

КОЛЛЕКТИВ АВТОРОВ

THE GERMAN CLASSICS
OF THE NINETEENTH
AND TWENTIETH
CENTURIES, VOLUME 08

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Nineteenth and Twentieth
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The German Classics of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Volume 08 / Masterpieces of German Literature Translated into English

EDITOR'S NOTE

This volume, containing chiefly masterpieces of the Novel of Provincial Life, is illustrated by the principal works of one of the foremost painters of German peasant life, Benjamin Vautier. These picture's have been so arranged as to bring out in natural succession typical situations in the career of an individual from the cradle to the grave. In order not to interrupt this succession, Auerbach's *Little Barefoot*, likewise illustrated by Vautier, has been placed before Gotthelf's *Uli, The Farmhand*, although Gotthelf, and not Auerbach, is to be considered as the real founder of the German village story.

The frontispiece, Karl Spitzweg's *Garret Window*, introduces a master of German genre painting who in a later volume will be more fully represented.

THE NOVEL OF PROVINCIAL LIFE

By EDWIN C. ROEDDER, PH.D.

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To Rousseau belongs the credit of having given, in his passionate cry "Back to Nature!" the classic expression to the consciousness that all the refinements of civilization do not constitute life in its truest sense. The sentiment itself is thousands of years old. It had inspired the idyls of Theocritus in the midst of the magnificence and luxury of the courts of Alexandria and Syracuse. It reëchoed through the pages of Virgil's bucolic poetry. It made itself heard, howsoever faintly, in the artificiality and sham of the pastoral plays from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. And it was but logical that this sentiment should seek its most adequate and definitive expression in a portrayal of all phases of the life and fate of those who, as the tillers of the soil, had ever remained nearer to Mother Earth than the rest of humankind.

Not suddenly, then, did rural poetry rise into being; but while its origin harks back to remote antiquity it has found its final form only during the last century. In this its last, as well as its most vigorous, offshoot, it presents itself as the village story—as we shall term it for brevity's sake—which has won a permanent place in literature by the side of its older brothers and sisters, and has even entirely driven out the fanciful pastoral or village idyl of old.

The village story was bound to come in the nineteenth century, even if there had been no beginnings of it in earlier times, and even if it did not correspond to a deep-rooted general sentiment. The eighteenth century had allowed the Third Estate to gain a firm foothold in the domain of dignified letters; the catholicity of the nineteenth admitted the laborer and the proletarian. It would have been passing strange if the rustic alone had been denied the privilege. An especially hearty welcome was accorded to the writings of the first representatives of the new species. Internationalism, due to increased traffic, advanced with unparalleled strides in the third and fourth decades. The seclusion of rural life seemed to remain the quiet and unshakable realm of patriarchal virtue and venerable tradition. The political skies were overcast with the thunder clouds of approaching revolutions; France had just passed through another violent upheaval. Village conditions seemed to offer a veritable haven of refuge. The pristine artlessness of the peasant's intellectual, moral, and emotional life furnished a wholesome antidote to the morbid hyperculture of dying romanticism, the controversies and polemics of Young Germany, and the self-adulation of the society of the salons. Neither could the exotic, ethnographic, and adventure narratives in the manner of Sealsfield, at first enthusiastically received, satisfy the taste of the reading public for any length of time—at best, these novels supplanted one fashion by another, if, indeed, they did not drive out Satan by means of Beelzebub. And was it wise to roam so far afield when the real good was so close at hand? Why cross oceans when the land of promise lay right before one's doors? All that was needed was the poet discoverer.

The Columbus of this new world shared the fate of the great Genoese in more than one respect. Like him, he set out in quest of shores that he was destined never to reach. Like him, he discovered, or rather rediscovered, a new land. Like him, he so far outstripped his forerunners that they sank into oblivion. Like Columbus, who died without knowing that he had not reached India, the land of his dreams, but found a new world, he may have departed from this life in the belief that he had been a measurably successful social reformer when he had proved to be a great epic poet. Like Columbus, he was succeeded by his Amerigo Vespucci, after whom his discovery was named. The Columbus of the village story is the Swiss clergyman Albert Bitzium, better known by his assumed name as Jeremias Gotthelf; the Amerigo Vespucci is his contemporary Berthold Auerbach.

The choice of his *nom de guerre* is significant of Jeremias Gotthelf's literary activity. He regarded himself as the prophet wailing the misery of his people, who could be delivered only through the aid of the Almighty. It never occurred to him to strive for literary fame. He considered himself

as a teacher and preacher purely and simply; in a measure, as the successor of Pestalozzi, who, in his *Lienhard und Gertrud* (1781-1789), had created a sort of pedagogical classic for the humbler ranks of society; and if there be such a thing in Gotthelf's make-up as literary influence, it must have emanated from the sage of Burgdorf and Yverdon. To some extent also Johann Peter Hebel (1760-1826), justly famed for his Alemannian dialect poems, may have served him as a model, for Hebel followed an avowedly educational purpose in the popular tales of his *Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreunds* ("Treasure Box of the Rhenish Crony"), of which it has been said that they outweigh tons of novels.

Gotthelf's intention was twofold: to champion the cause of the rustic yeomanry in the threatening of its peculiar existence—for the radical spirit of the times was already seizing and preying upon the hallowed customs of the peasantry's life—and to fight against certain inveterate vices of the rural population itself that seemed to be indigenous to the soil. As the first great social writer of the German tongue, he is not content to make the rich answerable for existing conditions, but labors with all earnestness to educate the lower classes toward self-help. At first he appeared as an uncommonly energetic, conservative, polemic author in whose views the religious, basis of life and genuine moral worth coincided with the traditional character of the country yeomanry. A more thorough examination revealed to his readers an original epic talent of stupendous powers. He was indeed eminently fitted to be an educator and reformer among his flock by his own nobility of character, his keen knowledge and sane judgment of the people's real needs and wants, his warm feeling, and his unexcelled insight into the peasant's inner life. Beyond that, however, he was gifted with exuberant poetic imagination and creative power, with an intuitive knowledge of the subtlest workings of the emotional life, and a veritable genius for finding the critical moments in an individual existence.

So it came about that the poet triumphed over the social reformer, in spite of himself; and while in his own parish, at Lützelflüh in the Canton of Berne—where he was installed as minister of the Gospel in 1832 after having spent some time there as a vicar—he is remembered to this day for his self-sacrificing activity in every walk of life, the world at large knows him only as one of the great prose writers of Germany in the nineteenth century. His first work, *Bauernspiegel* ("The Peasants' Mirror"), was published in 1836, when he was thirty-nine years old. From that time on until his death in 1854, his productivity was most marvelous. *The Peasants' Mirror* is the first village story that deserves the name; here, for the first time, the world of the peasant was presented as a distinct world by itself.¹ It is at the same time one of the earliest, as well as the most splendid, products of realistic art; and, considered in connection with his later writings, must be regarded as his creed and program. For the motives of the several chapters reappear later, worked out into complete books, and thus both *Uli der Knecht* ("Uli, the Farmhand," 1841) and *Uli der Pächter* ("Uli, the Tenant," 1849) are foreshadowed here.

As a literary artist Gotthelf shows barely any progress in his whole career, and intentionally so. Few writers of note have been so perfectly indifferent to matters of form. The same Gottfried Keller who calls Gotthelf "without exception the greatest epic genius that has lived in a long time, or perhaps will live for a long time to come," characterizes him thus as to his style: "With his strong, sharp spade he will dig out a large piece of soil, load it on his literary wheelbarrow, and to the accompaniment of strong language upset it before our feet; good garden soil, grass, flowers and weeds, manure and stones, precious gold coins and old shoes, fragments of crockery and bones—they all come to light and mingle their sweet and foul smells in peaceful harmony." His adherence to the principle *Naturalia non sunt turpia* is indeed so strict that at times a sensitive reader is tempted to hold his nose. It is to be regretted that so great a genius in his outspoken preference for all that is characteristic should

¹ This peculiarity distinguishes Gotthelf's *Bauernspiegel* from the nearly contemporary *Oberhof*, the episode of Immermann's *Münchhausen* which is intended as a popular contrast to the aristocratic society represented in the larger part of that novel. Cf. Vol. vii, p. 169.

have been so partial to the rude, the crude, and the brutal. For Gotthelf's literary influence—which, to be sure, did not make itself felt at once—has misled many less original writers to consider these qualities as essential to naturalistic style.

Very largely in consequence of his indifference to form and the naturalistic tendencies mentioned—for to all intents and purposes Gotthelf must be regarded as the precursor of naturalism—the Swiss writer did not gain immediate recognition in the world of letters, and the credit rightfully belonging to him fell, as already mentioned, to Berthold Auerbach (1812-1882), a native of the village of Nordstetten in the Württemberg portion of the Black Forest. From 1843-1853 Auerbach published his *Black Forest Village Stories*, which at once became the delight of the reading public. Auerbach himself claimed the distinction of being the originator of this new species of narrative—an honor which was also claimed by Alexander Weill, because of his *Sittengemälde aus dem Elsass* ("Genre Paintings from Alsace," 1843). While Gotthelf had written only for his peasants, without any regard for others, Auerbach wrote for the same general readers of fiction as the then fashionable writers did. So far as his popularity among the readers of the times and his influence on other authors are concerned, Auerbach has a certain right to the coveted title, for a whole school of village novelists followed at his heels; and his name must remain inseparably connected with the history of the novel of provincial life. The impression his stories made everywhere was so strong as to beggar description. They afforded the genuine delight that we get from murmuring brooks and flowering meadows—although the racy smell of the soil that is wafted toward us from the pages of Gotthelf's writings is no doubt more wholesome for a greater length of time. Auerbach has often been charged with idealizing his peasants too much. It must be admitted that his method and style are idealistic, but, at least in his best works, no more so than is compatible with the demands of artistic presentation. He does not, like Gotthelf, delight in painting a face with all its wrinkles, warts, and freckles, but works more like the portrait painter who will remove unsightly blemishes by retouching the picture without in any way sacrificing its lifelike character. When occasion demands he also shows himself capable of handling thoroughly tragic themes with pronounced success. In his later years, it is true, he fell into mannerism, overemphasized his inclination toward didacticism and sententiousness, and allowed the philosopher to run away with the poet by making his peasant folk think and speak as though they were adepts in the system of Spinoza, with which Auerbach himself, being of Jewish birth and having been educated to be a rabbi, was intimately familiar. On the whole, however, the lasting impression we obtain from Auerbach's literary work remains a very pleasant one—that of a rich and characteristic life, sound to the core, vigorous and buoyant.

Not as a writer of village stories—for in the portrayal of the rustic population, as such, he was not concerned—but in his basic purpose of holding up nature, pure and holy, as an ideal, Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868), an Austrian, must be assigned a place of honor in this group. A more incisive contrast to the general turbulence of the forties could hardly be imagined than is found in the nature descriptions and idyls of this quietist, who "from the madding crowd's ignoble strife" sought refuge in the stillness of the country and among people to whom such outward peace is a physical necessity. His feeling for nature, especially for her minutest and seemingly most insignificant phenomena, is closely akin to religion; there is an infinite charm in his description of the mysterious life of apparently lifeless objects; he renders all the sensuous impressions so masterfully that the reader often has the feeling of a physical experience; and it is but natural that up to his thirty-fifth year, before he discovered his literary talent, he had dreamed of being a landscape painter. Hebbel's epigram, "Know ye why ye are such past masters in painting beetles and buttercups? 'Tis because ye know not man; 'tis because ye see not the stars," utterly fails to do justice to Stifter's poetic individuality. But in avoiding the great tempests and serious conflicts of the human heart he obeyed a healthy instinct of his artistic genius, choosing to retain undisputed mastery in his own field.

It is, of course, an impossibility to treat adequately, in the remainder of the space at our disposal, the poetic and general literary merit of Fritz Reuter (1810-1874), the great regenerator

and rejuvenator of Low German as a literary language. His lasting merit in the field of the village story is that by his exclusive use of dialect he threw an effective safeguard around the naturalness of the emotional life of his characters, and through this ingenious device will for all time to come serve as a model to writers in this particular domain. For dialectic utterance does not admit of any super-exaltation of sentiment; at any rate, it helps to detect such at first glance. But there are other features no less meritorious in his stories of rural life, chief of which is that unique blending of seriousness and humor that makes us laugh and cry at the same time. With his wise and kind heart, with his deep sympathy for all human suffering, with the smile of understanding for everything truly human, also for all the limitations and follies of human nature, Reuter has worthily taken his place by the side of his model, Charles Dickens. It is questionable whether even Dickens ever created a character equal to the fine and excellent Uncle Bräsig, who, in the opinion of competent critics, is the most successful humorous figure in all German literature. Bräsig is certainly a masterpiece of psychology; as remote from any mere comic effect, despite his idiosyncrasies, as from maudlin sentimentality; an impersonation of sturdy manhood and a victor in life's battles, no less than his creator, who, although he had lost seven of the most precious years of his life in unjust imprisonment and even had been under sentence of death for a crime of which he knew himself to be absolutely innocent, had not allowed his fate to make him a pessimist. Nor does the central theme and idea of his masterpiece *Ut mine Stromtid* ("From my Roaming Days," 1862), in its strength and beauty, deserve less praise than the character delineation. Four years previous, in *Kein Hüsung* ("Homeless ") the author had raised a bitter cry of distress over the social injustice and the deceit and arrogance of the ruling classes. In spite of a ray of sunshine at the end, the treatment was essentially tragic. Now he has found a harmonious solution of the problem; the true nobility of human nature triumphs over all social distinctions; aristocracy of birth and yeomanry are forever united. Thus the marriage of Louise Havermann with Franz von Rambow both symbolizes the fusion of opposing social forces and exemplifies the lofty teaching of Gotthelf—"The light that is to illumine our fatherland must have its birth at a fireside." With his gospel of true humanity the North German poet supplements and brings to its full fruition the religious austerity of the doctrines and precepts of Jeremias Gotthelf, the preacher on the Alpine heights of Switzerland.

* * * *

BERTHOLD AUERBACH

LITTLE BAREFOOT² (1856)

A TALE OF VILLAGE LIFE

**TRANSLATED BY H.W. DULCKEN, PH.D. REVISED AND ABRIDGED BY PAUL
BERNARD THOMAS**

² Editor's note.—Numerous omissions have been made in the course of the narrative, reducing the length of the original text by about one fifth. Wherever necessary for the continuity of the story, the essence of the excluded portions has been supplied by synopses. These synopses are printed enclosed in brackets. Permission Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., London.

CHAPTER I

THE CHILDREN KNOCK AT THE DOOR

Early in the morning through the autumnal mist two children of six or seven years are wending their way, hand in hand, along the garden-paths outside the village. The girl, evidently the elder of the two, carries a slate, school-books, and writing materials under her arm; the boy has a similar equipment, which he carries in an open gray linen bag slung across his shoulder. The girl wears a cap of white twill, that reaches almost to her forehead, and from beneath it the outline of her broad brow stands forth prominently; the boy's head is bare. Only one child's step is heard, for while the boy has strong shoes on, the girl is barefoot. Wherever the path is broad enough, the children walk side by side, but where the space between the hedges is too narrow for this, the girl walks ahead.

The white hoar frost has covered the faded leaves of the bushes, and the haws and berries; and the flips especially, standing upright on their bare stems, seem coated with silver. The sparrows in the hedges twitter and fly away in restless groups at the children's approach; then they settle down not far off, only to go whirring up again, till at last they flutter into a garden and alight in an apple-tree with such force that the leaves come showering down. A magpie flies up suddenly from the path and shoots across to the large pear-tree, where some ravens are perched in silence. The magpie must have told them something, for the ravens fly up and circle round the tree; one old fellow perches himself on the waving crown, while the others find good posts of observation on the branches below. They, too, are doubtless curious to know why the children, with their school things, are following the wrong path and going out of the village; one raven, indeed, flies out as a scout and perches on a stunted willow by the pond. The children, however, go quietly on their way till, by the alders beside the pond, they come upon the high-road, which they cross to reach a humble house standing on the farther side. The house is locked up, and the children stand at the door and knock gently. The girl cries bravely: "Father! mother!"—and the boy timidly repeats it after her: "Father! mother!" Then the girl takes hold of the frost-covered latch and presses it, at first gently, and listens; the boards of the door creak, but there is no other result. And now she ventures to rattle the latch up and down vigorously, but the sounds die away in the empty vestibule—no human voice answers. The boy then presses his mouth to a crack in the door and cries: "Father! mother!" He looks up inquiringly at his sister—his breath on the door has also turned to hoar frost.

From the village, lying in a shroud of mist, come the measured sounds of the thresher's flail, now in sudden volleys, now slowly and with a dragging cadence, now in sharp, crackling bursts, and now again with a dull and hollow beat. Sometimes there is the noise of one flail only, but presently others have joined in on all sides. The children stand still and seem lost. Finally they stop knocking and calling, and sit down on some uprooted tree-stumps. The latter lie in a heap around the trunk of a mountain-ash which stands beside the house, and which is now radiant with its red berries. The children's eyes are again turned toward the door—but it is still locked.

"Father got those out of the Mossbrook Wood," said the girl, pointing to the stumps; and she added with a precocious look: "They give out lots of heat, and are worth quite a little; for there is a good deal of resin in them, and that burns like a torch. But chopping them brings in the most money."

"If I were already grown up," replied the boy, "I'd take father's big ax, and the beechwood mallet, and the two iron wedges, and the ash wedge and break it all up as if it were glass. And then I'd make a fine, pointed heap of it like the charcoal-burner, Mathew, makes in the woods; and when father comes home, how pleased he'll be! But you must not tell him who did it!" the boy concluded, raising a warning finger at his sister.

She seemed to have a dawning suspicion that it was useless to wait there for their father and mother, for she looked up at her brother very sadly. When her glance fell on his shoes, she said:

"Then you must have father's boots, too. But come, we will play ducks and drakes—you shall see that I can throw farther than you!"

As they walked away, the girl said:

"I'll give you a riddle to guess: What wood will warm you without your burning it?"

"The schoolmaster's ruler, when you get the spatters," answered the boy.

"No, that's not what I mean: The wood that you chop makes you warm without your burning it." And pausing by the hedge, she asked again:

"On a stick he has his head, And his jacket it is red, And filled with stone is he—Now who may he be?"

The boy bethought himself very gravely, and cried "Stop! You mustn't tell me what it is!—Why, it's a hip!"

The girl nodded assentingly, and made a face as if this were the first time she had ever given him the riddle to guess; as a matter of fact, however, she had given it to him very often, and had used it many times to cheer him up.

The sun had dispersed the mist, and the little valley stood in glittering sheen, as the children turned away to the pond to skim flat stones on the water. As they passed the house the girl pressed the latch once more; but again the door did not open, nor was anything to be seen at the window. And now the children played merrily beside the pond, and the girl seemed quite content that her brother should be the more clever at the sport, and that he should boast of it and grow quite excited over it; indeed, she manifestly tried to be less clever at it, than she really was, for the stones she threw almost always plumped down to the bottom as soon as they struck the water—for which she got properly laughed at by her companion. In the excitement of the sport the children quite forgot where they were and why they had come there—and yet it was a strange and sorrowful occasion.

In the house, which was now so tightly locked up, there had lived, but a short time before, one Josenhans, with his wife and their two children, Amrei (Anna Marie) and Damie (Damien). The father was a woodcutter in the forest, and was, moreover, an adept at various kinds of work; the house, which was in a dilapidated state when he bought it, he had himself repaired and reroofed, and in the autumn he was going to whitewash it inside—the lime was already lying prepared in the trench, covered with withered branches. His wife was one of the best day-laboring women in the village—ready for anything, day and night, in weal and in woe; for she had trained her children, especially Amrei, to manage for themselves at an early age. Industry and frugal contentment made the house one of the happiest in the village. Then came a deadly sickness which snatched away the mother, and the following evening, the father; and a few days later two coffins were carried away from the little house. The children had been taken immediately into the next house, to "Coaly Mathew," and they did not know of their parents' death until they were dressed in their Sunday clothes to follow the bodies.

Josenhans and his wife had no near relations in the place, but there was, nevertheless, loud weeping heard, and much mournful praise of the dead couple. The village magistrate walked with one of the children at each hand behind the two coffins. Even at the grave the children were quiet and unconscious, indeed, almost cheerful, though they often asked for their father and mother. They dined at the magistrate's house, and everybody was exceedingly kind to them; and when they got up from the table, each one received a parcel of cakes to take away.

But that evening, when, according to an arrangement of the village authorities, "Crappy Zachy" came to get Damie, and Black Marianne called for Amrei, the children refused to separate from each other, and cried aloud, and wanted to go home. Damie soon allowed himself to be pacified by all sorts of promises, but Amrei obliged them to use force—she would not move from the spot, and the magistrate's foreman had to carry her in his arms into Black Marianne's house. There she found her own bed—the one she had used at home—but she would not lie down on it. Finally, however, exhausted by crying, she fell asleep on the floor and was put to bed in her clothes. Damie, too, was heard weeping aloud at Crappy Zachy's, and even screaming pitiably, but soon after he was silent.

The much-defamed Black Marianne, on the other hand, showed on this first evening how quietly anxious she was about her foster-child. For many, many years she had not had a child about her, and now she stood before the sleeping girl and said, almost aloud:

"Happy sleep of childhood! Happy children who can be crying, and before you look around they are asleep, without worry or restless tossing!"

She sighed deeply.

The next morning Amrei went early to her brother to help him dress himself, and consoled him concerning what had happened to him, declaring that when their father came home he would pay off Crappy Zachy. Then the two children went out to their parents' house, knocked at the door and wept aloud, until Coaly Mathew, who lived near there, came and took them to school. He asked the master to explain to the children that their parents were dead, because he himself could not make it clear to them—Amrei especially seemed determined not to understand it. The master did all he could, and the children became quiet. But from the school they went back to the empty house and waited there, hungry and forsaken, until they were fetched away.

Josenhans' house was taken by the mortgagee, and the payment the deceased had made upon it was lost; for the value of houses had decreased enormously through emigration; many houses in the village stood empty, and Josenhans' dwelling also remained unoccupied. All the movable property had been sold, and a small sum had thus been realized for the children, but it was not nearly enough to pay for their board; they were consequently parish children, and as such were placed with those who would take them at the cheapest rate.

