, he shall never come under this roof."

"Pilgrim said nothing of the sort. Why will you persist in having some particular person to hate? My mother said a hundred times over, the only way to have peace of mind, is to think well of your fellow creatures. I wish she had lived even a year longer, that you might have profited by her wisdom. Was it not well said? You understand everything. When we hate a man, or know that we have an enemy – I never knew the feeling but once in my life and it was terrible indeed – we feel, no matter where we go, or where we are, that an invisible pistol is aimed at our heads. My greatest happiness is, that I hate no one, and no one so far as I know, hates me."

Annele had not listened very attentively to this speech; she only asked: "Who said it then, pray, if it was not Pilgrim?"

"No one, in fact, but I often thought so myself, I own."

"I don't believe that: some one must have put it into your head; but it was very silly in you to tell me of it. I could repeat to you equally, what people said about you; people whom you would little suspect! You have your detractors also, just like other people; but I know better than to irritate you by detailing such foolish talk."

"You only say this to pay me off. Well, I deserve it, and now we are quits, so let us be cheerful again. The whole world is nothing to us now; you and I form our whole world."

And both were indeed as happy as possible, and Franzl, in the kitchen, was often seen moving her lips, which was her habit when she was thinking of any particular subject, and on this occasion she thought thus: "God be praised! it is all as it should be, and this is just the way in which Anton and I would have lived together, if he had not proved false, and married a black woman."

On Sunday morning, Lenz said: "I quite forgot to tell you, that I had invited a guest to dinner today – I suppose you have no objection."

"No; who is it?"

"My worthy friend, Pilgrim."

"You ought to invite your uncle also, it is only proper to do so."

"I thought of it repeatedly, but it is better not; I know his ways."

The church bells in the valley began to ring out, and Lenz said: "Is not that pleasant? My mother said a thousand times, that as we cannot hear the bells themselves, but only the echo from the wood behind our house, it is as if the melody came direct from heaven."

"Quite so," said Annele, "but it is time for us to set off." On the way she began: "Lenz, I do not ask through curiosity, but I am your wife, so you ought to tell me everything, and I promise you faithfully, by that solemn peal we are listening to, that I will never divulge it."

"You need make no vows – never do so, for I have a great objection to strong asseverations. What do you wish to know?"

"Well then, your uncle and you spoke in so obscure a manner on our wedding-day: what did you settle together about your inheritance?"

"Nothing at all: we never spoke one word together on the subject."

"And yet it seemed from your manner that it was all signed and sealed."

"I only said that my uncle and I understood each other; and so we do – we never speak about such things – he can do as he likes with his own."

"And you helped him out of his dilemma; for he was fairly beset and could not have escaped – such an occasion will never come again. He ought to have settled on us, I mean on you, a handsome sum."

"I cannot bear strangers interfering in family matters. I am in no difficulty, and even if he leaves me nothing I can earn what I require myself."

Annele was silent; but it was not a melody like that of the bells, now resounding in clear tones through hill and dale, that filled her heart.

They went on together in comparative silence to church, and afterwards, before going home, they paid a visit to Annele's parents.

Not far from their own meadow. Pilgrim shouted out behind them: – "Include a poor soul in your Paradise." Both laughed and turned round. Pilgrim was very merry on the road, and still more so at table. It was strange that Pilgrim, who had spoken so severely of Annele, now seized every opportunity of praising her. He was anxious to make Lenz forget what he had once said of her, and to make him feel his happiness now secure. After he was gone, Lenz said: —

"I never enjoyed my dinner more than today. What can be better in the world, than to be occupied with your work, and to have plenty to eat and drink, and a dear wife, and a dear friend to keep you company?"

"Pilgrim is certainly very amusing," replied Annele.

"I am also so glad," continued Lenz, "that you have fairly converted him. He was not very fond of you, but he is very different now; you are a witch; you can do what you will with every one."

Annele made no answer, and Lenz repented having told her this as there was no need to do so; but honesty never does harm. He therefore repeated that Annele must feel particular pleasure, in having so entirely changed one who had formerly undervalued her.

Still Annele did not say a word; but she had many a triumph yet in store for her, as she never missed an opportunity, either now or hereafter, of showing Lenz how bad, and wicked, and cunning, and false all men are.

"I never knew that the world was so bad. I have lived like a child," said Lenz, modestly; and Annele continued: —

"But, Lenz, I have seen the world in your place, and become acquainted with hundreds of men in the course of our traffic, I have seen and heard how they talk, as soon as any one turns his back whom they have made a great fuss with, and how they laugh at him for placing any faith in the existence of cordial words, and honest speech. I can tell you more than if you had travelled for ten years yourself."

"But of what use is it?" asked Lenz. "I don't see that such knowledge can do any good. If we go on our straight path, the world round us may be bad enough, but it can do us no harm; besides there are a great many good and upright men: – but you are right, the daughter of a landlord is at home among strangers – you know that, and told me so on that evening when we were first engaged. It must be a relief to you to have now a real home, where no one has a right to come in, and be as free and easy as he pleases, by ordering a pint of wine, and be as disagreeable as possible to other people."

"Oh! no doubt," answered Annele, but no longer so well pleased, for she felt annoyed again that Lenz should not consider her past life a happy one. He might consequently imagine that it was through him she first knew happiness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ANCIENT HEIRLOOMS ARE DISMISSED, AND A NEW TONE PREVAILS IN THE MORGENHALDE

The bridal week, and many other weeks and months have passed away, about which there is not much to relate. Annele laughed at Lenz almost every morning, for he could never reconcile himself to the Landlady of the "Lion" sending up fresh baked white bread to his house from the village. It was not so much the luxury itself; but that people should accustom themselves to such indulgences, filled him with astonishment. In many other things too it was evident, that Annele had wants and habits which, to Lenz, seemed only suited to holidays and festivals. On this account she, of course, thought herself very superior to him, and blamed the inexperience that did not understand how to make life twice as agreeable at the same cost; and, in truth, everything in the household was now far better of its kind, without the expense being increased. From the very same flour, she baked far better bread than was formerly in the house. But along with her good management she was often petulant, and during the spring months she was constantly complaining and saying: —

"Good heavens! the wind up on the hill is so high, I often think it will blow down the house about our ears."

