

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

LANDOLIN

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CHAPTER I

The spring has come again to the hills and valleys of our home. The day awakes, a breeze moves strongly through the forest, as if its task were to carry away the lingering night; the birds begin to twitter, and here and there an early lark utters his note. Among the pine-trees, with their fresh green needles, a whispering and rustling is heard. The sun has risen above the mountaintop, and shines upon the valley; the fields and meadows are glittering with dew. From the cherry-trees comes a stream of fragrance, and the hawthorn hedges that blossomed in the night are rejoicing in the first sunbeams, which penetrate to the very heart of each floweret.

Down in the valley, where the logmen's rafts are floating rapidly-down by the saw-mill, where the water dashes over the wheel, and the saw sounds shrill-a young man with white forehead and sunburnt cheeks opens a window, looks out, and nods gayly, as if greeting the awakening day. Presently he appears on the doorstep; he opens his arms wide, as if to embrace something; he smiles, as though looking at a happy, loved face. Taking his soldier's cap from his head, and holding it in his hand, he leaves the house; his step is firm, his bearing erect, and sincere honesty and candor look from his eyes. He goes through the meadows toward the forest-crowned hill, not stopping till he reaches its summit. Pausing there, he looks far into the distance, where a column of smoke ascends to the cloudless sky.

"Good morning, Thoma! Are you still sleeping? Awake! our own day is here!" he said in a deep, manly voice.

And now he joyously bounded down the hill, but soon moderated his step, and sang a yodel until the birds joined with him, and the echo repeated the song. Before long he reached the house; by the door stood his father, scattering bread crumbs to the chickens.

"Good morning, father!" cried the young man. The father, a tall, thin man, looked up with surprise, and answered:

"What, up already, Anton? Where have you been?"

"I? where? Everywhere. In heaven, and in this beautiful world below. O father! it has often seemed to me that I should not live to see this day; that I should die before it came, or that something else would happen. But now the day is here. And such a day!"

The old man drew the palm of his hand twice, three times, over his mouth; for he would have liked to say: "Your mother was just so, so faint-hearted, and again so confident;" but he kept back the words; he would not mar his son's happiness; and at last he said:

"Yes, yes, so it is; that's what it is to be young. Tell me, Anton, were you so uneasy in the war, and so-?"

"No, father, that was quite another thing. Father, I'm afraid you are not entirely satisfied with Thoma."

"It's true, I'm not in love with her, as you are."

"No, but that's not all."

"There's nothing else, but for me she is almost too-"

"Too rich, you mean."

"I didn't mean that. No girl is too rich for an honest lad. I only meant she is too beautiful. Yes, laugh if you choose; but a wife as beautiful as she, is a troublesome possession. I think, however, it will come out all right; she certainly seems more like her mother than like Landolin. To be sure,

she has some of his pride, but I hope not his ungovernable temper. In old stories we read of wicked giants; Landolin might have been one of them. It's well that we live in other times."

"But, father, you make too much of this; my Thoma-

"Yes, yes, she has her mother's good disposition. I have been thinking it over, and I believe that, all told, I have been fifteen times at Rotterdam. There are no such violent men as Landolin in Holland."

"Father, perhaps it's because they have no mountain streams in Holland, only quiet canals."

"Well, well! Is there anything that the young people nowadays do not know all about? However, I did not mean to say anything bad of Thoma."

"That you can never do, father. There is one thing about her that will please you especially; an untruth has never escaped her lips, and never will."

"The world doesn't set much store by that now, but it's a great thing, after all. But enough of this. You are a man that can be master. I have only said this that your mind might be prepared. Enough now. It is a glorious day, thank God!"

"Yes, glorious indeed," replied Anton; but he did not mean the weather, for to-day was to take place, at the spring fair in the city, the betrothal of the miller's son, Anton, with Thoma (Thomasia), the daughter of the farmer and former bailiff, Landolin of Reutershöfen.

CHAPTER II

High up on the plateau lie Landolin's broad acres. The buildings stand by themselves, for the farm-houses of the borough are scattered miles apart over the hill-sides. Only the dwelling-house, with its shingled roof, faces the road; its various outbuildings lie back of it, around an open square, and the pastures and fields extend up the steep hill-side to the beech wood, whose brown buds are glistening with the morning dew.

It is still early in the morning; no sound is heard in the farm-yard, save the noisy splashing of the broad rivulet from the spring. A roof extends far over the water, for in the winter the cattle are brought there to drink. Near by are heaps of paving stones, with which a new drain is to be built through the yard.

Gradually the larks began their songs high in the air; the sparrows on the roof twittered; the cows lowed; the horses rattled their halters; the doves began cooing; the chickens on their roost and the pigs in their pens all awoke and gave signs of comfort or discomfort. The huge watch-dog, whose head lay on the threshold of his kennel, lazily opened his eyes now and then, and closed them again as though he would say, "What strange sounds; what do they all amount to, compared with a hearty bark! That's, after all, the most beautiful and sensible noise in the world, for dogs of my rank never bark without good reason."

The first person who came through the yard was the farmer's stately wife, well dressed, and still in her prime. It is a well-ordered household where the master or mistress is the first awake.

The farmer's wife was a quiet woman, such a one as is called a "genuine farmer's wife;" not much more than this could be said of her. She was industrious, and watchful of her interests, and kept others under strict control. She held her husband in all fitting honor, as a wife should, but there was never any thought of love, either in her youth or now. She was the daughter of a farmer in a neighboring borough, and had married in the same rank, for she had never dreamed of the possibility of doing otherwise. During the time that Landolin was bailiff she had worthily done the honors of the house; she had unbounded confidence in her husband, and when people came with complaints to her, her usual answer was: "Just be patient, my husband will make everything right." She was entirely frank, what she said she meant; but she spoke little, for much speaking was not befitting a farmer's wife; and as for much thinking-for that there was no need. A wife must keep the house in order, economize, and be strictly honest, as the custom is-to think is quite unnecessary.

The head-servant, Tobias, came from the stable-door. The two nodded to one another without a word, and yet each had a deep respect for the other; for, in his place, the head-servant was equally responsible for the honor of the household; therefore he ranked next after the farmer, and before the only son, who, in this family, was indeed too young to be much thought of.

Tobias had already endured fifteen years in this house, for living here meant endurance, and during all this time he had never called upon the farmer's wife for aid against the violence of the master; in his heart he respected the mistress who never wanted anything for herself, but who seemed to think herself in the world only that she might be obedient to her husband. When the farmer drove through the country to the different gala-day festivals with his beautiful, proud daughter, his wife thought it only right and a matter of course that she should be left behind, and she had no longing for the world outside. She had grown up in a secluded farm-house, where the principal pleasure lay in being able, while the sun shone on Sunday-to sleep in the afternoon.

"Mistress," began the head-servant, Tobias, "Mistress, may I ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Is it true that your daughter-?"

"Will be betrothed to-day."

"Praise be to God and thanks!" cried the head-servant; "God forgive me, I was afraid the master would not give her to anybody, that he would think nobody good enough for her! Anton Armbruster is a fine, honest fellow, and in the war he showed himself a brave man; he will be the husband to-"

The farmer's wife interrupted this speech, lest something unpleasant about Thoma might be added, and said, "The betrothal is not to be here at home, it will take place in the city to-day, at the Sword Inn. I am to go too," she concluded, pleased that so great an honor should be done her. She walked more quickly than usual to the house, awakened the maids, and then mounted the stairs to the large guest chamber. There stood two high bedsteads, but they held bed-clothing enough for six, for from this house neither feathers nor linen were ever sold. It was easy enough to see that when the mistress opened the double doors of the great, gayly-painted wardrobe. She feasted her eyes on the masses of linen heaped up there; of which that in the left side of the wardrobe, tied with blue ribbon, was the outfit long ago prepared for Thoma. The mother laid her hand on it as if in blessing, and her lips moved.

But now she heard footsteps in the living-room, and went down stairs again.

