

AUERBACH BERTHOLD

BLACK FOREST VILLAGE
STORIES

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Black Forest Village Stories

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Black Forest Village Stories

THE GAWK

I see you now, my fine fellow, as large as life, with your yellow hair cropped very short, except in the neck, where a long tail remains as if you had cut yourself after the pattern of a plough-horse. You are staring straight at me with your broad visage, your great blue goggle eyes, and your mouth which is never shut. Do you remember the morning we met in the hollow where the new houses stand now, when you cut me a willow-twigg to make a whistle of? We little thought then that I should come to pipe the world a song about you when we should be thousands of miles apart. I remember your costume perfectly, which is not very surprising, as there is nothing to keep in mind but a shirt, red suspenders, and a pair of linen pantaloons dyed black to guard against all contingencies. On Sunday you were more stylish: then you wore a fur cap with a gold tassel, a blue roundabout with broad buttons, a scarlet waistcoat, yellow shorts, white stockings, and buckled shoes, like any other villager; and, besides, you very frequently had a fresh pink behind your ear. But you were never at ease in all this glory; and I like you rather better in your plainer garb, myself.

But now, friend gawk, go about your business; there's a good fellow. It makes me nervous to tell your story to your face. You need not be alarmed: I shall say nothing ill of you, though I do speak in the third person.

The gawk not only had a real name, but a whole pedigree of them; in the village he ought to have been called Bart's Bast's¹ boy, and he had been christened Aloys. To please him, we shall stick to this last designation. He will be glad of it, because, except his mother Maria and a few of us children, hardly any one used it; all had the impudence to say "Gawk." On this account he always preferred our society, even after he was seventeen years old. In out-of-the-way places he would play leap-frog with us, or let us chase him over the fields; and when the gawk-I should say, when Aloys-was with us, we were secure against the attacks of the children at the lime-pit; for the rising generation of the village was torn by incessant feuds between two hostile parties.

Yet the boys of Aloys' own age were already beginning to feel their social position. They congregated every evening, like the grown men, and marched through the village whistling and singing, or stood at the tavern-door of the Eagle, by the great wood-yard, and passed jokes with the girls who went by. But the surest test of a big boy was the tobacco-pipe. There they would stand with their speckled bone-pipe bowls, of Ulm manufacture, tipped with silver, and hung with little silver chains. They generally had them in their mouths unlit; but occasionally one or the other would beg a live coal from the baker's maid, and then they smoked with the most joyful faces they knew how to put on, while their stomachs moaned within them.

Aloys had begun the practice too, but only in secret. One evening he mustered up courage to mingle with his fellows, with the point of his pipe peeping forth from his breast-pocket. One of the boys pulled the pipe out of his pocket with a yell; Aloys tried to seize it, but it passed from hand to hand with shouts of laughter, and the more impatiently he demanded it the less it was forthcoming, until it disappeared altogether, and every one professed to know nothing of what had become of it. Aloys began to whimper, which made them laugh still more; so at last he snatched the cap of the first robber from his head, and ran with it into the house of Jacob the blacksmith. Then the capless one brought the pipe, which had been hidden in the wood-yard.

¹ Bartholomew's Sebastian's.

Jacob Bomiller the blacksmith's house was what is called Aloys' "go-out." He was always there when not at home, and never at home after his work was done. Aunt Applon, (Apollonia,) Jacob's wife, was his cousin; and; besides his own mother and us children, she and her eldest daughter Mary Ann always called him by his right name. In the morning he would get up early, and, after having fed and watered his two cows and his heifer, he always went to Jacob's house and knocked at the door until Mary Ann opened it. With a simple "Good-morning," he passed through the stable into the barn. The cattle knew his step, and always welcomed him with a complacent growl and a turn of the head: he never stopped to return the compliment, but went into the barn and filled the cribs of the two oxen and the two cows. He was on particularly good terms with the roan cow. He had raised her from a calf; and, when he stood by her and watched her at her morning meal, she often licked his hands, to the improvement of his toilet. Then he would open the door of the stable and restore its neatness and good order, often chatting cosily to the dumb beasts as he made them turn to the right or left. Not a dunghill in the village was so broad and smooth and with such clean edges as the one which Aloys built before the house of Jacob the blacksmith; for a fine dunghill is the greatest ornament to a villager's door-front in the Black Forest. The next thing he did was to wash and curry the oxen and cows until you might have seen your face in their sleek hides. This done, he ran to the pump before the house and filled the trough with water: the cattle, unchained, ran out to drink; while he spread fresh straw in their stalls. Thus, by the time that Mary Ann came to the stable to milk the cows, she found every thing neat and clean. Often, when a cow was "skittish," and kicked, Aloys stood by her and laid his hand on her back while Mary Ann milked; but generally he found something else to do. And when Mary Ann said, "Aloys, you are a good boy," he never looked up at her, but plied the stable-broom so vehemently that it threatened to sweep the boulder-stones out of the floor. In the barn he cut the feed needed for the day; and, after all the work required in the lower story of the building-which, in the Black Forest, as is well known, contains what in America is consigned to the barn and outhouses-was finished, he mounted up-stairs into the kitchen, carried water, split the kindling-wood, and at last found his way into the room. Mary Ann brought the soup-bowl, set it on the table, folded her hands, and, everybody having done the same, spoke a prayer. All now seated themselves with a "God's blessing." The bowl was the only dish upon the table, into which every one dipped his spoon, Aloys often stealing a mouthful from the place where Mary Ann's spoon usually entered. The deep silence of a solemn rite prevailed at the table: very rarely was a word spoken. After the meal and another prayer, Aloys trudged home.