"But, my dear Annele, I can't prevent it blowing. Besides, that is the reason the air here is so pure and healthy. All men live to a good old age here, and you need have no fears about our house; it will endure for generations yet to come, for it is constructed of entire trunks of trees which will last for our great-grandchildren."

When the snow melted, and rushing streams filled the usually dry channels, and Lenz rejoiced in it, she complained that the deafening and incessant noise prevented her sleeping.

"You often, however, during the winter, used to say how much you disliked the deathlike stillness up here; that you never heard the sound of a carriage, or saw either horsemen or pedestrians going past — now you have noise enough."

Annele looked at Lenz with no very pleasant expression, and went out to Franzl in the kitchen and wept. Franzl went to Lenz and exhorted him not to contradict his wife, as it was neither good for her, in her present situation, nor for himself.

Lenz led a quiet yet busy life, and when he succeeded in producing a good tone in his instruments, he would say: —

"Just listen, Annele, how pure that note is; it is just like a bell;" and she answered: —

"What care I? it's no affair of mine. I fear, I sadly fear, that you make a mistake about your work; you spend too much time over it; it can never pay you. To succeed, a man must be quick, and sharp, and not fritter away his time."

"Annele, I must understand that best."

"If you do, then, don't talk to me on the subject. I can only speak as I understand the thing to be. If you want to have a milliner's doll to listen to you, go to the doctor's, and borrow one of his daughters; they have pretty red lips, and never speak a word."

The days passed quietly, and Spring, that now burst forth with such gladness on the earth, seemed to bring fresh life with its pure breezes, to the Morgenhalde also. The Landlady often came up to visit them, and enjoyed the bright sunshine on the hill. The Landlord was scarcely ever visible. He had become more gruff than ever. Annele evidently cared less to be with her parents, and clung with greater affection than ever to Lenz; indeed, she often went with him on Sunday mornings, and holiday evenings, to the wood, where her husband had put up a bench on his father-in-law's property, and there they used to sit happily together, and Lenz said: —

"Listen to that bird! that is a genuine musician; he does not ask if anyone is listening to him, but he warbles his song for himself and his wife, and so do I also."

Lenz sung sweetly in the echoing wood, and Annele replied: —

"You are quite right, and you ought to leave the Choral Society; it is no longer a fitting place for you: as a bachelor, Faller and the rest of them might quite well be your companions, but now that you are married, it won't do any longer, and you are too old to sing now."

"I too old? Each spring I am born afresh in the world. At this moment I feel as if I were a child once more. This is the spot where I built a little boat with my brother who died. How happy we were!"

"You always speak as if every trifle in your life were something marvellous. What is there remarkable in that?"

"You are right, I must learn to grow old; I am almost as old as the wood in fact, for I remember that when I was a child, there were very few large trees, but all young plantation. Now the wood, which is grown far, far above our heads, is ours."

"How do you mean ours? Has my father made it over to you?"

"No, it still belongs to your father — that is — on certain conditions. He never had the power entirely to cut down the wood, because it is our protection against the weather, a safeguard against the snow, or a landslip of the hill itself, falling on our house and burying it."

"Why do you talk to me about such things? What are they to me?"

"I don't understand you."

"Nor I you. In my situation you should not imagine such dreadful possibilities."

"Very well, then I will sing you something, and if anyone hears us, so much the better."

Lenz and Annele went homewards, singing, and soon a visitor arrived: it was the Landlord himself. He took his son-in-law aside into another room, and said: —

"Lenz, I can do you a service."

"I am glad to hear it. I shall be glad to learn what it is."

"Has the bailiff still got your money?"

"He paid me four hundred gulden, but I spent part of it in furnishing."

"Hard cash is now the thing; you can make a good profit by it."

"I will call it up from the bailiff."

"That would take too long. Give me a bill for the sum, I will invest it for you and you will gain five-and-twenty per cent."

"Then we must share it."

"I wish you had not said that. I intended that you should have had all the gain yourself, but I must say you are an honest man."

"Thank you, father-in-law, I do my best. I don't like to accept presents."

"Perhaps it would be better still if you left the money in my business, and whatever I make by it shall be yours."

"I don't understand your business; I prefer taking my steady percentage."

When her father returned into the sitting-room, Annele brought in refreshments, but the Landlord wished to decline them and to go away immediately. Annele however pressed him to remain, saying: —

"It is your own wine, father. Do sit down for a little; we see you so seldom now."

No chair in the Morgenhalde seemed substantial enough to bear the weight of the Landlord's dignity, so he drank a glass of wine standing, and then went down the hill, holding his hand on the breast pocket of his coat.

"How strange my father is today," said Annele.

"He has important business on hand, — I have just given him my two thousand six hundred gulden that I had placed with the bailiff."

"And what did he give you in return?"

"I don't know what you mean – nothing; I will ask him for a receipt some day, when I have an opportunity, because this is customary."

"If you had asked my advice, I should have told you not to have given the money."

"What do you mean, Annele? I shall never take anything amiss in future, when I see that you distrust even your own father; but Franzl is right; she is quite patient with all your whims, for at this moment every one must give way to your wishes."

"So!" said Annele, "but I don't wish anyone to give way to me. What I said about my father was mere idle talk; – I don't myself know what put it into my head; but Franzl shall leave the house! So she complains of me to you, does she?"

Lenz tried hard to deny this, and to excuse Franzl, saying that her intentions were very different – but all was in vain: before fourteen days had passed, Franzl must leave the house, Lenz tried to console her, as he best could, by saying that no doubt she would come back soon, and that he would pay her wages as long as she lived. Franzl shook her head, and said, with tears: —

"The good Lord will provide for me, no doubt I never thought I should have left this house, till I was carried out of it in my coffin. I have been eight-and-twenty years here, – but I can't help it. Oh, dear! to look at all my pots and pans, and my copper kettle and my pails! how many thousand times have I had them in my hand, and cleaned them. No one can say, when I am gone, that I was not tidy and orderly; there stand my witnesses; if they could speak, every handle and spout must say how I have been, and what I have been; but God knows all things; He can see not only into houses, but into hearts; – that is my comfort, consolation, and solace, – but I say no more. To tell the truth I am not sorry to leave, for I would rather spin thorns than stay here. I don't wish to vex your heart, Lenz; – I would rather you killed me at once like a rat, than be the cause of strife in your home: no, no, that shall never be. Have no anxiety on my account; you have enough without that; and if I could take your troubles with me, I would not care if I sank down on the way from the burden. Don't think of me; – I mean to go to my brother in Kunslingen; I was born there, and there I mean to stay till I die; and when I join your mother in paradise, I will wait on her just as I used to do. The good Lord will admit me for her sake, and for her sake I feel sure you will prosper in the world. Now, farewell; and forgive me if I ever offended you. Good bye, and good bye a thousand times over!"