CHAPTER III

There, where the bright morning light streamed through many windows, and the ever-heated porcelain stove spread a pleasant warmth, the farmer was walking up and down. He was a broad, stately man; his thick hair was cut short, and the stubble stood upright, which gave his immense head a certain bull-dog look. From his smoothly-shaven face looked forth self-esteem, obstinacy, and contempt of the world. He was still in his shirt sleeves, but otherwise arrayed in holiday attire; the single-breasted, collarless, velvet coat alone hung on the nail; he wore high boots, whose tops fell down in folds, showing the white stockings below the knee-breeches; and also a gay silk vest, buttoned close to his throat.

As his wife entered he nodded silently. Following her came their son Peter, a discontented-looking, full-faced young fellow, and then the servant-men and maids. After grace was said, they sat down to breakfast. There was no conversation; no one even spoke of the chair that remained vacant, that of Thoma. Not until the after-grace had been said, did the peasant speak to Tobias, telling him to take the fat oxen to the fair.

He then sat down in the great arm-chair, not far from the stove, and looked toward the door. Thoma may be permitted to make an exception to-day. Usually she takes great pride in allowing no one to be before her at work, early or late.

Suddenly he arose, and stepping to the porch that led to the yard, called to Tobias to take the prize cow also to the fair. "Father," called a strong girlish voice from the chamber window over the door, "Father, do you mean to sell the prize cow too?"

Landolin half-turned his head, and looked toward the window, but seemed to think a reply unnecessary.

He called to the servant not to forget to stop at the "Sword."

The oxen were led out. They moved as though half asleep, then stopped and looked around, as if bidding farewell to the farm-yard. A splendid cow followed-she was of Simmenthaler stock, but raised here on the farm. The cow's eyes glistened as though she were conscious that she had taken the first prize at the last agricultural fair.

Landolin went down the broad stone steps into the yard, and stood balancing himself first on one foot, then on the other, surveying with great satisfaction the animals and the comfortable appointments of his house.

"Good morning, father!" called the same strong, girlish voice from the veranda. "I could not sleep till near morning. Father, are you really intending to sell the prize cow?"

"You do not know as much as I thought," answered Landolin laughing; "do you think nothing goes to the fair except to be sold? A man sometimes likes to show what he owns."

"You're right," answered the girl, shaking back her long, flowing yellow hair, "you're right."

And the miller was right too. The girl was almost too beautiful. She now seated herself upon the door-step, and began braiding her hair, and singing softly to herself; but she often stopped, and gazed dreamily into the far distance with her great blue eyes. She was thinking of Anton, down by the mill in the valley.

CHAPTER IV

Arrayed in the velvet coat, on his head his broad hat adorned with a large silver buckle, and in his hand a stout stick, Landolin came through the door-way and said:

"Thoma, I'm going now; I want you and your mother to follow soon."

He started on, but waited a while at the gate, for the common people there, who greeted him obsequiously, to pass by; he could not accompany those who were driving to the fair only a poor little cow or a goat, or perhaps going empty-handed to make some small purchases. The Galloping Cooper greeted him as he hastened by. He was a gaunt man, by trade a cooper, and received this name because he was always in a hurry. The gamekeeper saluted by touching his hand to his cap. Landolin responded graciously, for he had appointed the man to his present position when he was bailiff. Cushion Kate, an old woman with sunburnt face and a red kerchief tied round her head, who carried a number of gay-colored head cushions, passed by without greeting; she was angry with Landolin, and had no other way of expressing it. Not until a wealthy farmer like himself came up and cried: "Come along, Landolin," did Landolin condescend to nod, and join his equal.

Our story lies in that part of the country where great farms are still found in the hands of peasants; these descend by inheritance from one generation to another; and with them certain lines of social demarcation which exclude from the farmer's circle those who are styled the "common people;" even at the inn an unwritten law prescribes that the farmers should sit at a separate table from the laborers and mechanics.

The village consists of thirty-two farm-houses, that lie scattered amidst their broad fields, and of a few small houses collected about the church, the school-house, and the inn.

"Where are your women folks?" said Landolin's companion, after they had walked silently side by side a good distance.

"They are coming after us; they are riding," answered Landolin.

The first speaker had indeed heard that something more important than the sale of cattle was to take place at the fair in the city to-day; but, as a discreet and self-controlled farmer, who allowed no one to meddle in his affairs or to trouble him with impertinent questions, he said no more.

The two walked a long distance, silent and supercilious, for each felt that here were walking two men who together represented three hundred acres of field and meadow, and nearly as many more of forest-land. At length the neighbor, who was the younger, and besides was Burgomaster, asked,

"Have you any old hay left?"

"No; sold it all."

"At a good price?"

"Yes. You too?"

"Of course."

They spoke to each other as unconcernedly as though neither had ever thought of increasing his acres; but for all that the enchanted dragon-Speculation-had flown over this peaceful valley, leaving dire destruction in his track. Each of these men had lost large sums of money by a recent bank failure, and in American railroad stocks; but neither was willing to ask the other's sympathy, or even to acknowledge his own loss; and each thought, "I can bear it better than he."

One said to himself, "I am younger than he is," and the other, "I am older than he;" one, "How could the young man be so rash?" and the other, "How could the old man have shown so little experience?" On only one point did their thoughts agree; both intended to resist temptation for the future, and to be contented with the slow and sure profits of their fields.

"We are a little late," the younger farmer at last said.

"Oh," replied Landolin, standing still (he always stood still when he spoke), "what I have to buy will wait for me. I only sent my cattle that the fair might amount to something, as I hear that a great many Alsace traders are coming."

The other glanced sideways at Landolin, as though he would have enjoyed saying, "I know you wish the miller and his son to be there first, and be waiting for you; but I'll not give you the satisfaction of knowing that I understand your meanness."

Landolin's wagon with the two great horses now overtook them. In it were seated mother and daughter, in holiday attire. Landolin's companion bowed quickly many times, and murmured, as he glanced at Thoma, "It is certainly true; she is the most beautiful girl in the country." Thoma asked if the men did not wish to ride, for there was a second seat in the "Schaarenbank," as they here call the *Char-à-banc*, which has now taken the place of the old-fashioned coach. The men declined, and the wagon rolled on.

CHAPTER V

Mountain and valley must join each other after all. Down by the brook Anton was walking with his father, and from the hill-side Thoma was coming with hers. A few weeks only had passed since Anton and Thoma gave themselves to each other; but when once the verdure of the spring-time appears, its spread is strong and unceasing.

It came about thus: the snow was lying heavy on the mountains and in the ravines, on the fields it had begun to melt, when three young men in soldiers' caps had come one Sunday to Landolin's gate. They greeted as a comrade the servant Fidelis, who was currying the horses, and also wore a soldier's cap.

"What!" said Fidelis, "do you dare to invite the master's daughter?"

"Yes, of course."

"I don't believe that she'll consent, or rather that her father will, but he won't mind having the honor offered him."

"Come with us, Fidelis," said Anton, "you are one of us."

The other two young men, who were sons of rich farmers like Landolin, looked astonished, but said nothing.

"As you will," answered Fidelis; "just wait till I put my Sunday coat on."

He accompanied the three to the house, but stopped on the threshold, and allowed the farmers' sons to approach his master alone. After welcoming them, Landolin seated himself quickly and asked:

"What can I do for you?"

The son of the farmer, Titus, called the Mountain-king, who lived on the other side of the plateau, a tall fellow with broad shoulders and a boyish face, answered glibly, as though reciting a carefully committed lesson, that they had come most humbly to invite the maiden Thoma to be Maid of Honor at the presentation of the flag to the Club.

"Who are to be the other maids of honor?" asked Landolin.

"My sister and the daughter of the District Forester."

Landolin nodded, and then asked on what day the festival was to take place. Anton, who had not before spoken, answered that the fifteenth of July had been chosen, as it was the anniversary of the declaration of war, and fortunately happened to fall on Sunday. He added adroitly, "that they desired to change the day of terror into one of gladness."

Landolin looked up, astonished at Anton's temerity in addressing him; then fixed his eye on the mountain prince, who, instead of replying himself, had permitted the miller's son to speak.

"You make arrangements far in advance; it's a long time from now to the middle of July; but never mind. We thank you for the honor, but we cannot join you," said Landolin, with decision.

"All right, we need go only one house farther," quickly answered the mountain prince, his face reddening. He was about turning away, when Anton interrupted:

"Pardon me; but if I have rightly understood the ex-bailiff, he is going to leave the decision to his daughter."