Thus things went on till Aloys reached his nineteenth year, when, on New-Year's day, Mary Ann made him a present of a shirt, the hemp of which she had broken herself, and had spun, bleached, and sewed it. He was overjoyed, and only regretted that it would not do to walk the street in shirt-sleeves: though it was bitter cold, he would not have cared for that in the least; but people would have laughed at him, and Aloys was daily getting more and more sensitive to people's laughter.

The main cause of this was the old squire's² new hand who had come into the village last harvest. He was a tall, handsome fellow, with a bold, dare-devil face appropriately set off with a reddish mustache. George (for such was his name) was a cavalry soldier, and almost always wore the cap belonging to his uniform. When he walked up the village of a Sunday, straight as an arrow, turning out his toes and rattling his spurs, every thing about him said, as plainly as words could speak, "I know all the girls are in love with me;" and when he rode his horses down to Jacob's pump to water them, poor Aloys' heart was ready to burst as he saw Mary Ann look out of the window. He wished that there were no such things as milk and butter in the world, so that he too might be a horse-farmer.

Inexperienced as Aloys was, he knew all about the three classes or "standings" into which the peasants of the Black Forest are divided. The cow-farmers are the lowest in the scale: their draught-

² Not a lord of the manor, according to the English acceptance of the term, but a sort of village mayor, elected by the farmers out of their own number. Very little of the feudal tenure remains in the Black Forest, the peasants being almost everywhere lords of the soil.

cattle, in addition to their labor, must yield them milk and calves. Then come the ox-farmers, whose beasts, after having served their time, may be fattened and killed. The horse-farmers are still more fortunate: their beasts of draught yield neither milk nor meat, and yet eat the best food and bring the highest prices.

Whether Aloys took the trouble to compare this arrangement with the four castes of Egypt, or the three estates of feudalism, is doubtful.

On this New-Year's day, George derived a great advantage from his horses. After morning service, he took the squire's daughter and her playmate Mary Ann sleighing to Impfingen; and, though the heart of poor Aloys trembled within him, he could not refuse George's request to help him hitch the horses and try them in the sleigh. He drove about the village, quite forgetting the poor figure he cut beside the showy soldier. When the girls were seated, Aloys led the horses a little way, running beside them until they were fairly started, and then let them go. George drove down the street, cracking his whip; the horses jingled their bells; half the commune looked out of their windows; and poor Aloys stared after them long after they were out of sight; and then went sadly home, cursing the snow which brought the water to his eyes. The village seemed to have died out when Mary Ann was not to be in it for a whole day.

All this winter Aloys was often much cast down. At his mother's house the girls frequently assembled to hold their spinning-frolics, – a custom much resembling our quiltings. They always prefer to hold these gatherings at the house of a comrade recently married or of a good-natured widow; elder married men are rather in the way. So the girls often came to Mother Maria, and the boys dropped in later, without waiting to be invited. Hitherto Aloys had never troubled himself about them so long as they left him undisturbed: he had sat in a corner doing nothing. But now he often said to himself, "Aloys, this is too bad: you are nineteen years old now, and must begin to put yourself forward." And then again he would say, "I wish the devil would carry that George away piecemeal!" George was the object of his ill-humor, for he had soon obtained a perfect control over the minds of all the boys, and made them dance to his whistle. He could whistle and sing and warble and tell stories like a wizard. He taught the boys and girls all sorts of new songs. The first time he sang the verse, -

"Do thy cheeks with gladness tingle
Where the snows and scarlet mingle?" -

Aloys suddenly rose: he seemed taller than usual; he clenched his fists and gnashed his teeth with secret joy. He seemed to draw Mary Ann toward him with his looks, and to see her for the first time as she truly was; for, just as the song ran, so she looked.