One day Amrei announced gleefully to her brother that she knew where their parents' cuckoo-clock was—Coaly Mathew had bought it. And that very evening the children stood outside the house and waited for the cuckoo to sing; and when it did, they laughed aloud.

And every morning the children went to the old house, and knocked, and played beside the pond, as we saw them doing today. Now they listen, for they hear a sound that is not often heard at this season of the year—the cuckoo at Coaly Mathew's is singing eight times.

"We must go to school," said Amrei, and she turned quickly with her brother through the garden-path back into the village. As they passed Farmer Rodel's barn, Damie said:

"They've threshed a great deal at our guardian's today." And he pointed to the bands of threshed sheaves that hung over the half-door of the barn, as evidence of accomplished work. Amrei nodded silently.

CHAPTER II

THE DISTANT SOUL

Farmer Rodel, whose house with its red beams and its pious text in a large heart over the door, was not far from Josenhans's had let himself be appointed guardian of the orphan children by the Village Council. He made the less objection for the reason that Josenhans had, in former days, served as second-man on his farm. His guardianship, however, was practically restricted to his taking care of the father's unsold clothes, and to his occasionally asking one of the children, as he passed by: "Are you good?"—whereupon he would march off without even waiting for an answer. Nevertheless a strange feeling of pride came over the children when they heard that the rich farmer was their guardian, and they looked upon themselves as very fortunate people, almost aristocratic. They often stood near the large house and looked up at it expectantly, as if they were waiting for something and knew not what; and often, too, they sat by the plows and harrows near the barn and read the biblical text on the house over and over again. The house seemed to speak to them, if no one else did.

It was the Sunday before All Souls' Day, and the children were again playing before the locked house of their parents,—they seemed to love the spot,—when Farmer Landfried's wife came down the road from Hochdorf, with a large red umbrella under her arm, and a hymn-book in her hand. She was paying a final visit to her native place; for the day before the hired-man had already carried her household furniture out of the village in a four-horse wagon, and early the next morning she was to move with her husband and her three children to the farm they had just bought in distant Allgau. From way up by the mill Dame Landfried was already nodding to the children—for to meet children on first going out is, they say, a good sign—but the children could not see her nodding, nor could they see her sorrowful features. At last, when she drew near to them, she said:

"God greet ye, children! What are you doing here so early? To whom do you belong?"

"To Josenhans—there!" answered Amrei, pointing to the house.

"Oh, you poor children!" cried the woman, clasping her hands. "I should have known you, my girl, for your mother, when she went to school with me, looked just as you do—we were good companions; and your father served my cousin, Farmer Rodel. I know all about you. But tell me, Amrei, why have you no shoes on? You might take cold in such weather as this! Tell Marianne that Dame Landfried of Hochdorf told you to say, it is not right of her to let you run about like this! But no—you needn't say anything—I will speak to her myself. But, Amrei, you are a big girl now, and must be sensible and look out for yourself. Just think—what would your mother say, if she knew that you were running about barefoot at this season of the year?"

The child looked at the speaker with wide-open eyes, as if to say:

"Doesn't my mother know anything about it?"

But the woman continued:

"That's the worst of it, that you poor children cannot know what virtuous parents you had, and therefore older people must tell you. Remember that you will give real, true happiness to your parents, when they hear, yonder in heaven, how the people down here on earth are saying 'The Josenhans children are models of all goodness—one can see in them the blessing of honest parents.'"

The tears poured down the woman's cheeks as she spoke these last words. The feeling of grief in her soul, arising from quite another cause, burst out irresistibly at these words and thoughts; there was sorrow for herself mingled with pity for others. She laid her hand upon the head of the girl, who, when she saw the woman weeping, also began to weep bitterly; she very likely felt that this was a good soul inclining toward her, and a dawning consciousness began to steal over her that she had really lost her parents.

Suddenly the woman's face seemed irradiated. She raised her still tearful eyes to heaven, and said:

"Gracious God, Thou givest me the thought." Then, turning to the child, she went on: "Listen—I will take you with me. My Lisbeth was just your age when she was taken from me. Tell me, will you go with me to Allgau and live with me?"

"Yes," replied Amrei, decidedly.

Then she felt herself nudged and seized from behind. "You must not!" cried Damie, throwing his arms around her—and he was trembling all over.

"Be still," said Amrei, to soothe him. "The kind woman will take you too. Damie is to go with us, is he not?"

"No, child, that cannot be—I have boys enough."

"Then I'll not go either," said Amrei, and she took Damie by the hand.

There is a kind of shudder, wherein a fever and a chill seem to be quarreling—the joy of doing something and the fear of doing it. One of these peculiar shudders passed through the strange woman, and she looked down upon the child with a certain sense of relief. In a moment of sympathy, urged on by a pure impulse to do a kind deed, she had proposed to undertake a task and to assume a responsibility, the significance and weight of which she had not sufficiently considered; and, furthermore, she had not taken into account what her husband would think of her taking such a step without her having spoken to him about it. Consequently when the child herself refused, a reaction set in, and it all became clear to her; so that she at once acquiesced, with a certain sense of relief, in the refusal of her offer. She had obeyed an impulse of her heart by wishing to do this thing, and now that obstacles stood in the way, she felt rather glad that it was to be left undone, and without her having been obliged to retract her promise.

"As you like," said the woman. "I will not try to persuade you. Who knows?—perhaps it is better that you should grow up first anyway. To learn to bear sorrow in youth is a good thing, and we easily get accustomed to better times; all those who have turned out really well, were obliged to suffer some heavy crosses in their youth. Only be good, and keep this in remembrance, that, so long as you are good, and so long as God grants me life, there shall always be, for your parents' sake, a shelter for you with me. But now, it's just as well as it is. Wait! I will give you something to remember me by." She felt in her pockets; but suddenly she put her hand up to her neck and said: "No, you shall have this!" Then she blew on her fingers, which were stiff with the cold, until they were nimble enough to permit her to unclasp from her neck a necklace of five rows of garnets, with a Swedish ducat hanging from them; and she fastened the ornament around the child's neck, kissing her at the same time.

Amrei watched all this as if spell-bound.

"For you I unfortunately have nothing," said the good woman to Damie, who was breaking a switch he had in his hand into little pieces. "But I will send you a pair of leather breeches belonging to my John—they are quite good still and you can wear them when you grow bigger. And now, God keep you, dear children. If possible, I shall come to you again, Amrei. At any rate, send Marianne to me after church. Be good children, both of you, and pray heartily for your parents in eternity. And don't forget that you still have protectors, both in heaven and on earth."

The farmer's wife, who, to walk the faster, had tucked her dress up all around, let it down now that she was at the entrance of the village. With hurried steps she went along the street, and did not look back again.

Amrei put her hands up to her neck and bent down her face, wishing to examine the coin; but she could not quite succeed. Damie was chewing on the last piece of his switch; when his sister looked at him and saw tears in his eyes, she said:

"You shall see—you'll get the finest pair of breeches in the village!"

"And I won't take them!" cried Damie, and he spat out a bit of wood.

"And I'll tell her that she must buy you a knife too. I shall stay home all day today—she's coming to see us."

"Yes, if she were only there already," replied Damie without knowing what he said; for a feeling that he had been slighted made him jealous and reproachful.

The first bell was ringing, and the children hastened back to the village. Amrei, with a brief explanation, gave the newly-acquired trinket to Marianne, who said:

"On my word, you are a lucky child! I'll take good care of it for you.
Now make haste to church."

All during the service the children kept glancing across at Farmer Landfried's wife, and when they came out they waited for her at the door; but the wealthy farmer's wife was surrounded by so many people, all eagerly talking to her, that she was obliged to keep turning in a circle to answer first one and then another. She had no opportunity to notice the wistful glances of the children and their continual nodding. Dame Landfried had Rosie, Farmer Rodel's youngest daughter, in her hand. Rosie was a year older than Amrei, who involuntarily kept moving her hand, as though she would have pushed aside the intruder who was taking her place. Had the well-to-do farmer's wife eyes for Amrei only out by the last house, and when they were alone, and did she not know her when other people were present? Are only the children of rich people noticed then, and the children of relatives?

Amrei was startled when she suddenly heard this thought, which had begun to stir gently within her, uttered aloud; it was Damie who uttered it. And while she followed at a distance the large group of people surrounding the farmer's wife, she strove to drive the bad thought out of her brother's mind, as well as out of her own. Dame Landfried at last disappeared into Farmer Rodel's house, and the children quietly turned back.

Suddenly Damie said:

"If she comes to you, you must tell her to go to Crappy Zachy too, and tell him to be good to me."

Amrei nodded; and then the children parted, and went to the separate houses where they had found shelter.

The clouds, which had lifted in the morning, came back in the afternoon in the shape of a perfect downpour of rain. Dame Landfried's large red umbrella was seen here and there around the village, almost hiding the figure beneath it. Black Marianne had not been able to find her, and she said on her return home:

"She can come to me—I don't want anything of her."

The two children wandered out to their parents' house again and crouched down on the doorstep, hardly speaking a word. Again the suspicion seemed to dawn upon them, that after all their parents would not come back. Then Damie tried to count the drops of rain that fell from the eaves; but they came down too quickly for him, and he made easy work of it by crying out all at once: "A thousand million!"

"She must come past here when she goes home," said Amrei, "and then we'll call out to her. Mind that you help me call, too, and then we'll have another talk with her."

So said Amrei; for the children were still waiting there for Dame Landfried.

The cracking of a whip sounded in the village. There was a trampling and splashing of horses' feet in the slushy street, and a carriage came rolling along.

"You shall see that it's father and mother coming in a coach to fetch us," cried Damie.

Amrei looked around at her brother mournfully, and said:

"Don't chatter so."

When she looked back again the carriage was quite near; somebody in it motioned from beneath a red umbrella, and away rolled the vehicle. Only Coaly Mathew's dog barked after it for a while, and acted as if he wanted to seize the spokes with his teeth; but at the pond he turned back again, barked once more in front of the door, and then slunk into the house.

"Hurrah! she's gone away!" cried Damie, as if he were glad of it. "It was Farmer Landfried's wife. Didn't you know Farmer Rodel's black horses?—they carried her off. Don't forget my leather

breeches!" he cried at the top of his voice, although the carriage had already disappeared in the valley, and was presently seen creeping up the little hill by the Holderwasen.

The children returned quietly to the village. Who knows in what way this incident may take root in the inmost being, and what may sprout from it? For the present another feeling covers that of the first, bitter disappointment.

CHAPTER III

FROM THE TREE BY THE PARENTS' HOUSE

On the eve of All Souls' Day Black Marianne said to the children:

"Go, now, and gather some red berries, for we shall want them at the graveyard tomorrow."

"I know where to find them! I can get some!" cried Damie with genuine eagerness and joy. And away he ran out of the village, at such a pace that Amrei could hardly keep up with him; and when she arrived at their parents' house he was already up in the tree, teasing her in a boasting manner and calling for her to come up too—because he knew that she could not. And now he began to pluck the red berries and threw them down into his sister's apron. She asked him to pick them with their stems on, because she wanted to make a wreath. He answered, "No, I shan't!"—nevertheless no berries fell down after that without stems on them.

"Hark, how the sparrows are scolding!" cried Damie from the tree. "They're angry because I'm taking their food away from them!" And finally, when he had plucked all the berries, he said: "I shan't come down again, but shall stay up here day and night until I die and drop down, and shall never come to you at all any more, unless you promise me something!"

"What is it?"

"That you'll never wear the necklace that Farmer Landfried's wife gave you, so long as I can see it. Will you promise me that?"

"No!"

"Then I shall never come down!"

"Very well," said Amrei, and she went away with her berries. But before she had gone far, she sat down behind a pile of wood and started to make a wreath, every now and then peeping out to see if Damie was not coming. She put the wreath on her head. Suddenly an indescribable anxiety about Damie seized her; she ran back, and there was Damie, sitting astride a branch and leaning back against the trunk of the tree with his arms folded.

"Come down! I'll promise you what you want!" cried Amrei; and in a moment Damie was down on the ground beside her.

When she got home, Black Marianne called her a foolish child and scolded her for making a wreath for herself out of the berries that were intended for her parents' graves. Marianne quickly destroyed the wreath, muttering a few words which the children could not understand. Then she took them both by the hand and led them out to the churchyard; and passing where two mounds lay close together, she said:

"There are your parents!"

The children looked at each other in surprise. Marianne then made a cross-shaped furrow in each of the mounds, and showed the children how to stick the berries in. Damie was handy at the work, and boasted because his red cross was finished sooner than his sister's. Amrei looked at him fixedly and made no answer; but when Damie said, "That will please father," she struck him on the back and said: "Be quiet!"

Damie began to cry, perhaps louder than he really meant to. Then Amrei called out:

"For heaven's sake, forgive me!—forgive me for doing that to you. Right here, I promise you that I'll do all I can for you, all my life long, and give you everything I have. I didn't hurt you, Damie, did I? You may depend upon it, it shall not happen again as long as I live—never again!—never! Oh, mother! Oh, father! I shall be good, I promise you! Oh, mother! Oh, father!"

She could say no more; but she did not weep aloud, although it was plain that her heart was almost bursting. Not until Black Marianne burst out crying did Amrei weep with her.

They returned home, and when Damie said "Good night," Amrei whispered into his ear:

"Now I know that we shall never see our parents again in this world."

Even from making this communication she derived a certain satisfaction—a childish pride which is awakened by having something to impart. And yet in this child's heart there had dawned something like a realization that one of the great ties in her life had been severed forever, the thought that arises with the consciousness that a parent is no longer with us.

When the lips which called thee child have been sealed by death, a breath has vanished from thy life that shall nevermore return.

While Black Marianne was sitting beside the child's bed, the little one said:

"I seem to be falling and falling, on and on. Let me keep hold of your hand."

Holding the hand fast, she dropped into a slumber; but as often as Black Marianne tried to draw her hand away, she clutched at it again. Marianne understood what this sensation of endless falling signified for the child; she felt in realizing her parents' death as if she were being wafted along, without knowing whence or whither.

It was not until nearly midnight that Marianne was able to quit the child's bedside, after she had repeated her usual twelve Paternosters over and over again, who knows how many times? A look of stern defiance was on the face of the sleeping child. She had laid one hand across her bosom; Black Marianne gently lifted it, and said, half-aloud, to herself:

"If there were only an eye to watch over thee and a hand to help thee all the time, as there is now in thy sleep, and to take the heaviness out of thy heart without thy knowing it! But nobody can do that—none but He alone. Oh, may He do unto my child in distant lands as I do unto this little one!"

Black Marianne was a shunned woman, that is to say, people were almost afraid of her, so harsh did she seem in her manner. Some eighteen years before she had lost her husband, who had been shot in an attempt which he had made with some companions to rob the stage-coach. Marianne was expecting a child to be born when the body of her husband, with its blackened face, was carried into the village; but she bore up bravely and washed the dead man's face as if she hoped, by so doing, to wash away his black guilt. Her three daughters died, and only the son, who was born soon afterward, lived to grow up. He turned out to be a handsome lad, though he had a strange, dark color in his face; he was now traveling abroad as a journeyman mason. For from the time of Brosi, and especially since that worthy man's son, Severin, had worked his way up to such high honor with the mallet, many of the young men in the village had chosen to follow the mason's calling. The children used to talk of Severin as if he were a prince in a fairy tale. And so Black Marianne's only child had, in spite of her remonstrances, become a mason, and was now wandering around the country. And she, who all her life long had never left the village, nor had ever desired to leave it, often declared that she seemed to herself like a hen that had hatched a duck's egg; but she was almost always clucking to herself about it.

One would hardly believe it, but Black Marianne was one of the most cheerful persons in the village; she was never seen to be sorrowful, for she did not like to have people pity her; and that is why they did not take to her. In the winter she was the most industrious spinner in the village, and in the summer, the busiest at gathering wood, a large part of which she was able to sell; and "my John"—for that was her surviving child's name—"my John" was always the subject of her conversation. She said that she had taken little Amrei to live with her, not from a desire to be kind, but in order that she might have some living being about her. She liked to appear rough before people, and thus enjoyed, all the more, the proud consciousness of independence.

The exact opposite to her was Crappy Zachy, with whom Damie had found shelter. This worthy represented himself to people as a kind-hearted fellow who would give away anything he had; but as a matter of fact he bullied and ill-used his entire household, and especially Damie, for whose keep he received but a small sum of money. His real name was Zechariah, and he got his nickname from his once having brought home to his wife a couple of finely trussed pigeons to roast, but they were in fact a pair of plucked ravens, which in that part of the country are called "crappies." Crappy Zachy, who had a wooden leg, spent most of his time knitting woolen stockings and jackets; and with his knitting he used to sit about in the village wherever there was any opportunity to gossip. This gossiping, in

the course of which he heard all sorts of news, was a source of some very profitable side-business for him. He was what they called the "marriage-maker" of the region; for in those parts, where there are large, separate estates, marriages are generally managed through agents, who find out accurately the relative circumstances of the prospective couples, and arrange everything beforehand. When a marriage of this kind had been brought about, Crappy Zachy used to play the fiddle at the wedding, for he had quite a reputation in the region as a fiddler; moreover, when his hands were tired from fiddling, he could play the clarionet and the horn. In fact, he was an undoubted genius.

Damie's whining and sensitive nature was very disgusting to Crappy Zachy, and he tried to cure him of it by giving him plenty to cry about and teasing him whenever he could.

Thus the two little stems which had sprouted in the same garden were transplanted into different soils. The position and the nature of the ground, and the qualities that were inherent in each stem, made them grow up very differently.

CHAPTER IV "OPEN, DOOR"

All Souls' Day came. It was dull and foggy, and the children stood among a crowd of people assembled in the churchyard. Crappy Zachy had led Damie there by the hand, but Amrei had come alone, without Black Marianne; many were angry at the hard-hearted woman, while a few hit a part of the truth when they said that Marianne did not like to visit graves, because she did not know where her husband's grave was. Amrei was quiet and did not shed a tear, while Damie wept bitterly at the pitying remarks of the bystanders, more especially because Crappy Zachy had given him several sly pinches and pokes. For a time Amrei, in a dreamy, forgetful way, stood gazing at the lights on the heads of the graves, watching the flame consume the wax and the wick grow blacker, and blacker, until at last the light was quite burnt out.

In the crowd a man, wearing handsome, town-made clothes and with a ribbon in his button-hole, was moving about here and there. It was the High Commissioner of Public Works, Severin, who, on a trip of inspection, had come to visit the graves of his parents, Brosi and Moni. His brothers and sisters and other relatives were constantly crowding around him with a kind of deferential respect; in fact, the usual reverence of the occasion was almost entirely diverted, nearly all the attention being fixed upon this stranger. Amrei also looked at him, and asked Crappy Zachy:

"Is that a bridegroom?"

"Why?"

"Because he has a ribbon in his button-hole."

Instead of answering her, the first thing that Crappy Zachy did was to go up to a group of people and tell them what a stupid speech the child had made; and from among the graves there arose a loud laugh over her foolishness. Only Farmer Rodel's wife said: "I don't see anything foolish in that. Although it is a mark of honor that Severin has, it is after all a strange thing for him to go about in the churchyard with such a decoration on—in the place where we see what we are all coming to, whether in our lifetime we have worn clothes of silk or of homespun. It annoyed me to see him wear it in the church—a thing of that kind ought to be taken off when one goes to church, and more especially in the churchyard!"

The rumor of little Amrei's question must have penetrated to Severin himself, for he was seen to button his overcoat hastily, and as he did so he nodded at the child. Now he was heard to ask who she was, and as soon as he found out, he came hurrying across to the children beside the fresh graves, and said to Amrei:

"Come here, my child. Open your hand. Here is a ducat for you—buy what you want with it."

The child stared at him and did not answer. But scarcely had Severin turned his back when she called out to him, half-aloud:

"I won't take any presents!"—and she flung the ducat after him.

Several people who had seen this came up to Amrei and scolded her; and just as they were about to illuse her, she was again saved from their rough hands by Farmer Rodel's wife, who once before had protected her with words. But even she requested Amrei to go after Severin and at least thank him. But Amrei made no answer whatsoever; she remained obstinate, so that her protectress also left her. Only with considerable difficulty was the ducat found again, and a member of the Village Council, who was present, took charge of it in order to deliver it over to the child's guardian.

This incident gave Amrei a strange reputation in the village. People said she had lived only a few days with Black Marianne, and yet had already acquired that woman's manners. It was declared to be an unheard of thing that a child so sunk in poverty could be so proud, and she was scolded up hill and down dale for this pride, so that she became thoroughly aware of it, and in her young, childish heart there arose an attitude of defiance, a resolve to evince it all the more. Black Marianne, moreover,

did her part to strengthen this state of mind, for she said: "Nothing more lucky can happen to a poor person than to be considered proud, for by that means he or she is saved from being trampled upon by everybody, and from being expected to offer thanks for such usage afterward."

In the winter Amrei was at Crappy Zachy's much of the time, for she was very fond of hearing him play the violin; yes, and Crappy Zachy on one occasion bestowed such high praise upon her as to say: "You are not stupid;" for Amrei, after listening to his playing for a long time, had remarked: "It's wonderful how a fiddle can hold its breath so long; I can't do that." And, on quiet winter nights at home, when Marianne told sparkling and horrifying goblin-stories, Amrei, when they were finished, would draw a deep breath and say: "Oh, Marianne, I must take breath now—I was obliged to hold my breath all the time you were speaking."