The farmer compressed his lips craftily, then said:

"Yes, yes; you are right. And mind you, I shall not say a word to her, and you shall find that she will give you the same answer that I gave."

"May I ask why?" inquired the mountain prince.

"You may ask," answered the peasant, going to the door and calling to Thoma to bring wine and something to eat. It seemed as if Thoma had already prepared this, for she came immediately, the young men following her movements with admiring eyes. She poured the wine, they touched their glasses, and Anton had begun to repeat his request, when she interrupted him:

"Say no more!"

Anton turned pale, and Thoma blushed; their eyes met, and Thoma's eyelids dropped. In a moment, however, she looked up frankly, and continued:

"I have heard all that has been said."

"Bravo! that's splendid!" cried Anton; "pardon me, but I imagine there are few who would so honestly confess that they had been listening."

"I thank you for your praise, but it is nothing-that is, I mean being honest deserves no praise."

The farmer shrugged his shoulders, and opened his mouth with delight. "He's getting it now," thought he, "she pays in good coin."

Turning to her father, Thoma continued:

"Father, did you really mean that I should do as I choose?"

"Certainly! Whatever you say will be right."

"Then I say yes; I accept the honor with thanks."

Fidelis, who was standing at the door, bit his lip to keep from laughing aloud; and an expression of astonishment spread itself over the faces of the farmer and the three young men. The mountain-prince and the other farmer's son thanked Thoma and shook hands with her, but when Anton offered his hand she turned quickly away, and busied herself with the plates and glasses.

Meanwhile the farmer's wife had entered, unnoticed, and now, whilst they were enjoying the refreshment, spoke to them all, for she knew their mothers. Turning to Anton, she expressed her sympathy at his mother's death, saying that she was a most excellent woman, and that her happiness must have been great indeed when her only son returned from the war, safe and with honor.

After the three young men had gone, the farmer's wife said:

"Anton's a splendid fellow, he pleases me best of them all."

"Do you think so too?" the farmer was about to ask his daughter, but he refrained, and only answered:

"He has a tongue like a lawyer's; the only real substantial farmer is Titus's son and heir."

Thoma left the room without a word, and that which Landolin dreaded came to pass. From this time Thoma and Anton met often, in public and alone, in the bright day time and the quiet evening. And when at length Thoma told her father of her love, he calmly endeavored to show her that this would be an unequal marriage, and that he had always had confidence that her pride would not allow her to throw herself away; as, however, he found that Thoma never wavered in her decision, he was wise enough to give his consent, thereby securing their gratitude instead of having to yield without it; for above all else he valued Thoma's love and respect.

So it came to pass, that to-day was to take place the betrothal of the haughty Landolin's proud daughter with her honest, but not quite so well-born lover, Anton.

CHAPTER VI

"Mother!" said Thoma, during the drive, "when father was young he must have been the handsomest man in the country."

"He was, indeed, but wild and unruly, very wild; you will have a more gentle husband. It will be just the opposite with you to what it was with us."

Thoma looked up wonderingly; it was unusual for her mother either to think or speak so much; and her astonishment increased when her mother added:

"If your father had been a soldier like Anton, he too would have learned to give way to others, and not always think himself the only person in the world. Heaven forgive me, I was not going to speak of your father at all, I only meant to tell you that you must now learn to give up to others; with marriage willfulness must end."

The deference with which Thoma had listened at first, disappeared now that her mother concluded with advice and censure. She moved her lips impatiently, but said nothing.

From the valley could be heard the din of the fair; the drums and trumpets in the show booths, the lowing of the cows and oxen, and the whinnying of the horses in the broad meadow by the river side.

At the foot of the mountain, where the signpost is, Thoma beckoned to her a beggar, who sat by the roadside, holding out his handless arm, and gave him a bright, new mark.

"That pleases me," said the mother, as they drove on.

Thoma answered with a voice clear as the morning:

"Yes, mother, on this, my day of happiness, I cannot pass the first beggar I meet without giving him something; and see," she cried, looking back, "see, he is making signs to us; he has just found out how much he received, and is showing it to the others. If I could only make the whole world happy, as happy as I am! O mother, it must be terrible! There sits a poor man appealing with such pitiful glances; men pass by, one gives nothing, the others give nothing, it is too much trouble to put their hands into their pockets and open their purses, and the poor man begs with empty mouth."

The mother nodded with a happy face, and wanted to say: "You do not take after your father in everything, in some things you are like me," but she suppressed the words. She was still vexed for having so far forgotten herself as to say anything against her husband.

"Good morning, Thoma! Good morning, mother!" suddenly sounded in greeting the clear voice of Anton; he held out his hand and continued:

"Come, jump out and walk with me."

"No, you ride with us."

"I'll walk beside you," replied Anton, and rested his hand upon the railing of the wagon, as he walked along.

The mother made excuses for having kept him waiting, and said that the farmer was following on foot.

CHAPTER VII

Upon entering the fair ground, Landolin was immediately greeted by the farmer Titus, called the Mountain-king, whose estate lay on the other side of the plateau. Titus offered him a large sum for the prize cow, which Landolin haughtily refused. He was soon surrounded by a crowd of farmers, who, partly in earnest, and partly in jest, charged him with having ruined the fair by exhibiting her, for the other cattle looked small and poor in comparison. Landolin smiled; he had brought her merely to gratify his pride, but he was very well pleased to find that he had been able to arouse the envy of others; and the annoyance of the Mountain-king especially pleased him, as they had long been rivals. The other farmers had really no ambition, their thoughts and efforts were centered on gain. This was the case with the rivals, too, but in addition to this, they desired a special recognition of their superior importance.

The Mountain-king Titus had this advantage, he despised the world, and let it be so understood; the man who does this the world runs after. He acted as if (and perhaps it was true) he desired nothing from any one; he had the indifference of the pretentious peasant; he might hear his name spoken behind him seven times without so much as turning his head to find out who spoke, or what was said of him. He rarely talked with any one, but when he did, the person addressed was happy; "The Mountain-king has just spoken to me, and so long, and so politely!" – he who could say this was elated with the honor. Landolin, on the other hand, despised the world no less than the Mountain-king; but he longed for applause and homage, and when it was not voluntarily offered him, he endeavored to compel it. He was boastful, and displayed his condescension, or even his anxiety for the good opinion of this and that one, and by that very means trifled away the desired standing.

Landolin and the Mountain-king treated each other like friends, while at the same time they hated each other profoundly.

Presently they stood in the presence of a third person, to whom each of them was bound to do honor. Pfann, the Circuit Judge, a man with a fine countenance, wearing gold spectacles, was walking with his wife on his arm, through the crowded fair, bowing here and there. He now came up to the two men, and told them that on the next day they would be summoned to serve on the jury.

"I'm sorry it cannot be arranged otherwise," he added, "but the next term of court falls during harvest."

"It's always so," cried Landolin; "in return for paying high taxes, we have the privilege of sitting for weeks at a time, nailed to a bench."

He thought that he had spoken not only with dignity, but with general approval, and he looked around for signs of assent; but nobody nodded.

Titus, on the other hand, was silent, and his silence was more weighty than Landolin's words.

"We may congratulate you," said the judge's wife to Landolin; "I hear your daughter is to be betrothed to the miller's son, Anton, of Rothenkirchen. He is an excellent young man, intelligent, well-educated, and brave."

Landolin did not appear to be altogether satisfied with this praise, and could not help saying, vaingloriously, even at the expense of his future son-in-law:

"Yes, the young folks are so desperately fond of each other, that I have given my consent. Thank God, I am able to take a son-in-law of lower rank; and, indeed, he might have been an officer. But I must say farewell; I have waited too long, they are expecting me at the 'Sword.'" He stepped quickly away.

When the Circuit Judge had found his way through the crowd to a quiet corner, he said:

"There you have a sample of your honest-hearted peasantry. Utter stupidity or cunning roughness is their alternative. The roughness hits at random, without reflecting how the smitten feels

the blow. Landolin is not ashamed to belittle the brave boy his daughter is to marry, merely to make himself appear bigger by his side."

"I still hold," answered his wife, "that the hearts of these people are true, and are often better than their words and deeds. Landolin did not really wish to speak disparagingly of Anton; he only wanted to set down his old rival, Titus; for Titus, too, would have been glad to have Anton for a son-in-law."