Lenz was silent and gloomy for a long time after Franzl went away, but Annele was more cheerful than ever. She was indeed a sorceress, for she could influence him as she chose; her voice seemed to have some magic power, when she wished to please, that no one could resist. Pilgrim succeeded in pacifying Lenz entirely. He tried to persuade him that Annele could only now, for the first time, feel herself really mistress of the house, since the old maid took her departure, who had acquired a certain mastery in the family. Annele had certainly been accustomed to much greater activity in the house, and was much better pleased when there was a great deal to do; she declared to Lenz that she would never hire another maid, as so small a household was scarcely half sufficient work for herself alone. The apprentice was to assist her; it was not till Lenz brought in the aid of his mother-in-law that a new maid was engaged.

All continued now cheerful and peaceful in the house, far into the summer. Annele urged her mother to see that her father soon paid back Lenz his money, and the latter came one day and offered Lenz the wood behind his house instead of payment, but demanded another thousand gulden. Lenz replied that he did not want to buy the wood, he wished to have current money, so the affair was set at rest, and the worthy landlord gave Lenz his acknowledgment in due form, and properly executed.

Late in the summer there were great doings in the village. The Techniker married Bertha, the doctor's second daughter, – the eldest was resolved to remain single, – and the doctor's son, who made chronometers, returned from his travels. It was said that he intended to erect, near his father's house, a large establishment for the fabrication of clocks and watches, with all kinds of new machinery. In the whole country there were lamentations, for it was feared everyone would be ruined, and that now clocks would be made here, as they were in America, without a single stroke of a file, and entirely by

the pressure of machinery. Lenz was one of those in no manner disturbed; he said that hitherto they had been able to compete with the American clockmakers, and he saw no reason why they should not do the same with regard to the Doctor's case; moreover, no machinery could place the mechanism properly together, — man's intelligence was required for that. It would be rather an advantage to many parts of the clocks, if they could be made quicker by machinery.

Lenz and the schoolmaster were, in the mean time, much occupied in trying to effect a project they had long cherished. The principal traders were to enter into an association, to render themselves independent of retail dealers, and merchants. But instead of any effectual support, they found only grumbling and complaints, and Annele, when she heard of the plan, said: —

"For goodness' sake give it up; I wonder you don't tire of always rolling the balls for others to play."

Annele, however, repeatedly urged Lenz to undertake an establishment of this kind along with her father, and if it was necessary, he might travel for a year in the interests of the firm, while she would stay with her parents. Lenz, however, declared, —

"I am not suited to that kind of thing, and I shall certainly not leave home as a married man, when I never did so as a bachelor."

He therefore entirely gave up all idea of an Association, and pacified Annele by assuring her that they would have quite as good an income; that she need have no fears on that account, and Pilgrim quite agreed with Lenz's views.

Annele consequently regarded Pilgrim as the chief obstacle to Lenz's advancement in life.

"He is a man," said she, "who never in all his life succeeded in anything, and he never will."

She tried, in every possible way, to sow discord between Pilgrim and Lenz, but she entirely failed.

Annele brooded over various plans, and was constantly reckoning and calculating in her head. She knew that Lenz had become security for Faller when he bought his house, and now she constantly pressed on him the propriety of recalling this security. He was obliged to consent to her wish, but just as he arrived at Faller's house his friend came out to meet him, laughing, and saying —

"My wife has just presented me, for the second time, with twins."

Lenz of course could not, at such a moment, plague Faller by depriving him of the security; and when Annele inquired what he had done, he gave her an evasive answer.

The night before the Techniker's marriage with the Doctor's daughter, Annele had a son. When Lenz was standing by her bedside, full of joy, she said: —

"Lenz, promise me one thing; promise me that you will give up Pilgrim, or that you will try for three months to do so."

"I can make no such promise," said Lenz, and a bitter drop fell into the cup of his joy.

Annele was painfully excited when the sounds of the wedding music in the valley reached her ears, and both her mother and her husband were alarmed for her life from such agitation; but she fell into a sound sleep at noon, and Lenz closed every door carefully to exclude all noise. She became now more composed, and was gentle and loveable, and Lenz felt truly grateful for his happiness, both as a husband and a father. Annele was so unusually amiable that she even said: —

"We promised Pilgrim that he should be godfather to our child, and this is a promise we must keep."

It was strange to see how variable her moods were. Lenz wished Petrowitsch to be the other godfather, but he refused.

Pilgrim brought the infant a large parchment, with a great many signatures and flourishes, painted by himself, which he laid on the cradle: it was a diploma from the Choral Society, in which the newly born child, on account of the fine voice he had no doubt inherited, was named an honorary member of the society.

"Do you know," said Lenz, "what is the sweetest sound in the world? The first cry of your child. Do you see how he can clutch a thing already?" and he gave the infant his father's file into his little hand. Annele flung it away, exclaiming: —

"The child might kill himself with the sharp point," but in flinging it on the floor the point was broken.

"My father's honourable tool, consecrated by his memory, is now destroyed," said Lenz, distressed.

Pilgrim tried to console him by laughingly saying, that there must always be new men, and new tools, in the world.

Annele did not say a syllable.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PENDULUMS SWING TOGETHER, BUT THE STRESS ON THE MAINSPRING IS SEVERE

"Annele, come here, I have something to show you."

"I have no time."

"Only look, for it will please you. See, I set agoing two pendulums, on both these clocks, the one from right to left, and the other the reverse way. If you will observe, you will see that in the course of a few days they will both swing in the same direction, from right to left, or both the reverse way. That is owing to the power of attraction they mutually exercise; they approximate to each other by degrees."

"I don't believe that."

"You can see it with your own eyes; and so it will be with us. The one starts from the right, and the other from the left, and we must gradually balance each other. To be sure the pendulums never tick quite together, so as to make but one sound; a Spanish king tried to accomplish this, and it fairly turned his brain."

