

**LEVER
CHARLES
JAMES**

DIARY AND NOTES OF
HORACE TEMPLETON,
ESQ. VOLUME II

Charles Lever

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Templeton, Esq. Volume II**

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Charles James Lever

Diary And Notes Of Horace Templeton, Esq. Volume II (of II)

CHAPTER I

The Ortler is the Mont Blanc of the Tyrol, and seen from Nauders, a village on a green, grassy table land, more than four thousand feet above the sea, can well bear comparison with the boldest of the Swiss Alps. Nauders itself, a type of a Tyrolean village, is situated in a wild and lonely region; it has all the picturesque elegance and neat detail of which Tyroleaners are so lavish in their houses, and, like every other Dorf in this country, has its proud castle standing sentry over it. The Barons of the Naudersberg were men of station in olden times, and exacted a tribute over a tract extending deep into the Engadine; and now, in this great hall, whose chimney would contain the heaviest diligence that ever waddled over the Arlberg, a few Nauders notabilities are squabbling over some mysterious passage in a despatch from Vienna, for it is the high court of the district, while I wait patiently without for some formality of my passport. To judge from their grave expressions and their anxious glances towards me, one would say that I was some dangerous or suspected personage – some one whose dark designs the government had already fathomed, and were bent on thwarting. If they did but know how few are, in all likelihood, the days I have yet to linger on, they would not rob me of one hour of them in this wild mountain.

And yet I have learned something while I wait. This little dorf, Nauders, is the birthplace of a very remarkable man, although one whose humble name, Bartholomew Kleinhaus, is little known beyond Tyrol. Left an orphan at five years old, he lost his sight in the small-pox, and was taken into the house of a carpenter who compassionated his sad condition. Here he endeavoured to learn something of his protector's trade; but soon relinquishing the effort, he set to work, forming little images in wood, at first from models, and then self-designed, till, at the age of thirteen, he completed a crucifix of singular beauty and elegance.

Following up the inspiration, he now laboured assiduously at his new craft, and made figures of various saints and holy personages, for his mind was entirely imbued with a feeling of religious fervour; and to such an extent that, in order to speak his devotion by another sense, he actually learned to play the organ, and with such a proficiency, that he performed the duties of organist for nearly a year in the village church of Kaltenbrunnen. As sculptor, his reputation is widely spread and great in Tyrol. A St. Francis by his hand is at present in the Ambras collection at Vienna; many of his statues adorn the episcopal palaces of Chur and Brixen, and the various churches throughout the province.

Leaving the sculptor and his birthplace, which already a mountain mist is shrouding, I hasten on, for my passport is at last discovered to be in order, and I am free to pursue my road to Meran.

Of all spots in the Tyrol, none can compare with Meran, the wildest character of mountain uniting with a profusion of all that vegetation can bring. The snow peak, the glacier, the oak forest, the waving fields of yellow corn, the valley, one vast vineyard – where have such elements of grandeur and simple beauty in scenery been so gloriously commingled? And then the little town itself – what a strange reminiscence of long-buried years! The street – there is properly but one – with its deep arched passages, within which the quaint old shops, without windows, display their wares; and the courtyards, galleried around, story above story, and covered at top by a great awning to keep off the sun; for already Italy is near, and the odour of the magnolia and oleander is felt from afar.

I wandered into one of these courts last night; the twilight was closing, and there was a strange, mysterious effect in the dim distances upwards, where figures came and went along the high-perched

galleries. Beyond the court lay a garden, covered over with a vine-roofed trellis, under whose shade various tables were placed. A single light, here and there, shewed where one or two guests were seated; but all so still and silently, that one would have thought the place deserted. It seemed as if the great charm was that mellow air softened by silence, for none spoke.

I walked for some time through the alleys, and at last sat down to rest myself at a little table, over which a wide-leaved fig-tree spread its dark canopy.

At first I did not remark that another person was seated near the table; but as my eyes became more accustomed to the shade, I descried a figure opposite to me, and immediately rising, I offered my apology in German for intruding. He replied in French, by politely requesting I would be seated; and the tone and manner of his words induced me to comply.

We soon fell into conversation; and although I could barely distinguish his shadow as the night fell thicker, I recognised that he was an old man; his accent proclaimed him to be French. We chatted away, the topics ranging, with that wilfulness conversation always inclines to, from the “Wein-cur” – the “Grape cure” – for which Meran is celebrated, to the present condition and the past grandeur of the ancient town. With its bygone history my companion seemed well acquainted, and narrated with considerable skill some of its illustrious passages, concluding one by saying, “Here, in this very garden, on a summer morning of 1342, the Emperor and the Margrave of Brandenburg sat at breakfast, when a herald came to announce the advance of the procession with the future bride of the Duke, Margareta, while the Bishops of Augsburg and Regensburg, and all the chivalry of the Tyrol, rode beside and around her. In yonder little chapel, where a light now glitters over a shrine, was the betrothal performed. From that day forth Tyrol was Austrian. Of all this gorgeous festivity, nothing remains but an iron horse-shoe nailed to the chapel door. The priest who performed the betrothal somewhat indiscreetly suggested that, with such a dowry as the bridegroom received, he might well be generous towards the Church; on which the Duke, a man of immense personal strength, at once stooped down and wrenched a fore-shoe from the bride’s white palfrey, saying, with sarcastic bitterness, ‘Here, I give thee iron for stone!’ in allusion to the rocks and precipices of the Tyrol land.

“Ungratefully spoken at the time,” continued the stranger, “and equally false as a prophecy. These wild fastnesses have proved the best and last defences of that same Austrian Empire. Indeed, so well aware was Napoleon of the united strength and resources of the Tyrol, that one of his first measures was to partition the country between Bavaria, Austria, and Illyria. And yet this Tyrol loyalty is inexplicable. They are attached to the house of Haps-burgh, but they are not Austrian in feeling. The friends of free trade need not go far in Meran to find disciples to their doctrine. Every one remembers the time that an aume of Meraner wine was worth seventy-five gulden, which now is to be had for five; but then they were Bavarian, and might barter the grape-juice for the yellow produce of the Baierisch corn-fields. At the present day they are isolated, shut up, and imprisoned by custom-houses and toll; and they are growing daily poorer, and neglecting the only source they possessed of wealth.”

We talked of Hofer, and I perceived that my companion was strongly imbued with an opinion, now very general in the Tyrol, that his merits were much less than foreigners usually ascribe to him. Sprung from the people, the host of a little wayside inn, a man with little education, and of the very roughest manner, it is somewhat singular that his claims are most disputed among the very class he came from. Had he been an aristocrat, in all likelihood they had never ventured to canvass the merits they now so mercilessly arraign. They judge of his efforts by the most unfair of tests in such matters – the result. They say, “To what end has Tyrol fought and bled? Are we better, or richer, or freer than before?” They even go further, and accuse him of exciting the revolt as a means of escaping the payment of his debts, which assuredly were considerable. What a terrible price is paid for mob popularity, when the hour of its effervescence is past!

We fell to chat over the character of revolutions generally, and the almost invariable tendency to reaction that ensues in all popular commotions. The character of the Three Days and the present condition of France, more despotically governed than ever Napoleon dared, was too palpable an

example to escape mention. I had the less hesitation in speaking my opinion on this subject, that I saw my companion's leanings were evidently of the Legitimist stamp.

From the Revolution we diverged to the struggle itself of the Three Days; and being tolerably familiar, from various personal narratives, with the event, I ventured on expressing my concurrence with the opinion that a mere mob, unprepared, unarmed, and undisciplined, could never have held for an hour against the troops had there not been foul play.

“Where do you suspect this treachery to have existed?” asked my companion.

The tone of the question, even more than its substance, confused me, for I felt myself driven to a vague reply in explanation of a direct charge. I answered, however, that the magnitude of the danger could scarcely have been unknown to many men highly placed in the service of Charles X.; and yet it was clear the King never rightly understood that any real peril impended. The whole outbreak was treated as an “échauffourée”.