The judge was astonished at this new information from his wife; but at her charitable judgment, which nothing could shake, he had long since left off being astonished.

They wandered on; and as they proceeded, the greetings given the wife were, if possible, more earnest than those given the judge himself. She nodded to some with special friendliness, and to a few she gave a pleasant passing word.

CHAPTER VIII

On one side of the river was the noise and bustle of the crowded fair; on the other, in the shade of the elms and willows, hidden from all the world, sat Anton and Thoma, caressing each other.

"Now be sensible, and say something," said Thoma at length.

"No, no, I cannot talk, and I don't need to, for everything I would say you know already," replied Anton. He told, however, of his awakening before day, of his morning walk, and how he had greeted Thoma from the far distance.

She laughed gladly, and tears came to her eyes. She was certainly sincerely fond of Anton, but the deep, gushing love which now burst from him she had scarcely dreamed of.

"Yonder is the fair," said he, "anything can be got there. I should like to buy something for you, but it would be useless; the world, the whole world, is yours."

"Not quite the whole," she laughed, "but you are right, don't buy anything for me. All I want is your good heart; that I have, and such a one all the gold in the world couldn't buy. Do you know what pleases me best in all you say?"

"Tell me what it is."

"I believe every word you speak. I don't believe you could possibly tell an untruth."

Again they were silent until, as a happy smile broke over Anton's face, Thoma said:

"Why do you smile? Your soul laughs out. Tell me why!"

"Yes, yes, love; doesn't it seem as if our river were more joyous than usual to-day? I've grown up on its banks, you know. When I was in the war, I often fancied at night I heard it rushing. It made me homesick. I was thinking just now, darling, that the little fishes must be happy down there in the water."

"It will be hard, Anton, for me to grow accustomed to it. I have a real horror of water. When I was a very little child, one of our servants was drowned, and they told me that the river must have its sacrifice every year, and after three days it would give up the dead; so I hated it. But nonsense, what foolish talk! See, there comes Titus's wagon, with his son and daughter. The son wanted me and the daughter wanted you."

She arose and waved her hand to them, and then called out, taking care they should not hear her:

"Buy yourselves dolls at the fair."

Anton remained seated, and a cloud passed over his face, for it pained him that Thoma should greet them so scornfully.

A messenger came from the inn to say that Landolin had arrived. The hostess met them at the door, and said:

"Your friends are all up stairs in the corner room. Good luck to you!"

CHAPTER IX

The hostess of the "Sword" – it so happens that every one speaks of the hostess and not of the host, and her husband seems to be quite satisfied with it – this wise woman, according to a plan of her own, had changed and enlarged the old inn until it was twice as large as before. For, as soon as a spot had been fixed upon for a railway station, she had a new building added on the side toward the river, with a large summer hall and verandas, where the people of rank in the village could hold their summer gatherings in the open air. The corner room of the house, on the town side, she arranged especially for betrothal festivities. There was a great mirror, in which people could survey themselves at full length – to be sure not always an advantage. There were colored prints of young lovers, of marriages, of christenings, and of golden weddings.

At the table sat the miller and Landolin's wife, and waited long for the farmer. The miller was annoyed, and Landolin's wife did not know what to say, for she could not deny that her husband probably kept the miller waiting intentionally, in order to show him who was the more important.

The miller had an earnest, good-natured face, and a thoughtfulness in every word and gesture. He had a high regard for the farmer's wife, and expressed it to her. She looked down, abashed, for she was not used to being praised, and became silent. The miller, too, ceased talking, and whistled gently to himself.

At length Landolin's step was heard, and following him came Thoma and Anton. Landolin shook hands with the miller.

"I have been waiting a long time," the miller said.

Landolin did not consider it necessary to excuse himself; he thought people must be satisfied with all he did, and the way in which he did it.

The miller poured out some of the wine which stood on the table, and, after touching glasses, Landolin said:

"We have really nothing more to arrange. You know what division Peter must make when he takes the estate. The money I have promised I will pay down the day before the wedding. The five acres of forest which I have bought, which border on your land, and are properly no part of my farm, I now give to Thoma to be hers in her own right. You have no one but your son, so there is nothing more to be said. Of course, you will not marry again?"

The miller smiled sadly, and said at length:

"Then give your hands to one another in God's name, and may happiness and blessing be yours for all time."

The lovers clasped each other's hands firmly, and so did the fathers and mother.

The betrothed drank from the same glass; and it was a good omen that Thoma did not take from his hand the glass, which Anton held out to her, but drank whilst he held it.

Landolin might have spoken, but he remained silent. It is not necessary for him to speak. Is he not Landolin? He even looked suspiciously at the miller. He did not esteem him highly, for every one praised his good nature, and Landolin was inclined to consider good nature as one kind of rascality.

"Father-in-law," said Anton, "whenever you come to our house you will find joy there, for as surely as our brook will never flow up the mountain side, so surely will Thoma's thoughts never turn toward her old home in discontent."

Landolin opened his eyes at this speech; but his only answer was a tap on the shoulder. The miller said, with a trembling voice:

"Yes, yes; 'twill be beautiful to have a young woman in our house once more."

"Thoma will hold you in all honor," said the farmer's wife. "She honors her parents, and that makes sound housewives."

Landolin shrugged his shoulders slightly, when the miller continued:

"I'm very sure, Landolin, that your daughter is not so hot-tempered as you and your side of the house have always been."

Landolin smiled, well pleased that people should think him hot-tempered, for this made them fear and respect him.

CHAPTER X

As Landolin still remained silent, the miller felt called upon to speak.

"I can well understand that it must be hard for you to let your daughter leave your house; we found it so when our only daughter was married. My wife-it is from her that Anton gets his ready speech-said that when the daughter who sang as she went up and down the stairs is gone, then it seems that all the cheerfulness of the house has flown away like a bird."

At these stupid, soft-hearted words, Landolin gave the miller a disdainful look. But he did not notice this, and went on in a voice too low for the lovers to hear:

"I needn't praise Anton to you any more. He belongs to you as well as to me. He is well educated; the military authorities wished to keep him in the army. They said he would be made an officer, but that is not for one of us. It will not be long before your daughter is the wife of the bailiff. My wife, thank God, lived to see him come home from the war with the great medal of honor. I'm sure you are glad of it too. A man with that medal is worth much, I do not mean in money, but wherever he goes he is esteemed and respected, and needn't stand back for anybody, no matter who he is."

"We needn't do that, either," said Landolin, looking at the miller arrogantly. He laughed aloud when the miller added:

"The judge's wife put it well when she said, 'Wherever he goes he has the honorable recognition of the highest rank in the whole kingdom.'"

"Hoho!" cried Landolin, so loudly that even the lovers started. There was nothing more said; for, as the fair was over, the miller's relatives and the brother of Landolin's wife came in. The farmer's wife greeted her brother affectionately; and Landolin shook hands with him, and bade him welcome. He and his brother-in-law were enemies, as the brother-in-law sided with Titus; but to-day it was only proper that he should be invited to the family festival.

They sat down together to the feast, when the miller remarked that next Sunday he would go with the lovers to visit the patriarch Walderjörgli, in the forest, and announce to him their betrothal. Landolin's face reddened to the roots of his hair, and he exclaimed:

"I don't care anything for the patriarch. I don't care anything for old customs; and, as for me, Walderjörgli, with his long beard, is no saint; he's not down in my calendar."

"He is a relative of my wife," replied the miller, "and you know very well of how much importance he is."

"Just as much as there is in my glass," answered Landolin, after he had drained it.

His wife, fearing a quarrel, declared she had great respect for Walderjörgli, and begged her husband to say nothing against him. Thoma joined her, and laid her hand on her father's shoulder, imploring him not to stir up a dispute unnecessarily.

Landolin smiled on his child; poured a fresh glass of wine, and drank to the lovers' health.

Anton and Thoma now started to go, but Landolin cried excitedly:

"Hold on! Wait a moment, Anton! You mustn't ask for the marriage to take place before Candlemas. Give me your hand on it."

"I have no hand to give. I have already given it to Thoma," replied Anton, laughing, as he went away with his betrothed.