The girls sat around in a ring, each having her distaff with the gilt top before her, to which the hemp was fastened with a colored ribbon; they moistened the thread with their lips, and twirled the spindle, which tumbled merrily on the floor. Aloys was always glad to put "a little moistening," in the shape of some pears or apples, on the table, and never failed to put the plate near Mary Ann, so that she might help herself freely.

Early in the winter Aloys took his first courageous step in right of his adolescence. Mary Ann had received a fine new distaff set with pewter. The first time she brought it into the spinning-room and sat down to her work, Aloys came forward, took hold of it, and repeated the old rhyme: -

"Good lassie, give me leave,
Let me shake your luck out of this sleeve;
Great goodhap and little goodhap
Into my lassie's lap.
Lassie, why are you so rude?
Your distaff is only of wood;

If it had silver or gold on't,
I'd have made a better rhyme on't."

His voice trembled a little, but he got through without stammering. Mary Ann first cast her eyes down with shame and fear lest he should "balk;" but now she looked at him with beaming eyes. According to custom, she dropped the spindle and the whirl,³ which Aloys picked up, and exacted for the spindle the promise of a dumpling, and for the whirl that of a doughnut. But the best came last. Aloys released the distaff and received as ransom a hearty kiss. He smacked so loud that it sounded all over the room, and the other boys envied him sorely. He sat down quietly in a corner, rubbed his hands, and was contented with himself and with the world. And so he might have remained to the end of time, if that marplot of a George had not interfered again.

Mary Ann was the first voice in the church-choir. One evening George asked her to sing the song of the "Dark-Brown Maid." She began without much hesitation, and George fell in with the second voice so finely and sonorously that all the others who had joined in also lapsed into silence one by one, and contented themselves with listening to the two who sang so well. Mary Ann, finding herself unsupported by her companions, found her voice trembling a little, and nudged her companions to go on singing; but, as they would not, she took courage, and sang with much spirit, while George seemed to uphold her as with strong arms. They sang: -

"Oh, to-morrow I must leave you,
My beloved dark-brown maid:
Out at the upper gate we travel,
My beloved dark-brown maid.
"When I march in foreign countries,
Think of me, my dearest one;
With the sparkling glass before you,
Often think how I adore you;
Drink a health to him that's gone.
"Now I load my brace of pistols,
And I fire and blaze away,
For my dark-brown lassie's pleasure;
For she chose me for her treasure,
And she sent the rest away.
"In the blue sky two stars are shining:
Brighter than the moon they glow;
This looks on the dark-brown maiden,
And that looks where I must go.
"I've bought a ribbon for my sabre,
And a nosegay for my hat,
And a kerchief in my keeping,
To restrain my eyes from weeping:
From my love I must depart.
"Now I spur my horse's mettle,
Now I rein him in and wait:
So good-bye, dear dark-brown maiden;
I must ride out at the gate."

³ A ring of hard wood or stone fixed to the end of the spindle, to weigh it down and improve its turning.

When each of the girls had filled four or five spindles, the table was pushed into a corner, to clear a space of three or four paces in length and breadth, on which they took turns in dancing, those who sat singing the music. When George brought out Mary Ann, he sang his own song, dancing to it like a spindle: indeed, he did not need much more space than a spindle, for he used to say that no one was a good waltzer who could not turn around quickly and safely on a plate. When he stopped at last, – with a whirl which made the skirts of Mary Ann's wadded dress rise high above her feet, – she suddenly left him alone, as if afraid of him, and ran into a corner, where Aloys sat moodily watching the sport. Taking his hand, she said, –

"Come, Aloys, you must dance."

"Let me alone: you know I can't dance. You only want to make game of me."

"You g-" said Mary Ann: she would have said, "you gawk," but suddenly checked herself on seeing that he was more ready to cry than to laugh. So she said, gently, "No, indeed, I don't want to make game of you. Come; if you can't dance you must learn it: there is none I like to dance with better than you."

They tried to waltz; but Aloys threw his feet about as if he had wooden shoes on them, so that the others could not sing for laughing.

"I will teach you when nobody is by, Aloys," said Mary Ann, soothingly.