No one paid much attention to Amrei, and the child could dream away just as she had a mind to. Only the schoolmaster said once at a meeting of the Village Council, that he had never seen such a child—she was at once defiant and yielding, dreamy and alert. In truth, with all her childish self-forgetfulness, there was already developing in little Amrei a sense of responsibility, an attitude of self-defense in opposition to the world, its kindness and its malice. Damie, on the other hand, came crying and complaining to his sister upon every trifling occasion. He was, furthermore, always pitying himself, and when he was tumbled over by his playmates in their wrestling matches, he always whined: "Yes, because I am an orphan they beat me! Oh, if my father and mother knew of it!"—and then he cried twice as much over the injustice of it. Damie let everybody give him things to eat, and thus became greedy, while Amrei was satisfied with a little, and thus acquired habits of moderation. Even the roughest boys were afraid of Amrei, although nobody knew how she had proved her strength, while Damie would run away from quite little boys. In school Damie was always up to mischief; he shuffled his feet and turned down the leaves of the books with his fingers as he read. Amrei, on the other hand, was always bright and attentive, though she often wept in the school, not for the punishment she herself received, but because Damie was so often punished.

Amrei could please Damie best by telling him the answers to riddles. The children still used to sit frequently by the house of their rich guardian, sometimes near the wagons, sometimes near the oven behind the house, where they used to warm themselves, especially in the autumn. Once Amrei asked:

"What's the best thing about an oven?"

"You know I can't guess anything," replied Damie, plaintively.

"Then I'll tell you:

'In the oven this is best, 'tis said,
That it never itself doth eat the bread.'"

And then, pointing to the wagons before the house, Amrei asked:

"What's full of holes, and yet holds?"—and without waiting for a reply, she gave the answer: "A chain!"

"Now you must let me ask you these riddles," said Damie.

And Amrei replied: "Yes, you may ask them. But do you see those sheep coming yonder? Now I know another riddle."

"No!" cried Damie, "no! Two are enough for me—I can't remember three!"

"Yes, you must hear this one too, or else I'll take the others back!"

And Damie kept repeating to himself, anxiously: "A chain," "Eat it itself," while Amrei asked: "On which side have sheep the most wool?"—"Ba! ba! on the outside!" she sang merrily.

Damie now ran off to ask his playmates these riddles; he kept his fists tightly clenched, as if he were holding the riddles fast and was determined not to let them go. But when he got to his playmates, he remembered only the one about the chain; and Farmer Rodel's eldest son, whom he hadn't asked

at all and who was much too old for that sort of thing, guessed the answer at once, and Damie ran back to his sister crying.

Little Amrei's cleverness at riddles soon began to be talked about in the village, and even rich, serious farmers, who seldom wasted many words on anybody, and least of all on a poor child, now and then condescended to ask little Amrei one. That she knew a great many herself was not strange, for she had probably learned them from Black Marianne; but that she was able to answer so many new ones caused general astonishment. Amrei would soon have been unable to go across the street or into the fields without being stopped and questioned, if she had not found out a remedy; she made it a rule that she would not answer a riddle for anybody, unless she might propose one in return, and she managed to think up such good ones that the people stood still as if spell-bound. Never had a poor child been so much noticed in the village as was this little Amrei. But, as she grew older, less attention was paid to her, for people look with sympathetic eyes only at the blossom and the fruit, and disregard the long period of transition during which the one is ripening into the other.

Before Amrei's school-days were over, Fate gave her a riddle that was difficult to solve.

The children had an uncle, a woodcutter, who lived some fifteen miles from Haldenbrunn, at Fluorn. They had seen him only once, and that was at their parents' funeral, when he had walked behind the magistrate, who had led the children by the hand. After that time the children often dreamt about their uncle at Fluorn. They were often told that this uncle was like their father, which made them still more anxious to see him; for although they still believed at times that their father and mother would some day suddenly reappear—it could not be that they had gone away forever—still, as the years rolled on, they gradually became reconciled to giving up this hope, especially after they had over and over again put berries on the graves, and had long been able to read the two names on the same black cross. They also almost entirely forgot about the uncle in Fluorn, for during many years they had heard nothing of him.

But one day the children were called into their guardian's house, and there sat a tall, heavy man with a brown face.

"Come here, children," said this man, as the children entered. "Don't you know me?" He had a dry, harsh voice.

The children looked at him with wondering eyes. Perhaps some remembrance of their father's voice awoke within them. The man continued:

"I am your father's brother. Come here, Lisbeth, and you too, Damie."

"My name's not Lisbeth—my name's Amrei," said the girl; and she began to cry. She did not offer her hand to her uncle. A feeling of estrangement made her tremble, when her own uncle thus called her by a wrong name; she very likely felt that there could be no real affection for her in anybody who did not know her name.

"If you are my uncle, why don't you know my name?" asked Amrei.

"You are a stupid child! Go and offer him your hand immediately!" commanded Farmer Rodel. And then he said to the stranger, half in a whisper: "She's a strange child. Black Marianne, who, you know, is a peculiar sort of person, has put all sorts of odd notions into her head."

Amrei looked around in astonishment, and gave her hand to her uncle, trembling. Damie, who had done so already, now said:

"Uncle, have you brought us anything?"

"I haven't much to bring. I bring myself, and you're to go with me. Do you know, Amrei, that it's not at all right for you not to like your uncle. You'd better come here and sit down beside me—nearer still. You see, your brother Damie is much more sensible. He looks more like our family, but you belong to us too."

A maid now came in with some man's clothing, which she laid on the table.

"These are your brother's clothes," said Farmer Rodel to the stranger; and the latter went on to say to Amrei:

"As you see, these are your father's clothes. We shall take them with us, and you shall go too—first to Fluorn, and then across the brook."

Amrei, trembling, touched her father's coat and his blue-striped vest. But the uncle lifted up the clothes, pointed to the worn-out elbows, and said to Farmer Rodel:

"These are worth very little—I won't have them valued at much. I don't even know if I can wear them over in America, without being laughed at."

Amrei seized the coat passionately. That her father's coat, which she had looked upon as a costly and invaluable treasure, should be pronounced of little value, seemed to grieve her, and that these clothes were to be worn in America, and ridiculed there, almost bewildered her. And, anyway, what was the meaning of this talk about America? This mystery was soon cleared up, when Farmer Rodel's wife came, and with her, Black Marianne; for Dame Rodel said:

"Harkye, husband—to my mind this thing should not be done so fast, this sending the children off to America with that man."

"But he is their only living relative, Josenhans' brother."

"Yes, to be sure. But until now he has not done much to show that he is a relative; and I fancy that this cannot be done without the approval of the Council, and even the Council cannot do it alone. The children have a legal right to live here, which cannot be taken away from them in their sleep, so to speak—for the children are not yet in a position to say what they want themselves. It's like carrying people off in their sleep."

"My Amrei is intelligent enough. She's thirteen now, but more clever than many a person of thirty, and she knows what she wants," said Black Marianne.

"You two ought to have been town-councilors," said Farmer Rodel. "But it's my opinion, too, that the children ought not to be tied to a rope, like calves, and dragged away. Well, let the man talk with them himself, and then we shall see what further is to be done. He is after all their natural protector, and has the right to stand in their father's place, if he likes. Harkye; do you take a little walk with your brother's children outside the village, and you women stay here, and let nobody try to persuade or dissuade them."

The woodcutter took the two children by the hand, and went out of the room and out of the house with them. In the street he asked the children:

"Whither shall we go?"

"If you want to be our father, go home with us," suggested Damie. "Our house is down yonder."

"Is it open?" asked the uncle.

"No, but Coaly Mathew has the key. But he has never let us go in. I'll run on and get the key."

Damie released himself quickly, and ran off. Amrei felt like a prisoner as her uncle led her along by the hand. He spoke earnestly and confidentially to her now, however, and explained, almost as if he were excusing himself, that he had a large family of his own and, that he could hardly get along with his wife and five children. But now a man, who was the owner of large forests in America, had offered him a free passage across the ocean, and in five years, when he had cleared away the forest, he was to have a large piece of the best farm-land as his own property. In gratitude to God, who had bestowed this upon him for himself and his family, he had immediately made up his mind to do a good deed by taking his brother's children with him. But he was not going to compel them to go; indeed, he would take them only on the condition that they should turn to him with their whole hearts and look upon him as their second father.

Amrei looked at him with eyes of wonder. If she could only bring herself to love this man! But she was almost afraid of him—she could not help it. And to have him thus fall from the clouds, as it were, and compel her to love him, rather turned her against him.

"Where is your wife?" asked Amrei. She very likely felt that a woman would have broached the subject in a more gentle and gradual manner.

"I will tell you honestly," answered her uncle. "My wife does not interfere in this matter, and says she will neither persuade nor dissuade me. She is a little sharp, but only at first—if you are good to her, and you are a sensible child, you can twist her around your finger. And if, once in a while, anything should happen to you that you don't like, remember that you are at your father's brother's, and tell me about it alone. I will help you all I can, and you shall see that your real life is just beginning."

Amrei's eyes filled with tears at these words; and yet she could say nothing, for she felt estranged toward this man. His voice appealed to her, but when she looked at him, she felt as if she would have liked to run away.

Damie now came with the key. Amrei started to take it from him, but he would not give it up. With the peculiar pedantic conscientiousness of a child he declared that he had faithfully promised Coaly Mathew's wife to give it to nobody but his uncle. Accordingly the uncle took it from him, and it seemed to Amrei as if a magic secret door were being opened when the key for the first time rattled in the lock and turned—the hasp went down and the door opened! A strange chill, like that of a vault, came creeping from the black front-room, which had also served as a kitchen. A little heap of ashes still lay on the hearth, and on the door the initials of Caspar Melchior Balthasar and the date of the parent's death, were written in chalk. Amrei read it aloud—her own father had written it.

"Look," cried Damie, "the eight is shaped just as you make it, and as the master won't have it—you know—from right to left."

Amrei motioned to him to keep quiet. She thought it terrible and sinful that Damie should talk so lightly—here, where she felt as if she were in church, or even in eternity—quite out of the world, and yet in the very midst of it. She herself opened the inside door; the room was dark as a grave, for the shutters were closed. A single sunbeam, shining through a crack in the wall, fell on the angel's head on the tile stove in such a way that the angel seemed to be laughing. Amrei crouched down in terror. When she looked up again, her uncle had opened one of the shutters, and the warm, outside air poured in. How cold it seemed in there! None of the furniture was left in the room but a bench nailed to the wall. There her mother used to spin, and there she had put Amrei's little hands together and taught her to knit.

"Come, children, let us go now," said the uncle. "It is not good to be here. Come with me to the baker and I will buy you each a white roll—or do you like biscuits better?"

"No, let us stay here a little longer," said Amrei; and she kept on stroking the place where her mother had sat. Then, pointing to a white spot on the wall, she said, half in a whisper: "There our cuckoo clock used to hang, and there our father's discharge from the army. And there the hanks of yarn that mother spun used to hang—she could spin even better than Black Marianne—Black Marianne has said so herself. She always got a skein more out of a pound than anybody else, and it was always so even—not a knot in it. And do you see that ring up there on the ceiling? It was beautiful to see her twisting the threads there. If I had been old enough to know then, I would not have let them sell mother's spindle—it would have been a fine legacy for me. But there was nobody to take any interest in us. Oh, mother dear! Oh, father dear! If you knew how we have been pushed about, it would grieve you, even in eternity."

Amrei began to weep aloud, and Damie wept with her; even the uncle dried his eyes. He again urged them to come away from the place; he was vexed for having caused himself and the children this grief. But Amrei said in a decided way:

"Even if you do go, I shall not go with you."

"How do you mean? You will not go with me at all?"

Amrei started; for she suddenly realized what she had said, and it seemed to her almost as if it had been an inspiration. But presently she answered:

"No, I don't know about that yet. I merely meant to say, that I shall not willingly leave this house until I have seen everything again. Come, Damie, you are my brother—come up into the attic. Do

you remember where we used to play hide-and-seek, behind the chimney? And then we'll look out of the window, where we dried the truffles. Don't you remember the bright florin father got for them?"

Something rustled and pattered across the ceiling. All three started, and the uncle said quickly:

"Stay where you are, Damie, and you too. What do you want up there?"

Don't you hear the mice running about?"

"Come with me—they won't eat us!" Amrei insisted. Damie, however, declared that he would not go, and Amrei, although she felt a secret fear, took courage and went upstairs alone. But she soon came down again, looking as pale as death, with nothing in her hand but a bundle of old straws.

"Damie says he'll go with me to America," said the uncle, as she came forward. Amrei, breaking up the straws in her hands, replied: "I've nothing to say against it. I don't know yet what I shall do, but he can go if he likes."

"No," cried Damie, "I shan't do that. You did not go with Dame Landfried when she wanted to take you away, and so I shall not go off alone without you."

"Well, then, think it over—you are sensible enough," said the uncle, to conclude the matter. He then closed the shutters again, so that they stood in the dark, and hurried the children out of the room and through the vestibule, locked the outside door, and went to take the key back to Coaly Mathew. After that he started for the village with Damie alone. When he was some way off, he called back to Amrei:

"You have until tomorrow morning—then I shall go away whether you go with me or not."

Amrei was left alone. She looked after the retreating figures and wondered how one person could go away from another.

"There he goes," she thought, "and yet he belongs to you, and you to him."

Strange! As in a sleep-dream, a subject that has been lightly touched upon is renewed and interwoven with all sorts of strange details, so was it now with Amrei in her waking-dream. Damie had made but a passing allusion to the meeting with Farmer Landfried's wife. The remembrance of her had half faded away; but now it suddenly rose up fresh again—like a picture of past life in a vision. Amrei said to herself, almost aloud:

"Who knows if she may not thus suddenly think of you? One cannot tell why she should, and yet perhaps she is thinking of you at this very moment. For in this place she promised to be your protectress whenever you came to her,—it was yonder by the stunted willows. Why is it, that only the trees remain to be seen? Why is not a word like a tree, something which stands firmly, something which one can hold to. Yes, one can, if one will. Then one is as well off as a tree—and what an honorable farmer's wife says, is firm and lasting. She, too, wept because she had to go away from her native place, although she had been married and away from it for a long time. And she has children of her own—one of them is called John."

Amrei was standing by the tree where they had picked the berries. She laid her hand upon the trunk and said:

"You—why don't you go away, too? Why don't people tell you to emigrate? Perhaps for you, too, it would be better elsewhere. But, to be sure, you are too large—you did not place yourself here, and who knows if you would not die in some other place. You can only be hewn down, not transplanted. Nonsense! I also had to leave my home. If it were my father, I should be obliged to go with him—he would not need to ask me. And he who asks too much, goes astray. No one can advise me in this matter, not even Marianne. And, after all, with my uncle, it's like this: 'I am doing you a good turn, and you must repay me.' If he's severe with me, and with Damie, because he's awkward, and we have to run away, where in this wide, strange world are we to go? Here everybody knows us, and every hedge, every tree has a familiar face. 'You know me, don't you?' she said, looking up at the tree. 'Oh, if you could but speak! God created you too—why cannot you speak? You knew my father and mother so well—why cannot you tell me what they would advise me to do?' Oh, dear father! Oh, dear mother! It grieves me so to have to go away! I have nothing here, and hardly anybody, and yet

I feel as if I were being driven out of a warm bed into the cold snow. Is this deep sadness that I feel a sign that I ought not to go? Is it the true voice of conscience, or is it but a foolish fear? Oh, good Heaven, I do not know! If only a voice from Heaven would come now and tell me!"

The child trembled with inward terror, and the sense of life's difficulties for the first time arose vividly within her. And again she went on, half-thinking, half-talking to herself—but this time in a more decided way:

"If I were alone, I know for certain that I should not go; I should stay here. For it would grieve me too much. Alone I could get along. Good—remember that; of one thing, then, you are sure—as to yourself you are decided. But what foolish thoughts are these! How can I imagine that I am alone, and without Damie? I am not alone—I belong to Damie, and he belongs to me. And for Damie it would be better if he had a fatherly hand to guide him—it would help him up. But why do you want anybody else, Amrei?—can you not take care of him yourself, if it be necessary? If he once starts out in that way, I can see that he'll be nothing but a servant all his life, a drudge for other people. And who knows how uncle's children will behave toward us? Because they're poor people themselves, they'll play the masters with us. No, no! I'm sure they're good,—and it would be a fine thing to be able to say: 'Good morning, cousin.' If uncle had only brought one of the children with him, I could decide much better—I could find out about things. Oh, good heavens, how difficult all this is!"

Amrei sat down by the tree. A chaffinch came hopping along, picked up a seed, looked around him, and flew away. Something crept across Amrei's face; she brushed it off—it was a ladybird. She let it creep about on her hand, between the mountains and valleys of her fingers, until it came to the tip of her little-finger and flew away.

"What a tale he'll have to tell about where he has been!" thought Amrei. "A little creature like that is well off indeed—wherever it flies, it is at home. How the larks are singing! They, too, are well off—they do not have to think what they ought to say and do. Yonder the butcher, with his dog, is driving a calf out of the village. The dog's voice is quite different from the lark's—but then a lark's singing would never drive a calf along."

"Where's the colt going?" Coaly Mathew called out of his window to a young lad who was leading a fine colt away by a halter.

"Farmer Rodel has sold it," was the reply; and presently the colt was heard neighing farther down the valley. Amrei, who had heard this, again reflected:

"Yes, a creature like that can be sold away from its mother, and the mother hardly knows of it; and whoever pays for it, to him it belongs. But a person cannot be sold, and he who is unwilling cannot be led away by a halter. Yonder comes Farmer Rodel and his horses, with a large colt frisking beside them. You will be put in harness soon, colt, and perhaps you, too, will be sold. A man cannot be bought—he merely hires himself out. An animal for its work gets nothing more than its food and drink, while a person gets money as a reward. Yes, I can be a maid now, and with my wages I can apprentice Damie—he wants to be a mason. But when we are at uncle's, Damie won't be as much mine as he is now. Hark! the starling is flying home to the house which father made for him—he's singing merrily again. Father made the house for him out of old planks. I remember his saying that a starling won't go into a house if it's made of new wood, and I feel just the same. 'You, tree,—now I know—if you rustle as long as I stay here, I shall remain.'" And Amrei listened intently; soon it seemed to her as if the tree were rustling, but again when she looked up at the branches they were quite still, and she did not know what it was she heard.

Something was now coming along the road with a great cackling and with a cloud of dust flying before it. It was a flock of geese returning from the pasture on the Holderwasen. Amrei abstractedly imitated their cackling for a long time. Then her eyes closed and she fell asleep.

An entire spring-array of blossoms had burst forth in this young soul. The budding trees in the valley, as they drank in the evening dew, shed forth their fragrance over the child who had fallen asleep on her native soil, from which she could not tear herself.

It had long been dark when she awoke, and a voice was crying:

"Amrei, where are you?"

She sat up, but did not answer. She looked wonderingly at the stars,—it seemed to her as if the voice had come from Heaven. Not until the call was repeated did she recognize the voice of Black Marianne, and then she answered:

"Here I am!"

Black Marianne now came up and said:

"Oh, it's good that I have found you! They are like mad all through the village; one says he saw you in the wood, another that he met you in the fields, that you were running along, crying, and would listen to no call. I began to fear that you had jumped into the pond. You need not be afraid, dear child, you need not run away; nobody can compel you to go with your uncle."

"And who said that I did not want to go?" But suddenly a gust of wind rustled loudly through the branches of the tree. "But I shall certainly not go!" Amrei cried, holding fast to the tree with her hand.

"Come home—there's a severe storm coming up, and the wind will blow it here directly," urged Marianne.

And so Amrei walked, almost staggered, back to the village with Black Marianne. What did it mean—that people had seen her running through field and forest? Or was it only Black Marianne's fancy?

The night was pitch dark, but now and then bright flashes of lightning illuminated the houses, revealing them in a dazzling glare, which blinded their eyes and compelled them to stand still. And when the lightning disappeared, nothing more could be seen. In their own native village the two seemed as if they were lost, as if they were in a strange place, and they hastened onward with an uncertain step. The dust whirled up in eddies, so that at times they could scarcely make any progress; then, wet with perspiration, they struggled on again, until at last they reached the shelter of their home, just as the first heavy drops of rain began to fall. A gust of wind blew open the door, and Amrei cried:

"Open, door!"

She was very likely thinking of a fairy tale, in which a magic door opens at a mysterious word.

CHAPTER V ON THE HOLDERWASEN

Accordingly, when her uncle came the next morning, Amrei declared that she would remain where she was. There was a strange mixture of bitterness and benevolence in her uncle's reply:

"Yes, you certainly take after your mother—she would never have anything to do with us. But I couldn't take Damie alone along with me, even if he wanted to go; for a long time he wouldn't be able to do anything but eat bread, whereas you would have been able to earn it too."

Amrei replied that she preferred to do that here at home for the present, but that if her uncle remained in the same mind, she and her brother would come to him at some future time. Indeed, the interest her uncle now expressed for the children, for a moment, almost made her waver in her resolution, but in her characteristic way she did not venture to show any signs of it. She merely said:

"Give my love to your children, and tell them I feel very sorry about never having seen my nearest relatives; and especially now that they are going across the seas, since perhaps I shall never see them in my life."

Then her uncle stood up quickly, and commissioned Amrei to give his love to Damie, for he himself had no time to wait to bid him farewell. And with that he went away.

When Damie came soon afterward and heard of his uncle's departure, he wanted to run after him, and even Amrei felt a similar impulse. But she restrained herself and did not yield to it. She spoke and acted as if she were obeying some one's command in every word she said and in every movement she made; and yet her thoughts were wandering along the road by which her uncle had gone. She walked through the village, leading her brother by the hand, and nodded to all the people she met. She felt just as if she had been away and was now returning to them all. Her uncle had wanted to tear her away, and she thought that everybody else must be as glad that she had not gone, as she was herself. But she soon found out that they would not only have been glad to let her go, but that they were positively angry with her because she had not gone. Crappy Zachy opened his eyes wide at her and said:

"Child, you have an obstinate head of your own—the whole village is angry with you for spurning your good fortune. Still, who knows whether it would have been good fortune? But they call it so now, at any rate, and everybody that looks at you casts it up to you how much you receive from the parish. So make haste and get yourself off the public charity lists."

"But what am I to do?"

"Farmer Rodel's wife would like to have you in her service, but the old man won't listen to it."

Amrei very likely felt that henceforward she would have to be doubly brave, in order to escape the reproaches of her own conscience, as well as those of others; and so she asked again:

"Don't you know of anything at all?"