“I can assure you of your error, so far,” replied my companion. “The greatest difficulty we encountered –” There was a slight pause here, as if by use of the word “we” an unwitting betrayal had escaped him. He speedily, however, resumed: – “The greatest difficulty was to persuade his Majesty that the entire affair was any thing but a street brawl. He treated the accounts with an indifference bordering on contempt; and at every fresh narrative of the repulse of the troops, he seemed to feel that the lesson to be inflicted subsequently would be the most efficacious check to popular excess in future. To give an instance, – a very slight one, but not without its moral, of the state of feeling of the court, – at four o'clock of the afternoon of the third day, when the troops had fallen back from the Place du Carrousel, and with great loss been compelled to retreat towards the Champs Elysées, Captain Langlet, of the 4th Lancers, volunteered to carry a verbal message to Versailles, in doing which he should traverse a great part of Paris in the occupation of the insurgents. The attempt was a bold and daring one, but it succeeded. After innumerable hairbreadth dangers and escapes, he reached Versailles at half-past seven. His horse had twice fallen, and his uniform was torn by balls; and he entered the courtyard of the Palace just as his Majesty learned that his dinner was served. Langlet hastened up the great staircase, and, by the most pressing entreaties to the officer in waiting, obtained permission to wait there till the king should pass. He stood there for nearly a quarter of an hour; it seemed an age to him, for though faint, wounded, and weary, his thoughts were fixed on the scene of struggle he had quitted, and the diminishing chances of success each moment told. At last the door of a salon was flung wide, and the Grand Maréchal, accompanied by the officers in waiting, were seen retiring in measured steps before the King. His Majesty had not advanced half-way along the corridor when he perceived the splashed and travel-stained figure of the officer. ‘Who is that?’ demanded he, in a tone of almost asperity. The officer on guard stepped forward, and told who he was and the object of his coming. The king spoke a few words hastily and passed on. Langlet awaited in breathless eagerness to hear when he should have his audience – he only craved time for a single sentence. What was the reply he received? – an order to present himself, ‘suitably dressed,’ in the morning. Before that morning broke there was no King in France!

“Take this – the story is true – as a specimen of the fatuity of the Court. *Quem Deus vult perdere*; – so it is we speak of events, but we forget ourselves.”

“But still,” said I, “the army scarcely performed their *devoir*– not, at least, as French troops understand *devoir*– where their hearts are engaged.”

“You are mistaken again,” said he. “Save in a few companies of the line, never did troops behave better: four entire squadrons of one regiment were cut to pieces at the end of the Rue Royale; two infantry regiments were actually annihilated at the Hôtel de Ville. For eight hours, at the Place du Carrousel, we had no ammunition, while the insurgents poured in a most murderous fire: so was it along the Quai Voltaire.”

“I have heard,” said I, “that the Duc de Raguse lost his head completely.”

“I can assure you, sir, they who say so calumniate him,” was the calm reply. “Never before that day was a Marshal of France called upon to fight an armed host, without soldiers and without ammunition.”

“His fate would induce us to be superstitious, and believe in good luck. Never was there a man more persecuted by ill fortune!”

“I perceive they are shutting the gates,” said my companion, rising; “these worthy Meraners are of the very earliest to retire for the night.” And so saying, and with a “Good night,” so hastily uttered as to forbid further converse, my companion withdrew, while I wandered slowly back to my Inn, curious to learn who he might be, and if I should ever chance upon him again.

I heard a voice this morning on the bridge, so exactly like that of my companion of last night, that I could not help starting. The speaker was a very large and singularly handsome man, who, though far advanced in life, walked with a stature as erect, and an air as assured, as he could have worn in youth. Large bushy eye-brows, black as jet, although his hair was perfectly white, shaded eyes of undimmed brilliancy – he was evidently “some one,” the least observant could not pass him without this conviction. I asked a stranger who he was, and received for answer, “Marshal Marmont – he comes here almost every autumn.”

CHAPTER II. THE TYROL

Every traveller in the Tyrol must have remarked, that, wherever the way is difficult of access, or dangerous to traverse, some little shrine or statue is always to be seen, reminding him that a higher Power than his own watches over his safety, and suggesting the fitness of an appeal to Him who is “A very present help in time of trouble.”

Sometimes a rude painting upon a little board, nailed on a tree, communicates the escape and gratitude of a traveller; sometimes a still ruder fresco, on the very rock, tells where a wintry torrent had swept away a whole family, and calling on all pious Christians who pass that way to offer a prayer for the departed. There is an endless variety in these little “Votive Tablets,” which are never more touching than when their very rude poverty attests the simplest faith of a simple people. The Tyrolers are indeed such. Perhaps alone, of all the accessible parts of Europe, the Tyrol has preserved its primitive habits and tastes for centuries unchanged. Here and there, throughout the continent, to be sure, you will find some little “Dorf,” or village, whose old-world customs stand out in contrast to its neighbours; and where in their houses, dress, and bearing, the inhabitants seem unlike all else around them. Look more closely, however, and you will see that, although the grandmother is clothed in homespun, and wears her leathern pocket at her girdle, all studded with copper nails, that her granddaughter affects a printed cotton or a Swiss calico; and instead of the broad-brimmed and looped felt of the old “Bauer,” the new generation sport broad-cloth and beaver.

Such hamlets are, therefore, only like the passengers left behind by their own coach, and waiting for the next conveyance that passes to carry them on their journey.

In the Tyrol, however, such evidences of progress – as it is the fashion to call it – are rare. The peasantry seem content to live as their fathers have done, and truly he must be sanguine who could hope to better a condition, which, with so few prorations, comprises so many of life’s best and dearest blessings. If the mountain peaks be snow-clad, even in midsummer, the valleys (at least all in South Tyrol) are rich in vineyards and olive groves; and although wheat is seldom seen, the maize grows every where; the rivers swarm with trout; and he must be a poor marksman who cannot have venison for his dinner. The villages are large and well built; the great wooden houses, with their wide projecting roofs and endless galleries, are the very types of comfort. Vast piles of fire-wood, for winter use, large granaries of forage for the cattle – the cattle themselves with great silver bells hanging to their necks – all bespeak an ease, if not an actual affluence, among the peasantry. The Tyrolers are, in a word, all that poets and tourists say the Swiss are, and of which they are exactly the reverse.

It would be difficult to find two nations so precisely alike in all external circumstances, and so perfectly dissimilar in every feature of character. Even in their religious feelings, Romanism, generally so levelling, has not been able to make them of the same measure here. The Swiss Catholic – bigotted, overbearing, and plotting – has nothing in common with the simple-minded Tyroler, whose faith enters into all the little incidents of his daily life, cheering, exalting, and sustaining, but never suggesting a thought save of charity and good will to all.

That they have interwoven, so to say, their religious belief into all their little worldly concerns, if not making their faith the rule, at least establishing it as the companion of their conduct, is easily seen. You never overtake a group, returning from fair or market, that all are not engaged in prayer, repeating together some litany of the Church; and as each new arrival joins the party, his voice chimes in, and swells the solemn hum as naturally as if prearranged or practised.

If you pass a village, or a solitary farmhouse, at sunset, the same accents meet your ears, or else you hear them singing some hymn in concert. Few “Bauer” houses, of any pretension, are without the effigy of a patron saint above the door, and even the humblest will have a verse of a psalm, or a pious sentence, carved in the oaken beam. Their names are taken from the saintly calendar, and every thing, to the minutest particular, shews that their faith is an active working principle, fashioning

all their actions, and mingling with all their thoughts. Their superstitions, like all simple-minded and secluded people's, are many; their ignorance is not to be denied; mayhap the Church has fostered the one, and done little to enlighten the other: still, if Romanism had no heavier sin to account for, no darker score to clear up, than her dealings in these mountains, there would be much to forgive in a creed that has conferred so many good gifts, and sowed the seeds of so few bad ones.

These pious emblems find their way, too, into places where one would scarce look for them – over the doors of village inns, and as signs to little wine and beer-houses: and frequently the Holy personages are associated with secular usages, strangely at variance with the saintly character. Thus I have seen, in the village beside me, a venerable St. Martin engaged in the extraordinary operation of shoeing a horse; though what veterinary tastes the saint ever evinced, or why he is so represented, I can find no one to inform me. On the summit of steep passes, where it is usual, by a police regulation, to prescribe the use of a drag to all wheel carriages, the board which sets forth the direction is commonly ornamented by a St. Michael, very busily applying the drag to a heavy waggon, while the driver thereof is on his knees hard by, worshipping the saint, in evident delight at his dexterity. In the same way many venerable and holy men are to be seen presiding over savoury hams and goblets of foaming beer, and beaming with angelic beatitude at a party of hard-drinking villagers in the distance. Our present business is, however, less with the practice in general, than a particular instance, which is to be met with in the Bavarian Tyrol, mid-way between the villages of Murnou and Steingaden, where over the door of a solitary little way-side inn hangs a representation of the Virgin, with a starling perched upon her wrist. One has only to remark the expression of unnatural intelligence in the bird's look, to be certain that it was not a mere fancy of the artist to have placed her thus, but that some event of village tradition, or history, is interwoven with her presence.