CHAPTER XI

"How many friends you have!" said Thoma; for they were often stopped on their way through the crowded fair grounds, especially by Anton's old comrades. "I wish we were alone," she added impatiently.

"Yes, love," answered Anton, "if we choose the day of the fair for our betrothal, and show ourselves then for the first time together, we must expect these congratulations, and I am glad to have them. Isn't it delightful to have so many people rejoice with us in our happiness? It adds to their enjoyment without taking from ours."

"Do you really believe they rejoice?" asked Thoma.

The conversation was interrupted by the handless beggar, who came up to thank Thoma again, and tell her how astonished he was at such a gift. He said he had been her father's substitute (for at that time substitutes in the military service were still allowed).

Anton encouraged him to tell where he had lost his hand. It was on a circular saw, in a mill on the other side of the valley. Anton told him to come the next day, and perhaps he could give him work. While he was speaking the judge's wife approached, and congratulated them heartily. Thoma looked at her in surprise when she said:

"You are the new generation; preserve the honesty of the old, and add to it the progressiveness of the present. I shall write to my son of your betrothal."

Anton shook hands twice with the judge's wife.

"I beg you will give the lieutenant my most respectful greetings."

It was still difficult for the lovers to disengage themselves from the crowd, for a group of Anton's comrades surrounded them, saying:

"At your wedding we are going to march in front of you with the flag of the Club and the regimental music."

Anton thanked them, and said he would be much pleased.

He had scarcely got out of the throng, when a teamster in a blue jacket, who was walking beside a four-horse wagon, called out, "Captain Anton Armbruster! Hallo!" and came up to him and said:

"How are you? So you've got her, have you? Is that she? Is that Thoma?"

"Yes."

"Then I wish you happiness and blessing. How tall and beautiful she is! Let me shake hands with you."

Thoma gave her hand with reluctance, and the teamster continued jokingly:

"Get him to tell you what he did one night when we were before Paris. We were lying by the camp-fire, roasted on one side, frozen on the other. Anton, who was asleep, called out, 'Thoma! Thoma!' He wouldn't own up to it afterwards, but I heard it plain enough. Well, good-by; may God keep you both. Get up," he called to his horses, and drove on.

At last the lovers made their way out of the crowd to the quiet meadow-path, where, for a time, they walked hand in hand, then stood still. Any one who saw them must have thought they were speaking loving words to each other. The youth's voice was full of tenderness, but he spoke not of love, or, at least, not of love for his betrothed. He began hesitatingly: "Let me tell you something, darling."

"What is it? What's the matter?"

"Just think of our being here together, and having each other, and belonging to each other, and only a little while ago I was so far away in France. There, in the field, on the march, or in the camp, thousands upon thousands of us, we were like one man, no one for himself, no one thinking of what he was at home. The brotherhood was all; and now, each lives for himself alone."

"You are not alone, we are together."

"Yes, indeed. But you were going to ask me something."

"Oh, yes! How did it happen that you called my name in your sleep?"

"I'll tell you. Do you remember my passing your house when I was on my way to the army as a recruit?"

"Certainly I remember it."

"Did you notice that I took a roundabout way over the mountain, so as to pass it?"

"I didn't notice it then, but afterward I thought of it. When you gave me your hand in farewell you looked at me with your fiery eyes, that are so piercing."

"Yes, I wanted then to tell you how much I loved you, but I wouldn't do it, for your sake. I said to myself, 'You had better say nothing, and so save her from heart-ache and anxiety while you are in the war, and from life-long grief if you should be killed.' It was hard for me to keep silent, but after I had gone I was glad of it. And, do you remember? you had a wild-rose in your mouth by the stem, and the rose-leaves lay on your lips, just where I wanted to put a kiss; and at your throat was a corn-flower as blue as your eyes."

"Oh, you flatterer! But go on, go on; what else?"

Anton drew her to him and kissed her, then continued:

"There! Shall I go on? Well, you took the two flowers in your hand, and I saw you would like to give them to me, and I wanted to have them, but even that I wouldn't ask. Often and often by day and by night, in the field and on the watch, I thought of you, as the song says: and once, when the teamster lay beside me, I spoke your name in my sleep."

"Oh, you are so dear and so good and so sweet," cried Thoma, "I'm afraid I'm not gentle enough for you. In our home everything is rough, we are not so-. But you'll see I can be different."

Her eyes moistened while she spoke, and the whole expression of her face changed to one of humility and tenderness.

"I will not have you different," cried Anton, "you shall remain as you are, for just as you are you please me best. Oh, Heaven! who in the world would believe that Landolin's Thoma of Reutershöfen could be as gentle as a dove."

"I gentle?" she exclaimed, laughingly, "I a dove? All right then, catch me!" she cried, joyously clapping her hands and running quickly into the forest, whither Anton followed her.

CHAPTER XII

They came within the border of the wood which belonged to Landolin. On the side where the sun is most searching and powerful, the bark of the mighty pine-trees was torn open, and the resin was dropping into the tubs which were set for it.

"It's a pity for the beautiful trees," said Anton; "your father mustn't tap such trees as these hereafter; they are good for lumber. He must leave them to me."

Thoma begged him to be very careful how he dealt with her father, for he would not bear opposition.

"I don't know," she added, "it seems to me father is very-very irritable to-day. I don't know why."

"But I know. He is vexed because he has to give you up. You'll see, I shall be so too in a thousand weeks. But a man must be a grandfather before--"

"Oh you!" interrupted Thoma, coloring.

They kept on deeper into the forest, away from the path, and sat down on the soft, yielding moss at the foot of a far-branching pine.

"We have had enough kissing, let me rest a little now, I'm tired," said Thoma, as she leaned against the tree. She smiled when Anton hastily made his coat into a pillow for her head.

Lilies of the valley blossomed at their feet. Anton plucked one, and with it stroked Thoma's cheek and forehead, gently singing the while all manner of nursery songs, and magic charms.

I wish thee a night of repose,
A canopy of the wild rose,
Young May-bells to pillow thy head,
Sleep soft in thy flowery bed.

And where two lovers sit thus together, in the depth of the forest, there streams from the mists arising heavenward, and from the murmuring and rustling in the tree-tops, that same subtle enchantment and delight which resounds in song, and is portrayed in fairy tales, where trees and grass and wild beasts speak.

"Hark; there's a finch," said Anton. "Do you remember the story about the finch?"

"No; tell it to me."

"Once a young man went through a field to visit his sweetheart, and the finch called out: 'Wip! Wip!' (wife, wife.) 'That's just what I want,' said the young man. As he was on his way home again the finch cried: 'Bethink you well. Bethink you well.' Now we, dear Thoma, have bethought ourselves well. Fly on, finch, we don't need your help. 'Wip! Wip!'"

"How tender you are!" said Thoma, smiling; then she shut her eyes, and soon she was fast asleep. As Anton looked at her she seemed to become more beautiful, but she must have gone to sleep with some willful impulse in her mind, for her face had a strained expression.

From a little stone near by, some lizards looked with their bright, knowing eyes at the slumberer and her guard. They shuffled noiselessly away, and presently others came to see the wonder. Dragon-flies in green and gold came flying through the air, brushed against each other, and sped away. A gay butterfly lighted on Thoma's forehead, just at the parting of her hair, and rested there like a diadem. On the highest twig of the tree, a green finch perched. He turned his head, saw the sleeping girl, and flew swiftly away. A cuckoo alighted from his flight, and sounded his cry. Thoma awoke, and looked around bewildered.

"Good morning, my darling," said Anton, "you have been my betrothed ever since yesterday."

"Have I slept very long?" asked she.

"No, not very, but surely you dreamt something strange. What was it?"
"I never tell dreams; I don't believe in them. Come, let us go home."
And so they started homeward.

CHAPTER XIII

At the edge of the wood they saw "Cushion Kate," with her red kerchief round her head, standing by a young man who sat by the roadside. She offered him a pretzel, but he refused it.

"See," said Thoma, "that's 'Cushion Kate' with her Vetturi. She spoils the good-for-nothing fellow. He used to be a servant of ours, but we found that he had been stealing oats, nobody knows how long. So, of course, father sent him away."

"The poor creature looks almost starved."

"He's not only poor, but he's a rascal. Father doesn't want to prosecute him, so the fellow keeps bothering him for his wages."