"Yes, certainly; but you must not be ashamed of anything—except begging. Have you not heard that foolish Fridolin yesterday killed two geese belonging to a farmer's wife? The goosekeeper's place is vacant, and I advise you to take it."

It was soon done. That very noon Amrei drove the geese out to the Holderwasen, as the pasture on the little hill by the King's Well was called. Damie loyally helped his sister in doing it.

Black Marianne, however, was very much put out about this new service, and declared, not without reason:

"It's something that's remembered against a person an entire lifetime to have had such a place. People never forget it, and always refer to it; and later on every one will think twice about taking you into their service, because they will say: 'Why, that's the goose-girl!' And if any one does take you, out of compassion, you'll get low wages and bad treatment, and they'll always say: 'Oh, that's good enough for a goose-girl.'"

"I won't mind that," replied Amrei; "and you have told me hundreds of times about how a goose-girl became a queen."

"That was in olden times. But who knows?—you belong to the old world. Sometimes it seems to me that you are not a child at all, and who knows, you old-fashioned soul, if a wonder won't happen in your case?"

This hint that she had not yet stood upon the lowest round of the ladder of honor, but that there was a possibility of her descending even lower than she was, startled Amrei. For herself she thought nothing of it, but from that time forth she would not allow Damie to keep the geese with her. He was a man—or was to be one—and it might do him harm if it were said of him, later on, that he had kept geese. But, to save her soul, she could not make this clear to him, and he refused to listen to her. For it is always thus; at the point where mutual understanding ends, vexation begins; the inward helplessness translates itself into a feeling of outward injustice and injury.

Amrei, nevertheless, was almost glad that Damie could remain angry with her for so many days; for it showed that he was learning how to stand up against the world and to assert his own will.

Damie, however, soon got a place for himself. He was employed by his guardian, Farmer Rodel, in the capacity of scarecrow, an occupation which required him to swing a rattle in the farmer's orchard all day long, for the purpose of frightening the sparrows away from the early cherries and vegetable-beds. At first this duty appealed to him as sport, but he soon grew tired of it and gave it up.

It was a pleasant, but at the same time a laborious office that Amrei had undertaken. And it often seemed especially hard to her that she could do nothing to attach the creatures to her; indeed, they were hardly to be distinguished from one another. And it was not at all an idle remark that Black Marianne made to her one day when she returned from Mossbrook Wood:

"Animals that live in flocks and herds," she said, "if you take each one separately, are always stupid."

"I think so, too," replied Amrei. "These geese are stupid because they know how to do too many different things. They can swim, and run, and fly, but they are not really at home either in the water, or on land, or in the air. That's what makes them stupid."

"I still maintain," replied Marianne, "that there's the making of an old hermit in you."

The Holderwasen was not one of those lonely, sequestered spots which the world of fiction seems to select for its gleaming, glittering legends. Through the centre of the Holderwasen ran a road to Endringen, and not far from it stood the many-colored boundary-stakes with the coats-of-arms of the two sovereign princes whose dominions came together here. In rustic vehicles of all kinds the peasants used to drive past, and men, women, and children kept passing to and fro with hoe, scythe, and sickle. The *gardes-champêtres* of the two dominions also used to pass by often, the barrels of their muskets shining as they approached and gleaming long after they had passed. Amrei was almost always accosted by the *garde-champêtre* of Endringen as she sat by the roadside, and he often made inquiries of her as to whether this or that person had passed by. But she was never able to give the desired information—or perhaps she kept it from him on purpose, on account of the instinctive aversion the people, and especially the children, of a village have for these men, whom they invariably look upon as the armed enemies of the human race, going to and fro in search of some one to devour.

Theisles Manz, who used to sit by the road breaking stones, hardly spoke a word to Amrei; he would go sulkily from stone-heap to stone-heap, and his knocking was more incessant than the tapping of the woodpecker in Mossbrook Wood, and more regular than the piping and chirping of the grasshoppers in the neighboring meadows and cloverfields.

[And so Amrei spent day after day at Holderwasen, watching the geese and the passers-by, studying the birds and the flowers and the trees, dreaming of her father and mother, and wondering what was in store for Damie and herself. There was a trough of clear, fresh water by the roadside, and Amrei used to bring a jug with her in order to offer it to thirsty people who had nothing to drink out of.]

One day a little Bernese wagon, drawn by two handsome white horses, came rattling along the road; a stout, upland farmer took up almost the entire seat, which was meant for two. He drew up by the roadside and asked:

"Girlie, have you anything one can drink out of?"

"Yes, certainly—I'll get it for you." And she went off briskly to fetch her pitcher, which she filled with water.

"Ah!" said the farmer, stopping to take breath after a long draught; and with the water running down his chin, he continued, talking half into the jug: "There's after all no water like this in all the world." And again he raised the jug to his lips, and motioned to Amrei to keep still while he took a second long, thirsty draught. For it is extremely disagreeable to be addressed when you are drinking; you swallow hurriedly and feel an oppression afterward.

The child seemed to realize this, for not until the farmer had handed back the jug did she say:

"Yes, this is good, wholesome water; and if you would like to water your horses, it is especially good for them—it won't give them cramps."

"My horses are warm and must not drink now. Do you come from Haldenbrunn, my girl?"

"Yes indeed."

"And what is your name?"

"Amrei."

"And to whom do you belong?"

"To nobody now—my father was Josenhans."

"What! Josenhans, who served at Farmer Rodel's?"

"Yes."

"I knew him well. It was too bad that he died so soon. Wait, child—I'll give you something." He drew a large leather bag out of his pocket, groped about in it for a long time, and said at last: "There, take this."

"No, thank you—I don't accept presents—I'll take nothing."

"Take it—you can accept it from me all right. Is Farmer Rodel your guardian?"

"Yes."

"He might have done something better than make a goose-girl of you.

Well, God keep you."

Away rolled the wagon, and Amrei found herself alone with a coin in her hand.

"You can accept it from me all right.—Who was he that he could say that? And why didn't he make himself known? Why, it's a groschen, and there's a bird on it. Well, it won't make him poor, nor me rich."

The rest of that day Amrei did not offer her pitcher to any one else; she was afraid of having something given to her again. When she got home in the evening, Black Marianne told her that Farmer Rodel had sent for her, and that she was to go over to him directly.

Amrei hastened to his house, and as she entered, Farmer Rodel called out to her:

"What have you been saying to Farmer Landfried?"

"I don't know any Farmer Landfried."

"He was with you at the Holderwasen today, and gave you something."

"I did not know who he was—and here's his money still."

"I've nothing to do with that. Now, say frankly and honestly, you tiresome child, did I persuade you to be a goose-keeper? If you don't give it up this very day, I'm no guardian of yours. I won't have such things said of me!"

"I'll let everybody know that it was not your fault—but give it up is something I can't do. I must stick to it, at any rate for the rest of the summer—I must finish what I have begun."

"You're a crabbed creature," said the farmer; and he walked out of the room. But his wife, who was lying ill in bed, called out:

"You're quite right—stay just as you are. I prophesy that it will go well with you. A hundred years from now they will be saying in this village of one who has done well: 'He has the fortune of Brosi's Severin and of Josenhans' Amrei.' Your dry bread will fall into the honey-pot yet."

Farmer Rodel's sick wife was looked upon as crazy; and, as if frightened by a specter, Amrei hurried away without a word of reply.

Amrei told Black Marianne that a wonder had happened to her; Farmer Landfried, whose wife she so often thought about, had spoken to her and had taken her part in a talk with Farmer Rodel, and had given her something. She then displayed the piece of money, and Marianne called out, laughing:

"Yes, I might have guessed myself that it was Farmer Landfried. That's just like him—to give a poor child a bad groschen!"

"Why is it bad?" asked Amrei; and the tears came into her eyes.

"Why, that's a bird groschen—they're not worth full value—they're worth only a kreutzer and a half."

"Then he intended to give me only a kreutzer and a half," said Amrei decidedly.

And here for the first time an inward contrast showed itself between Amrei and Black Marianne. The latter almost rejoiced at every bad thing she heard about people, whereas Amrei put a good construction on everything. She was always happy, and no matter how frequently in her solitude she burst into tears, she never expected anything, and hence everything that she received was a surprise to her, and she was all the more thankful for it.

[Amrei hoped that her meeting with Farmer Landfried would result in his coming to take her to live with him, but she hoped in vain, for she watched the geese all summer long, and did not see or hear of him again.]

CHAPTER VI

THE WOMAN WHO BAKED HER OWN BREAD

A woman who leads a solitary, isolated life and bakes bread for herself quite alone, is called an "Eigenbrötlerin" (a woman who bakes her own bread), and such a woman, as a rule, has all kinds of peculiarities. No one had more right or more inclination to be an "Eigenbrötlerin" than did Black Marianne, although she never had anything to bake; for oatmeal and potatoes and potatoes and oatmeal were the only things she ever ate. She always lived by herself, and did not like to associate with other people. Only along toward autumn did she become restless and impatient; about that time of the year she would talk to herself a great deal, and would often accost people of her own accord, especially strangers who happened to be passing through the village. For she was anxious to find out whether the masons from this or that place had yet returned home for the winter, and whether they had brought news of her John. While she was once more boiling and washing the linen she had been bleaching all summer long, for which purpose she remained up all night, she would always be muttering to herself. No one could understand exactly what she said, but the burden of it was intelligible, for it was always: "That is for me, and that is for thee." She was in the habit of saying twelve Paternosters daily for her John, but on this particular washing-night they became innumerable. When the first snow fell she was always especially cheerful; for then there could be no more outdoor work, and then he would be most likely to come home. At these times she would often talk to a white hen which she kept in a coop, telling it that it would have to be killed when John came. She had repeated these proceedings for many years, and people never ceased telling her that she was foolish to be thus continually thinking of the return of her John.

This autumn it would be eighteen years since John had gone away, and every year John Michael Winkler was reported in the paper as missing, which would be done until his fiftieth year—he was now in his thirty-sixth. The story circulated in the village that John had gone among the gypsies. Once, indeed, his mother had mistaken a young gipsy for him; he was a man who bore a striking resemblance to her missing son, in that he was small of stature and had the same dark complexion; and he had seemed rather pleased at being taken for John. But the mother had put him to the proof, for she still had John's hymn-book and his confirmation verse; and, inasmuch as the stranger did not know this verse and could not tell who were his sponsors, or what had happened to him on the day when Brosi's Severin arrived with his English wife, and later on when the new well was dug at the town-hall—inasmuch as he did not satisfy these and other proofs, he could not be the right man. And yet Marianne used to give the gipsy a lodging whenever he came to the village, and the children in the streets used to cry "John!" after him.

John was advertised as being liable to military duty and as a deserter; and although his mother declared that he would have slipped through under the measuring-stick as "too short," she knew that he would not escape punishment if he returned, and inferred that this was the reason why he did not return. And it was very strange to hear her praying, almost in the same breath, for the welfare of her son and the death of the reigning prince; for she had been told that when the sovereign died, his successor would proclaim a general amnesty for all past offenses.

Every year Marianne used to ask the schoolmaster to give her the page in the newspaper in which her John was advertised for, and she always put it with his hymn-book. But this year it was a good thing that Marianne could not read, so that the schoolmaster could send her another page in place of the one she wanted. For a strange rumor was going through the whole village; whenever two people stood together talking, they would be saying:

"Black Marianne must not be told anything about it. It would kill her—it would drive her crazy."

For a report, coming from the Ambassador in Paris, had passed through a number of higher and lower officers, until it reached the Village Council; it stated that, according to a communication

received from Algiers, John Winkler of Haldenbrunn had perished in that colony during an outpost skirmish. There was much talk in the village of the singular fact that so many in high departments should have concerned themselves so much about the dead John. But this stream of well-confirmed information was arrested before it had reached the end of its course.

At a meeting of the Village, Council it was determined that nothing at all should be said to Black Marianne about it. It would be wrong, they said, to embitter the last few years of her life by taking her one comfort away from her.

But instead of keeping the report secret, the first thing the members of the Council did was to talk of it in their homes, and it was not long before the whole village knew about it, excepting only Black Marianne. Every one, afraid of betraying the secret to her, looked at her with strange glances; no one addressed her, and even her greetings were scarcely returned. It was only Marianne's peculiar disposition that prevented her from noticing this. And indeed, if any one did speak to her and was drawn on to say anything about John's death, it was done in the conjectural and soothing way to which she had been accustomed for years; and Marianne did not believe it now any more than she had formerly, because nobody ever said anything definite about the report of his decease.

It would have been better if Amrei had known nothing about it, but there was a strange, seductive charm in getting as close as possible to a subject that was forbidden. Accordingly every one spoke to Amrei of the mournful event, warned her not to tell Black Marianne anything about it, and asked if the mother had no presentiments or dreams of her son's death—if his spirit did not haunt the house. After she heard of it Amrei was always trembling and quaking in secret; for she alone was always near Black Marianne, and it was terrible to know something which she was obliged to conceal from her. Even the people in whose house Black Marianne had rented a small room could no longer bear to have her near them, and they showed their sympathy by giving her notice to quit.

But how strangely things are associated in this life! As a result of this very thing Amrei experienced joy as well as grief—for it opened up her parents' home to her again. Black Marianne went to live there, and Amrei, who at first trembled as she went back and forth in the house, carrying water or making a fire, always thinking that now her father and mother must come, afterward began gradually to feel quite at home in it. She sat spinning day and night, until she had earned enough money to buy back her parents' cuckoo-clock from Coaly Mathew. Now she had at least one household article of her own! But the cuckoo had fared badly among strangers; it had lost half of its voice, and the other half seemed to stick in its throat—it could only cry "cook"—and as often as it did that, Amrei would involuntarily add the missing "oo."

* * * * *

Black Marianne could not bear to hear the clock cuckoo and fixed the pendulum so that it would not work, saying that she always had the time in her head. And it was indeed wonderful how true this was—at any minute she could tell what time it was, although it was of very little consequence to her. In fact, this waiting, expectant woman possessed a remarkable degree of alertness, for as she was always listening to hear her son coming, she was naturally wide-awake all the time. And, although she never visited anybody in the village, and spoke to nobody, she knew everybody, and all about the most secret things that went on in the place. She could infer a great deal from the manner in which people met one another, and from words she overheard here and there. And because this seemed very wonderful, she was feared and avoided. She often used to describe herself, according to a local expression, as an "old-experienced" woman, and yet she was exceedingly active. Every day, year in and year out, she ate a few juniper berries, and people said that was the reason why she was so vigorous and showed her sixty-six years so little. The fact that the two sixes stood together

caused her, according to an old country saying³ (which, however, was not universally believed in) to be regarded as a witch. It was said that she sometimes milked her black goat for hours at a time, and that this goat gave an astonishing quantity of milk, but that in milking this goat she was in reality drawing the milk out of the udders of the cows belonging to persons she hated, and that she had an especial grudge against Farmer Rodel's cattle. Moreover, Marianne's successful poultry-keeping was also looked upon as witchcraft; for where did she get the food, and how was it that she always had chickens and eggs to sell? It is true that in the summer she was often seen collecting cock-chafers, grasshoppers, and all kinds of worms, and on moonless nights she was seen gliding like a will-o'-the-wisp among the graves in the churchyard, where she would be carrying a burning torch and collecting the large black worms that crept out, all the time muttering to herself. It was even said that in the quiet winter nights she held wonderful conversations with her goat and with her fowls, which she housed in her room during the winter. The entire wild army of tales of witchcraft and sorcery, banished by school education, came back and attached itself to Black Marianne.

Amrei sometimes felt afraid in the long, silent winter nights, when she sat spinning by Black Marianne, and nothing was heard but an occasional sleepy clucking from the fowls, or a dreamy bleat from the goat. And it seemed truly magical how fast Marianne spun! She even said once:

"I think my John is helping me to spin." And then again she complained that this winter, for the first time, she had not thought wholly and solely of her John. She took her self to task for it and called herself a bad mother, and complained that it seemed all the time as if the features of her John were slowly vanishing before her—as if she were forgetting what he had done at such and such a time, how he had laughed, sung, and wept, and how he had climbed the tree and jumped into the ditch.

* * * * *

But however cheerfully and brightly Marianne might begin to speak, she always ended by relapsing into gloomy complaint and mourning; and she who professed to like to be alone and to think of nothing and to love nothing, only lived to think about her son and to love him. Consequently Amrei made up her mind to release herself from this uncanny position of being alone with Black Marianne; she demanded that Damie should be taken into the house. At first Marianne opposed it vehemently, but when Amrei threatened to leave the house herself, and then coaxed her in such a childlike way and tried so hard to do whatever would best please her, the old woman at last consented.

Damie, who had learned from Crappy Zachy to knit wool, now sat beneath the parental roof again; and at night, when the brother and sister were asleep in the garret, each one of them would wake the other when they heard Black Marianne down stairs, running to and fro and muttering to herself. But Damie's transmigration to Black Marianne's was the cause of new trouble. Damie was exceedingly discontented at having been compelled to learn a miserable trade that was fit only for a cripple. He wanted to be a mason, and although Amrei was very much opposed to it, for she predicted that he would not keep at it, Black Marianne supported him in it. She would have liked to make all the young lads masons, and then to have sent them out on their travels that they might bring back news of her John.

Black Marianne seldom went to church, but she always liked to have anybody else borrow her hymn-book and take it to church—it seemed to give her a kind of pleasure to have it there. She was especially pleased when any strange workman, who happened to be employed in the village, borrowed the hymn-book which John had left behind him for that purpose; for it seemed to her as if John himself were praying in his native church, when the words were spoken and sung out of his book. And now Damie was obliged to go to church twice every Sunday with John's hymn-book.

³ This old country saying is founded on the similarity in sound between *sechse* (sixes) and *hexe* (witch).

While Marianne did not go to church herself, she was always to be seen at every solemn ceremony in the village or in any of the surrounding villages. There was never a funeral which Marianne did not attend as one of the mourners; and at the funeral sermon, and the blessing spoken over the grave, even of a little child, she always wept so violently that one would have thought she was the nearest relative. On the way home, however, she was always especially cheerful, for this weeping seemed to be a kind of relief to her; all the year round she had to suppress so much secret sorrow, that she felt thankful for an opportunity to give vent to her feelings.

Could people be blamed if they shunned her as an uncanny person, especially as they were keeping a secret from her? The habit of avoiding Black Marianne was partly extended to Amrei herself; in several houses where the girl called to offer help or sympathy she was made to see distinctly that her presence was not desired, especially as she herself was beginning to show certain eccentricities which astonished the whole village; for example, except on the coldest winter days she used to go barefoot, and people said that she must know some secret method to prevent herself from catching cold and dying.

Only in the house of Farmer Rodel were they glad to have her, for the farmer was her guardian. His wife, who had always taken Amrei's part and who had one day promised to take her into her service when she was older, was prevented from carrying out this plan. She herself was taken by another—Death. The heaviness of life is generally felt in later years, when one friend after another has been called away, and only a name and a memory remains. But it was Amrei's lot to experience this in her youth; and it was she and Black Marianne who wept more bitterly than any of the others at the funeral of Farmer Rodel's wife.

Farmer Rodel was always complaining about how hard it was that he should have to give up his property so soon, although not one of his three children was yet married. But hardly a year had passed, and Damie had not yet worked a full year in the quarry, when the celebration of a double wedding was announced in the village; for Farmer Rodel's eldest daughter and his only son were to be married on the same day. On this day Farmer Rodel was to give over his property to his son, and at this wedding it was fated that Amrei should acquire a new name and be introduced into a new life.

In the space before the large dancing-floor the children were assembled, and while the grown-up people were dancing and enjoying themselves within, the children were imitating them outside. But, strange to say, no boy and no girl would dance with Amrei. No one knew who said it first, but a voice was heard to call out:

"No one will dance with you—you're Little Barefoot!" and "Barefoot! Barefoot! Barefoot!" was echoed on all sides. Amrei was ready to weep; but here again she quickly made use of the power which enabled her to ignore insult and injury. Suppressing her tears, she seized her apron by the two ends and danced around by herself so gracefully and prettily, that all the children stopped to look at her. And presently the grown-up people were nodding to one another, and a circle of men and women was formed around Amrei. Farmer Rodel, in particular, who on this day was eating and drinking with double relish, snapped his fingers and whistled the waltz the musicians were playing, while Amrei went on dancing and seemed to know no weariness. When at last the music ceased, Farmer Rodel took Amrei by the hand and said:

"You clever girl, who taught you to do that so well?"

"Nobody."

"Why don't you dance with any one?"

"It is better to dance alone—then one does not have to wait for anybody, and has one's partner always at hand."

"Have you had anything from the wedding yet?" asked Farmer Rodel, with a complacent smile.

"No."

"Then come in and eat," said the proud farmer; and he led the poor girl into the house and sat her down at the wedding table, at which feasting was going on all day long. Amrei did not eat much. Farmer Rodel, for a jest, wanted to make the child tipsy, but Amrei said bravely:

"If I drink more, I shall have to be led and shall not be able to walk alone; and Marianne says 'alone' is the best conveyance, for then the horses are always harnessed."

All were astonished at the child's wisdom.

Young Farmer Rodel came in with his wife and asked the child, to tease her:

"Have you brought us a wedding present? For if one eats so, one ought to bring a wedding present."

The father-in-law, moved by an incomprehensible impulse of generosity, secretly slipped a sixpenny piece into the child's hand. Amrei held the coin fast in her palm, nodded to the old man, and said to the young couple:

"I have the promise and an earnest of payment; your deceased mother always promised me that I should serve her, and that no one else should be nurse to her first grand-child."

"Yes, my wife always wished it," said the old farmer approvingly. And what he had refused to do for his wife while she was alive, for fear of having to provide for an orphan, he now did, now that he could no longer please her with it, in order to make it appear before the people that he was doing it out of respect for her memory. But even now he did it not from kindness, but in the correct calculation that the orphan would be serviceable to him, the deposed farmer who was her guardian; and the burden of her maintenance, which would amount to more than her wages, would fall on others and not on him.

The young couple looked at each other, and the man said:

"Bring your bundle to our house tomorrow—you can live with us."

"Very well," said Amrei, "tomorrow I will bring my bundle. But now I should like to take my bundle with me; give me a bottle of wine, and this meat I will wrap up and take to Marianne and my Damie."