The motto contributes nothing to the explanation. It is merely a line from the Church Litany, “Maria, Mutter Grottes, hilf uns, – Mary, Mother of God, help us!”

There is then a story connected with the painting, and we shall, with your leave, tell it; calling our tale by the name of the little inn,

“MARIA HULF!”

Has our reader ever heard, or read, of those strange gatherings, which take place at the early spring in the greater number of southern German cities and are called, “Year Markets?” The object is simply to assemble the youth of the mountain districts in Tyrol and Vorarlberg, that they may be hired, by the farmers of the rich pasture countries, as herds. Thither they go – many a mile – some children of ten or eleven years old, and seeming even still younger, away from home and friends, little adventurers on the bleak wide ocean of life, to sojourn among strangers in far-off lands; to pass days long in lonely valleys or deep glens, without a sight or sound of human life around them; watching the bright sun and counting the weary minutes over, that night and rest may come, per* chance with dreams of that far-off home, which, in all its poverty, is still cheered by the fond familiar faces! Some, ruddy and stout-looking, seem to relish the enterprise, and actually enjoy the career so promising in its vicissitudes; others, sad and care-worn, bear with them the sorrows of their last leave-taking, and are only comforted by the thought that autumn will come at last, and then the cattle must be housed for the winter: and then they shall be free to wend their way over mountain and plain, far, far away beyond Maltz – high in the wild peaks of the Stelvio, or deep in the lovely glens below Meran.

It was in one of these “Markets” at Inspruck that a little boy was seen, not standing with the groups which usually gather together under a single leader, but alone and apart, seemingly without one that knew him. His appearance bespoke great poverty; his clothes, originally poor, were now in rags; his little cap, of squirrel skin, hung in fragments on either side of his pallid cheeks; his feet – a rare circumstance – were bare, and bloodstained from travel; want and privation were stamped in every feature: and his eyes, which at that moment were raised with eager anxiety as some Bauer drew nigh, grew wan, and filling at each new disappointment to his hopes, for this was his third day to stand in the market, and not one had even asked his name. And yet he heard that name; ever and

anon it met his ears in sounds which stirred his feeble heart, and made it throb faster. “Fritzerl! ah, Fritzerl, good fellow!” were the words; and poor Fritzerl would stoop down when he heard them and peep into a little cage where a Starling was perched – a poor, emaciated little thing it was, as way-worn and poverty struck, to all seeming, as himself: but he did not think so: he deemed it the very paragon of the feathered tribe, for it had a little toppin of brown feathers on its head, and a little ring of white around its neck, and would come when he called it; and, better than all, could sing, “Good Fritzerl – nice Fritzerl!” when it was pleased, and “Potztausend!” when angry. This was all its education; his master, poor little fellow, had not much more. How could he? Fritzerl’s mother died when he was a baby; his father was killed by a fall from a cliff in the Tyrol Alps, for he was by trade a bird-catcher, and came from the Engadine, where every one loves birds, and in the pursuit of this passion met his fate.

Fritzerl was left an orphan at eleven years old, and all his worldly wealth was this little Starling; for although his father had left a little cabin in the high Alps, and a rifle, and some two or three articles of house gear, they all were sold to pay the expenses of his funeral, and feast the neighbours who were kind enough to follow him to the grave: so that poor Fritz kept open house for two days; and when he walked out the third, after the coffin, he never turned his steps back again, but wandered away – far, far away – to seek in the year-market of Inspruck some kind peasant who would take him home to herd his cattle, and be a father to him now.

Fritzerl knew not that the children, who desire to be hired out, assemble together in little groups or gangs, electing some one to bargain for them with the Bauers, setting forth in vehement language their various excellencies and good gifts, and telling where they have served before, and what zeal and fidelity they have shewn to their trust. Fritz, I say, knew not this; perhaps, if he had, it would have availed him but little; for he was so poorly clad and so weak-looking, and so ignorant of all about tending cattle besides, that he would soon have been driven from the fraternity with disgrace. It was, then, as fortunate for him that he did not know the custom of the craft, and that he took his stand alone and apart beside the fountain in the main street of Inspruck.

And a lovely object is the same fountain; and a beautiful street it stands in, with its stately houses, all rich in stuccoed arabesques, and gorgeously carved doors and gates! And bright and cheerful, too, it looks, with its Tyroler people clad in their gay colours and their gold-banded hats!

Fritz saw little of these things, or, if he saw, he marked them not. Cold, hunger, and desolation, had blunted the very faculties of his mind; and he gazed at the moving crowd with a dreamy unconsciousness that what he saw was real.

The third day of his painful watching was drawing to a close. Fritz had, several hours before, shared his last morsel of black bread with his companion; and the bird, as if sympathising with his sorrow, sat moody and silent on his perch, nor even by a note or sound broke the stillness.

“Poor Jacob!”¹ said Fritz, with tears in his eyes, “my hard luck should not fall on thee! If no one comes to hire me before the shadow closes across the street, I’ll open the cage and let thee go!”

The very thought seemed an agony, for scarcely had he uttered it when his heart felt as if it would break, and he burst into a torrent of tears.

“Potztausend!” screamed Jacob, alarmed at the unusual cries – “Potztausend!” And as Fritz sobbed louder, so were the Starling’s cries of “Potztausend!” more shrill and piercing.

There were few people passing at the moment, but such as were, stopped; some to gaze with interest on the poor little boy – more, far more, to wonder at the bird; when suddenly a venerable old man, with a wide-leaved hat, and a silken robe reaching down to his feet, crossed over towards the fountain. It was the Curate of Lenz, a pious and good man, universally respected in Inspruck.

“What art thou weeping for, my child?” said he, mildly.

¹ Every Starling in Germany is called Jacob.

Fritz raised his eyes, and the benevolent look of the old man streamed through his heart like a flood of hope* It was not, however, till the question had been repeated, that Fritz could summon presence of mind to tell his sorrow and disappointment.

“Thou shouldst not have been here alone, my child,” said the curate; “thou shouldst have been in the great market with the others. And now the time is well-nigh over: most of the Bauers have quitted the town.”

“Potztausend!” cried the bird, passionately.

“It will be better for thee to return home again to thy parents,” said the old man, as he drew his little leathern purse from between the folds of his robe – “to thy father and mother.”

“I have neither!” sobbed Fritz.

“Potztausend!” screamed the Starling – “Potztausend!”

“Poor little fellow! I would help thee more,” said the kind old priest, as he put six kreutzers into the child’s hand, “but I am not rich either.”

“Potztausend!” shrieked the bird, with a shrillness excited by Fritz’s emotion; and as he continued to sob, so did the Starling yell out his exclamation till the very street rang with it.

“Farewell, child!” said the priest, as Fritz kissed his hand for the twentieth time; “farewell, but let me not leave thee without a word of counsel: thou shouldst never have taught thy bird that idle word. He that was to be thy companion and thy friend, as it seems to me he is, should have learned something that would lead thee to better thoughts. This would bring thee better fortune, Fritz. Adieu! adieu!”

“Potztausend!” said the Starling, but in a very low, faint voice, as if he felt the rebuke; and well he might, for Fritz opened his little handkerchief and spread it over the cage – a sign of displeasure, which the bird understood well.

While Fritz was talking to the Curate, an old Bauer, poorly but cleanly clad, had drawn nigh to listen. Mayhap he was not overmuch enlightened by the Curate’s words, for he certainly took a deep interest in the Starling; and every time the creature screamed out its one expletive, he would laugh to himself, and mutter, —

“Thou art a droll beastie, sure enough!”

He watched the bird till Fritz covered it up with his handkerchief, and then was about to move away, when, for the first time, a thought of the little boy crossed his mind. He turned abruptly round, and said, —

“And thou, little fellow! – what art doing here?”

“Waiting,” sighed Fritz, heavily – “waiting!”

“Ah, to sell thy bird?” said the old man; – “come, I’ll buy him from thee. He might easily meet a richer, but he’ll not find a kinder master. What wilt have? – twelve kreutzers, isn’t it?”

“I cannot sell him,” sobbed Fritz; “I have promised him never to do that.”