The girls now lighted their lanterns and went home. Aloys insisted on going with them: he would not for all the world have let Mary Ann go home without him when George was of the company.

In the still, snowy night, the raillery and laughter of the party were heard from end to end of the village. Mary Ann alone was silent, and evidently kept out of George's way.

When the boys had left all the girls at their homes, George said to Aloys, "Gawk, you ought to have stayed with Mary Ann to-night."

"You're a rascal," said Aloys, quickly, and ran away. The others laughed. George went home alone, warbling so loud and clear that he must have gladdened the hearts of all who were not sick or asleep.

Next morning, as Mary Ann was milking the cows, Aloys said to her, "Do you see, I should just like to poison that George; and if you are a good girl you must wish him dead ten times over."

Mary Ann agreed with him, but tried to convince him that he should endeavor to become just as smart and ready as George was. A bright idea suddenly struck Aloys. He laughed aloud, threw aside the stiff old broom and took a more limber one, saying, "Yes: look sharp and you'll see something." After much reluctance, he yielded to Mary Ann's solicitations to be "good friends" with George: he could not refuse her any thing.

It was for this reason alone that Aloys had helped George to get the sleigh out, and that the snow made his eyes run over as he watched the party till they disappeared.

In the twilight Aloys drove his cows to water at Jacob's well. A knot of boys had collected there, including George and his old friend, a Jew, commonly called "Long Hartz's Jake." Mary Ann was looking out of the window. Aloys was imitating George's walk: he carried himself as straight as if he had swallowed a ramrod, and kept his arms hanging down his sides, as if they had been made of wood.

"Gawk," said Jake, "what will you allow me if I get Mary Ann to marry you?"

"A good smack on your chops," said Aloys, and drove his cows away. Mary Ann closed the sash, while the boys set up a shout of laughter, in which George's voice was heard above all the others.

Aloys wiped the sweat from his forehead with his sleeve, so great was the exertion which the expression of his displeasure had cost him. He sat for hours on the feed-box of his stable, maturing the plans he had been meditating.

Aloys had entered his twentieth year, and it was time for him to pass the inspection of the recruiting-officers. On the day on which he, with the others of his age, was to present himself at Horb, the county town, he came to Mary Ann's house in his Sunday gear, to ask if she wished him to get any thing for her in town. As he went away, Mary Ann followed him into the hall, and, turning

aside a little, she drew a bit of blue paper from her breast, which, on being unwrapped, was found to contain a creutzer.⁴ "Take it," said she: "there are three crosses on it. When the shooting stars come at night, there's always a silver bowl on the ground, and out of those bowls they make this kind of creutzers: if you have one of them in your pocket you are sure to be in luck. Take it, and you will draw a high number."⁵

Aloys took the creutzer; but in crossing the bridge which leads over the Necker he put his hand in his pocket, shut his eyes, and threw the creutzer into the river. "I won't draw a high number: I want to be a soldier and cut George out," he muttered, between his teeth. His hand was clenched, and he drew himself up like a king.

At the Angel Hotel the squire waited for the recruits of his parish; and when they had all assembled he went with them to the office. The squire was equally stupid and pretentious. He had been a corporal formerly, and plumed himself on his "commission: " he loved to treat all farmers, old and young, as recruits. On the way he said to Aloys, "Gawk, you will be sure to draw the highest number; and even if you should draw No. 1 you need not be afraid, for they never can want you for a soldier."

"Who knows?" said Aloys, saucily. "I may live to be a corporal yet, as well as any one: I can read and write as well as another, and the old corporals haven't swallowed all the wisdom in the world, either."

The squire looked daggers at him.

When Aloys walked up to the wheel, his manner was bold almost to provocation. Several papers met his fingers as he thrust his hand in. He closed his eyes, as if determined not to see what he should draw, and brought out a ticket. He handed it to the clerk, trembling with fear of its being a high number. But, when "Number 17" was called, he shouted so lustily that they had to call him to order.

The boys now bought themselves artificial flowers tied with red ribbons, and, after another hearty drink, betook themselves homeward. Aloys sang and shouted louder than all the others.

At the stile at the upper end of the village the mothers and many of the sweethearts of the boys were waiting: Mary Ann was among them also. Aloys, a little fuddled, – rather by the noise than by the wine, – walked, not quite steadily, arm-in-arm with the others. This familiarity had not occurred before; but on the present occasion they were all brothers. When Aloys' mother saw No. 17 on his cap, she cried, again and again, "O Lord a' mercy! Lord a' mercy!" Mary Ann took Aloys aside, and asked, "What has become of my creutzer?" "I have lost it," said Aloys; and the falsehood smote him, half unconscious as he was.