They let Amrei have her way; but old Farmer Rodel said to her secretly:

"Give me back my sixpence—I thought you were going to give it up."

"I'll keep that as an earnest from you," answered Amrei slyly; "you shall see, I will give you value for it." Farmer Rodel laughed to himself half angrily, and Amrei went back to Black Marianne with money, wine, and meat.

The house was locked; and there was a great contrast between the loud music and noise and feasting at the wedding house, and the silence and solitude here. Amrei knew where to wait for Marianne on her way home, for the old woman very often went to the stone-quarry and sat there behind a hedge for a long time, listening to the tapping of chisels and mallets. It seemed to her like a melody, carrying her back to the times when her John used to work there too; and so she often sat there, listening and watching.

Sure enough, Amrei found Black Marianne there, and half an hour before quitting time she called Damie up out of the quarry. And here among the rocks a wedding feast was held, more merry than the one amid the noise and music. Damie was especially joyful, and Marianne, too, was unusually cheerful. But she would not drink a drop of the wine, for she had declared that no wine should moisten her lips until she drank it at her John's wedding. When Amrei told with glee how she had got a place at young Farmer Rodel's, and was going there tomorrow, Black Marianne started up in furious anger; picking up a stone and pressing it to her bosom, she said:

"It would be better a thousand times that I had this in me, a stone like this, than a living heart! Why cannot I be alone? Why did I ever allow myself to like anybody again? But now it's all over forever! You false, faithless child! Hardly are you able to raise your wings, than off you fly! But it is well. I am alone, and my John shall be alone, too, when he comes—and what I have wished would come to pass, shall never be!"

With that she ran off toward the village.

"She's a witch, after all," said Damie when she had disappeared. "I won't drink the wine—who knows if she has not bewitched it?"

"You can drink it—she's only a strict *Eigenbrötlerin* and she has a heavy cross to bear. I know how to win her back again," said Amrei, consolingly.

CHAPTER VII

THE SISTER OF MERCY

During the next year there was plenty of life in Farmer Rodel's house. "Barefoot," for so Amrei was now called, was handy in every way, and knew how to make herself liked by everybody; she could tell the young farmer's wife, who had come to the place as a stranger, what the customs of the village were; she studied the habits and characters of those around her and learned to adapt herself to them. She managed to do all sorts of kindnesses to old Farmer Rodel, who could not get over his chagrin at having had to retire so early, and grumbled all day long about it. She told what a good girl his daughter-in-law was, only that she did not know how to show it. And when, after scarcely a year, the first child came, Amrei evinced so much joy at the event, and was so handy at everything that had to be done, that all in the house were full of her praise; but according to the fashion of such people they were more ready to scold her for any trifling omission than to praise her openly. But Amrei did not expect any praise. She knew so well how to carry the little baby to its grandfather, and just when to take it away again, that it pleased and surprised everybody. And when the baby's first tooth came, and Amrei exhibited it to the grandfather, the old man said:

"I will give you a sixpence for the pleasure you have given me. But do you remember the one you stole from me at the wedding—now you may keep it honestly."

Meanwhile Black Marianne was not forgotten. It was certainly a difficult task to regain her favor. At first Marianne would have nothing to say to Barefoot, whose new mistress would not allow her to go to Marianne's, especially not with the child, as it was always feared that the witch might do the baby some mischief. Great patience and perseverance were required to overcome this prejudice, but it was accomplished at last. Indeed, Little Barefoot brought matters to such a pass that Farmer Rodel himself several times paid a visit to Black Marianne, a thing which astonished the entire village. These visits, however, were soon discontinued, for Marianne once said:

"I am nearly seventy years old and have got on until now without the friendship of a farmer; and it's not worth while to make a change now."

Naturally enough Damie was often with his sister. But young Farmer Rodel objected to this, alleging, not without reason, that it would result in his having to feed the big boy; for in a large house like his one could not see whether a servant was not giving him all kinds of things to eat. He therefore forbade Damie to come to the house, except on Sunday afternoons.

Damie, however, had already seen too much of the comfort of living in a wealthy farmer's house; his mouth watered for the flesh-pots, and he wanted to stay there, if only as a servant. Stone-chipping was such a hungry life. But Barefoot had many objections to make. She told him to remember that he was already learning a second trade, and that he ought to keep at it; that it was a mistake to be always wanting to begin something new, and then to suppose that one could be happy in that way. She said that one must be happy in the place where one was, if one was ever to be happy at all. Damie allowed himself to be persuaded for a time. And so great was the acknowledged authority of Little Barefoot already, and so natural did it seem that she should dictate to her brother, that he was always called "Barefoot's Damie," as if he were not her brother, but her son. And yet he was a head taller than she, and did not act as if he were subordinate to her. Indeed, he often expressed his annoyance that he was not considered as good as she, merely because he did not have a tongue like hers in his head. His discontent with himself and with his trade he always vented first on his sister. She bore it patiently, and because he showed before the world that she was obliged to give him his way, she really gained more influence and power through this very publicity. For everybody said that it was very good of Amrei to do what she did for her brother, and she rose in the public estimation by letting him treat her thus unkindly, while she in turn cared for him like a mother. She washed and darned for him at night so steadily, that he was one of the neatest boys in the village; and instead of taking

two stout pairs of shoes, which she received as part of her wages every half year, she always paid the shoemaker a little extra money to make two pairs for Damie, while she herself went barefoot; it was only on Sunday, when she went to church, that she was seen wearing shoes at all.

Little Barefoot was exceedingly annoyed to find that Damie, though no one knew why, had become the general butt of all the joking and teasing in the village. She took him sharply to task for it, and told him he ought not to tolerate it; but he retorted that she ought to speak to the people about it, and not to him, for he could not stand up against it. But that was not to be done—in fact, Damie was secretly not particularly annoyed by being teased everywhere he went. Sometimes, indeed, it hurt him to have everybody laugh at him, and to have boys much younger than himself take liberties with him, but it annoyed him a great deal more to have people take no notice of him at all, and he would then try to make a fool of himself and expose himself to insult.

Barefoot, on the other hand, was certainly in some danger of developing into the hermit Marianne had always professed to recognize in her. She had once attached herself to one single companion, the daughter of Coaly Mathew; but this girl had been away for years, working in a factory in Alsace, and nothing was ever heard of her now. Barefoot lived so entirely by herself that she was not reckoned at all among the young people of the village; she was friendly and sociable with those of her own age, but her only real playmate was Black Marianne. And just because Barefoot lived so much by herself, she had no influence upon the behavior of Damie, who, however much he might be teased and tormented, always had to have the company of others, and could never be alone like his sister.

But now Damie suddenly emancipated himself; one fine Sunday he exhibited to his sister some money he had received as an earnest from Scheckennarre, of Hirlingen, to whom he had hired himself out as a farmhand.

"If you had spoken to me about it first," said Barefoot, "I could have told you of a better place. I would have given you a letter to Farmer Landfried's wife in Allgau; and there you would have been treated like a son of the family."

"Oh, don't talk to me about her!" said Damie crossly. "She has owed me a pair of leather breeches she promised me for nearly thirteen years. Don't you remember?—when we were little, and thought we had only to knock, and mother and father would open the door. Don't talk to me of Dame Landfried! Who knows whether she ever thinks of us, or indeed if she is still alive?"

"Yes, she's alive—she's related to the family which I serve, and they often speak of her. And all her children are married, except one son, who is to have the farm."

"Now you want to make me feel dissatisfied with my new place," said Damie complainingly, "and you go and tell me that I might have had a better one. Is that right?" And his voice faltered.

"Oh, don't be so soft-hearted all the time!" said Barefoot. "Is what I said going to take away any of your good fortune? You are always acting as if the geese were biting you. And now I will only tell you one thing, and that is, that you should hold fast to what you have, and remain where you are. It's no use to be like a cuckoo, sleeping on a different tree every night. I, too, could get other places, but I won't; I have brought it about that I am well off here. Look you, he who is every minute running to another place will always be treated like a stranger—people know that tomorrow he perhaps won't belong to the house, and so they don't make him at home in it today."

"I don't need your preaching," said Damie, and he started to go away in anger. "You are always scolding me, and toward everybody else in the world you are good-natured."

"That's because you are my brother," said Barefoot, laughing and caressing the angry boy.

In truth, a strange difference had developed itself between brother and sister; Damie had a certain begging propensity, and then again the next minute showed a kind of pride; Barefoot, on the other hand, was always good-natured and yielding, but was nevertheless supported by a certain self-respect, which was never detracted from by her willingness to work and oblige.

She now succeeded in pacifying her brother, and said:

"Look, I have an idea. But first you must be good, for the coat must not lie on an angry heart. Farmer Rodel still has in his possession our dear father's clothes; you are tall now, and they will just fit you. Now it will give you a good appearance if you arrive at the farm in such respectable clothes; then your fellow-servants will see where you come from, and what worthy parents you had."

Damie saw that this was sensible, and Barefoot induced old Farmer Rodel—with considerable difficulty, for he did not want to give up the clothes so soon—to hand the garments over to Damie. Barefoot at once took him up to her room and made him put on his father's coat and vest then and there. He objected, but when Amrei had set her heart on a thing, it had to be done. The hat, alone, Damie could not be induced to wear; when he had put on the coat, Amrei laid her hand on his shoulder and said:

"There, now you are my brother and my father, and now the coat is going to be worn again with a new man in it. Look, Damie,—you have there the finest coat of honor in the world; hold it in honor, and be as worthy and honest in it as our dear father was."

She could say no more. She laid her head on her brother's shoulder, and tears fell upon the paternal coat which had once more been brought to light.

"You say that I am soft-hearted," said Damie, "and you are much worse yourself."

And Barefoot was indeed deeply and quickly moved by anything; but she was strong and light-hearted like a child. It was true of her, what Marianne had observed when she went to sleep for the first time in the old woman's house; she was waking and sleeping, laughing and weeping, almost all at the same time. Every occurrence and every emotion affected her very strongly, but she soon got over it and recovered her balance.

She continued to weep.

"You make one's heart so heavy," said Damie complainingly.

"It's hard enough to have to go away from one's home and live among strangers. You ought rather to cheer me up, than to be so—so—."

"Right thinking is the best cheer," replied Amrei. "It does not weigh upon the heart at all. But you are right—you have enough to bear; a single pound added to the load might crush you. I am foolish after all. But come—let us see now what the sun has to say, when father walks out in its light once more. No, I didn't mean to say that. Come, you yourself surely know where we must go, and what you must take leave of; for even if you are going only a couple of miles away, still you are going away from the village, and you must bid it good-by. It's hard enough for me that I am not to have you with me any longer—no, I mean that I am not to be with you any longer, for I don't want to rule over you, as people say I do. Yes, yes,—old Marianne was right; *alone* is a great word; one can't possibly learn all that it means. As long as you were living on the other side of the street, even if I did not see you for a week at a time, it did not matter; for I could have you at any moment, and that was as good as living together. But now—well, it's not out of the world, after all. But remember, don't try to lift too much, or hurt yourself in your work. And when any of your things are torn, send them to me—I'll mend them for you, and continue to knit for you. And now, come, let us go to the churchyard."

Damie objected to this plan, making the plea that he felt the parting heavy enough, and did not want to make it any heavier. His sister gave in. He took off his father's clothes again, and Barefoot packed them in the sack she had once worn as a cloak in the days when she kept the geese. This sack still bore her father's name upon it, and she charged Damie specially to send her back the sack at the first opportunity.

The brother and sister went out together. A cart belonging to Hirlingen was passing through the village; Damie hailed it, and quickly loaded his possessions on it. Then he walked with his sister, hand in hand, out of the village, and Barefoot sought to cheer him up by saying:

"Do you remember the riddle I asked you there by the oven?"

"No."

"Think: What is best about the oven?"

"No."

"Of the oven this is best, 'tis said,
That it never itself doth eat the bread."

"Yes, you can be cheerful—you're going to stay home."

"But it was your own wish to go away. And you can be cheerful, too, if you only try hard enough."

In silence she walked on with her brother to the Holderwasen. There, under the wild pear-tree, she said:

"Here we will say good-by. God bless you, and don't be afraid of anything!"

They shook hands warmly, and then Damie walked on toward Hirlingen, and Barefoot turned back toward the village. Not until she got to the foot of the hill, where Damie could not see her, did she venture to lift up her apron and wipe away the tears that were running down her cheeks.

[Amrei and Damie were separated for three years. During this time the girl made herself more and more liked and respected by everybody, not only on account of her pleasant ways and general helpfulness, but also on account of her self-sacrificing devotion to her unappreciative brother. While her going barefoot and having been a goose-girl caused her to be the victim of more or less raillery, still nobody meant it at all seriously unless it was Rose, Farmer Rodel's youngest daughter, who was jealous of Amrei's popularity. One day when Amrei was standing by her window, she heard the fire-bell ringing.]

"There's a fire at Scheckennarre's, at Hirlingen!" was the cry outside. The engine was brought out, and Barefoot climbed upon it and rode away with the firemen.

"My Damie! My Damie!" she kept repeating to herself in great alarm. But it was day-time, and in the day-time people could not be burned to death in a fire. And sure enough, when they arrived at Hirlingen, the house was already in ashes. Beside the road, in an orchard, stood Damie in the act of tying two piebalds,—fine, handsome horses,—to a tree; and oxen, bulls, and cows were all running about in confusion.

They stopped the engine to let Barefoot get off, and with a cry of "God be praised that nothing has happened to you!" she hurried toward her brother. Damie, however, made no reply, and stood with both hands resting on the neck of one of the horses.

"What is it? Why don't you speak? Have you hurt yourself?"

"I have not hurt myself, but the fire has hurt me."

"What's the matter?"

"All I have is lost—all my clothes and my little bit of money! I've nothing now but what's on my back."

"And are father's clothes burnt too?"

"Are they fireproof?" replied Damie, angrily. "Don't ask such stupid questions!"

Barefoot was ready to cry at this ungracious reception by her brother; but she quickly remembered, as if by intuition, that misfortune in its first shock often makes people harsh, unkind, and quarrelsome. So she merely said:

"Thank God that you have escaped with your life! Father's clothes—to be sure, in those there's something lost that cannot be replaced—but sooner or later they would have been worn out anyway."

"All your chattering will do no good," said Damie, still stroking the horse. "Here I stand like a miserable outcast. If the horses here could talk, they'd tell a different story. But I am born to misfortune—whatever I do that's good, is of no use. And yet—" He could say no more; his voice faltered.

"What has happened?"

"There are the horses, and the cows, and the oxen—not one of them was burned. Look, that horse over there tore my shirt when I was dragging him out of the stable. This nigh horse here did me no harm—he knows me. Eh, Humple, you know me, don't you? We know each other, don't we?" The horse laid his head across the neck of the other and stared at Damie, who went on:

"And when I joyfully went to tell the farmer that I had saved all his cattle, he said: 'You needn't have done it—they were all well insured, and I would have been paid good money for them.' 'Yes,' thinks I to myself, 'but to have let the poor beasts die, is that nothing? If a thing's paid for, is that all?' The farmer must have read in my face what I was thinking of, for he says to me: 'Of course, you saved your clothes and your property?' And then I says: 'No, not a stitch. I ran out to the stable directly.' And then he says: 'You're a noodle!' 'What?' says I, 'You're insured?—Well then, if the cattle would have been paid for, my clothes shall be paid for—and some of my dead father's clothes were among them, and fourteen guilders, and my watch, and my pipe.' And says he: 'Go smoke it! My property is insured, but not my servant's property.' And I says: 'We'll see about that—I'll take it to court!' Whereupon he says: 'Now you may go at once. Threatening a lawsuit is the same as giving notice. I would have given you a few guilders, but now you shan't have a farthing. And now, hurry up—away with you!' And so here I am. And I think I ought to take my nigh horse with me, for I saved his life, and he would be glad to go with me, wouldn't you? But I have never learned to steal, and I shouldn't know what to do now. The best thing for me to do is to jump into the water. For I shall never amount to anything as long as I live, and I have nothing now."

"But I still have something, and I will help you out."

"No, I won't do that any longer—always depending upon you. You have a hard enough time earning what you have."

Barefoot tried to comfort her brother, and succeeded so far that he consented to go home with her. But they had scarcely gone a hundred paces, when they heard something trotting along behind them. It was the horse; he had broken loose and had followed Damie, who was obliged to drive back the creature he was so fond of by flinging stones at it.

Damie was ashamed of his misfortune, and would hardly show his face to any one; for it is a peculiarity of weak natures that they feel their strength, not in their own self-respect, but always wish to show how much they can really do by some visible achievement. Misfortune they regard as evidence of their own weakness, and if they cannot hide it, they hide themselves.

Damie would go no farther than the first houses in the village. Black Marianne gave him a coat that had belonged to her slain husband; Damie felt a terrible repugnance at putting it on, and Amrei, who had before spoken of her father's coat as something sacred, now found just as many arguments to prove that there was nothing in a coat after all, and that it did not matter in the least who had once worn it.

Coaly Mathew, who lived not far from Black Marianne, took Damie as his assistant at tree-felling and charcoal-burning. This solitary life pleased Damie best; for he only wanted to wait until the time came when he could be a soldier, and then he would enter the army as a substitute and remain a soldier all his life. For in a soldier's life there is justice and order, and no one has brothers and sisters, and no one has his own house, and a man is provided with clothing and meat and drink; and if there should be a war, why a brave soldier's death is after all the best.

Such were the sentiments that Damie expressed one Sunday in Mossbrook Wood, when Barefoot came out to the charcoal-burner's to bring her brother yeast, and meal, and tobacco. She wanted to show him how—in addition to the general charcoal-burner's fare, which consists of bread baked with yeast—he might make the dumplings he prepared for himself taste better. But Damie would not listen to her; he said he preferred to have them just as they were—he rather liked to swallow bad food when he might have had better; and altogether, he derived a kind of satisfaction from self-neglect, until he should some day be decked out as a soldier.

Barefoot fought against this continual looking forward to a future time, and this loss of time in the present. She was always wanting to put some life into Damie, who rather enjoyed being indolent and pitying himself. Indeed, he seemed to find a sort of satisfaction in his downward course, for it gave him an opportunity to pity himself to his heart's content, and did not require him to make any physical exertion. With great difficulty Barefoot managed to prevail so far that he at least bought an ax of his own out of his earnings; and it was his father's ax, which Coaly Mathew had bought at the auction in the old days.

Barefoot often came back out of the Wood in profound despair, but this state of mind never lasted long. Her inward confidence in herself, and the natural cheerfulness that was in her, involuntarily burst forth from her lips in song; and anybody who did not know her, would never have thought that Barefoot either had a care then, or ever had had one in all her life.

The satisfaction arising from the feeling that she was sturdily and untiringly doing her duty, and acting as a Samaritan to Black Marianne and Damie, impressed an indelible cheerfulness on her countenance; in the whole house there was no one who could laugh so heartily as Barefoot. Old Farmer Rodel declared that her laughter sounded like the song of a quail, and because she was always serviceable and respectful to him, he gave her to understand that he would remember her in his will. Barefoot did not pay much attention to this or build much upon it; she looked only for the wages to which she had a true and honest claim; and what she did, she did from an inward feeling of benevolence, without expectation of reward.

CHAPTER VIII

"SACK AND AX"

Scheckennarre's house was duly rebuilt, and in handsomer style than before; and the winter came, and with it the drawing for recruits. Never had there been greater lamentation over a "lucky number" than arose when Damie drew one and was declared exempt. He was in complete despair, and Barefoot almost shared his grief; for she looked upon this soldiering as a capital method of setting Damie up, and of breaking him of his slovenly habits. Still she said to him:

"Take this as a sign that you are to depend upon yourself now, and to be a man; for you still behave like a little child that can't shift for itself and has to be fed."

"You're reproaching me now for feeding upon you."

"No, I didn't mean that. Don't be so touchy all the time—always standing there as if to say: 'Who's going to do anything for me, good or bad?' Strike about for yourself."

"That's just what I am going to do, and I shall strike with a good swing," said Damie.

For a long time he would not state what his real intention was; but he walked through the village with his head singularly erect and spoke freely to everybody; he worked diligently in the forest with the woodcutters, having his father's ax and with it almost the bodily strength of him who had swung it so sturdily in the days that were gone.

One evening in the early part of the spring, when Barefoot met him on his way back from Mossbrook Wood, he asked, taking the ax from his shoulder and holding it up before her:

"Where do you think this is going?"

"Into the forest," answered Barefoot. "But it won't go alone—there must be a chopper."

"You are right; but it's going to its brother—and one will chop on this side and another will chop on that side, and then the trees crash and roar like cannons, and still you will hear nothing of it—and yet *you* may, if you wish to, but no one else in this place."

"I don't understand one peck of all your bushel," answered Barefoot.

"Speak out—I'm too old to guess riddles now."

"Well, I'm going to uncle in America."

"Indeed? Going to start to-day?" said Barefoot, laughing. "Do you remember how Martin, the mason's boy, once called up to his mother through the window: 'Mother, throw me out a clean pocket-handkerchief—I'm going to America!' Those who were going to fly so quickly are all still here."

"You'll see how much longer I shall be here," said Damie; and without another word he went into Coaly Mathew's house.

Barefoot felt like laughing at Damie's ridiculous plan, but she could not; she felt that there was some meaning in it. And that very night, when everybody was in bed, she went to her brother and declared once for all that she would not go with him. She thought thus to conquer him; but Damie replied quickly:

"I'm not tied to you!" and became the more confirmed in his plan.

Then there suddenly welled up in the girl's mind once more all that flood of reflections that had come upon her once in her childhood; but this time she did not ask advice of the tree, as if it could have answered her. All her deliberations brought her to this one conclusion: "He's right in going, and I'm right, too, in staying here." She felt inwardly glad that Damie could make such a bold resolve—at any rate, it showed manly determination. And although she felt a deep sorrow at the thought of being henceforth alone in the wide world, she nevertheless thought it right that her brother should thrust forth his hand thus boldly and independently.

Still, she did not yet quite believe him. The next evening she waited for him and said:

"Don't tell anybody about your plan to emigrate, or you'll be laughed at if you don't carry it out."