“Silly child!” said the Bauer, laughing; “thy bird cares little for all thy promises: besides, he’ll have a better life with me than thee.” “That might he, easily!” said Fritz: “but I’ll not break my word.”

“And what is this wonderful promise thou’st made, my little man? – come, tell it!”

“I told him,” said Fritz, in a voice broken with agitation, “that if the shadow closed over the street down there before any one had hired me, that I would open his cage and let him free; and look! it is nearly across now – there’s only one little glimpse of sunlight remaining!”

Poor child! how many in this world live upon one single gleam of hope – ay, and even cling to it when a mere twilight, fast fading before them!

The Bauer was silent for some minutes; his look wandered from the child to the cage, and back again from the cage to the child. At last he stooped down and peeped in at the bird, which, with a sense of being in disgrace, sat with his head beneath his wing.

“Come, my little man,” said he, laying a hand on Fritz’s shoulder, “I’ll take thee home with me! ‘Tis true I have no cattle – nothing save a few goats – but thou shalt herd these. Pack up thy bird, and let us away, for we have a long journey before us, and must do part of it before we sleep.”

Fritz’s heart bounded with joy and gratitude. It would have been, in good truth, no very splendid prospect for any other to be a goatherd to a poor Bauer – so poor that he had not even one cow; but little Fritz was an orphan, without a home, a friend, or one to give him shelter for a single night. It may be believed, then, that he felt overjoyed; and it was with a light heart he trotted along beside the old Bauer, who never could hear enough about the starling – where he came from? how he was caught? who taught him to speak? what he liked best to feed upon? and a hundred other questions, which, after all, should have been far more numerous ere Fritz found it any fatigue to answer them. Not only did it give him pleasure to speak of Jacob, but now he felt actually grateful to him, since, had the old Bauer not taken a fancy to the bird, it was more than likely he had never hired its master.

The Bauer told Fritz that the journey was a long one, and true enough. It lay across the Zillerthal, where the garnets are found, and over the great mountains that separate the Austrian from the Bavarian Tyrol – many a long, weary mile – many, I say, because the Bauer had come up to Inspruck to buy hemp for spinning when the evenings of winter are long and dark, and poor people must do something to earn their bread. This load of hemp was carried on a little wheeled cart, to which the old man himself was harnessed, and in front of him his dog – a queer-looking team would it appear to English eyes, but one meets them often enough here; and as the fatigue is not great, and the peasants lighten the way by many a merry song – as the Tyrol “Jodeln” – it never suggests the painful idea of over-hard or distressing labour. Fritzerl soon took his place as a leader beside the dog, and helped to pull the load; while the Starling’s cage was fastened on the sheltered side of the little cart, and there he travelled quite safe and happy.

I never heard that Fritz was struck – as he might possibly, with reason, have been – that, as he came into Bavaria, where the wide-stretching plains teem with yellow corn and golden wheat, the peasants seemed far poorer than among the wild mountains of his own Tyrol; neither have I any recollection that he experienced that peculiar freedom of respiration, that greater expansion of the chest, travellers so frequently enumerate as among the sensations whenever they have passed over the Austrian frontier, and breathed the air of liberty, so bounteously diffused through the atmosphere of other lands. Fritz, I fear, for the sake of his perceptive quickness, neither was alive to the fact nor the fiction above quoted; nor did he take much more notice of the features of the landscape, than to mark that the mountains were further off and not so high as those among which he lived – two circumstances which weighed heavily on his heart, for a Dutchman loves not water as well as a Tyroler loves a mountain.

The impression he first received did not improve as he drew near the Dorf where the old Bauer lived, The country was open and cultivated; but there were few trees: and while one could not exactly call it flat, the surface was merely a waving tract that never rose to the dignity of mountain. The Bauer houses, too, unlike the great wooden edifices of the Southern Tyrol – where three, ay, sometimes four, generations may be found dwelling under one roof – were small, misshapen things, half stone, half wood. No deep shadowing eave along them to relieve the heat of a summer sun; – no trellised vines over the windows and the doorway; – no huge yellow gourds drying on the long galleries, where bright geraniums and prickly aloes stood in a row; – no Jäger either, in his green jacket and gold-tas-selled hat, was there, sharing his breakfast with his dog; the rich spoils of his day’s sport strewed around his feet – the smooth-skinned chamois, or the stag with gnarled horns, or the gorgeously-feathered wild turkey, all so plentiful in the mountain regions. No; here was a land of husbandmen, with ploughs, and harrows, and deep-wheeled carts, driven along by poor-looking, ill-clad peasants, who never sung as they went along, scarce greeted each other as they passed.

It was true, the great plains were covered with cattle, but to Fritz’s eyes the prospect had something mournful and sad. It was so still and silent. The cows had no bells beneath their necks like

those in the Alpine regions; nor did the herds jodeln to each other, as the Tyrolers do, from cliff to cliff, making the valleys ring to the merry sound. No, it was as still as midnight; not even a bird was there to cheer the solitude with his song.

If the aspect without had little to enliven Fritz's spirits, within doors it had even less. The Bauer was very poor; his hut stood on a little knoll outside the village, and on the edge of a long tract of unreclaimed land, which once had borne forest-trees, but now was covered by a low scrub, with here and there some huge trunk, too hard to split, or too rotten for firewood. The hut had two rooms; but even that was enough, for there was nobody to dwell in it but the Bauer, his wife, and a little daughter, Gretchen, or, as they called her in the Dorf, "Grettl'a." She was a year younger than Fritz, and a good-tempered little "Mädle;" and who, but for over-hard work for one so young, might have been even handsome. Her eyes were large and full, and her hair bright-coloured, and her skin clear; yet scanty food and continual exposure to the air, herding the goats, had given her a look of being much older than she really was, and imparted to her features that expression of premature cunning which poverty so invariably stamps upon childhood. It was a happy day for Grettl'a that brought Fritz to the cottage; not only because she gained a companion and a playfellow, but that she needed no longer to herd the goats on the wild, bleak plain, rising often ere day broke, and never returning till late in the evening. Fritz would do all this now; and more, he would bring in the firewood from the little dark wood-house, where she feared to venture after nightfall; and he would draw water from the great deep well, so deep that it seemed to penetrate to the very centre of the earth. He would run errands, too, into the Dorf; and beetle the flax betimes; – in fact, there was no saying what he would not do. Fritz did not disappoint any of these sanguine expectations of his usefulness; nay, he exceeded them all, shewing himself daily more devoted to the interests of his humble protectors. It was never too early for him to rise from his bed – never too late to sit up when any work was to be done; always willing to oblige – ever ready to render any service in his power. Even the Bauer's wife, a hard-natured, ill-thinking creature, in whom poverty had heightened all the faults, nor taught one single lesson of kindness to others who were poor, – even she felt herself constrained to moderate the rancour of her harshness, and would even at times vouchsafe a word or a look of good humour to the little orphan boy. The Bauer himself, without any great faults of character, had no sense of the fidelity of his little follower. He thought that there was a compact between them, which, as each fulfilled in his own way, there was no more to be said of it. Gretchen more than made up for the coldness of her parents. The little maiden, who knew by hard experience the severe lot to which Fritz was bound, she felt her whole heart filled with gratitude and wonder towards him. Wonder, indeed; for not alone did his services appear so well performed, but they were so various and so numerous. He was every where and at every thing; and it was like a proverb in the house – "Fritz will do it." He found time for all; he neglected – stay, I am wrong – poor little fellow, he did neglect something – something that was more than all; but it was not his fault. Fritz never entered the village church – he never said a prayer; he knew nothing of the Power that had created him, and all that he saw around him. If he thought on these things, it was with the vague indecision of a mind without guidance or direction. Why, or how, and to what end, he and others like him, lived or died, he could not, by any effort, conceive. Fritz was a bondman – as much a slave as many who are carried away in chains across the seas, and sold to strange masters. There was no bodily cruelty in his servitude; he endured no greater hardships than poverty entails on millions; his little sphere of duties was not too much for his strength; his humble wants were met, but the darkest element of slavery was there! The daily round of service over, no thought was taken of that purer part which in the Peasant claims as high a destiny as in the Prince. The Sunday saw him go forth with his flock to the mountain like any other day; and though from some distant hill he could hear the tolling bell that called the villagers to prayer, he knew not what it meant. The better dresses and holiday attire suggested some notion of a fete-day; but as he knew there were no fete-days for him, he turned his thoughts away, lest he should grow unhappy.