"Such nonsense only plagues me; you seem to have time for it, however, but I have not."

In the course of a few days the pendulums vibrated in unison, but the hearts of the married couple obstinately pursued their separate course. Sometimes it almost seemed as if that miracle were to be accomplished, that was never yet attained by any work of human hands – identical vibration; but it was only delusion, and then the consciousness of having been deceived, was all the more sad.

Lenz thought that his disposition was very yielding, but it was not so in reality. Annele had no wish to be pliant or submissive; she thought that she knew everything best, she had experience in the ways of the world; men of every country, old and young, rich and poor, had all told her in the Inn, from the time she was a child, that she was as clever as the day.

Annele's nature was what is called superficial, but she was also easy to live with, lively, and active. She liked to talk much and often, but when the conversation was over, she never thought again either of what she had heard, or what she had said.

Lenz's disposition was more profound and solid; he was rather apprehensive by nature, as if habitually impressed with the transitory nature of everything in the world; he treated every subject, even the most insignificant, with the same subtle precision that he bestowed on his work – or as he liked to hear it called – his art.

If Annele had not recently seen people, she had nothing to talk about, but the more quiet their life was, the more Lenz had to say. When Lenz spoke, he always stopped working; Annele continued to speak, while finishing the work she had on hand.

Annele liked to relate her dreams, and strangely enough she always dreamt that she had been driving in a fine carriage with fine horses, in beautiful scenery, and a merry party; and "how we did laugh to be sure!" was always the burden of her narration; or else she dreamt that she was a landlady, and that kings and princes drew up to her door, and she made them such appropriate answers; whereas Lenz attached no importance to dreams, and disliked her repeating them.

Lenz could scarcely say a word early in the morning; his thoughts seemed to awake by degrees; he continued to dream long with his eyes open, and even while he was working. Annele on the contrary, the instant she opened her eyes, was like a soldier at his post, armed and ready; she commenced the day zealously, and all half-waking thoughts were hateful to her; she was and continued to be the smart, lively, landlord's daughter, owing to whose activity, the guests find everything in order at the earliest hour of the morning, and she herself ready to have a pleasant talk.

In the midst of the household bustle, Lenz often looked up at his mother's picture, as if saying to her: "Don't let your rest be disturbed; her great delight is noise and tumult."

When Annele sat by him and watched his work, her restlessness seemed to infect him. He was in the habit of looking intently at anything he had finished, or was about to finish; and then he felt as if her eyes followed each movement of his impatiently, and her thoughts were involuntarily reproaching him for his slowness, and so he became himself impatient and irritable, – so her vicinity did more harm than good.

Little Wilhelm thrived well on the Morgenhalde, and when a little sister also came, the constant commotion in the house, was as if the spectre huntsman and his followers were always passing through it. When Lenz often complained of the incessant noise, Annele disdainfully replied, "Those who want to have a quiet house should be rich and live in a palace, where the princes each inhabit a separate wing."

"I am not rich," answered Lenz. He smiled at the taunt, and yet it vexed him.

Two pendulums can only vibrate simultaneously, and with the same number of strokes, when they are in a similar atmosphere, or at the same distance from the centre of the earth.

Lenz became daily more quiet and reserved, and when he spoke to his wife, he could not help being astonished that she found so much to say on every point. If he chanced to say in the morning, "What a thick fog we have to day!" she snapped him up instantly, saying: "Yes, and so early in the autumn too, but we may have bright weather yet: we in the hills can never depend on weather, and who knows which of us wants rain, and which fine weather, just as it may suit best what we have to do. If our good Lord were to suit the weather to the taste of everybody," &c. &c.

There was a long discussion about every trifle, – how a waggoner had been spoken to while his horses were getting a feed outside, – or a passing stranger who wanted something to eat, and who, in spite of the cover being quickly laid, had to wait a long time for dinner.

Lenz shrugged his shoulders, and was silent after such reproofs, indeed he often scarcely spoke during the whole day, and his wife said sometimes good-humouredly, and sometimes angrily: "You are a tiresome, silent creature."

He smiled at the reproach, but it hurt his feelings all the same.

The apprehensions entertained about the manufactory for clocks proved quite unfounded, for, on the contrary, the business for private hands never had been so flourishing. Lenz was very proud of having prophesied this. He received much praise on this account, but Annele saw nothing remarkable in such a proof of his foresight: of course it is but natural that each should understand his own business, but one thing was quite certain, that the Techniker and the Doctor's son were fast making money, while the original clockmakers were thankful and content to remain in the old beaten path.

Annele frequently praised Pröbler now, who at least tried to make new discoveries.

Lenz, however, was quite engrossed with his work, and said to Annele: "When I think each morning I rise – you may work honestly to day, and your work will prosper and be completed, – I feel as if I had a sun in my heart that never set."

"You have a talent for preaching, you ought to have been a pastor," said Annele, leaving the room and privately thinking – "There, that's a hit at you; we are all to listen to him, but what any one else says is of no consequence at all; that was a capital hit at him."

It was not revenge, but pure forgetfulness, that made Lenz often, when Annele was relating some anecdote, start and say, as if just waking up, "Don't be angry, but I have not heard one word you have been saying, that beautiful melody is running in my head. I wish I could make it sound as it ought! How clever the way in which the key changes from sharps to flats!"

Annele smiled, but she did not soon forgive such absence of mind.

The pendulums continued to diverge still further.

Formerly, when Lenz used to come home from the brassfounder or the locksmith, or from any expedition, his mother used to sit by him while he was at dinner, and was interested in all he related; he enjoyed over again with her the very glass of wine he had drunk away from her, and the friendly greetings of those he had met during his absence. All that Lenz detailed seemed of consequence to his

mother, because it had happened to her son. Now, when he came home, Annele had seldom time to sit down beside him, and when she did so, and he began to tell her his news, she would interrupt him, saying: "Oh! what does that signify to me? I don't care at all about it. Other people may live just as they please; they are not likely to give me any share of their good luck, and I'm sure I don't want to have anything to do with their misfortunes. Men impose on you famously by their pretensions to goodness; they have only to wind you up, and then you play a tune to each, just like your musical clocks."

Lenz laughed, for Pilgrim had once called him an eight day clock, because he was always so carefully dressed on Sundays.