"You're right," answered Damie; "but it's not for that. I'm not afraid to bind myself before other people; so surely as I have five fingers on this hand, so surely shall I go before the cherries are ripe here, if I have to beg, yes, even to steal, in order to get off. There's only one thing I'm sorry about—and that is that I must go away without playing Scheckennarre a trick that he'd remember to the end of his days."

"That's the true braggart's way! That's the real way to ruin!" cried Barefoot; "to go off and leave a feeling of revenge behind one! Look, over yonder lie our parents. Come with me—come with me to their graves and say that again there if you can. Do you know who it is that turns out to be a no-good?—the boy who lets himself be spoiled! Give up that ax! You are not worthy to have your hand where father had his hand, unless you tear that thought out of your mind, root and branch! Give up that ax! No man shall have that who talks of stealing and of murdering! Give up that ax, or I don't know what I may do!"

Then Damie, in a frightened tone, replied:

"It was only a thought. Believe me I never intended to do it—I can't do anything of that kind. But because they always call me "skittle-boy," I thought I ought for once to threaten and swear and strike as they do. But you are right; look, if you like, I'll go this very day to Scheckennarre and tell him that my heart doesn't cherish a single hard thought against him."

"You need not do that—that would be too much. But because you listen to reason, I will help you all I can."

"It would be best if you went with me."

"No, I can't do that—I don't know why, but I can't. But I have not sworn not to go—if you write to me that you are doing well at uncle's, then I'll come after you. But to go out into the fog, where one knows nothing—well, I'm not fond of making changes anyway, and after all I'm doing fairly well here. But now let us consider how you are to get away."

Damie's savings were very trifling, and Barefoot's were not enough to make up the deficiency. Damie declared that the parish ought to give him a handsome contribution; but his sister would not hear of it, saying that this ought to be the last resource, when everything else had failed. She did not explain what else she was going to try. Her first idea, naturally, was to make application to Dame Landfried at Zumarshofen; but she knew what a bad appearance a begging letter would make in the eyes of the rich farmer's wife, who perhaps would not have any ready money anyway. Then she thought of old Farmer Rodel, who had promised to remember her in his will; could he be induced to give her now what he intended to give her later on, even if it should be less? Then again, it occurred to her that perhaps Scheckennarre, who was now getting on especially well, might be induced to contribute something.

She said nothing to Damie about all this. But when she examined his wardrobe, and with great difficulty induced Black Marianne to let her have on credit some of the old woman's heaped-up stores of linen, and when she began to cut out this linen and sat up at night making shirts of it—all these steady and active preparations made Damie almost tremble. To be sure, he had acted all along as if his plan of emigrating were irrevocably fixed in his mind—and yet now he seemed almost bound to go, to be under compulsion, as if his sister's strong will were forcing him to carry out his design. And his sister seemed almost hard-hearted to him, as if she were thrusting him away to get rid of him. He did not, indeed, dare to say this openly, but he began to grumble and complain a good deal about it, and Barefoot looked upon this as suppressed grief over parting—the feeling that would gladly take advantage of little obstacles and represent them as hindrances to the fulfilment of a purpose one would gladly leave unfulfilled.

First of all she went to old Farmer Rodel, and in plain words asked him to let her have at once the legacy that he had promised her long ago.

The old man replied:

"Why do you press it so? Can't you wait? What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing's the matter with me, but I can't wait."

Then she told him that she was fitting out her brother who was going to emigrate to America. This was a good chance for old Rodel; he could now give his natural hardness the appearance of benevolence and prudent forethought. Accordingly he declared to Barefoot that he would not give her one farthing now, for he did not want to be responsible for her ruining herself for that brother of hers.

Barefoot then begged him to be her advocate with Scheckennarre. At last he was induced to consent to this; and he took great credit to himself for thus consenting to go begging to a man he did not know on behalf of a stranger. He kept postponing the fulfilment of his promise from day to day, but Barefoot did not cease from reminding him of it; and so, at last, he set forth.

But, as might have been anticipated, he came back empty-handed; for the first thing Scheckennarre did was to ask how much Farmer Rodel himself was going to give, and when he heard that Rodel, for the present, was not going to give anything, his course, too, was clear and he followed it.

When Barefoot told Black Marianne how hurt she felt at this hard-heartedness, the old woman said:

"Yes, that's just how people are! If a man were to jump into the water tomorrow and be taken out dead, they would all say: 'If he had only told me what was amiss with him, I should have been very glad to help him in every way and to have given him something. What would I not give now, if I could restore him to life!' But to keep a man alive, they won't stir a finger."

Strangely enough, the very fact that the whole weight of things always fell upon Barefoot made her bear it all more easily. "Yes, one must always depend upon oneself alone," was her secret motto; and instead of letting obstacles discourage her, she only strove harder to surmount them. She scraped together and turned into money whatever of her possessions she could lay hands on; even the valuable necklace she had received in the old days from Farmer Landfried's wife went its way to the widow of the old sexton, a worthy woman who supported herself in her widowhood by lending money at high interest on security; the ducat, too, which she had once thrown after Severin in the churchyard, was brought into requisition. And, marvelous to relate, old Farmer Rodel offered to obtain a considerable contribution from the Village Council, of which he was a member; he was fond of doing virtuous and benevolent things with the public money!

Still it almost frightened Barefoot when he announced to her, after a few days, that everything had been granted—but upon the one condition, that Damie should entirely give up his right to live in the village. Of course, that had been understood from the first—no one had expected anything else; but still, now that it was an express condition, it seemed like a very formidable matter to have no home anywhere. Barefoot said nothing about this thought to Damie, who seemed cheerful and of good courage. Black Marianne, especially, continued to urge him strongly to go; for she would have been glad to send the whole village away to foreign parts, if only she could at last get tidings of her John. And now she had firmly taken up the notion that he had sailed across the seas. Crappy Zachy had indeed told her, that the reason she could not cry any more was because the ocean, the great salty deep, absorbed the tears which one might be disposed to shed for one who was on the other shore.

Barefoot received permission from her employers to accompany her brother when he went to town to conclude the arrangement for his passage with the agent. Greatly were both of them astonished when they learned, on arriving at the office, that this had already been done. The Village Council had already taken the necessary steps, and Damie was to have his rights and corresponding obligations as one of the village poor. On board the ship, before it sailed out into the wide ocean, he would have to sign a paper, attesting his embarkation, and not until then would the money be paid.

The brother and sister returned sorrowfully to the village. Damie had been seized with a fit of his old despondency, because a thing had now to be carried out which he himself had wished. And Barefoot herself felt deeply grieved at the thought that her brother was, in a way, to be expelled from his native land. At the boundary-line Damie said aloud to the sign-post, on which the name of the village and of the district were painted:

"You there! I don't belong to you any longer, and all the people who live here are no more to me than you are."

Barefoot started to cry; but she resolved within herself that this should be the last time until her brother's departure, and until he was fairly gone. And she kept her word to herself.

The people in the village said that Barefoot had no heart, because her eyes were not wet when her brother went away. People like to see tears actually shed—for what do they care about those that are shed in secret? But Barefoot was calm and brave.

Only during the last days before Damie set out did she for the first time fail in her duty; for she neglected her work by being with Damie all the time. She let Rose upbraid her for it, and merely said: "You are right." But still she ran after her brother everywhere—she did not want to lose a minute of his company as long as he was there. She very likely felt that she might be able to do something special for him at any moment, or say something special that would be of use to him all his life; and she was vexed with herself for finding nothing but quite ordinary things to say, and for even quarreling with him sometimes.

Oh, these hours of parting! How they oppress the heart! How all the past and all the future seem crowded together into one moment, and one knows not how to set about anything rightly, and only a look or a touch must tell all that is felt!

Still Amrei found good words to speak. When she counted out her brother's stock of linen she said:

"These are good, respectable shirts—keep yourself respectable and good in them."

And when she packed everything into the big sack, on which her father's name was still to be seen, she said:

"Bring this back full of glittering gold; then you shall see how glad they will be to give you back the right to live here. And Farmer Rodel's Rose, if she's still unmarried, will jump over seven houses to get you."

And when she laid their father's ax in the large chest, she said:

"How smooth the handle is! How often it has slipped through our father's hand. I fancy I can still feel his touch upon it! So now I have a motto for you—'Sack and Ax.' Working and gathering in, those are the best things in life—they make one keep cheerful and well and happy. God keep you! And say to yourself very often—'Sack and Ax.' I shall do the same, and that shall be our motto, our remembrance, our call to each other when we are far, far apart, and until you write to me, or come to fetch me, or do what you can, as God shall will it. 'Sack and Ax'—yes it's all included in that; so one can treasure up everything—all thoughts and all that one has earned!"

And when Damie was sitting up in the wagon, and for the last time gave her his hand, for a long time she would not release it. And when at last he drove away, she called out after him with a loud voice:

"'Sack and Ax'—don't forget that!"

He looked back, waved his hand to her, and then—he was gone.

CHAPTER IX

AN UNINVITED GUEST

"Glory to America!" the village watchman, to the amusement of all, cried several nights when he called out the hours, in place of the usual thanksgiving to God. Crappy Zachy, being a man of no consideration himself, was fond of speaking evil of the poor when he found himself among what he called "respectable people," and on Sunday when he came out of church, or on an afternoon when he sat on the long bench outside the "Heathcock," he would say:

"Columbus was a real benefactor. From what did he not deliver us? Yes, America is the pig-trough of the Old World, and into it everything that can't be used in the kitchen is dumped—cabbage and turnips and all sorts of things. And for the piggies who live in the castle behind the house, and understand French—'Oui! Oui!'—there's very good feeding there."

In the general dearth of interesting subjects, Damie and his emigrating naturally formed the main topic of conversation for a considerable time, and the members of the Council praised their own wisdom in having rid the place of a person who would certainly have come to be a burden on the community. For a man who goes driving about from one trade to another is sure to drive himself into ruin eventually.

Of course, there were plenty of good-natured people who reported to Barefoot all that was said of her brother, and told her how he was made a laughing-stock. But Barefoot merely smiled. When Damie's first letter came from Bremen—nobody had ever thought that he could write so properly—then she exulted before the eyes of men, and read the letter aloud several times; but in secret she was sorry to have lost such a brother, probably forever. She reproached herself for not having put him forward enough, for it was now evident what a sharp lad Damie was, and so good too! He wanted to take leave of the whole village as he had taken leave of the post at the boundary-line, and he now filled almost a whole page with remembrances to different people, calling each one "the dear" or "the good" or "the worthy." Barefoot reaped a great deal of praise everywhere she delivered these greetings, and each time pointed to the precise place, and said:

"See—there it stands!"

For a time Barefoot was silent and abstracted; she seemed to repent of having let her brother go, or of having refused to go with him. Formerly she had always been heard singing in the stable and barn, in the kitchen and chamber, and when she went out with the scythe over her shoulder and the grass-cloth under her arm; but now she was silent. She seemed to be making an effort to restrain herself. Still there was one time when she allowed people to hear her voice again; in the evening, when she put Farmer Rodel's children to bed, she sang incessantly, even long after the children were asleep. Then she would hurry over to Black Marianne's and supply her with wood and water and whatever else the old woman wanted.

On Sunday afternoons, when everybody was out for a good time, Barefoot often used to stand quiet and motionless at the door of her house, looking out into the world and at the sky in dreamy, far-off meditation, wondering where Damie was now and how he was getting on. And then she would stand and gaze for a long time at an overturned plow, or watch a fowl clawing in the sand. When a vehicle passed through the village, she would look up and say, almost aloud:

"They are driving to somebody. On all the roads of the world there is nobody coming to me, and no one thinking of me. And do I not belong here too?"

And then she would make believe to herself that she was expecting something, and her heart would beat faster, as if for somebody who was coming. And involuntarily the old song rose to her lips:

All the brooklets in the wide world,
They run their way to the Sea;

But there's no one in this wide world,
Who can open my heart for me.

"I wish I were as old as you," she once said to Black Marianne, after dreaming in this way.

"Be glad that a wish is but a word," replied the old woman. "When I was your age I was merry; and down there at the plaster-mill I weighed a hundred and thirty-two pounds."

"But you are the same at one time as at another, while I am not at all—even."

"If one wants to be 'even' one had better cut one's nose off, and then one's face will be even all over. You little simpleton! Don't fret your young years away, for nobody will give them back to you; and the old ones will come of their own accord."

Black Marianne did not find it very difficult to comfort Barefoot; only when she was alone, did a strange anxiety come over her. What did it mean?

A wonderful rumor was now pervading the village; for many days there had been talk of a wedding that was to be celebrated at Endringen, with such festivities as had not been seen in the country within the memory of man. The eldest daughter of Dominic and Ameile—whom we know, from Lehnhold—was to marry a rich wood-merchant from the Murg Valley, and it was said that there would be such merry-making as had never yet been seen.

The day drew nearer and nearer. Wherever two girls meet, they draw each other behind a hedge or into the hallway of a house, and there's no end to their talking, though they declare emphatically that they are in a particular hurry. It is said that everybody from the Oberland is coming, and everybody from the Murg Valley for a distance of sixty miles! For it is a large family. At the Town-hall pump, there the true gossiping goes on; but not a single girl will own to having a new dress, lest she should lose the pleasure of seeing the surprise and admiration of her companions, when the day arrived. In the excitement of asking and answering questions, the duty of water-carrying is forgotten, and Barefoot, who arrives last, is the first to leave with her bucketful of water. What is the dance to her? And yet she feels as if she hears music everywhere.

The next day Barefoot had much running back and forth to do in the house; for she was to dress Rose for the great occasion. She received many an unseen knock while she was plaiting her hair, but bore them in silence. Rose had a fine head of hair, and she was determined it should make a fine show. Today she wished to try something new with it; she wanted to have a Maria-Theresa braid, as a certain artistic arrangement of fourteen braids is called in those parts. That would create a sensation as something new. Barefoot succeeded in accomplishing the difficult task, but she had scarcely finished when Rose tore it all down in anger; and with her hair hanging down over her brow and face, she looked wild enough.

But for all that she was handsome and stately, and very plump; her whole demeanor seemed to say: "There must be not less than four horses in the house into which I marry." And many farmers' sons were, indeed, courting her, but she did not seem to care to make up her mind in favor of any one of them. She now decided to keep to the country fashion of having two braids, interwoven with red ribbons, hanging down her back and reaching almost to the ground. At last she stood adorned and ready.

But now she had to have a nosegay. She had allowed her own flowers to run wild; and in spite of all objections, Barefoot was ultimately obliged to yield to her importunities and rob her own cherished plants on her window-sill of almost all their blossoms. Rose also demanded the little rosemary plant; but Barefoot would rather have torn that in pieces than give it up. Rose began to jeer and laugh, and then to scold and mock the stupid goose-girl, who gave herself such obstinate airs, and who had been taken into the house only out of charity. Barefoot did not reply; but she turned a glance at Rose which made the girl cast down her eyes.

And now a red, woolen rose had come loose on Rose's left shoe, and Barefoot had just knelt down to sew it on carefully, when Rose said, half ashamed of her own behavior, and yet half jeeringly:

"Barefoot, I will have it so—you must come to the dance today."

"Do not mock so. What do you want of me?"

"I am not mocking," persisted Rose, still in a somewhat jeering tone. "You, too, ought to dance once, for you are a young girl, and there will be some of your equals at the wedding—our stable-boy is going, or perhaps some farmer's son will dance with you. I'll send you some one who is without a partner."

"Let me be in peace—or I shall prick you."

"My sister-in-law is right," said the young farmer's wife, who, until now, had sat silent. "I'll never give you a good word again if you don't go to the dance today. Come—sit down, and I will get you ready."

Barefoot felt herself flushing crimson as she sat there while her mistress dressed her and brushed her hair away from her face and turned it all back; and she almost sank from her chair, when the farmer's wife said:

"I am going to arrange your hair as the Allgau girls wear it. That will suit you very well, for you look like an Allgau girl yourself—sturdy, and brown, and round. You look like Dame Landfried's daughter at Zusmarshofen."

"Why like her daughter? What made you think of her?" asked Barefoot, and she trembled all over.

How was it that she was just now reminded again of Dame Landfried, who had been in her mind from childhood, and who had once appeared to her like the benevolent spirit in a fairy-tale? But Barefoot had no ring that she could turn and cause her to appear; but mentally she could conjure her up, and that she often did, almost involuntarily.

"Hold still, or I'll pull your hair," said the farmer's wife; and Barefoot sat motionless, scarcely daring to breathe. And while her hair was being parted in the middle, and she sat with her arms folded and allowed her mistress to do what she liked with her, and while her mistress, who was expecting a baby very soon, bustled about her, she really felt as if she had suddenly been bewitched; she did not say a word for fear of breaking the charm, but sat with her eyes cast down in modest submission.

"I wish I could dress you thus for your own wedding," said the farmer's wife, who seemed to be overflowing with kindness today. "I should like to see you mistress of a respectable farm, and you would not be a bad bargain for any man; but nowadays such things don't happen, for money runs after money. Well, do you be contented—so long as I live you shall not want for anything; and if I die—and I don't know, but I seem to fear the heavy hour so much this time—look, you will not forsake my children, but will be a mother to them, will you not?"

"Oh, good heavens! How can you think of such a thing?" cried Barefoot, and the tears ran down her cheeks. "That is a sin; for one may commit a sin by letting thoughts enter one's mind that are not right."

"Yes, yes, you may be right," said the farmer's wife. "But wait—sit still a moment; I will bring you my necklace and put it around your neck."

"No, pray don't do that! I can wear nothing that is not my own; I should sink to the ground for shame of myself."

"Yes, but you can't go as you are. Or have you, perhaps, something of your own?"

Hereupon Barefoot said that she, to be sure, had a necklace which had been presented to her as a child by Dame Landfried, but that on account of Damie's emigration it was in pledge with the sexton's widow.

Barefoot was then told to sit still and to promise not to look at herself in the glass until the farmer's wife returned; and the latter hurried away to get the ornament, herself being surety for the money lent upon it.

What a thrill now went through Barefoot's soul as she sat there! She who had always waited upon others was now being waited upon herself!—and indeed almost as if under a spell. She was

almost afraid of the dance; for she was now being treated so well, so kindly, and perhaps at the dance she might be pushed about and ignored, and all her outward adornment and inward happiness would go for nothing.

"But no," she said to herself. "If I get nothing more out of it than the thought that I have been happy, that will be enough; if I had to undress right now and to stay at home, I should still be happy."

The farmer's wife now returned with the necklace, and was as full of censure for the sexton's wife for having demanded such usurious interest from a poor girl, as she was full of praise for the ornament itself. She promised to pay the loan that very day and to deduct it gradually from Barefoot's wages.

Now at last Barefoot was allowed to look at herself. The mistress herself held the glass before her, and both of their faces glowed and gleamed with mutual joy.

"I don't know myself! I don't know myself!" Barefoot kept repeating, feeling her face with both hands. "Good heavens, if my mother could only see me now! But she will certainly bless you from heaven for being so good to me, and she will stand by you in the heavy hour—you need fear nothing."

"But now you must make another kind of face," said her mistress, "not such a pitiful one. But that will come when you hear the music."

"I fancy I hear it already," replied Barefoot. "Yes, listen, there it is!"

And, in truth, a large wagon decorated with green boughs was just driving through the village. Seated in the wagon were all the musicians; in the midst of them stood Crappy Zachy blowing his trumpet as if he were trying to wake the dead.

And now there was no more staying in the village; every one was hastening to be up and away. Light, Bernese carriages, with one and two horses, some from the village itself and some from the neighboring villages, were chasing each other as if they were racing. Rose mounted to her brother's side on the front seat of their chaise, and Barefoot climbed up into the basket-seat behind. So long as they were passing through the village, she kept her eyes looking down—she felt so ashamed. Only when she passed the house that had been her parents' did she venture to look up; Black Marianne waved her hand from the window, the red cock crowed on the wood-pile, and the old tree seemed to nod and wish her good luck.

Now they drove through the valley where Manz was breaking stones, and now over the Holderwasen where an old woman was keeping the geese. Barefoot gave her a friendly nod.

"Good heavens!" she thought. "How does it happen that I sit here so proudly driving along in festive attire? It is a good hour's ride to Endringen, and yet it seems as if we had only just started."

The word was now given to alight, and Rose was immediately surrounded by all kinds of friends. Several of them asked:

"Is that not a sister of your brother's wife?"

"No, she's only our maid," answered Rose.

Several beggars from Haldenbrunn who were here, looked at Barefoot in astonishment, evidently not recognizing her; and not until they had stared at her for a long time did they cry out: "Why, it's Little Barefoot!"

"She is only our maid." That little word "only" smote painfully on the girl's heart. But she recovered herself quickly and smiled; for a voice within her said:

"Don't let your pleasure be spoiled by a single word. If you begin anything new, you are sure to step on thorns at first."

Rose took Barefoot aside and said: "You may go for the present to the dancing-room, or wherever you like, if you have any acquaintances in the place. When the music begins I shall want to see you again."

And so Barefoot stood forsaken, as it were, and feeling as if she had stolen the clothes she had on, and did not belong to the company at all, as if she were an intruder.

"How comes it that thou goest to such a wedding?" she asked herself; and she would have liked to go home again. She decided to take a walk through the village. She passed by the beautiful house built for Brosi, where there was plenty of life today, too; for the wife of that high official was spending the summer here with her sons and daughters. Barefoot turned back toward the village again, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and yet wishing that somebody would accost her that she might have a companion. On the outskirts of the village she encountered a smart-looking young man riding a white horse. He was attired in farmer's dress, but of a strange kind, and looked very proud. He pulled up his horse, rested his right hand with the whip in it on his hip, and patting the animal's neck with his left, called out:

"Good morning, pretty mistress! Tired of dancing already?"

"I'm tired of idle questions already," was the reply.

The horseman rode on. Barefoot sat for a long time behind a hedge, while many thoughts flitted through her mind. Her cheeks glowed with a flush caused by anger at herself for having made so sharp a reply to a harmless question, by bashfulness, and by a strange, inward emotion. And involuntarily she began to hum the old song:

"There were two lovers in Allgau
Who loved each other so dear."