If Fritz's companion, when within doors, was GrettFa, when he was away on the plain, or among the furze hills, the Starling was ever with him. Indeed he could easier have forgotten his little cap of squirrel-skin, as he went forth in the morning, than the cage, which hung by a string on his back. This be unfastened when he had led his goats into a favourable spot for pasturage, and, sitting down beside it, would talk to the bird for hours. It was a long time before he could succeed in obeying the Curate's counsel, even in part, and teach the bird not to cry "Potztausend!" Starlings do not unlearn their bad habits much easier than men; and, despite all Fritz's teaching, his pupil would burst out with the forbidden expression on any sudden emergency of surprise; or sometimes as it happened, when he had remained in a sulky fit for several days together without uttering a note, he would reply to Fritz's caresses and entreaties to eat by a sharp, angry "Potztausend!" that any one less deeply interested than poor Fritz would have laughed at outright. They were no laughing matters to him. He felt that the work of civilisation was all to be done over again. But his patience was inexhaustible; and a circumstance, perhaps, not less fortunate – he had abundant time at his command. With these good aids he laboured on, now punishing, now rewarding, ever inventing some new plan of correction, and at last – as does every one who has that noble quality, perseverance – at last succeeding, – not, indeed, all at once perfectly; for Star's principles had been laid down to last, and he struggled hard not to abandon them, and he persisted to cry "Potz – " for three months after he had surrendered the concluding two syllables; finally, however, he gave up even this; and no temptation of sudden noise, no riotous conduct of the villagers after nightfall, no boiling over of the great metal pot that held the household supper, nor any more alarming ebullition of ill-temper of the good Fran herself, would elicit from him the least approach to the forbidden phrase. While the Starling was thus accomplishing one part of his education by unlearning, little Fritz himself, under Grettl'a's guidance, was learning to read. The labour was not all to be encountered, for he already had made some little progress in the art under his father's tuition. But the evening hours of winter, wherein he received his lessons, were precisely those in which the poor bird-catcher, weary and tired from a day spent in the mountains, would fall fast asleep, only waking up at intervals to assist Fritz over a difficulty, or say, "Go on," when his blunders had made him perfectly unintelligible even to himself. It may be well imagined, then, that his proficiency was not very great. Indeed, when first called upon by Grettl'a to display his knowledge, his mistakes were so many, and his miscallings of words so irresistibly droll, that the little girl laughed outright; and, to do Fritz justice, he joined in the mirth himself.

The same persistence of purpose that aided him while teaching his bird, befriended him here. He laboured late and early, sometimes repeating to himself by heart little portions of what he had read, to familiarise himself with new words; sometimes wending his way along the plain, book in hand; and then, when having mastered some fierce difficulty, he would turn to his Starling to tell him of his victory, and promise, that when once he knew how to read well, he would teach him something out of his book – "Something good;" for, as the Curate said, "that would bring luck."

So long as the winter lasted, and the deep snow lay on the hills, Fritz always herded his goats near the village, seeking out some sheltered spot where the herbage was still green, or where the thin drift was easily scraped away. In summer, however, the best pasturages lay further away among the hills near Steingaden, a still and lonely tract, but inexpressibly dear to poor Fritz, since there the wild flowers grew in such abundance, and from thence he could see the high mountains above Reute and Paterkirchen, lofty and snow-clad like the "Jochs" in his own Tyrol land. There was another reason why he loved this spot. It was here that, in a narrow glen, where two paths crossed, a little shrine stood, with a painting of the Virgin enclosed within it – a very rude performance, it is true; but how little connexion is there between the excellence of art and the feelings excited in the humble breast of a poor peasant child! The features, to his thinking, were beautiful; never had eyes a look so full of compassion and of love. They seemed to greet him as he came, and follow him as he lingered on his way homeward. Many an hour did Fritz sit upon the little bench before the shrine, in unconscious

worship of that picture. Heaven knows what fancies he may have had of its origin; it never occurred to him to think that human skill could have achieved any thing so lovely.

He had often remarked that the villagers, as they passed, would kneel down before it, and with bowed heads and crossed arms seem to do it reverence; and he himself, when they were gone, would try to imitate their gestures, some vague sentiment of worship struggling for utterance in his heart.

There was a little inscription in gilt letters beneath the picture; but these he could not read, and would gaze at their cabalistic forms for hours long, thinking how, if he could but decipher them, that the mystery might be revealed.

How he longed for the winter to be over and the spring to come, that he might lead the goats to the hills, and to the little glen of the shrine! He could read now. The letters would be no longer a secret; they would speak to him, and to his heart, like the voice of that beautiful image. How ardently did he wish to be there! and how, when the first faint sun of April sent its pale rays over the plain, and glittered with a sickly delicacy on the lake, how joyous was his spirit and how light his step upon the heather!

Many a little store of childish knowledge had Grettl'a opened to his mind in their winter evenings' study; but somehow, he felt as if they were all as nothing compared to what the golden letters would reveal. The portrait, the lonely glen, the solemn reverence of the kneeling worshippers, had all conspired to create for him a mass of emotions indescribably pleasurable and thrilling. Who can say the secret of such imaginings, or bound their sway?

The wished-for hour came, and it was alone and unseen that he stood before the shrine and read the words, "Maria, Mutter Gottes, hilf uns." If this mystery were unrevealed to his senses, a feeling of dependent helplessness was too familiar to his heart not to give the words a strong significance. He was poor, unfriended, and an orphan: who could need succour more than he did? Other children had fathers and mothers, who loved them and watched over them; their little wants were cared for, their wishes often gratified. His was an uncheered existence: who was there to "*help him?*"

Against the daily load of his duties he was not conscious of needing aid; his burden he was both able and willing to bear. It was against his thoughts in the long hours of solitude – against the gloomy visions of his own free-thinking spirit, he sought assistance; against the sad influence of memory, that brought up his childhood before him, when he had a father who loved him – against the dreary vista of an unloved future, he needed help. "And could *she* befriend him?" was the question he asked his heart.

"He must ask Grettl'a this; she would know it all!" Such were the reflections with which he bent his way homeward, as eagerly as in the morning he had sought the glen. Grettl'a did know it all, and more too, for she had a prayer-book, and a catechism, and a hymn-book, though hitherto these treasures had been unknown to Fritz, whose instructions were always given in a well-thumbed little volume of fairy tales, where "Hans Däumling" and "The Nutz-cracker" figured as heroes.

I am not able to say that Grettl'a's religious instruction was of the most enlightened nature – not any more than it was commensurate with the wishes and requirements of him who sought it; it went, indeed, little further than an explanation of the "golden letters." Still, slight and vague as it was, it comforted the poor heart it reached, as the most straggling gleam of sunlight will cheer the dweller in some dark dungeon, whose thoughts soar out upon its rays to the gorgeous luminary it flows from. Whatever the substance of his knowledge, its immediate effect upon his mind was to diffuse a hopeful trust and happiness through him he had never known till now. His loneliness in the world was no longer the solitary isolation of one bereft of friends. Not only with his own heart could he commune now. He felt there was One above who read these thoughts, and could turn them to his will. And in this trust his daily labour was lightened, and his lot more happy.

"Now," thought he, one day, as he wandered onward among the hills, "now, I can teach thee something good – something that will bring us luck. Thou shalt learn the lesson of the golden letters, Starling – ay, truly, it will be hard enough at first. It cost me many a weary hour to learn to read, and thou hast only one little line to get off by heart – and such a pretty line, too! Come, Jacob, let's begin

at once.” And, as he spoke, he opened the cage and took out the bird, and patted his head kindly and smoothed down his feathers. Little flatteries, that Starling well understood were preparatory to some educational requirement; and he puffed out his chest proudly, and advanced one leg with an air of importance; and drawing up his head, seemed as though he could say, “Well, what now, Master Fritz? – what new scheme is this in thy wise head?”

Fritz understood him well, or thought he did so, which in such cases comes pretty much to the same thing; and so, without more ado, he opened his explanation, which perhaps, after all, was meant equally for himself as the Starling – at least I hope so, for I suspect he comprehended it better.

He told him that for a long time his education had been grossly neglected; that having originally been begun upon a wrong principle, the great function of his teacher had been to eradicate the evil, and, so to say, to clear the soil for the new and profitable seed. The ground, to carry out the illustration, had now lain long enough in fallow – the time had arrived to attend to its better culture.