When they came up, the lad arose quickly. He was of slight build, and his bluish-black hair fell in disorder over his forehead. The dark, weary eyes had a frightened look. He took off a torn straw hat, and bowed several times to Anton. He seemed to be trying to say something.

"Your name is Vetturi, isn't it?" asked Anton. "Come here. Is there anything you want?"

"I won't take alms like a beggar, I'd rather strike my mouth against a stone," replied Vetturi in a hoarse voice; and turning to his mother as though she had contradicted him, said: "Mother, you shan't take anything."

Then in an entirely different tone he said to Thoma: "May I wish you joy?"

"No, you may not. Nobody who speaks so disrespectfully of my father shall wish me joy. Own up to stealing the oats. If you do, I will go to father and get him to forgive you."

"I won't do it."

"Then abuse me, not my father. My father might, perhaps, have given up to you, but I won't let him as long as you keep on lying."

"But I can wish you joy, Anton," cried Cushion Kate; "I hope your wife will be like your mother. She was a good woman; there isn't her like in the whole country. I was in your house when you came into the world. You are just eight days older than my oldest daughter would be now. Now, get your father-in-law to take my Vetturi again, and straighten everything out. We are poor people. We don't want to quarrel with such a powerful farmer as he is, but he must not squeeze us until the blood runs out from under our nails."

"Come along," cried Thoma, taking hold of Anton's arm, "don't let her talk to you so."

She walked away. Anton did not follow her, but said to Vetturi that he would employ him as a wood-cutter up in the forest.

"My Vetturi cannot do that," interrupted the mother. "He cannot work up there from Monday morning to Saturday night, and have no decent food, and no decent bed."

"Come! come!" urged Thoma from a distance. Anton obeyed, and Vetturi called after them all kinds of imprecations against Landolin.

With a frown Thoma said to Anton, in a reproachful tone:

"That Vetturi is no comrade of yours, and why do you stop and talk with him? I do not like it in you. You are not proud enough. Such people should not speak to us unless they are spoken to."

Anton looked at her with astonishment. There was a sharpness in her words and voice which surprised him. She noticed it, perhaps, for she gave him a bewitching smile, and continued:

"See, I am proud of you, and you must be proud of yourself. Such a man as you are! People ought to take off their hats when they speak to you. I wouldn't say good-day to a rascal, and you ought not to either. Perhaps you think I'm angry. Don't think that for an instant. It's only that I have no patience with a liar. Whatever a man does, if he confesses it, you feel like helping him; but a liar, a hypocrite—"

"But, Thoma dear," interrupted Anton, "lying belongs to badness; a man who is bad enough to steal, must be bad enough to lie."

"I understand everything at once. You need not always explain a thing to me twice. I could see a liar or a hypocrite perishing before my eyes and not help him until he-"

"Oho! You're getting excited."

"Yes, I always do when I'm on this subject. But enough of this. What are the cottagers to us! See there, it was there by the pear-tree that you said good-bye to me, when you went to the war. See, it is the finest tree of all. It looks like a great nosegay."

"And before the flowers become fruit you will be mine."

CHAPTER XIV

Anton asked about their neighbor's daughter, Thoma's old playmate. Sadly she told him how she had broken with her only friend. Anger and shame reddened her cheeks as she related to him how her old playmate had, on her wedding day, worn a wreath which she had no right to wear. Thoma's lips quivered when she said:

"They say that Cushion Kate's mother was forced to stand at the church door with a straw wreath on her head, and a straw girdle round her waist. That was hard, but just. But for the girl to lie so, before God and man; to accept an honor to which she had no right. To know it herself and yet be so bold-. There, that is just like Vetturi. I have no patience nor friendship with a liar, whether rich or poor, man or woman. He who will not take the responsibility of his own acts may go to perdition. Indeed, it is not necessary to tell him so, for he has already gone there. You laugh? You are right! Such an honorable man as you are doesn't need to be lectured. Now I don't need my playmate nor anything else while I have you and father. No princess could be happier than I."

They went on hand in hand. When they reached the farm-house, her mother, who had come straight home, called to them from the window to wait until everything should be ready for the visitors, who would soon be there with their congratulations.

So the two seated themselves in the garden back of the house, on the terrace beyond the cherry-tree, and the blossoms on the tree were not richer than the happy thoughts of the young couple.

While they were here under the cherry-tree, Cushion Kate was sitting by her son; he said:

"Mother, I must get away from here. I will go to Alsace, into a factory."

"And you will leave me alone," complained the mother for the hundredth time; and for the hundredth time related, as though it were a comfort, that Vetturi's grandfather had been one of the Reutershöfen family; and though he received his portion as a younger son, neither he nor his descendants had ever been able to get along. Vetturi let his mother talk, but still insisted that he would go.

"Mother, I'm a burden to you. It makes me ashamed."

"You're not a burden to me, and you shouldn't be ashamed to stay with your mother. What have I left in the world if you go away? I shall never want to get up again. I shall never want to make the fire. If you go away you must take me along."

"We'll see, mother. But first, I will have my pay from Landolin; this very day I will have it."

With these words he tore himself away, and hurried to the farm-house.

CHAPTER XV

Just as the farmer's wife had expected, many people returning from the fair, and many too who had not been there, came to offer their good wishes upon Thoma's betrothal. She made them welcome, and invited them to eat and drink.

When Landolin reached home his greeting to the guests was cool and careless, and he did not look at all like the father of a girl who had just been happily betrothed to her lover.

People said afterward that they knew then from his manner what he was likely to do. But who knows whether they were really so wise?

Landolin said to his wife:

"Stop feeding these people. Start them off. Don't be so friendly and talkative with the herd. It's impudence for them to come to me with good wishes. I don't want their good wishes."

He then went across the yard and stood awhile by the dog. Yes, he even spoke to him. "You're right, you should have been with me. Such fellows don't deserve a word. They ought to have a dog set on them."

Then Vetturi rushed into the yard, bareheaded, and called out: "Farmer! for the last time I say, I want my pay, my money."

"What? You want anything from me! March out of this yard at once. Off with you! What? You're standing there yet? Once for all, go, or I'll make you!"

"I won't go."

"Shall I untie the dog and set him on you?"

"You needn't untie the dog. You're a dog yourself."

"I'm what?"

"What I just said."

"Vetturi, you know I have a hand like iron. Go! Go, or I'll knock you down so you'll never move again."

"Do it! Kill me! You man-skinner, you-"

A stone was thrown; there was a shriek; a moan was heard that even hushed the barking of the dog. Vetturi fell down, groaned once, and then lay motionless.

Anton and Thoma had come to the open gate. They stood there as if rooted to the spot.

"For God's sake! What has happened?" Anton cried, and hastened to the prostrate form. But Thoma stood still, and fixed her gaze on her father, who was tearing open his vest, and loosening his collar.

Controlling herself with a violent effort, Thoma went up to her father, who was staring into his open hands.

"Father! What have you done?" cried she. He looked at her. There was a terrible change in his face. Is this the look of a man at the moment that he has killed another?

Thoma laid her hand on his shoulder. He shook it off and said: "Let me alone." He was afraid of her, and she of him.

At this moment it came to pass that father and daughter lost each other.

"He's dead! His skull is broken!" called the hostler, Fidelis, who, with Anton, had lifted Vetturi up.

With eyes cast on the ground, Thoma went to the house. Landolin left the yard, and went to the spring on the other side of the road.

The people in the house, who had come to give their congratulations, hastened out. With lamentation and mourning they carried Vetturi home to his mother.

Landolin's yard was suddenly still and forsaken; only a little pool of blood, near the heap of paving-stones, showed what had happened there. The sparrows and chickens had gathered round. The

head-servant Tobias drove them off, and quickly swept everything away. He then threw the stone and the broom into the drain.

CHAPTER XVI

When Anton returned Landolin was still at the spring, holding his hands under its broad stream of water.

"How is it?" he asked, turning round.

"He is dead; he gives no sign of life," replied Anton.

Landolin shook the water from his hands fiercely, and shaking his head slowly, said:

"You saw it, Anton? You had just come up. The stone didn't touch him; he fell down at the sound of my voice."