He had no rest during the whole week, therefore the Sundays were even more precious to him than ever, and when the sun shone bright, he often exclaimed: "Thousands of men, God be praised, are enjoying this fine Sunday."

"You speak as if you were some guardian angel, and must think of all the world," said Annele, pettishly.

Lenz soon learned never to utter such thoughts aloud, and became quite perplexed as to what he should, and should not think. Once he proposed to go with Annele on a Sunday to a meeting of the Choral Society in a neighbouring village, or to take no one with them but Faller and his wife down the valley; but she said, angrily: – "You can go where you please, it does not signify to a man in what company he finds himself, but I am not going with you, I consider myself too good for such people. Faller and his wife are not the kind of society that suits me – but you can go yourself, I shall not try to prevent you."

Of course Lenz stayed away also, and was more morose than he ought to have been at home, or in the Lion.

Lenz never in his life had a card in his hand, or played a game at bowls; other men drive away their ill humour by these resources, and pass away their time. "I wish I took any pleasure in cards and bowls," said he; but he was not prepared for Annele's peevish answer: —

"A man has a good right to play at either, if he only returns with fresh vigour to his work; at all events that is better than to play with his work."

The pendulums were getting further apart than ever. Lenz sold the greater part of his store of clocks at good prices. The only work that made no great progress, was the one he had undertaken at the request of his father-in-law, and when Lenz could not resist sometimes complaining to his wife, that he failed in this or that, she tried to persuade him that he did not think enough of making money; people like to have their orders quickly attended to, so you ought to lose no time in getting the work out of hand, but you are so over particular. "You are a dreamer, but a dreamer in broad daylight. Wake up, for Heaven's sake, wake up!"

"God knows! I live anything but a peaceful life; my sleep can be no longer called sleep! Oh! if I could only sleep well and soundly for one single night again! I always feel nervous and excited now; it seems to me as if I were incessantly awake, and as if I never took off my clothes day or night."

Instead of bestowing sympathy on Lenz, and striving in his depressed mood to inspire him with fresh self-confidence, Annele endeavoured to prove to Lenz, that though he failed, she could show him how to succeed. If he accomplished a thing and could not resist calling out to her, "Do you hear what a pure bell-like tone that is?" she would reply: "I must tell you fairly, once for all, that I detest every kind of musical clock. I heard that piece played in Baden-Baden, it sounded very different there."

Lenz knew this already, and had even told Pilgrim so, but he felt much hurt at the way in which Annele said it, for in this manner she paralyzed all his powers for his business.

Annele, however, had a private fixed plan of her own in her head, and she considered herself quite justified in trying to carry it through. She felt that her best faculties were lying dormant, for she could not employ them in her small household. She wanted to earn something, and an Inn of her own was best adapted for that purpose.

She had formerly endeavoured to estrange Lenz from Pilgrim. Now she made Pilgrim her confederate; he had said it was a pity that she was not a landlady, for she would give a fresh impulse to the Lion, and every one thought the same. Her object was, that Pilgrim should assist in persuading Lenz to undertake the Lion inn; he might still pursue his art – when she wished to be amiable she called it an art, but when in bad humour a trade – either in the Lion, or on the Morgenhalde; indeed the latter would be best, for he would be quieter there, and many a one had his workshop further from his home, than the Morgenhalde was from the Lion.

When Pilgrim came now, Annele said to him, graciously: – "Pray light your pipe, I rather like the smell; I seem at home when people are smoking around me."

"You are certainly not at home here," thought Pilgrim, but he took care not to say so. Though Annele attacked Pilgrim on every side, she could not obtain his co-operation, and Lenz was obstinate and impervious to all flattery, and proof even against bursts of rage, in a way she never could have expected from him.

"You first wished to make me a pedlar, to sell watches," said he; "and then a manufacturer, and now landlord of the Lion; if I am to become so entirely different from my former self, what did you see in me to induce you to marry me?"

Annele evaded any reply, but she said, bitterly: – "You are as soft as butter to the whole world, but to me as hard as a pebble."

Lenz thought he was an experienced man, but Annele wished to make him one. She neither said to him, nor admitted to herself, that she thought herself the best fitted of the two to gain a livelihood, but she wept and complained that she was of no use, and pitied herself on that account. She said she only wished to act for the best; and what is it she wishes? to work, to increase their means, but Lenz will not hear of it.

Lenz told her that the garden was formerly very productive, she had better cultivate it; but she had no taste for gardening: – "Every plant grows just where it is placed, in peace and quiet, and requires no pressing or driving forwards. Make haste! it is far too slow an affair to watch what is growing and blossoming in time: three visits to the kitchen, and three to the cellar, and I have gained more profit than I would get from such a garden the whole summer; and an old woman, to whom we pay a trifle, is quite good enough to work in the garden."

Now there was no end to the worry, and complaints, and lamentations, that they must live so sparingly at home, Lenz was often in despair, and sometimes so incensed, that he seemed to have become quite another man. Then he was seized with a fit of repentance, and he took up a different position, and said he was ashamed of all this discord before his workmen and apprentices, and if Annele allowed him no peace, he was resolved to send them away.

Annele laughed in his face. He proved to her, however, that he was in earnest, for he dismissed the young men. So long as Lenz had preserved his calm, unmoved nature, he possessed a kind of power over Annele, but now, by constantly upbraiding him, and deploring his certain ruin, Annele mastered him entirely; daily telling him he was good for nothing, that he had sent away his workmen from idleness, and that his good nature was only idleness in disguise.

Instead of laughing at such nonsense – for who had worked harder than Lenz from his childhood, or who could be less disposed to boast of it? – Lenz could not resist brooding over these reproaches for days, when he was at his work; and then one thought followed another, till a regular edifice was formed, while Annele had long forgotten all she had said. This kind of life, so entirely isolated, seemed to her like a rainy summer Sunday; when you have a right to anticipate that you are to amuse yourself, and enjoy the society of your neighbours; you are dressed in your Sunday clothes, but the roads are deep, the rain incessant, and staying in the house is like being in prison; but this state Annele resolved should not continue; changed it must and shall be, said she inwardly, and she became more irritable, and easily provoked by every trivial occurrence, though she never admitted to Lenz, or even to herself, the real cause of her ill-temper.