She had begun the day in expectation of joy, and now she wished that she were dead. She thought to herself: "How good it would be to fall asleep here behind this hedge and never to awake again. You are not to have any joy in this life, why should you run about so long? The grasshoppers are chirping in the grass, a warm fragrance is rising from the earth, a linnet is singing incessantly and seems to dive into himself with his voice and to bring up finer and finer notes, and yet seems to be unable to say with his whole heart what he has to say. Up in the air the larks, too, are singing, every one for himself—no one listens to the others or joins in with the others—and yet everything is—"

Never in her life had Amrei fallen asleep in broad daylight, or if ever, not in the morning. She had now drawn her handkerchief over her eyes, and the sunbeams were kissing her closed lips, which, even in sleep, were pressed together defiantly, and the redness of her chin had become deeper. She had slept about an hour, when she awoke with a start. The smart-looking young man on the white horse was riding toward her, and the horse had just lifted up his fore feet to bring them down on her chest. It was only a dream, and Amrei gazed around her as if she had fallen from the sky. She saw with astonishment where she was, and looked at herself in wonder. But the sound of music from the village soon aroused the spirit of life within her, and with new strength she walked back and found that everything had become more lively. She noticed that she felt more rested after the many things that she had experienced that day. And now let only the dancing begin! She would dance until the next morning, and never rest, and never get tired!

The fresh glow following the sleep of childhood was on her face, and everybody looked at her in astonishment. She went to the dancing-room; the music was playing, but in an empty room—for no dancers had come yet. Only the girls who had been hired to wait upon the guests were dancing with one another. Crappy Zachy looked at Barefoot for a longtime, and then shook his head; evidently he did not know her. Amrei crept along close to the wall, and so out of the room again. She ran across Farmer Dominic, whose face was radiant with joy today.

"Beg pardon," said he; "does the mistress belong to the wedding guests?"

"No, I am only a maid. I came with Farmer Rodel's daughter, Rose."

"Good! Then go out to the kitchen and tell the mistress that I sent you, and that you are to help her. We can't have hands enough in my house today."

"Because it's you I'll gladly go," said Amrei, and she set out at once. On the way she thought how Dominic himself had once been a servant, and—"Yes, such things happen only once in a century. It cost him many a pang before he came to the farm—and that's a pity."

Ameile, Dominic's wife, gave a friendly welcome to the new comer, who offered her services and at the same time took off her jacket, asking if she might borrow a large apron with a bib on it. But the farmer's wife insisted that Amrei should satisfy her own hunger and thirst before she set about serving others. Amrei consented without much ceremony, and won Ameile's heart by the first words she spoke; for she said:

"I will fall to at once, for I must confess that I am hungry, and I don't want to put you to the trouble of having to urge me."

Amrei now remained in the kitchen and handed the dishes to the waitresses in such a knowing way, and managed and arranged everything so well, that the mistress said:

"You two Amreis, you and my brother's daughter, can manage all this, and I will stay with the guests."

Amrei of Siebenhofen, who was nicknamed the "Butter Countess," and who was known far and wide as proud and stubborn, was very friendly with Barefoot. Once, indeed, the mistress said to the latter:

"It's a pity that you are not a boy; I believe that Amrei would marry you on the spot, and not send you home, as she does all of her suitors."

"I have a brother who's still single—but he's in America," replied Barefoot, laughing.

"Let him stay there," said the Butter Countess; "it would be better if we could send all the men folk away and be here by ourselves."

Amrei did not leave the kitchen until everything had been put back in its proper place; and when she took off her apron it was still as white and unruffled as when she had put it on.

"You'll be tired and not able to dance," said the farmer's wife, when Amrei, with a present, finally took her leave.

"Why should I be tired? This was only play; and, believe me, I feel much better for having done something today. A whole day devoted to pleasure! I shouldn't know how to spend it, and I've no doubt that was why I felt so sad this morning—I felt that something was missing. But now I feel quite ready for a holiday—quite out of harness. Now I feel just like dancing, if I could only find partners."

Ameile did not know how to show greater honor to Barefoot than by leading her about the house, as if she were a wealthy farmer's wife, and showing her the large chest full of wedding presents in the bridal room. She opened the tall, blue cabinets, which had the name and the date painted upon them, and which were crammed full of linen and all sorts of things, all tied up with ribbons of various colors and decorated with artificial flowers. In the wardrobe there were at least thirty dresses, and nearby were the high beds, the cradle, the distaff with its beautiful spindles, and everywhere children's clothes were hanging, presents from the bride's former playmates.

"Oh, kind Heaven!" cried Barefoot; "how happy a child of such a house must be!"

"Are you envious?" said the farmer's wife; and then remembering that she was showing all these things to a poor girl, she added: "But believe me, fine clothes are not all; there are many happier who do not get as much as a stocking from their parents."

"Yes, yes, I know that. I am not envious of the beautiful things, but rather of the privilege that it gives your child to thank you and so many good people for the lovely things she has received from them. Such clothes from one's mother must keep one doubly warm."

The farmer's wife showed her fondness of Barefoot by accompanying the girl as far as the yard, as she would have done to a visitor who had eight horses in the stable.

There was already a great crowd of people assembled when Amrei arrived at the dancing-floor. At first she stood timidly on the threshold. In the empty courtyard, across which somebody hurried

every now and then, a solitary gendarme was pacing up and down. When he saw Amrei coming along with a radiant face, he approached her and said:

"Good morning, Amrei! Art thou here too?"

Amrei started and turned quite pale. Had she done anything punishable? Had she gone into the stable with a naked light? She thought of her past life and could remember nothing; and yet he had addressed her as familiarly as if he had already arrested her once. With these thoughts flitting through her mind, she stood there trembling as if she were a criminal, and at last answered:

"Thank you. But I don't know why we should call each other 'thou.' Do you want anything of me?"

"Oh, how proud you are. You can answer me properly. I am not going to eat you up. Why are you so angry? Eh?"

"I am not angry, and I don't want to harm any one. I am only a foolish girl."

"Don't pretend to be so submissive—"

"How do you know what I am?"

"Because you flourish about so with that light."

"What? Where? Where have I flourished about with a light? I always take a lantern when I go out to the stable, but—"

The gendarme laughed and said: "I mean your brown eyes—that's where the light is. Your eyes are like two balls of fire."

"Then get out of my way, lest you get burnt. You might get blown up with all that powder in your cartridge-box."

"There's nothing in it," said the gendarme, embarrassed, but wishing to make some kind of retort. "But you have scorched me already."

"I don't see where—you seem to be all right. But enough! Let me go."

"I'm not keeping you, you little crib-biter. You could lead a man a hard life, who was fond of you."

"Nobody need be fond of me," said Amrei; and she rushed away as if she had got loose from a chain.

She stood in the doorway where many spectators were crowded together. A new dance was just beginning, and she swayed back and forth with the music. The feeling that she had got the better of some one made her more cheerful than ever, and she would have taken up arms against the whole world, as well as against a single gendarme. But her tormentor soon appeared again; he posted himself behind Amrei and said all kinds of things to her. She made no answer and pretended not to hear him, every now and then nodding to the people as they danced by, as if she had been greeted by them. Only when the gendarme said:

"If I were allowed to marry, I'd take you."

She replied:

"Take me, indeed! But I shouldn't give myself!"

The gendarme was glad to have at least got an answer from her, and continued:

"And if I were allowed to dance, I would have one with you right now."

"I cannot dance," replied Amrei.

Just then the music ceased. Amrei pushed against the people in front of her, and made her way in to seek some retired corner. She heard some one behind her say:

"Why, she can dance better than anybody in this part of the country!"

CHAPTER X

ONLY A SINGLE DANCE

Down from the musicians' platform Crappy Zachy handed a glass to Amrei.

She took a sip, and handed it back; and Crappy Zachy said:

"If you dance, Amrei, I'll play all my instruments so that the angels will come down from the sky and join in."

"Yes, but unless an angel comes down from the sky and asks me, I shall not get a partner," said Amrei, half in fun and half in sorrow. And then she began to wonder why there had to be a gendarme at a dance; but she did not hold to this thought long, but immediately went on to say to herself: "After all, he is a man like anybody else, even though he has a sword on; and before he became a gendarme, he was a lad like the rest. It must be a plague for him that he can't dance. But what's that to me? I, too, am obliged to be a mere spectator, and I don't get any money for it."

For a short time things went on in a much more quiet and moderate manner in the dancing-room. For the "English woman," as Agy, the wife of Severin, the building contractor, was still called, had come to the dance with her children. The rich wood-merchants set the champagne corks to popping and offered a glass to the English woman; she drank the health of the young couple and then made each one happy by a gracious word. A constant and complacent smile was lighting up the face of everybody. Agy honored many a young fellow who drank to her from the garlanded glasses, by sipping from hers in return. The old women, who sat near Barefoot, were loud in their praises of the English woman, and stood up a long time before she came when they saw her approaching to speak a few words to them. When Agy had gone away, the rejoicing, singing, dancing, stamping, and shouting broke out again with renewed vigor.

Farmer Rodel's foreman now came toward Amrei, and she felt a thrill of expectation. But the foreman said:

"Here, Barefoot, take care of my pipe for me while I am dancing." And after that several young girls from her village also came; from one she received a jacket, from another a cap, or a neckerchief, or a door-key. She let them hand it all over to her, and stood there with an ever-increasing load as one dance followed another. All the time she smiled quietly to herself, but nobody came to ask her to dance. Now a waltz was being played, so smoothly that one could have swum to it. And then a wild and furious galop; hurrah! now they are all hopping and stamping and jumping and panting in supreme delight. And how their eyes glitter! The old women who are sitting in the corner where Amrei is standing, complain of the dust and heat; but still, they don't go home. Then—suddenly Amrei starts; her eyes are fixed upon a handsome young man who is walking proudly to and fro among the crowd. It is the rider who had met her that morning, and whom she had snubbed in such a pert way. All eyes are fastened upon him as he comes forward, his right hand behind him, and his left holding a silver-mounted pipe. His silver watch-chain bobs up and down, and how beautiful is his black velvet jacket, and his loose black velvet trousers, and his red waistcoat! But more beautiful still is his round head with its curly, brown hair. His brow is white as snow; but from the eyes down his face is sunburnt, and a light, full beard covers his chin and cheeks.

"That's a bonny fellow," said one of the old women.

"And what heavenly blue eyes he has!" added another; "they are at once so roguish and so kind."

"Where can he be from? He's not from this neighborhood," said a third.

And a fourth observed:

"I'll wager he's another suitor for Amrei."

Barefoot started. What did this mean? What was that she said? But she soon found out the meaning of it, for the first old lady resumed:

"Then I'm sorry for him; for the Butter Countess makes fools of all the men."

And so the Butter Countess's name was also Amrei.

The young stranger had passed through the room several times, turning his eyes from one side to the other. Then he suddenly stopped not far from Barefoot and beckoned to her. A hot flush overspread her face; she stood riveted to the spot and did not move a muscle. No, he certainly beckoned to somebody behind you; he cannot mean you. The stranger pressed forward and Amrei made way for him. He must be looking for some one else.

"No, it's you I want," said the lad, taking Barefoot's hand. "Will you dance?"

Amrei could not speak. But what need was there to speak? She threw everything she had in her arms down into a corner—jackets, neckerchiefs, caps, pipes, and door-keys—and stood there ready. The lad threw a dollar up to the musicians; and when Crappy Zachy saw Amrei on the arm of the stranger, he blew his trumpet until the very walls trembled. And to the blessed souls above no music can sound more beautiful than did this to Amrei. She danced she knew not how; she felt as if she were being carried in the stranger's arms, as if she were floating in the air, and there seemed to be no one else there. And, indeed, they both danced so well, that everybody involuntarily stopped to look at them.

"We are alone," said Amrei during the dance; and then she felt the warm breath of her partner as he answered:

"Oh that we were alone—alone in the world! Why cannot one go on dancing thus—on and on to the end of time."

"I feel," said Amrei, "just as if we were two doves flying through the air. Juhu! away into the heavens!" And "Juhu!" cried the lad gleefully, "Juhu!" And the sound shot up heavenward like a fiery rocket. "Juhu!" cried Amrei, rejoicing with him. And on they danced with ever-increasing joy. Finally Amrei said:

"Tell me—is the music going on? Are the musicians still playing? I don't hear them any more."

"Of course they are still playing. Don't you hear them?"

"Yes, now I do," said Amrei. And now they stopped, for her partner probably felt that she was becoming giddy with happiness.

The stranger led Amrei to the table, and gave her wine to drink, and did not let go her hand. He lifted the Swedish ducat that hung from her necklace, and said:

"This ducat is in a good place."

"And it came from a good hand," answered Amrei. "That necklace was given to me when I was a little child."

"By a relative?"

"No, the lady was no relative."

"Dancing agrees with you apparently."

"Oh, indeed it does! You see, I'm obliged to jump around so much all the year around when nobody is playing for me—and therefore I enjoy it doubly now."

"You look as round as a ball," said the stranger in jest. "You must live where the food is good."

Amrei replied quickly:

"It's not the food itself that does it, but the way one enjoys it."

The stranger nodded; and after a pause, he spoke again, half questioningly:

"You are the daughter of Farmer—"

"No, I am a maid," replied Amrei, looking him full in the face. The stranger's eyes almost fell; the lids quivered, but he held them open by force. And this struggle and victory of the bodily eye seemed to be a symbol of what was going on within him. He felt almost inclined to leave the girl sitting there; but he resisted and conquered the impulse, and said:

"Come, let us have another dance."

He held her hand fast, and the pleasure and excitement began again; but this time it was more quiet and moderate. Both of them seemed to feel that the sensation of being lifted to the sky was over and past; and this thought was evidently in Amrei's mind when she said:

"Well, we have been very happy together once, even if we don't see each other again in all our lives, and even though neither of us knows the other's name."

The youth nodded and said:

"You are right."

Amrei held the end of her braid between her lips in embarrassment, and after a pause spoke again:

"The enjoyment one has once had cannot be taken from one; and whoever you are, you need never repent of having given a poor girl a pleasure she will remember all her life."

"I don't repent of it," replied her partner. "But I know that you repent of having answered me so sharply this morning."

"Oh, yes, you are right there!" cried Amrei; and then the stranger said:

"Would you venture to go out into the field with me?"

"Yes."

"And do you trust me?"

"Yes."

"But what will your people say?"

"I have nobody but myself to give account of my actions to; I am an orphan."

Hand in hand the two went out of the dancing-room. Barefoot heard several people whispering and tittering behind her, but she kept her eyes fixed on the ground. She wondered if she had not ventured too far after all.

In the fields, where the first ears of wheat were beginning to sprout and still lay half concealed in their green sheaths, the two stopped and stood looking at each other in silence. For a long time neither said a word. But finally it was the man who broke the silence, by saying, half to himself:

"I wonder how it is that one, on first sight, can be so—so—I don't know—so confidential with a person? How is it one can read what is written in another's face?" "Now we have set a poor soul free," said Amrei; "for you know, when two people think the same thought at the same time, they are said to set a soul free. And I was thinking the very words you just spoke."

"Indeed? And do you know why?"

"Yes."

"Will you tell me?"

"Why not? Look you; I have been a goose-keeper—"

At these words the stranger started again; but he pretended that something had fallen into his eye, and began to rub that organ vigorously, while Barefoot went on, undismayed:

"Look you; when one sits or lies alone out in the fields all day, one thinks of hundreds of things, and some of them are strange thoughts indeed. Just try it yourself, and you will certainly find it so. Every fruit-tree, if you look at it as a whole, has the appearance of the fruit it bears. Take the apple-tree; does it not look, spread out broad, and, as it were, in round pieces, like the apple itself? And the same is true of the pear-tree and the cherry-tree, if only you look at them in the right way. Look what a long trunk the cherry-tree has—like the stem of a cherry. And so I think—"

"Well, what do you think?"

"You'll laugh at me; but just as the fruit-trees look like the fruits they bear, so is it also with people; one can tell what they are at once by looking at them. But the trees, to be sure, always have honest faces, while people can dissemble theirs. But I am talking nonsense, am I not?"

"No, you have not kept geese for nothing," said the lad; and there was a strange mixture of feelings in the tone of his voice. "I like to talk with you. I should give you a kiss, if I were not afraid of doing what is wrong."

Barefoot trembled all over. She stooped to break off a flower, but did not break it. There was a long pause, and then the lad went on: "We shall most likely never meet again, and so it is best as it is."

Hand in hand the two went back to the dancing-room. There they danced once more together without saying a word to each other, and when the dance was over, the young man again led her to the table, and said:

"Now I shall say good-by. But first you must get your breath, and then drink once more."

He handed her the glass, and when she set it down again, he said:

"You must drain it, for my sake, to the very bottom."

Amrei drank and drank; and when the glass was empty in her hand, she looked around—the stranger was gone! She went down and stood in front of the house; and there she saw him again, not far away, riding off on his white horse; but he did not look back.

The mist hung over the valley like a veil of clouds, and the sun had already set. Barefoot said to herself, almost aloud:

"I wish tomorrow would never come, but that it would always be today—always today!" And then she stood still, lost in dreams.

The night came on quickly. The moon, looking like a thin sickle, was resting on the summits of the dark mountains. One little Bernese wagon after another drove away. Barefoot went to find her master's chaise, to which the horses were now being hitched. Then Rose came and told her brother that she had promised some young people of her village to go home in company with them. And it was understood as a matter of course that the farmer could not drive home alone with the maid. And so the little Bernese wagon went rattling off toward home with a single occupant. Rose must have seen Barefoot, but she acted as if she were not there. And so Barefoot once more wandered forth along the road on which the stranger had departed. Whither could he have gone? How many hundred villages and hamlets there were along that road, and to which one was he bound? Barefoot found the place again where he had first accosted her in the morning; she repeated aloud to herself his salutation, and the answer she had given him. And once more she sat down behind the hazel hedge, where in the morning she had slept and dreamt. A yellowhammer sat on a slender spray, and its six notes sounded just as if it were saying: "And why art thou still here? And why art thou still here?"

Barefoot had lived through a whole life's history in this one day. Could it be but a single day? She went back again to the dance, but did not go up to the room itself. And then she started out homeward alone. She had gone almost halfway to Haldenbrunn, when she suddenly turned back; she seemed unable to tear herself away from the place where she had been so happy. And she said to herself that it was not right for her to go home alone anyway; she should go in company with the young men and girls from her village. When she arrived in front of the tavern at Endringen again, she found several people from her village already assembled there.

"Ah, are you here, too, Barefoot?" was the only greeting she received.

And now there was great confusion; for many who had been the first to urge going home, were still upstairs dancing. And now some strange lads came and begged and besought them to stay for just one more dance; and they got their way. Barefoot, too, went upstairs, but only to look on. At last the cry was: "Whoever dances now shall be left behind;" and after a great deal of difficulty and much rushing to and fro, the Haldenbrunn contingent was finally assembled in front of the house. Some of the musicians escorted them through the village, and many a sleepy father came to the window to see what was going on, while now and then a woman, who had once been one of the merry-makers herself, but who had married and so culminated her days of frivolity, would appear at a window and cry: "A pleasant journey home!"

The night was dark, and large pine fagots had been provided for torches; and the lads who carried them danced about and shouted with joy. Scarcely had the musicians gone back, and scarcely had the party left Endringen well behind, when the cry was: "Put out the torches! They only dazzle us!" And two soldiers in particular, who were then off duty and had joined the party, made fun of

the torches, in proud consciousness of their sabres. Accordingly the torches were extinguished in a ditch. And now they began to miss this or that boy, and this or that girl, and when their comrades called out to them, they would answer from a distance.

Barefoot walked behind the rest, a good distance from those of her own village. They let her alone, and that was the greatest kindness they could have done her; she was with the people of her own village, and yet she was alone. She often looked around at the fields and the woods; how wonderful it all looked in the night!—so strange and yet so familiar! The whole world seemed as strange to her as she had become to herself. And as she went along, step by step, as if she were being pulled or pushed, without realizing that she was moving, so did her thoughts move, involuntarily, in her mind; they seemed to be whirling on, and she could not grasp or control them—she did not know what it meant. Her cheeks glowed as if every star in the heavens were a heat-radiating sun, and her very heart burned within her.

And now, just as if she had begun it, as if she herself had struck up the tune, her companions ahead began to sing the song that had risen to her lips that morning:

"There were two lovers in Allgau,
Who loved each other so dear;

And the young lad went away to war;
When comest thou home again?

Ah, that I cannot, love, tell thee,
What year, or what day, or what hour!"

And then the "Good Night" song was sung; and Amrei, in the distance, joined in:

"A fair 'good night' to thee, love, farewell!
When all are sleeping
Then watch I'm keeping,
So wearily.

A fair "good night" to thee, love, farewell!
Now I must leave thee,
And joy be with thee,
Till I come back.

And when I come back, then I'll come to thee,
And then I'll kiss thee,
That tastes so sweetly,—
Love, thou art mine!

Love, thou art mine, and I am thine,
And that doth content me,
And shall not repent thee,
Love, fare thee well!"

At last they came to the village, where one group after another detached itself. Barefoot paused under the tree by her father's house, and stood there for a long time in dreamy meditation. She would have liked to go in and tell Black Marianne everything, but gave up the idea. Why should she disturb

the old woman's rest at night? What good would it do? She went quietly home, where everybody was asleep. When she finally entered the house, everything seemed so much more strange to her than it had outside—so odd, so out of keeping, so out of place. "Why do you come home? What do you want here?" There seemed to be a strange questioning in every sound; when the dog barked, when the stairs creaked, when the cows lowed in the stable—they all seemed to be questioning her: "Who's that coming home? Who's that?" And when at length she found herself in her room, she sat down quietly and stared at the light. Suddenly she got up, seized the lamp, held it up to the glass, and looked at her face; she felt inclined to ask herself: "Who's that?"—"And thus," she thought, "he saw me—this is how I looked. He must have been pleased with something about you, or else why did he look at you so?"

There arose in her a quiet feeling of contentment, which was heightened by the thought:

"Well, for once you have been looked upon as a person; until now you have been nothing but a servant, a convenience for others. Good night, Amrei—this has been a day indeed! But even this day must come to an end at last."