It is more than probable Fritz had never heard of the great controversy in France upon the system of what is called the “Secondary Instruction,” nor troubled his head on the no less active schism in our own country between the enemies and advocates of National Education. So that he has all the merit, if it be one, of solving a very difficult problem for himself without aid or guidance; for he resolved that a religious education should precede all other.

“Now for it,” said he, at the close of a longer exposition of his intentions than was perhaps strictly necessary, “now for it, Starling! repeat after me – ‘Maria, Mutter Gottes, hilf uns!’”

The bird looked up in his face with an arch drollery that almost disconcerted the teacher. If a look could speak, that look said, as plainly as ever words could, —

“Why don’t you ask me to say the whole Litany, Fritz?”

“Ay, ay,” replied Fritz, for it was a reply, “I know that’s a great deal to learn all at once, and some of the words are hard enough, too; but with time, Star, time and patience – I had to use both one and the other before I learned to read; and many a thing that looks difficult and impossible even at first, seems quite easy afterwards. Come, then, just try it: begin with the first word – ‘Maria.’”

It was in vain Fritz spoke in his most coaxing accents, in vain did he modulate the syllables in twenty different ways; all his entreaties and petting», all his blandishments and caresses, were of no avail, Star remained deaf to them all. He even turned his back at last, and seemed as if no power on earth should make a Christian of him. Fritz had had too much experience of the efficacy of perseverance in his own case to abandon the game here; so he went to work again, and with the aid of a little lump of sugar returned to the lecture.

Had Star been a Chancery lawyer he could not have received the fee more naturally, though, for the honour of the equity bar, I would hope the similitude ends there, for he paid not the slightest heed to the “instructions.”

It would, perhaps, be rash in us “featherless bipeds” to condemn Star all at once; there is no saying on what grounds he may have resisted this educational attempt. How do we know that his reasoning ran not somewhat in this strain? —

“What better off shall I be when I have learned all your hard words? – or how is it that you, my teacher, knowing them so well, should be the poor, half-fed, half-naked thing I see there before me?”

These very conjectures would seem to have crossed Fritz’s mind, for he said, —

“It is not for a mere whim that I would have thee learn this; these words will bring us luck, Star! Ay, what I say is true, though thou mayst shake thy head and think otherwise. I tell thee, ‘Good words bring luck.’”

Whether it was that Star assumed an air of more than ordinary conceit and indifference, or that Fritz had come to the end of patience, I cannot affirm; but he hastily added, and in a voice much louder and more excited than was his wont, – “It is so; and thou shalt learn the words whether thou wilt or no – that I tell thee!”

“Potztausend!” cried the bird, frightened by his excitement, and at once recurring to his long unused exclamation: “Potztausend!”

“Hush, shameless thing!” said Fritz, angrily; “there is nothing for it but punishment!” And so he replaced him in the cage, covered him close on every side with his handkerchief, and trudged sorrowfully towards home.

For several days Fritz never spoke to Starling, even one word. He brought him his food in silence; and instead of taking him, as of old, along with him into the fields, he hung his cage in a gloomy corner of the hut, whence he could see little or nothing of what went on in the house – no small privation for a bird so alive to inquisitiveness. At length, when he believed punishment had gone far enough, he took him down and hung him on his back as usual, and brought him a long, long way into the hills. The day was fine, a fresh but balmy spring breathed over the young flowers, and the little stream danced and rippled pleasantly; and the clouds moved along overhead in large soft masses, bordered with a silvery edge. Star never noticed these things; he was indignant at the neglect, as he deemed it, which had been shewn him of late. His pride and spirit – and Starlings are not deficient in either – had sustained grievous injury; and he felt that, without due reparation made to him, he could not, consistently with honour, sign a treaty of reconciliation.

Fritz mistook these indications altogether – and who can blame him? What the world calls dignity is not unfrequently mere sulk. How should poor Fritz make distinctions great Ministers and Princes are sometimes incapable of?

The end of all this was a struggle, a long and violent struggle, on each side for the ascendancy. Fritz, however, had the advantage, for he could starve out the enemy – a harsh measure, no doubt, but greater folks have adopted even more severe ones to enforce their principles. Fritz, besides, had all the stern enthusiasm of a fanatic in the cause. The dark zeal of the Holy Office itself never enforced its decrees with more inflexible purpose than did he his. “Accept this creed, or die in your sins,” was, if not exactly his dictum, certainly his full meaning. Star stood out long, so long that Fritz began at last to fear that the creature meditated martyrdom, and in this dread he relaxed somewhat of his prison discipline.

It would scarcely be instructive – not any more than amusing – to recount the painful progress of this long contest – a contest, after all, in which there is nothing new to any reader of history; for when force is on one side and weakness on the other, the result may be deferred but is never doubtful. It is enough that we say, Star made submission. True, it was the submission of coercion – no matter for that, it was submission; for after three weeks of various successes on either side, the creature greeted Fritz one morning as he arose with a feint cry of “Maria, Maria!”

This was enough, more than enough, and Fritzerl could have hugged him to his heart.

His authority recognised, his will acknowledged, he was but too happy to take his rebellious subject into full favour again. Whether Star felt the benefits of his changed conduct so very satisfactory to his comfort, or that he was really disposed to please his master, I cannot say; but, from that hour out, he laboured strenuously to learn his new profession of faith, and screamed “Maria!” from day-dawn to dusk. The two following words were, however, downright puzzles; “Mutter-Gottes” was a combination that no Starling – even a German one, bred up among strong gutturals and flat labials – could master. He worked hard, however, and so did Fritz. If life depended upon it, neither of them could have exerted themselves more zealously; but it was no use. In any other language, perhaps, Star might have been able to invoke the Virgin, but here it was out of the question. The nearest approach the poor fellow could make was something like a cry of “Mörder – Mörder” (Murder – murder); so unfortunate a change that Fritz abandoned the lesson with the best grace he could, betaking himself to the concluding words, which happily presented no such unseemly similitudes.

His success here was such as to obliterate all memory of his former defeat. Starling made the most astonishing progress, and learned the words so perfectly, with such accuracy of enunciation, that to hear him at a little distance any one would say it was some pious Catholic invoking the Virgin

with all his might. The “Hülfs uns” was not a mere exclamation, but a cry for actual aid, so natural as to be perfectly startling.

So long as the bird’s education was incomplete, Fritzerl carefully screened him from public observation. He had all the susceptibility of a great artist, who would not let his canvass be looked upon before the last finishing touch was laid on the picture. No sooner, however, had full success crowned his teaching, than he proudly displayed him in a new cage made for the occasion at the door of the Bauer’s hut.

It was Sunday, and the villagers were on their way to mass; and what was their astonishment to hear themselves exhorted as they passed by the fervent cry of “Maria, hülf uns! Hülf uns, Maria!” Group after group stood in mute amazement, gazing at the wonderful bird, some blessing themselves with a pious fervour, others disposed to regard the sounds as miraculous, and more than either stood in dumb astonishment at this new specimen of ghostly counsel.

All this while Fritzerl lay hid beneath the window, enjoying his triumph with a heart full almost to bursting. Never did singing-master listen to the syren notes of his pupil, while as the *prima donna* of a great opera she electrified or entranced a crowded audience, with more enthusiastic rapture than did Fritz at his Starling’s performance. Poor little fellow! it was not merely vanity gratified by public applause – it was a higher feeling was engaged here. A sense of religious exaltation worked within him, that he had laboured in a great cause; a thrill of ecstasy trembled at his heart that another voice than his own was asking aid for him, and incessantly invoking the Virgin’s protection on his own head. Happy had it been for him that no other sentiment had intervened, and that he had not also indulged a vain pride in the accomplishment of his pupil!