Lenz sought peace out of the house, but she was not so displeased and impatient at his absence, as at the mode in which he effected it. He loitered about, and even when he was fairly out of the house, he would often return to the door two or three times, as if he had forgotten something. He could not say what pain it caused him, to go away in a mood which made him entirely a changed man. He hoped that Annele might detain him, or say some kind words, that he might be once more his former self.

In former days, when he went on any expedition, his mother always gave him some bread out of her cupboard, for bread is a great safeguard from unseen dangers, especially if you chance to step upon trefoil; and a better safeguard than the bread, was his mother's kind words. Now he went on his way, as if the house were not his own, nor himself either. This was the reason that he lounged about and wasted so much time, and yet could not say what he wanted.

It must come of itself, for it is no superstition to think, that a true blessing is only bestowed on what is given and accepted, without being demanded. Long before evening, Lenz was sitting with Pilgrim, and Annele with her parents. The whole household seemed unhinged. Lenz never breathed a hint before Pilgrim of what was inwardly consuming him, and when Annele complained to her parents, they refused to listen to her, and seemed to have other matters in their head.

Lenz often went to Faller's also, where he was at his ease, even more than with Pilgrim, for here he was received with joy and respect when he came. The Lenz of former days was honoured as highly as ever in this house – at home he was nobody.

Faller and his wife lived happily together, they were mutually convinced that they were the most excellent people in the world; if they were only free from debt, and had a little money to spare, they would astonish everybody. They saved and toiled, but were always in good humour. Faller was not a particularly skilful workman, so he chiefly confined himself to the largest sized clocks – for the larger the work, the easier it is to complete – and he amused himself and his wife, by telling her of all the various theatrical pieces in which he had acted, during his garrison life, in different costumes. His wife was always a grateful public, and the royal mantle, crown, and diamonds, which Faller described, were all before her eyes.

How different from all this was Lenz's "home!" darker and darker became the shadows that obscured his soul; everything that passed seemed full of bitterness and woe.

When he could not escape being present at the practisings and meetings of the Choral Society, and was forced to sing songs of love, tenderness, and delight, his soul was sad within him. Is it really so? is it possible? Have men ever existed, so full of love and joy? and yet once on a time you too... He often insisted on singing mournful melodies, and his companions were astonished at the heartrending tones of his voice, which sounded like the most touching lament; but while formerly he could never sing enough, he now soon gave over, and complained of fatigue, and was quickly displeased by any casual word, and then, as quickly offering his hand, and asking forgiveness, where there really was nothing to forgive.

Lenz tried to check such gloomy feelings, and said to himself that his irritable, nervous state proceeded from not being sufficiently industrious. He, therefore, now eagerly resumed his labours, but there seemed no blessing on his toil; he was often obliged to take out and throw aside what he had worked hard at half the night. His hand often trembled when he tried to guide the file, and even his father's file that he had sharpened afresh, and that had never failed in soothing him, had lost its influence. Angry with himself, he forced himself to be quiet and attentive to his work. "If you lose that too," said he, "then you have lost all – once on a time, you were happy alone with your art, now you must be the same. Just as one may hear a piece of music, in the midst of a noise from other causes, and you can perfectly distinguish the melody – so you must again become absorbed in your calling, and determine not to heed the tumult around you. If you resolve not to listen to it, you will not hear it. Be strong in your will."

Lenz succeeded in again working in a quiet and orderly manner – there was only wanting one little word from Annele. If she only had said: – "I am so glad to see you once more in your old place."

He thought he could have done without this word, but yet he could not. Annele had these very words often on her lips, but she never uttered them, for at the swing-door her pride said again: "Why should you praise him, when he is only doing his duty? and now what a blessing it would be if we had only an inn; he works best when he is alone, when no one takes any notice of him; and then I should be in the public room and he in his workshop, and all would go well."

His work now cost Lenz double toil, and he was fairly exhausted at night, which had never before been the case; till now, he had never found his work knock him up; he allowed himself, however, no recreation, he feared losing everything, and no longer to find a single resource, if he once left his house and his workshop.

For weeks he never went into the village, and Annele was often with her parents.

A particular occurrence at last caused him to leave his house. Pilgrim was dangerously ill. Lenz sat up with him night after night, and it was a great effort of friendship to do so, for Annele had said to him: – "Your good deeds towards Pilgrim are only a cloak for your laziness, and for your slovenly, indolent nature. You fancy that you have played a good part in the world, whereas you have done nothing, and succeed in nothing. What are you good for?" He breathed more hurriedly when he heard these insulting words; he felt as if a stone had fallen on his heart and crushed it, and the stone was not to be moved.

"Now," said he, "there is nothing more that you can say to me, except that I behaved badly to my mother."

"Yes! and so you did – so you did! Hörger Toni, your cousin, who is now in America, often said before us, that a greater hypocrite than you did not exist, and that he was called in a thousand times to make up your quarrels with your mother."

"You say that simply because you would like to see me in a rage again, but you shall not succeed; it does not distress me in the least. Why do you quote a person in America? Why not some one here? But you only wish to sting me – good night!"

He went to Pilgrim, who was now convalescent, and stayed all night with him. As Pilgrim was getting better, he was naturally in good spirits, and Lenz was unwilling to destroy his cheerfulness; on the contrary, he listened patiently when Pilgrim related to him: – "During my illness, I learned to comprehend how it is that a bird all his life long only twitters a couple of notes. In the half life of a dreamy state, even one tone is sufficient. During four long weeks, my soul was haunted by this solitary notion. Man has no wings, but he has got lungs, and even with one lung left, I may still live to eat potatoes for seventy seven years, and if I had been a bird I would have incessantly whistled, like a silly bird, 'one lung, two lungs, two lungs, one lung,' just like a grasshopper."

The words that haunted Lenz were also few but sad. No one should hear them.

"A reference to the Bible," continued Pilgrim cheerfully, "quite confirmed my fixed resolution to remain a bachelor and alone, for it is clearly written there, that man was at first alone in the world, – the woman never was alone, – and that it is good that man *can* live alone. Only I change one little word, and say it is good that man *should* be alone."

Lenz smiled, but he felt the application.

Next morning Lenz, having sat up all night, went home weary and as pale as death to his work, and when he saw his children, he said: —

"I scarcely knew that I had children."