Before Anton could reply, Landolin asked: "Was his mother at home?"

"Yes, she had just come in, and it was terrible when she threw herself on her son's body and cried out: 'Vetturi! open your eyes, Vetturi! Open your mouth, here is some brandy! Drink, do drink!'"

"I, too, must drink something," replied Landolin; and placing his lips to the trough, he drank long. Indeed, it was plain that he purposely allowed the water to splash into his face, and as he slowly wiped it dry, he said:

"Go to Thoma, now! I'll soon follow you."

Anton obeyed. He found Thoma standing near the porch by the flowers, picking off the dead leaves of the rosemary, the yellow jessamine, and the carnations. She did not look round.

"Thoma, here I am; don't you see me?" cried he.

"Yes, I see you," answered Thoma. Her voice and her face, which she now turned toward Anton, were changed; and her eyes, which before had been so fearless, now wandered uneasily here and there.

"I see you," she continued, "I see the flowers, I see the trees and the sky. Everything pretends to be alive, but everything is dead."

"Thoma, you are always so strong and resolute. Control yourself. I know it is sad and distressing, but for the sake of a person who is dead-"

"It is not only that a person has been killed; he, you, I, my father, all, all have received a deathblow."

"Thoma, don't excite yourself so, you are always so sensible. You know I have been in the war, and have seen many-"

"Yes, yes, it is true; you too have killed men. When he was still alive you were so tender-hearted toward him, and now that he is dead you are so hard. Say, am I still in my right mind?"

"You are, if you will only control yourself."

"I'll try, thank you. Do you think that my father, that any one of us, can ever be happy again for a single minute?"

"Certainly! Your father has done nothing."

"Who then has? Is Vetturi not dead?"

"He is dead, but he was hurt by falling on the paving-stones. Yes, he was."

"Anton!" cried Thoma, intensely excited, "Anton, you're not saying that yourself, some one else is speaking through you. Did my father tell you that?"

Anton trembled, and Thoma continued: "Anton, for my sake you are speaking falsely. You lie! There he stands, and has such true eyes, so honest, and yet will lie. How can I now believe your Yes before the altar? Anton, you're telling a lie."

With tremulous voice, Anton replied:

"Thoma, I'm-I'm a soldier." His hand touched the medal of honor upon his breast.

"Take that off," cried Thoma. "Go! go away! Even you can tell a lie. Go! go!"

"Thoma! I forgive you. In affliction one turns against his dearest friend-"

"You're no more my dearest friend. I'll not have your forgiveness. Go away forever and ever. I have no part in you, and you shall have no part in me."

She rushed away and locked herself in her bedroom. Anton stood for a time benumbed, then knocked at her door, and spoke lovingly to her. She made no answer. He threatened to break open the door unless she gave some sign. Then the bolt was drawn; the door opened a little way; and at his feet fell the engagement ring. The door was again closed and bolted; Anton picked up the ring and went away.

CHAPTER XVII

Landolin turned away from the spring and went into the yard. He stopped a moment at the dog's kennel, and said to himself: "Chained! Chained!"

Did he feel, and did he wish to say that henceforth he himself was in chains?

He unfastened the dog, and it followed him into the living-room. No one was there. Landolin sat down in the easy chair, nervously grasped its arms, and moved his hands over them as if to convince himself that they were still there. Then he pulled up the loose tops of his boots, as though making ready for a walk. He arose, but went only as far as the table, which he repeatedly rubbed with his hands, as though trying to wipe something off. With a peremptory voice he called to have the supper brought. It was soon ready. His wife sat down beside him. She said nothing; she seemed comforted, even delighted, that her husband was willing to eat; and she forced herself to eat with him.

Landolin told the maid to call Thoma and Anton to supper. The maid returned with the answer that Anton had gone away, and that Thoma sent word that she was not coming. At this, Landolin seized his fork, and struck it through the cloth, deep into the hard table. His wife arose, her lips tightly compressed, and looked with dismay at the sacred family table, as though she expected to see it shed blood after her husband's terrible blow.

The fork was still sticking in the table, when a carriage drew up to the door, and the District Judge and his clerk entered. The farmer's wife had the courage to draw the fork quickly out.

Landolin held out his hand in welcome, but the District Judge appeared not to notice it. Landolin with a steady voice thanked the judge for coming so soon to find out the facts of the unhappy affair.

"Pray be seated, your honor; and you, too, Mr. Clerk," he said, ingratiatingly; then poured out three glasses of wine, and taking one in his hand, touched the other two, as a sign to the gentlemen to drink. But the District Judge said curtly: "No, thank you," and did not take the glass. He leaned back in his chair while the clerk spread a paper on the table.

"Sit down," he said to Landolin; but the latter replied: "I'm comfortable standing," and laid his hand upon the back of the chair which stood in front of him. He drummed on it with his fingers, and controlling himself with a violent effort, said:

"Will you ask me questions, or shall I tell it in my own way?"

"You may go on."

"Your honor, that wine there is pure, for I brought it myself from the vat at Kaiserstuhl; but I think the wine at the Sword is not pure. When I drink during the day, and talk at the same time, it sets me beside myself; but the fright at the accident has brought me to my senses."

"So you were drunk at the time of the-of the accident."

Landolin started. "This is not a man who has come to gossip with me. It is a judge, and a judge over me. Stop! How can being drunk help?" These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, and he replied, almost smiling:

"Thank heaven, I am never so drunk as not to know what I am doing. I can stand a good deal."

He bestowed a confidential smile on the judge, but when he saw the unchanging gravity of his countenance, he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and went on determinedly:

"I can prove that the good-for-nothing fellow got no harm from me."

"Have you got that down?" said the judge to the clerk; and he replied: "Yes, I am taking it in short-hand."

The chair under Landolin's hand moved, for he was dismayed to find that his disconnected expressions were all written down. He now waited for questions to be put to him, and after a little while the judge began:

"Have you not had a violent quarrel, once before to-day, with one-handed Wenzel of Altenkirchen?"

"Have you found that out already?"

"Yes. Tell me how it happened."

"How it happened? The story is soon told. More than thirteen years ago Wenzel was my substitute in the army. My father knew him well. He was a boatman. You can ask Walderjörgli if he wasn't. Our families are the oldest in the country-"

"But what has that to do with Wenzel?"

"Oh yes! Well! My father gave both Wenzel and his mother a great deal of money and clothes, and now Wenzel still tries to bleed me."

"Did you not threaten to lay him out cold if he spoke to you before other people again?"

"Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't. A man sometimes says such a thing when he's angry; but I did not say it in earnest. Have I all at once become a man who is ready to kill any one that crosses his path? Am I an unknown adventurer?"

Landolin waited in vain for an answer, for the judge came back to the main point and asked:

"Were there any witnesses to the affair with Vetturi?"

"Yes, to be sure! My future son-in-law, Anton Armbruster, whom you know, and my daughter."

The District Judge desired them both to be called. He was told that Anton had gone away.

Thoma soon entered, and the judge arose and set a chair for her opposite to him.

CHAPTER XVIII

Thoma sat down and folded her hands. She did not look up. "As you are Landolin's daughter you may refuse to testify," said the judge in a kindly tone. Thoma wearily raised her head.

"Father! What can I say?"

"What you saw."

She looked steadily into her father's face. She saw that he forced his eyes to remain open, but the eyelids trembled as though they must close before her glance. She turned away with a relentless movement of her head, and laying her clenched hand upon the table, said:

"Your honor-I say-I-I refuse to testify."

Landolin groaned. He knew what was going on in his daughter's mind. She rose and left the room without a look or a word for any one. They all gazed after her in silence.

The judge now asked Landolin if any of the servants had seen the affair. Landolin answered hesitatingly that he did not know; he had not looked around; but that Tobias and Fidelis were at home. It was with alarm that he perceived that his fate was in the hands of others.

The judge asked for his son Peter. Landolin shrugged his shoulders. Nobody cared whether Peter was at home or not. He was an obstinate, insignificant boy.

Nevertheless, though no one knew it, at this hour Peter had become an important personage.

No one dreamed that the little sliding window, between the living-room and the kitchen, was half-open, and that Peter lurked behind it. When he heard his father's answer, he quickly pulled off his boots, sprang noiselessly down the steps to the barn where Tobias was, and said:

"We now know how it happened. The stone did not hit Vetturi. Do you hear? And you too?" turning to the hostler Fidelis. Tobias nodded understandingly. Fidelis, on the other hand, made no answer.