CHAPTER XI

WHAT THE OLD SONG SAYS

[The memory of the handsome stranger, and of the dance, and of all the new and wonderful emotions that had filled her heart on that eventful day, to Amrei was a sacred one indeed; for weeks she thought of it by day and dreamed of it by night. The jealous, sneering remarks of Rose, and the half-serious, half-jesting utterances of other people, who had been present at the wedding, meant nothing to her; she went about her work all the more diligently and ignored it all. Black Marianne could offer her no encouragement in her hope that the stranger would some day appear again and claim her; she had waited all her life for her John, and would continue to wait until she died.]

Spring had come again. Amrei was standing beside the flowers in her window when a bee came flying up and began sucking at an open blossom.

"Yes, so it is," thought Barefoot; "a girl is like a plant; she grows up in one place, and cannot go out into the world and seek—she must wait until something comes flying to her."

"Were I a little bird,
And had a pair of wings,
I'd fly to thee;
But since I can't do that,
Here must I be.

Though I am far from thee,
In dreams I am with thee,
Thou art mine own;
But when I wake again,
I am alone.

No hour at night doth pass,
But that my heart doth wake,
And think of thee,—"

Thus sang Amrei. It was wonderful how all songs seemed now to apply to her own life. And how many thousands of people have already sung those songs from the depths of their souls, and how many thousands more are yet to sing them!

Ye who yearn and who at last embrace a heart, ye embrace along with it the love of all those who have ever been, or who ever shall be.

CHAPTER XII

HE IS COME

One Sunday afternoon Barefoot, according to her custom, was leaning against the door-post of the house and gazing dreamily out before her, when Coaly Mathew's grandson came running up the street, beckoning to her from afar and crying:

"He is come, Barefoot! He is come!"

Barefoot felt her knees tremble, and she cried in a broken voice:

"Where is he? Where?"

"At my grandfather's, in Mossbrook Wood!"

"Where? Who? Who sent you?"

"Your Damie—he's down yonder in the woods."

Barefoot was obliged to sit down on the stone bench in front of the house; but only for a minute. Then she pulled herself together and stood up stiffly with the words:

"My brother? My Damie?"

"Yes, Barefoot's Damie," said the boy, bluntly; "and he promised that you would give me a kreutzer if I would run and tell you. So now give me a kreutzer."

"My Damie will give you three."

"Oh, no!" said the boy, "he's been whimpering to my grandfather because he hadn't a kreutzer left."

"I haven't one now either," said Barefoot, "but I'll promise you one."

She went quickly into the house and begged the second maid to milk the cows for her that evening, in case she should not get back, for she had an errand to do immediately. Then, with a heart now full of anger at Damie, now full of sorrow for him and his awkwardness, again full of vexation on account of his coming back, and then again full of self-reproach that she should be going to meet her only brother in such a way, Barefoot wended her way out into the fields and down the valley to Mossbrook Wood.

There was no mistaking the way to Coaly Mathew's, even if one were to wander off from the foot-path. The smell of burning charcoal led one to him infallibly.

How the birds are rejoicing in the trees! And beneath them a sad maiden is passing, thinking how unhappy it must make her brother to see all these things again, and how badly things must have gone with him, if he had no other resource but to come home and live upon her earnings.

"Other sisters are helped by their brothers," she thought to herself, "and I—but I shall show you this time, Damie, that you must stay where I put you, and that you dare not stir!"

Such were Barefoot's thoughts as she hurried along; and at last she arrived at Coaly Mathew's. But there she saw only Coaly Mathew himself, who was sitting by the kiln in front of his log cabin, and holding his wooden pipe with both hands as he smoked it; for a charcoal-burner is like a charcoal kiln, in that he is always smoking.

"Has anybody been playing a trick on me?" Barefoot asked herself. "Oh, that would be shameful! What have I done to people that they should make a fool of me? But I shall soon find out who did it—and he shall pay for it."

With clenched fists and a flaming face she stood before Coaly Mathew, who hardly raised his eyes to her—much less did he speak. As long as the sun was shining he was almost always mute, and only at night, when nobody could look into his eyes, did he like to talk, and then he spoke freely.

Barefoot gazed for a minute at the charcoal-burner's black face, and then asked impatiently:

"Where is my Damie?"

The old man shook his head. Then Barefoot asked again with a stamp of her foot:

"Is my Damie with you?"

The old man unfolded his hands and spread them right and left, implying thereby that he was not there.

"Who was it that sent to me?" asked Barefoot, still more impatiently.

"Can't you speak?"

The charcoal-burner pointed with his right thumb toward the side where a foot-path wound around the mountain.

"For Heaven's sake, do say something!" cried Barefoot, fairly weeping with indignation; "only a single word! Is my Damie here, or where is he?"

At last the old man said:

"He's there—gone to meet you along the path." And then, as if he had said too much, he pressed his lips together and walked off around the kiln.

Barefoot now stood there, laughing scornfully and, at the same time, sadly over her brother's simplicity.

"He sends to me and doesn't stay in the place where I can find him; now if I go up that way, why should he expect me to come by the foot-path? That has doubtless occurred to him now, and he'll be going some other way—so that I shall never find him, and we shall be wandering about each other as in a fog."

Barefoot sat down quietly on the stump of a tree. There was a fire within her as within the kiln, only the flames could not leap forth—the fire could merely smolder within. The birds were singing, the forest rustling—but what is all that when there is no clear, responsive note in the heart? Barefoot now remembered, as in a dream, how she had once cherished thoughts of love. What right had she to let such thoughts rise within her? Had she not misery enough in herself and in her brother? And this thought of love seemed to her now like the remembrance, in winter, of a bright summer's day. One merely remembers how sunny and warm it was—but that is all. Now she had to learn what it meant to "wait,"—to "wait" high up on a crag, where there is hardly a palm's breadth of room. And he who knows what it means, feels all his old misery—and more.

She went into the charcoal-burner's log cabin, and there lay a cloth sack, hardly half full, and on the sack was her father's name.

"Oh, how you have been dragged about!" she said, almost aloud. But she soon got over her excitement in her curiosity to see what Damie had brought back. "He must at least still have the shirts that I made for him out of Black Marianne's linen. And perhaps there is also a present from our uncle in America in it. But if he had anything good, would he have gone first to Coaly Mathew in the forest? Would he not have shown himself in the village at once?"

Barefoot had plenty of time to indulge in these reflections; for the sack had been tied with a cord, which had been knotted in a most complicated way, and it required all her patience and skill to disentangle it. She emptied out everything that was in the sack and said with angry eyes:

"Oh, you good-for-nothing! There's not a decent shirt left! Now you may have your choice whether you'll be called 'Jack in Tatters' or 'Tattered Jack.'"

This was not a happy frame of mind in which to greet her brother for the first time. And Damie seemed to realize this; for he stood at the entrance of the log cabin and looked on, until Barefoot had put everything back into the sack. Then he stepped up to her and said:

"God greet you, Amrei! I bring you nothing but dirty clothes, but you are neat, and will make me—"

"Oh, dear Damie, how you look!" cried Barefoot, and she threw herself on his neck. But she quickly tore herself away from him, exclaiming:

"For Heaven's sake! You smell of whisky! Have you got so far already?"

"No, Coaly Mathew only gave me a little juniper spirit, for I could not stand up any longer. Things have gone badly with me, but I have not taken to drink—you may believe that, though, to be sure, I can't prove it."

"I believe you, for you surely would not wish to deceive the only one you have on earth! But oh, how wild and miserable you look! You have a beard as heavy as a knife-grinder's. I won't allow that—you must shave it off. But you're in good health? There's nothing the matter with you?"

"I am in good health, and intend to be a soldier."

"What you are, and what you are to be, we'll think about in good time.

But now tell me how things have gone with you."

Damie kicked his foot against a half-burnt log of wood—one of the spoilt logs, as they were called—and said:

"Look you—I am just like that, not completely turned to coal, and yet no longer fresh wood."

Barefoot exhorted him to say what he had to say without complaints. And then Damie went off into a long, long story, setting forth how he had not been able to bear the life at his uncle's, and how hard-hearted and selfish that uncle was, and especially how his wife had grudged him every bit he ate in the house, and how he had got work here and there, but how in every place he had only experienced a little more of man's hard-heartedness. "In America," he said, "one can see another person perishing in misery, and never so much as look around at him."

Barefoot could hardly help laughing when there came again and again, as the burden of his story,— "And then they turned me out into the street." She could not help interrupting him with:

"Yes, that's just how you are, and how you used to be, even as a child. When you once stumbled, you let yourself fall like a log of wood; one must convert the stumble into a hop, as the old proverb says. Cheer up. Do you know what one must do, when people try to hurt one?"

"One must keep out of their way."

"No, one must hurt them, if one can—and one hurts them most by standing up and achieving something. But you always stand there and say to the world: 'Do what you like to me, good or bad; kiss me or beat me, just as you will.' That's easy enough; you let people do anything to you, and then pity yourself. I should like it right well myself, if some one would place me here and there, and do everything for me. But you must look out for yourself now. You've let yourself be pushed about quite enough in the world; now you must play the master for awhile."

Reproof and teaching often seem like hardness and injustice in the eyes of the unhappy; and Damie took his sister's words as such. It was dreadful that she did not see that he was the most unhappy creature on earth. She strongly urged him not to believe that, and said that if he did not believe it, it would not be so. But it is the most difficult of all undertakings to inspire a man with confidence in himself; most people acquire it only after they have succeeded.

Damie declared that he would not tell his heartless sister a word more; and it was only after some time that she got from him a detailed account of his travels and fortunes, and of how he had at last come back to the old world as a stoker on a steamboat. While she reproved him for his self-tormenting touchiness, she became conscious that she herself was not entirely free from that fault. For, as a result of her almost exclusive association with Black Marianne, she had fallen into the habit of thinking and talking so much about herself, that she had acquired a desponding way. And now that she was called upon to cheer her brother up, she unconsciously exerted a similar influence upon herself. For herein lies the mysterious power of cooperation among men, that when we help others we are also helping ourselves.

"We have four sound hands," she said in conclusion, "and we'll see if we cannot fight our way through the world together. And to fight your way through is a thousand times better than to beg your way through. And now, Damie, come with me—come home."

Damie did not want to show himself in the village at all; he dreaded the jeering that would be vented upon him from all sides, and preferred to remain concealed for the present. But Barefoot said:

"You go with me now—on this bright Sunday; and you must walk right through the village, and let the people mock at you, let them have their say, let them point and laugh. Then you'll be

through with it, then it will be over, and you will have swallowed their bitter draught all at once, and not drop by drop."

Not without long and obstinate resistance, not until Coaly Mathew had interfered and sided with Barefoot, was Damie induced to comply. And there was, indeed, a perfect hailstorm of jeering, sometimes coarse, sometimes satirical, directed at Barefoot's Damie, whom people accused of having taken merely a pleasure-trip to America at the expense of the parish.

Black Marianne alone received him kindly; her first question was:

"Have you heard nothing of my John?" But he could give her no information.

In a double sense Damie was doomed to be scratched that day; for that very evening Barefoot had the barber come and shave off his wild beard, and give him the smooth face that was the fashion of the country.

The next morning Damie was summoned to the Courthouse; and inasmuch as he trembled at the summons, he knew not why, Barefoot promised to accompany him. And that was good, though it was not of much use; for the Council declared to Damie that he was to be sent away from the place, that he had no right to remain there, perhaps to become a burden on the community once more.

All the members were astonished when Barefoot answered "Yes, you can send him away—but do you know when? When you can go out to the churchyard, where our father and mother lie buried, and say to them: 'Up, go away with your child!' Then you can send him away. No one can be sent away from the place where his parents are buried; for he is more than at home there. And if it is written a thousand times in your books there, and a thousand times again,"—and here she pointed to the bound government registers,— "and wherever else it may be written, it cannot be done, and you cannot do it."

One of the councilors whispered to the schoolmaster:

"Barefoot has learned to talk in that way from nobody else but Black Marianne."

And the sexton leaned over to the magistrate and said:

"Why do you allow the Cinderella to make such an outcry? Ring for the gendarme and have him shut her up in the madhouse."

But the magistrate only smiled, and explained that the community had rid itself of all burdens that could ever accrue to it through Damie by paying the greater part of his passage money.

"But where is his home now?" asked Barefoot.

"Wherever they will receive him, but not here—at present nowhere."

"Yes, I have no home," said Damie, who almost enjoyed being made more and more unhappy; for now nobody could deny that he was the most unfortunate person in the world.

Barefoot continued to fight, but she soon saw that nothing could be done; the law was against her. She now declared that she would work her fingers to the bone rather than take anything more from the parish, either for herself or for her brother; and she promised to pay back all that had been received.

"Shall I put that down on the minutes?" asked the clerk of those who sat around. And Barefoot replied:

"Yes, put it down; for with you nothing counts except what's written."

Barefoot then put her signature to the entry. When this was done, it was announced that Damie, as a stranger, had permission to remain in the village for three days, but that if within that time he had not found some means of subsistence, he would be sent away, and in case of necessity, would be removed by force across the frontier.

Without another word Barefoot left the Court-house with Damie, who actually shed tears because she had compelled him to return to the village to no purpose. It would have been better, he declared, if he had remained out in the woods and spared himself the jeering, and the humiliation of hearing himself banished as a stranger from his native place. Barefoot wanted to reply that it was better to know the worst, however bitter it might be; but she restrained herself, realizing that she had

need of all her strength to keep up her own courage. She felt as if she had been banished with her brother, and understood that she had to fight with a world that had law and might to fall back upon, while she herself was empty-handed and helpless.

But she bore up more bravely than ever; she did not allow Damie's weaknesses and adversities to weigh upon her. For that is the way with people; if any one has a pain of his own which entirely occupies him, he will bear a second pain—be it ever so severe—more easily than if he had this second pain alone to bear. And thus while Barefoot had a feeling of indescribable sorrow against which she could do nothing, she was able to bear the definite trial against which she could strive, the more willingly and freely. She allowed herself not a minute more for dreaming, and went to and fro with stiff arms and clinched fists, as if to say: "Where is there work to do? Be it ever so hard, I will gladly undertake it, if only I can get myself and my brother out of this state of forsaken dependency."

She now cherished the idea of going with Damie to Alsace, and working in a factory there. It seemed terrible to her that she should have to do this, but she would force herself to it; as soon as the summer was over, she would go. And then, "Farewell home," she said, "for we are strangers even here where we were born."

The one protector the two orphans had had on the Village Council was now powerless to do anything for them; old Farmer Rodel was taken seriously ill, and in the night following the stormy meeting he died. Barefoot and Black Marianne were the two people who wept the most at his burial in the churchyard. On the way home Black Marianne gave as a special reason for this fact that old Farmer Rodel had been the last survivor of those with whom she had danced in her youth. "And now," she said, "my last partner is dead."

But she soon spoke a very different elegy concerning him; for it appeared that Farmer Rodel, who had for years been raising Barefoot's hopes concerning his will, made no mention at all of her in that document—far less did he leave her anything.

When Black Marianne went on with an endless tirade of scolding and complaining, Barefoot said:

"It's all coming at once. The sky is cloudy now, and the hail is beating down upon me from all sides; but the sun will soon be shining again."

The relatives of Farmer Rodel gave Barefoot a few garments that had belonged to the old man; she would have liked to refuse them, but realized that it would not do to show a spirit of obstinacy just now. At first Damie also refused to accept the clothes, but he was finally obliged to give in; he seemed fated to pass his life in the clothes of various dead people.

Coaly Mathew took Damie to work with him at the kiln in the forest, where talebearers kept coming to Damie to tell him that he had only to begin a lawsuit; they declared that he could not be driven away, for he had not yet been received at any other place, and that this was always a tacit condition when any one gave up his right of settlement. These people seemed to derive a certain satisfaction from the reflection that the poor orphans had neither time nor money to begin a legal process.

Damie seemed to like the solitude of the forest; it suited him exactly, the fact that one was not obliged to dress and undress there. And every Sunday afternoon Barefoot experienced great difficulty in getting him to clean himself up a little; then she would sit with him and Coaly Mathew.

Little was said, and Barefoot could not prevent her thoughts from wandering about the world in search of him who had once made her so happy for a whole day, and had lifted her above the earth. Did he know nothing more about her? Did he think of her no more? Could people forget other people with whom they had once been so happy?

It was on a Sunday morning toward the end of May, and everybody was at church. The day before it had rained, and now a strong, refreshing breeze was blowing over the mountains and valleys, and the sun was shining brightly. Barefoot had also intended to go to church, but while the bells were ringing she had sat as if spell-bound beneath her window, until it was too late to go. That was a

strange thing for her, and it had never happened before. But now that it was too late, she determined to stay at home by herself and read her hymn-book. She rummaged through her drawers, and was surprised to find all sorts of things that belonged to her. She was sitting on the floor, reading a hymn and humming the tune of it to herself, when something stirred at the window. She glanced up; a white dove was sitting on the ledge and looking at her. When the eyes of the dove and of the girl met, the bird flew away. Barefoot watched it soar out over the fields and alight again.

This incident, which was a very natural one, filled her heart with gladness; and she kept nodding to the mountains in the distance, and to the fields and woods. The rest of that day she was unusually cheerful. She could not explain to herself why, but it seemed to her as if a joyous spirit were singing within her, and she knew not whence it came. And as often as she shook her head, while she leaned against the door-post, wondering at the strange excitement she felt, the feeling did not pass away.

"It must be, it must be that some one has been thinking kindly of me," she said; "and why should it not be possible that the dove was a silent messenger who came to tell me so?—Animals, after all, live in the world, where the thoughts of men are flying about, and who knows if they do not quietly carry those thoughts away?"

The people who passed by Barefoot could have no idea of the strange life that was moving within her.

CHAPTER XIII

OUT OF A MOTHER'S HEART

While Barefoot was dreaming and working and worrying in village, field, and wood, sometimes feeling a strange thrill of joy, at other times thinking herself completely deserted, two parents were sending their child forth into the world, in the hope, to be sure, that he would return to them the richer. Yonder in Allgau, in the large farm-house known, by the sign over the door, as the "Wild Clearing," sat Farmer Landfried and his wife, with their youngest son. The farmer was saying:

"Listen, John; it's more than a year since you came back, and I don't know what's gotten into you. You came home that day like a whipped dog, and said that you would rather choose a wife here in the neighborhood—but I don't see any signs of your doing it. If you will follow my advice once more, then I won't say another word to persuade you."

"Yes, I will," said the young man, without looking up. "Well then, make one more trial—one trial is no better than no trial. And I tell you, you will make me and your mother happy if you choose a wife from our region. I may say it to your face, wife; there's only one good breed of women in the world, and they come from our part of the country. Now, you are a sensible lad, John, and you will be sure to pick out a good one, and then you'll thank us on your death-bed for sending you to our home to find a wife. If I could get away, I would go with you—together we would find the right one surely—but I can't go. I've spoken to our George, however, and he says he'll go with you if you ask him. Ride over, and speak to him then."

"If I may say what I think," answered the young man, "when I go again, I'd rather go alone. You see, it's my way; in such a matter a second pair of eyes is superfluous—I should not like to consult any one else. If it were possible, I should even like to make myself invisible while I am looking around; but if two of us went together, we might as well have it proclaimed abroad, so that they would all dress themselves up to receive us."

"As you will," said the father; "you always were a strange fellow. Do you know what? Suppose you start at once; we want a mate for our white horse, so do you go out and look for one—but not in the market, of course. And when you are going about from house to house, you can see things for yourself; and on your way home you can buy a Bernese chaise-wagon. Dominic, in Endringen, they say, has three daughters as straight as organ-pipes; choose one of them—we should like to have a daughter from that house."

"Yes," the mother observed, "Ameile is sure to have nice daughters."

"And it would be well," continued the father, "if you went to Siebenhofen and took a look at Amrei, the Butter Count's daughter. She has a farm of her own that one could easily sell; the farmers of Siebenhofen have got their eyes on it, for they want to have more land. But it's a question of cold cash, and none of them can raise it. But I'll say nothing more, for you have eyes of your own. Come, set out at once, and I'll fill the money-belt for you—two hundred crowns will be enough, but if you should have to have more, Dominic will lend you some. Only make yourself known; I could never understand why you did not tell people who you were that time at the wedding. Something must have happened then—but I won't ask any questions."

"Yes, because he won't answer them," said the mother, smiling.

The farmer at once set about filling the money-belt; he broke open two large paper rouleaux, and it was manifest that he enjoyed counting out the big coins from one hand into the other. He made twenty piles of ten dollars each, and counted them over two or three times to be sure that he had made no mistake.

"Well, I am ready," said the young man, standing up as he spoke.

He is the strange dancer whose acquaintance we made at the wedding in Endringen. He went out to the stable, and presently returned with the white horse already saddled. And as he was fastening his valise to the bolster, a fine, large wolf-hound began jumping up at him and licking his hands.

"Yes, yes, I'll take you with me," said the lad to the dog; and for the first time his face looked cheerful, as he called out to his father:

"Father, can I take Lux with me?"

"Yes, if you like," sounded the answer from within, amid the jingling of coins. The dog seemed to understand the question and the answer, for he ran around the yard in circles, barking joyously. The young man went into the house, and, as he was buckling on the money-belt, he said "You are right, father; I feel better already, now that I am getting myself out of this aimless way of living. And I don't know—people ought not to be superstitious—but somehow I was glad when the horse turned around and neighed to me when I went out into the stable just now—and that the dog wants to go too. After all, they're good signs, and if we could ask animals, who knows if they could not give us good advice?"

The mother smiled, but the father said:

"Don't forget to look up Crappy Zachy, and don't go ahead and bind yourself until you have consulted him. He knows the affairs of all the people for ten miles around, and is a living information bureau. And now, God be with you! Take your time—you may stay away as long as ten days."

Father and son shook hands, and the mother said:

"I'll escort you part of the way."

The young man, leading his horse by the bridle, then walked quietly beside his mother until they were out in front of the yard, and it was not until they reached the turn in the road that the mother said, hesitatingly:

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