"No doubt you forget them utterly," said Annele.

Lenz again felt a stab in his heart, but he did not feel it so acutely as formerly, and when he looked up at his mother's picture, he exclaimed: —

"Mother! mother! She has slandered you too! can you not speak? Do not punish her, intercede with God not to visit her with a judgment for her sin. If he punishes her, my poor children and I must suffer also. Help me, dear mother, and influence her no longer to crush my heart. You know me – you alone – beloved mother!"

"I can't listen to such mummery," said Annele, and went with the two children to the kitchen. The stress on the mainspring was severe.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE AXE IS PUT TO THE ROOT OF LIFE, AND TEARS ARE SHED

It had been a sultry day, and was still a close, sultry evening, when the Landlord of the Lion, who had driven to the town in an open calèche with his pair of chesnuts, returned home. When he was driving through the village, he looked round in a strange manner to the right and to the left, and greeted every one with unusual politeness. Gregor, who had driven him, was in his postilion's dress, but had no horn, got down and unharnessed the horses, and yet the Landlord still sat motionless in the calèche. He was gazing thoughtfully at his Inn, and then again at the carriage and horses. When, at last, he alighted and stood on the ground, he sighed deeply, for he knew it was the last time he should ever drive in an equipage of his own. All seems just as usual, and only one single man, besides himself, knows what will soon be. He went upstairs with a heavy step; his wife was on the landingplace above, and whispered to him: —

"How is it settled?"

"All will be arranged," answered the Landlord, pushing quickly past his wife to the public room, and not going first into the back parlour, as he usually did when he came home. He gave the maid his hat and stick, and joined the guests present. His dinner was brought to him at the guests' table by his own desire, but he did not seem to relish it.

The guests stayed till late at night, and he stayed with them; he spoke little, but even his sitting with them was considered a great attention and pleasure.

The wife had gone to bed, and after she had been long asleep, the Landlord also retired to rest — but rest he found none, for an invisible power drew away the pillow from under his head: this bed, this house, all here will be no longer yours tomorrow! His thoughts chiefly turned on the calèche and the chesnut horses. He hastily rubbed his eyes, for he suddenly thought that the two horses were in his room, stretching out their heads over his bed, breathing hard, and staring at him with their great eyes. He tried to compose his nerves, especially dwelling on the fact, that he had borne his sorrows like a man. He had said nothing to his wife, she should sleep soundly this night at least; it will be time enough for her to hear the bad news in the morning, and then not till after breakfast. When we have had a good night's rest, and are thus strengthened and refreshed, and bright day is shining on us, we can bear even the worst tidings with more fortitude.

Day dawned at last, and the landlord, who was quite worn out, begged his wife, for once, to breakfast alone. At last he came downstairs, ate a good breakfast, and, as his wife urged him to tell her what arrangements had been made, he said: —

"Wife, I let you enjoy a peaceful night and morning, so now show some strength of mind, and hear my tidings with composure and resignation. At this very hour, my lawyer is announcing my bankruptcy in the next town."

The Landlady sat for a time dumb and motionless; at last she said: —

"And pray why did you not tell me this last night?"

"From the wish to spare you, and to let you pass the night in peace and quiet."

"Spare me? You? A greater simpleton does not live! If you had told me all this last night, I might have contrived to put out of the way a vast deal of property, that would have stood us in good stead for years to come, but now the thing is impossible. Help! Help! Oh Heavens!" screamed the landlady, suddenly, in the midst of their calm conversation, sinking back into a chair, apparently fainting.

The maids from the kitchen, and Gregor the postilion, rushed into the room. The Landlady started up and said, sobbing and turning to her husband: —

"You hid it from me, you never told me a word about it, or that you are now a bankrupt. All the shame, and all the disgrace rest on you; I am innocent, wretched creature that I am!"

It would now have been the Landlord's turn to faint away, if his determined will had not supported him; his spectacles fell down from his forehead over his eyes of their own accord, to let him see plainly if what was passing here was really true: this woman, who had never rested till he, the experienced baker and brewer, went into partnership with her brother in a large concern for selling clocks, and when his brother-in-law died, almost forced him to continue the business alone, although he understood very little of such a traffic; – this woman, who had always urged him on to fresh speculations, and knew his involvements even better than he did himself; – this woman had now summoned the rabble as witnesses, in order to devolve the whole shame and blame on him.

It was not till this minute that the Landlord of the Lion fully realized the extent of his misery; they had lived together thirty-five years, on looking back, – and on looking forwards, who knows how many more were to come? – and in order to save herself, and expose him to all the blame, his wife could carry her hypocrisy to such an extent as this.

His spectacles were dimmed, so that he could no longer see through them; he first quietly wiped his glasses with his handkerchief, and then his eyes.

At this moment he felt a degree of resentment and rancour that was never afterwards effaced; but the proud Landlady soon resumed her wonted calmness and composure.

When the maids and the postilion had left the room, the Landlord said: —

"You know best why you have done this; I have no idea what good it can do, but I shall not say one word more on the subject."

He persisted in this resolution and maintained entire silence, and let his wife lament and complain as she thought fit. It had always rather amused him to see how placid and amiable his wife affected to be in the world. He almost became now, in reality, the wise man he had hitherto been considered, for during all the violent speeches of his wife, he thought —

"It is marvellous what people can arrive at! practice makes perfection."

The unwise world, however, did not take the sudden downfall of the Landlord of the Lion so coolly. It rolled like a thunderclap over hill and valley – the Landlord of the Lion is bankrupt!

It cannot be! it is impossible! who can be sure to stand fast, if the Landlord of the Lion falls? Even the very Golden Lion itself, on the sign, seemed to fight against such an idea, and the hooks, by which the painting was suspended, creaked loudly; but the commissioners of bankruptcy tame even lions, and do not, in the least, pay respect to them because they are golden ones. The sign was taken down. The lion looked very melancholy, one eye being hid by the wall, and the other seemed dim and sad, as if it wished to be also closed for ever, from feelings of grief and shame.

There was a great commotion in the village, and a great commotion in the Morgenhalde also.

Lenz ran down into the village, and then up the hill again to the Lion.

The Landlord was still pacing the public room, looking very grave, and saying, with an air of dignity: —

"I must bear it like a man."

He very nearly said – "like a man of honour."