There was no time to say anything more, for the two servants were called into the house. Before Tobias left the yard he threw a stone down near the gate.

Tobias was first reprimanded for having swept away the marks of blood. He took it all quietly, and said, in a firm voice, that he had plainly seen that Vetturi, who was always shaky, had not been hit by the stone, but had fallen down himself on the paving-stones. When the head-servant began speaking, Landolin had closed his eyes, but he now looked up triumphantly. His elbow rested on the chair; he held his hand over his mouth, and pressed his lips tightly together when Tobias concluded with:

"The stone that Vetturi threw, lies down there yet, scarcely a step from where the master stood."

Landolin raised himself to his full height. "That's the thing! Self-defense! I must justify myself on that ground." Landolin grasped the arm of the chair, as a drowning man, battling with the waves, grasps the rope thrown out to save him; and, just so, his soul clung to the thought of self-defense.

Fidelis said quite as positively that he had seen his master pick up a paving-stone with both hands, lean back, draw a long breath, and throw it. It had struck Vetturi on the head, and he had not seen Vetturi throw anything.

Landolin started up with an angry exclamation. He was told to be silent. The judge arose and said, evidently with forced calmness, that he was sorry, but, in order to prevent any tampering with the witnesses, he was compelled to place Landolin in confinement for the present.

The chair moved violently, and Landolin cried:

"Your honor, I am Landolin of Reutershöfen; this is my house; out there are my fields, my meadows, my forests. I am no adventurer, and I sha'n't run away for a beggar who is nothing to me."

The judge shrugged his shoulders, and said that they would probably be able to release him in a few days.

As the clerk folded his papers together, he cast a longing look at the poured-out wine; but he had to content himself with licking the ink-spots from his fingers.

"May I not send my husband a bed?" asked the farmer's wife. This was the first word she had spoken. The judge replied with a compassionate smile that it was not necessary.

Landolin took her hand, and, for the first time in many years, said in an affectionate tone:

"Dear Johanna." Her face was illuminated as though a miracle had been worked; and Landolin continued: "Don't worry. Nothing will happen to me."

"Can't he take me with him?" asked his wife of the judge.

"I am sorry that it is impossible."

She was about to send a maid-servant for Thoma, but Landolin prevented it, and said to the judge:

"I am ready to go now."

When Landolin had taken his seat in the carriage, a guard, who had been standing before the house, sprang upon the box with the coachman. The farmer's wife brought her husband's cloak, and he wrapped himself in it, for he was shivering, although the air was mild. He pulled his hat down to hide his face, and besides, it was night.

The carriage rolled away. The barking of the dog, and the rumbling of the wheels over the plateau could long be heard. At last it died away, and all was still.

CHAPTER XIX

All was still in the yard. The moonbeams shone upon the house and barns, and glistened on the spring, the splashing of which could still be heard.

Under the broad eaves sat the head-servant and Peter. Tobias, in delight, clapped his hands together, and rubbed his knees. He had not only testified so as to help his master, but what, if possible, pleased him more, he had succeeded in cheating the judge, and making a laughing-stock of him. It was rare fun for him. He whispered to Peter:

"Only be sharp! You're smarter, slyer, than anybody guesses. You mustn't go after Fidelis hammer and tongs; that will only make the matter worse. He's a stiff-backed soldier of the new Prussian pattern. Just keep your head on your shoulders. By degrees, we'll teach him what he saw. If you turn him off now, then-Hold on! I've got it! Now listen to me."

He stopped a moment; put his hands together, as though he had a bird caged in them; chuckled to himself; and not until Peter questioned him did he say:

"Listen! Before taking the oath, they ask, 'Are you in the employ of the accused?' And if one answers 'Yes,' his testimony doesn't amount to much, good or bad. So we must keep Fidelis, do you understand! Hush! Who's knocking?"

Tobias opened the gate and greeted the pastor, whom he told that Landolin had already been taken away, and that his wife was in the house. The pastor went to the living-room, where he found the farmer's wife with an open prayer-book in her hand. He commended her for this, and said that he would have been there earlier, but had returned from the fair only an hour before, and had gone to "Cushion Kate's" first. He strove to comfort her, reminding her that man must bow to the will of Heaven.

The clergyman, a tall, hard-featured man, was the youngest son of a rich farmer. He was brusque in his intercourse with his people, but mingled little with them-election-time excepted-for he knew this conduct pleased the farmers best. In summertime the pastor was all day long by the brook in the valley, fishing. In the winter-time he stayed at home, and no one knew what he did.

"Oh, sir!" said the farmer's wife, mournfully, "people don't know how much they love each other until something like this happens." She blushed like a young girl, and continued: "Children live for themselves; but married people-it seems to me that I have done wrong in not letting my husband see how much-"

Her emotion would not allow her to continue. The pastor consoled her by saying that she had always been an honest woman, and a good wife; that God would ward off this evil from her; and that this misfortune would redound to her lasting welfare. He was astonished that this woman, whom people generally considered shallow, could show such deep affection.

"How does Thoma bear it?" he asked.

"I will call her," she answered.

She went out and soon returned with Thoma, who looked so careworn, that for a moment the pastor could say nothing. He soon, however, endeavored to comfort her.

"Herr Pastor," began Thoma, "what do you think about it? I don't know. I think I must go to Cushion-Kate's."

"Wait till to-morrow morning," interrupted her mother.

"No, I think I must go to-day."

"Yes! do so," said the pastor approvingly, "I have just come from her house. She did not show by word or sign that she heard what I said. She sits motionless on the floor beside her dead boy. Come, you can go a part of the way with me."

Thoma and the pastor walked side by side. The pastor could not speak of Anton, for this was no time for congratulations.

The moon had disappeared, and dark clouds covered the sky.

"It will rain to-morrow, thank God. It is much needed," was all that the pastor said during the walk. At the meadow-path which leads to Cushion-Kate's house, he asked if he should go there with her, but she declined and went alone. She had to pass the house of the "Gallop Cooper," and there, in the shadow of a pile of barrel staves, she heard old Jochen say to the people who sat with him on the bench before the house,

"Oh yes! It's Landolin! They've got him now, and he won't get away. He'll have to pay for it, but not as his father used to pay for his tricks. Here, on my right thumb is still the scar where Landolin bit me in a fight we had. His father paid smart money for it. Yes; in old times the common people only had bones that the farmers' sons might break them. When Landolin stepped into the dancing-room, the floor trembled, and so did the heart of everybody there. Now, he's getting paid back."

"Will his head be cut off?" asked a child's voice.

"He deserves it; but they don't behead people any more."

All this fell on Thoma like a thunderbolt. She stood as though on fire. Her fresh life seemed all burned away and turned to ashes. She pressed her cold hands to her burning face, and fled homeward, unseen.

When she had almost reached the house, she started back in terror, as though a ghost had waylaid her; but it was only the dog who rubbed himself affectionately against her. Thoma was angry with herself for being so easily frightened. "That must not be, and certainly not now." The dog leaped before her, barking. He had evidently been driven home.

When she came in, her mother resting her hand on her open prayer-book, asked how Cushion-Kate was doing.

Thoma acknowledged that she had not been to see her, but did not tell the reason.

Her mother begged Thoma to stay with her during the night. Thoma sat by the bed until she had gone to sleep, and then went to her own room, for she knew that she would disturb her mother's rest.

CHAPTER XX

It was late at night, when Thoma threw open the window of the room in which she should have been asleep. Her cheeks glowed; but her lover, who on this mild spring night, should have been talking with and caressing her, came not. From the forest came the song of a nightingale, and from the hill behind another answered, in rivalry. Thoma did not hear them. She was struggling with a demon that night.

Thoma was a well-bred farmer's daughter. To be sure she had not had much training. She had been one of the best scholars in the public school, and at home she was taught to be diligent and honest; and this she was. She was proud and imperious like her father, who had indulged her from her childhood, and, as her mother cared nothing for the outside world, had been her companion on all sorts of pleasure excursions. He delighted in her decision of character, and above all else had encouraged her pride.

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