It so chanced, that among those who passed the hut and stood to wonder at this astonishing creature, was a tall, ragged-looking, swarthy fellow, whose dress of untanned leather, and cap ornamented with the tail of many a wood squirrel, told that he was an “Engadiner,” one from the same land Fritz came himself. A strange wild land it is! where in dress, language, custom, and mode of life, there is no resemblance to any thing to be seen throughout Europe. A more striking representative of his strange country need not have been wished for. His jacket was hung round with various tufts of plumage and fur for making artificial birds, with whistles and birdcalls to imitate every note that ever thrilled through a leafy grove; his leathern breeches only reached to the knee, which was entirely bare, as well as the leg, to below the calf, where a rude sandal was fastened; his arms, also, copper-coloured as those of an Indian, were quite naked, two leathern bracelets enclosing each wrist, in which some metal hooks were inserted: by these he could hang on the branch of a tree, or the edge of a rock, leaving his hands at liberty. He wore his coal-black hair fer down on his back and shoulders, and his long moustache drooped deep beneath his lank jaw. If there was something wild almost to ferocity in his black and flashing eyes, the mouth, with its white and beautifully regular teeth, had a look of almost womanly delicacy and softness, – a character that was well suited to the musical sounds of his native language – one not less pleasant to the ear than Italian itself. Such was he who stopped to listen to the bird, and who, stealing round to the end of the hut, lay down beneath some scattered branches of firewood to delight his ear to the uttermost.

It may be doubted whether a connoisseur ever listened to Orisi or Jenny Lind with more heartfelt rapture than did the Engadiner to the Starling; for while the bird, from time to time, would break forth with its newly acquired invocation, the general tenor of its song was a self-taught melody – one of those wild and delicious voluntaries in which conscious power displayed itself; now, astounding the ear by efforts the wildest and most capricious, now subduing the sense by notes plaintive almost to bring tears. In these latter it was that he mingled his cry of “Maria, hülf – hülf – hülf uns, Maria!” – words so touching and so truthful in their accents that at every time the Engadiner beard them he crossed himself twice on the forehead and the breast; which devout exercise, I am constrained to say, had in his case more of habit than true piety, as the sequel proved.

I forget whether it is not Madame de Seuderi has built a little theory upon the supposition that every mind has within it the tendency to yield to some one peculiar temptation. The majority, I fancy, have not limited their weakness to units. Poverty has so many wants to be supplied, wealth so many seductions to offer, that it may be affirmed he is not worse than his fellows whose heart has only one undefended bastion. I am not anxious to claim for my Engadiner any more than ordinary powers of resistance: neither his race nor his country, the habits of his life, nor his principles – if it be permitted to use the word – had taught him such self-control; but, if they had – if they had steeled his nature against every common seduction, they could not have stifled within him the native passion for bird-catching, or, what is very much akin to it, bird-stealing. He would as soon have thought it needful to restrict his lungs in their requisite quantity of atmospheric air, as to curb what he regarded as a mere human instinct. If Engadiners were made for any thing, it was for bird-catching: no one did any thing else, thought, spoke, or dreamt of any thing else, in the Engadine. It was not a pastime, or a caprice; it was not that the one was skilful, or that the other was adroit at it, but the whole population felt that birds were their natural prey, and that the business of their life was comprised in catching, feeding, training, sending, and selling them all over the globe – not only in Europe, but over the vast continent of America. Wherever birds had fanciers, wherever men cared for the tints of plumage or the warbling mellowness of their notes, there an Engadiner was sure to be found. And who has ever studied their nature like one of these mountaineers, who knows all their habits and their tastes, their seasons of migrating and returning, how they build their nests, and all their likings and their antipathies – the causes which influence their selection and abandonment of a peculiar locality, the meaning of their songs – ay, and they are full of meaning – of welcome, of sorrow, of love, and of despair? None like an Engadiner for all this! Few would have the patience, fewer still the requisite gifts of acuteness, with uncommon powers of eye and ear – of eye to discern the tints of plumage among the dark leaves of the pine-forest – of ear to catch and imitate the notes of each tribe, so that birds themselves should answer to the sounds.

The Engadiner stirred not from his hiding-place the whole day; he watched the moving throng passing to and from the village church; he saw the Bauers pass by, some in the Sunday “waggon,” their horses gaily caparisoned, with huge scarlet tassels beneath their necks, and great wide traces all studded with little copper nails; and the more humble, on foot, the men dressed in their light Bavarian blue, and the women clad in a coarser stuff of the same colour, their wealth being all centred in one strange head-dress of gold and silver filigree, which, about the size and shape of a peacock’s tail when expanded, is attached to the back of the head – an unwieldy contrivance, which has not the merit of becomingness; it neither affords protection against sun or rain, and is so inconvenient, that when two peasant women walk together they have to tack and beat, like ships in a narrow channel; and not unfrequently, like such craft, run foul of each other after all.

The Engadiner watched these evidences of affluence, such as his wild mountains had nothing to compare with, and yet his heart coveted none of them. They were objects of his wonder, but no more; while every desire was excited to possess the little bird, whose cage hung scarcely three yards from where he lay.

As evening drew nigh, the Engadiner became almost feverish in excitement: each stir within the house made him fear that some one was coming to take the bird away; every step that approached suggested the same dread. Twice he resolved to tear himself from the spot, and pursue his journey; but each time some liquid note, some thrilling cadence, fell like a charm upon his ear, and he sank down spell-bound. He sat for a long time with eyes rivetted on the cage, and then at length, stooping down, he took from the ground beside him a long branch of pine-wood; he measured with his eye the distance to the cage, and muttered to himself an assent. With a dexterity and speed which in his countrymen are instincts, he fastened one handle of his scissors to the branch, and tied a string to the other, making an implement like that used by the grape-gatherers in the wine season. He examined it carefully, to try its strength, and even experimented with it on the jessamine that grew over the front

of the cottage. His dark eyes glistened like burning coals as the leaves and twigs were snapped off at a touch. He looked around him to see that all was still, and no one near. The moment was favourable: the Angelus was ringing from the little chapel, and all the Dorf was kneeling in prayer. He hesitated no longer, but, lifting the branch, he cut through three of the little bars in the cage; they were dry and brittle, and yielded easily: in a moment more he had removed them, leaving a little door wide enough for the bird to escape. This done, he withdrew the stick, detached the scissors, and in its place tied on a small lump of maple sugar – the food the bird loves best. Starling, at first terrified by the intrusion, soon gained courage and approached the bait. He knew not that a little noose of horse-hair hung beneath it, which, no sooner had he tasted the sugar, than it was thrown over his neck and drawn tight. Less practised fingers than the Engadiner's could scarcely have enclosed that little throat sufficiently to prevent even one cry, and yet not endanger life.

Every step of this process was far more rapid than we have been in telling it. The moment it was effected, the Engadiner was away. No Indian ever rose from his lair with more stealthy cunning, nor tracked his enemy with a fleeter step: away over the wide plain, down through the winding glens, among the oak-scrub, and into the dark pine-wood, who could trace his wanderings? – who could overtake him now?

With all his speed, he had not gone above a mile from the Dorf when Fritz missed his treasure. He went to take his bird into the house for the night, when the whole misfortune broke full upon him. For a few seconds, like most people under sudden bereavement, his mind could not take in all the sorrow: he peered into the cage, he thrust his fingers into it, he tumbled over the moss at the bottom of it; and then, at length, conscious of his loss, he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed as though his heart was breaking.

Men and women may find it hard to sympathise with such sorrow. A child, however, can understand a child's grief, for Fritz had lost every thing he had in the world. This little bird was not only all his wealth, all his ambition, his daily companion in solitary places, his hope, his friend, but somehow it was linked mysteriously with the memories of his own home – memories that every day, every hour, was effacing – but these, Star still could call up in his heart: to lose him was, therefore, to cut the last slender cord that tied him to the past and linked him to the future.

His violent sobbing brought Grettl'a to him, but he could tell her nothing – he could only point to the cage, which now hung on its side, and mutter the one word, —

“Hin! hin!” – Away! away!

The little girl's grief was scarcely less poignant than his own. She wrung her hands in all the passion of sorrow, and cried bitterly.

The Bauer and his wife now came to the spot, the one to join in, the other to rebuke, their afflictions. How little the children noticed either! Their misery filled up every corner of their minds – their wretchedness was overwhelming.

Every corner of the little hut was associated with some recollection of the poor “Star.” Here, it was he used to feed – here, he hopped out to greet Fritz of an evening, when the bad weather had prevented him accompanying him to the fields. There, he was accustomed to sit while they were at supper, singing his merry song; and here, would he remain silently while they were at prayers, waiting for the moment of their rising to utter the cry of “Maria, hilf uns!”

Each time the children's eyes met, as they turned away from looking at any of these well-known spots, they burst into tears: each read the other's thoughts, and felt his sorrows more deeply in the interchange.

What a long, long night was that! They cried themselves to sleep, to awake again in tears! – now, to dream they heard “Star” calling to them – now, to fancy he had come back again, all wayworn and ruffled, glad to seek his usual shelter, and be with friends once more – and then they awoke to feel the bitterness of disappointment, and know that he was gone!