The Landlady bewailed and lamented; she had known nothing of it, and vowed that she would put an end to herself.

"Father-in-law," said Lenz, "may I ask if my money is all lost too?"

"In such a vast heap of money, it is not easy to distinguish to whom such or such a sum belongs," answered the Landlord, in a sententious voice. "I intend to arrange my affairs presently. If my creditors grant me three years, I will pay fifty per cent. Sit down, it's no use brandishing your hands in that way. Lisabeth," called he into the kitchen, "my dinner."

The cook brought in a capital dinner, the Landlord quickly pulled off his cap, said grace, and sinking comfortably into his easy chair, he helped himself plentifully, and ate with the calm of a true sage. When the second dish arrived, he looked up at his wife, and said: —

"You should also sit down; the best pair of horses to help you up a steep hill, is a slice of good solid meat. Have they sealed up all our wine, or can you get me some?"

"It is all sealed up."

"Then make me presently some good coffee, to refresh me."

Lenz seized his hair with his hands. Is he insane? How is it possible that the man, owing to whom hundreds are at this minute in despair as to how they are to live, can be comfortably enjoying his dinner? The landlord was condescending and talkative, and praised Annele for not also rushing into the house, and adding to all these useless lamentations: —

"You have, indeed, a clever, industrious wife, the most sensible of all my children. It is a pity she is not a man, for she has an enterprising spirit; all would have been very different had she been a man. It is much to be regretted that Annele is not at the head of some extensive business; a large hotel would suit her exactly."

Lenz was indignant at his boasting, and his whole demeanour, at such an hour as this; but he strove to suppress this feeling, and, after an inward struggle, he said in a timid, almost humble tone: —

"Father-in-law, be sure above all things to take care that the wood behind my house is not cut down. I have heard people felling trees there all this morning, — this must not be."

The more mildly Lenz said this, the more vociferously the Landlord exclaimed: —

"Why not? he who has bought the wood can do as he pleases with it."

"Father-in-law, you promised me that wood."

"But you did not accept it. The wood is sold to a wood merchant at Trenzingen."

"But I say you have no power to sell it; that wood is the sole shelter of my roof. Some of the single trees may be cut down, but the whole wood must not be levelled. This is the same state in which it has been preserved for hundreds of years. My grandfather himself told me so."

"That is nothing to me. I have other things to think about just now."

"Oh Heavens!" cried Lenz, with emotion, "what have you done? You have deprived me of what I value most on earth."

"Really! is money everything? I did not before know that even your heart, too, was buried in money bags."

"Oh no! you have caused me to seek afresh for parents."

"You are old enough to live as an orphan; but I know you are one of those, who, even when they are grandfathers themselves, go whining about, and saying, 'Mother! mother! your precious child is injured!'"

Thus spoke the Landlord, and no one could have believed that he could be so spiteful. Lenz chanced to be the only one of his creditors who came within his reach, so he vented the whole burden of his wrath on his head.

Lenz was alternately pale and flushed, his lips trembled, and he said: —

"You are the grandfather of my children, and you know what you have robbed them of. I would not have your conscience for the world. But the wood shall not be cut down. I will try the question at law."

"Very well; do just as you please about it," said the Landlord, pouring out his coffee.

Lenz could no longer bear to stay in the room.

On the stone bench before the Lion sat a careworn figure; it was Pröbler. He told every one who passed by, that he was waiting here for the commissioners to arrive, for he had pawned his best work to the Landlord upstairs, and it was one in which he had combined all his discoveries; it must on no account be included in the inventory of sale, that other people might see it and imitate it, and thus he would have no profit after all his trouble. The commission of bankruptcy must first secure

him a patent from government, which would make him both rich and famous. Lenz took a great deal of trouble to soothe the old man, but he clung fast to his idea, and would not be persuaded to move from the spot.

Lenz went on his way, for he had enough to do for himself. He hurried to his uncle Petrowitsch, who said with an air of great triumph: —

"There now! did I not say so? in this very room on the day when you wished me to go with you to propose for Annele, did I not distinctly tell you that the Landlord of the Lion had not paid for the velvet cap on his head, or the boots on his feet? and even his portly person he acquired from devouring the substance of others."

"Yes, yes, uncle, you were right. You are a sensible man, but help me now."

"You don't require to be helped."

Lenz related the circumstance about the wood.

"Perhaps we may manage to do some good there," said Petrowitsch.

"Heaven be praised! If I could only get the wood!"

"Not the most remote chance of such a thing; the wood is already sold; but they have only a right to cut down one half of it. The wood is the only safeguard for your house, no one living has a right to cut it down altogether. We will soon show this famous wood merchant from Trenzingen that we are the masters on that point."

"But my house! my home!" exclaimed Lenz; he felt as if it was about to fall down, and he must rush home to save it.

"Your home! you certainly are not very much at home in this matter," said Petrowitsch, laughing at his own wit. "Go to the mayor and put in your claim. Only one thing more, Lenz; I never will again place faith in any man living; I told you on a former occasion, that your wife was the only good one of the family. You see I was not deceived about the two others. I now tell you that your wife knew it long ago, ay, for years past she knew beyond a doubt how her father's affairs stood, and you were the cat's paw, because the doctor's son-in-law, the Techniker, would have nothing to do with her, and he was quite right too."

"Uncle, why do you tell me that just now?"

"Why? because it is true. I can bring forward witnesses to prove it."

"But why now?"

"Is there any time when we ought not to tell the truth? I always thought that you and your Pilgrim had been two such heroic persons. I will tell you what you are. No man could be poorer than you, even before you lost your money, for you were always fretting and grumbling, and nothing can be more despicable than such a man; his sack must always have a hole in it. Yes, you are a regular grumbler, always regretting what you did the day before, and thinking, 'Oh! how unfortunate I am, and yet I meant well!'"

"You are very hard on me, uncle."

"Because you are too soft and yielding in your ways. Pray be firm and manly for once, and don't let your wife suffer; treat her kindly, for she is now far more miserable than you."

"You think so?"

"Yes. Annele of the Lion, once so proud, will feel it a sad blow, when she can no longer think that every one is proud of her saying good morning to them."

"She is no longer Annele of the Lion, she is my wife."

"Yes, before God and man; she was your own free choice; I did my best to dissuade you!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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