“And he told me, Grettl’a – he told me ‘A good word brings luck!’” sobbed Fritz, whose despair had turned to scepticism.

Poor Grettl’a had no argument wherewith to meet this burst of misery – she could but mingle her tears with his.

We frequently hear of the hard-heartedness of the poor – how steeled they are against the finer affections and softer feelings of the world; but it might be as well to ask if the daily business of life – which to them is one of sheer necessity – does not combat more powerfully against the indulgence of sorrow than all the philosophy that mere wisdom ever taught?

Poor Fritzerl awoke with a heart almost weighed down with affliction, but still he went forth with his goats to the pasture, and tended and watched after them as carefully as ever. The next day, and the day after that again, he went about his accustomed duties; but on the third day, as he sat beside Grettl’a under the old linden-tree before the door, he whispered to her, —

“I can bear it no longer, Grettl’a! I must away! – away!” And he pointed to the distance, which, vague and undefined as his own resolves, stretched out its broad expanse before them.

Grettl’a did her best to persuade him against his rash determination: she reasoned as well as she could reason; she begged, she even cried to him; and at last, all else failing, she forgot her pledge, and actually ran and told her father.

The Bauer, sorry to lose so faithful a servant as Fritz, added his influence to the little maiden’s tears; and even the Bauer’s wife tried to argue him out of his resolve, mingling with her wise suggestions about a “wide world and a cold one” some caustic hints about ingratitude to his friends and protectors.

Fritz was deaf to all: if he could not yield to Grettl’s prayers and weeping eyes, he was strong against the old wife’s sarcasms.

He cried all night through, and, arising before the dawn, he kissed Grettl’a as she lay sleeping, and, cautiously opening the latch, slipped out unheard. A heavy dew was on the grass, and the large, massive clouds rested on the mountains and filled the plain. It was cold, and gloomy, and cheerless – just such as the world is to the wanderer who, friendless, alone, and poor, would tempt his fortunes in it!

Fritz wandered on over the plain – he had no choice of paths – he had nothing to guide, no clue to lead him. He took this, because he had often gone it with “Star” when he was happy and contented. As he went along, the sun rose, and soon the whole scene changed from its leaden grey to the bright tint of morning. The hoar-frost glittered like thousands of spangles scattered over the grass; the earth sent up a delicious odour; the leaves, as they opened, murmured softly in the air; and the little brooks rustled among the stones, and rippled on with a sound like fairy laughter. There was gladness and joy every where, save in that heart which was now bereft of all.

“What could he mean?” said he, again and again to himself: “‘A good word brings luck!’ When had I ever misfortune till now?”

Oh, Fritzerl! take care lest you are not making the common mistake, and expecting the moral before the end of the story.

Were it my object to dwell on this part of my tale, I might tell you of Fritz’s long conflict with himself – his doubts, his hesitation, and his reasonings, before he could decide on what course to take, or whither to bend his steps. The world was a very wide one to hunt after a Starling through it: that, he knew, though not very deeply skilled in geography.

Fritz had never heard of those wise inspirations by which knights-errant of old guided their wanderings; nor, perhaps, if he had, would he have benefited by them, seeing that to throw the rein loose on his charger’s neck was a matter of some difficulty. He did, perhaps, what was the nearest thing in practice to this: he wandered along, keeping the straight path, and, neither turning right nor left, found himself at noon in the opening of the beautiful glen that leads to Reute. He looked up, and there were great mountains before him – not hills, but real mountains, with pine-forests beneath, and

crag above that, and over them, again, snow-peaks and glaciers. They seemed quite near, but they were still many a mile off. No matter: the sight of them cheered and encouraged him; they reminded him of the old life among the Tyrol “Jochs,” and the wild cattle sporting about, and the herdsmen springing from cliff to cliff, rifle in hand. Ob, that was a free and joyous life!

Fritz’s musings on this head were suddenly put a stop to by a severe pang of hunger, in all likelihood suggested by the odour of a savoury mess which steamed from the open window of a little hut on the road-side.

The peasant family were about to sit down to their twelve-o’clock dinner, when Fritz, unconsciously to himself, drew up at the window, and looked in at the tempting food.

There is one custom in Germany, which, simple as it is, it would be hard to praise above its merits: that is, the invariable habit of every one, so far as his means permit, to help the foot-traveller on his journey. By an old municipal law of most of the cities, the tradesmen cannot settle and establish themselves in their native town till they have travelled and lived in other places; thus learning, as it is supposed, whatever improvements their several crafts may have obtained in different and distant cities. These wanderings, which are usually for one year or two, are accomplished during the period of apprenticeship; so that you never travel on any of the high-roads without meeting these Lehr-Junkers, as they are called, who, with a knapsack on their back, and a spare pair of boots or two depending from it, are either smoking or singing to beguile the way. As it is not to be supposed that they are over-abundantly provided with means, it has grown into a recognised custom to assist them with some trifle: but the good habit ends not here; it extends to the poor boy returning from the gymnasium, or school, to see his parents – the discharged or furloughed soldier – the wayfarer of every class, in fact, whose condition pleads to those more plenteously endowed than himself.

Fritz was now to reap the benefit of this graceful charity; and scarcely had his wan features appeared at the window, than a sign from the chief Bauer invited him to partake. Happily for poor Fritz – happily for all who give and all who accept such aid – there is no sense of humiliation in doing so. It is, in fact, less an alms-giving than a remnant of the ancient hospitality which made the stranger welcome beneath every roof – a custom that dates before rail-roads and giant hotels.

Fritz ate and drank, and was thankful. The few words he spoke were in answer to the common questions, as to whence he came – and whither he was going – and what was his handicraft; inquiries which puzzled him sorely to reply to. His hesitations were not rendered more embarrassing by the curiosity of his questioners; they neither cared to push him closely, nor troubled their heads upon the matter.

“Farewell,” said the Bauer’s wife, as he thanked her gratefully; “farewell. Be good and pious, young lad; don’t keep naughty company, nor learn bad ways; and remember ‘A good word brings luck.’”

His eyes filled up with tears as she spoke. Who can tell the conflict of feelings they called up in his bosom?

“Where does this path lead to?” he asked, in a faint voice*

“To Reute, child.”

“And then, after Rente?”

“To Zillerthal and Inspruck.”

“To Inspruck!” said Fritz, while a sudden hope shot through him. “I’ll go to Inspruck,” muttered he, lower. “Good-by, Bauer; good-by, Frau. God bless thee.” And with these words he set out once more.

How little they who roll on their journey with all the speed and luxury that wealth can purchase, defying climate and distance, know the vicissitudes that fall to the lot of the weary foot-traveller! From city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, the rich man glides on, the great panorama of life revealing itself before him, without an effort on his part. The Alps – the Pyrenees, scarcely retard him; the luxuries he requires meet him at every halting-place, as though difference of region should

not trench upon even his daily habits; his patience, perhaps, not more tried than by the occasional stoppages where fresh horses meet him. And yet, between two such stations a foot-traveller may spend the live-long day, wearied, footsore, heavy of heart. What crosses and trials are his! What strange adventures, too! and what strange companionships! Each day a new episode of life – but of life over which Poverty has thrown its shadow.

Fritz was now to experience all this; now, travelling with a company of wandering apprentices; now, keeping company with a group of peasants on the way to market; sometimes, partaking of a seat in a Bauer's waggon – often, alone and weary, thinking over his future – a future, that each day seemed to render more doubtful and gloomy.

As he penetrated deeper into the Zillerthal, the journeys of each day became longer, the resting-places for the night being further apart; sometimes he was obliged to stop a day, or even two days, at a village, to recruit strength sufficient for a long march; and then, he would have to walk from before daylight to late in the night ere he reached his destination. His was not strength to endure fatigue like this with impunity; and if he did encounter it, it was from an enthusiasm that supplied energy, where mere bodily strength had failed. Two hopes buoyed him up, and carried him along through every opposing difficulty. Whether Star had escaped by accident, or been taken away by design, he was lame, and would surely be soon caught; and if so, what more likely than that he would be sent to Inspruck to be sold, for there was the greatest bird-market of all the world? at least so Fritz believed. His second sustaining hope lay in the prospect of once again meeting the old Priest, and learning from him how was it that a “good word” had not “brought luck” to him, and whether from any fault of his own.

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