The boys now walked down the village, singing, and the mothers and sweethearts of those who had probably been "drawn" followed them, weeping, and wiping their eyes with their aprons.

The "visitation," which was to decide every thing, was still six weeks off. His mother took a large lump of butter and a basket full of eggs, and went to the doctor's. The butter was found to spread very well, notwithstanding the cold weather, and elicited the assurance that Aloys would not be made a recruit of; "for," said the conscientious physician, "Aloys is incapable of military service, at any rate: he cannot see well at a distance, and that is what makes him so awkward sometimes."

Aloys gave himself no trouble about all these matters: he was quite altered, and swaggered and whistled whenever he went out.

On the day of the visitation, the boys went to town a little more soberly and quietly than when the lots were drawn.

When Aloys was called into the visitation-room and ordered to undress, he said, saucily, "Spy me out all you can: you will find nothing wrong about me. I have no blemish: I can be a soldier." His

⁴ About half a cent.

⁵ And thereby escape being taken as a recruit.

measure being taken and found to be full, he was entered on the list without delay: the doctor forgot the short-sightedness, the butter, and the eggs, in his astonishment at the boldness of Aloys.

But, when the irrevocable step was fairly taken, Aloys experienced such a sense of alarm that he could have cried. Still, when his mother met him on the stone steps of the office, weeping bitterly, his pride returned; and he said, "Mother, this is not right: you must not cry. I shall be back in a year, and Xavier can keep things in order very well while I am gone."

On being assured of their enlistment as soldiers, the boys began to drink, sing, and royster more than ever, to make up for the time they supposed themselves to have lost before.

When Aloys came home, Mary Ann, with tears in her eyes, gave him a bunch of rosemary with red ribbons in it, and sewed it to his cap. Aloys took out his pipe, smoked all the way up the village, and made a night of it with his comrades.

One hard day more was to be passed, – the day when the recruits had to set out for Stuttgart. Aloys went to Jacob's house early, and found Mary Ann in the stable, where she now had to do all the hard work without his assistance. Aloys said, "Mary Ann, shake hands." She did so; and then he added "Promise me you won't get married till I come back."

"No, indeed, I won't," said she; and then he replied, "There, that's all: but stop! give me a kiss for good-bye." She kissed him; and the cows and oxen looked on in astonishment, as if they knew what was going on.

Aloys patted each of the cows and oxen on the back, and took leave of them: they mumbled something indistinctly between their teeth.

George had hitched his horses to the wagon, to give the recruits a lift of a few miles. They passed through the village, singing; the baker's son, Conrad, who blew the clarionet, sat on the wagon with them and accompanied; the horses walked. On all sides the recruits were stopped by their friends, who came to shake hands or to share a parting cup. Mary Ann was looking out of her window, and nodded, smiling.

When they were fairly out of the village, Aloys suddenly stopped singing. He looked around him with moistened eyes. Here, on the heath called the "High Scrub," Mary Ann had bleached the linen of the shirt he wore: every thread of it now seemed to scorch him. He bade a sad farewell to every tree and every field. Over near the old heath-turf was his best field: he had turned the soil so often that he knew every clod in it. In the adjoining patch he had reaped barley with Mary Ann that very summer. Farther down, in the Hen's Scratch, was his clover-piece, which he had sown and was now denied the pleasure of watching while it grew. Thus he looked around him. As they passed the stile he was mute. In crossing the bridge he looked down into the stream: would he have dropped the marked creutzer into it now?

In the town the singing and shouting was resumed; but not till the Bildechingen Hill was passed did Aloys breathe freely. His beloved Nordstetten lay before him, apparently so near that his voice could have been heard there. He saw the yellow house of George the blacksmith, and knew that Mary Ann lived in the next house but one. He swung his cap and began to sing again.

At Herrenberg George left the recruits to pursue their way on foot. At parting he inquired of Aloys whether he had any message for Mary Ann.

Aloys reddened. George was the very last person he should have chosen for a messenger; and yet a kind message would have escaped his lips if he had not checked himself. Involuntarily he blurted out, "You needn't talk to her at all: she can't bear the sight of you, anyhow."

George laughed and drove away.

An important adventure befell the recruits on the road. At the entrance of the Boeblingen Forest, which is five miles long, they impressed a wood-cutter with his team, and compelled him to carry them. Aloys was the ringleader: he had heard George talk so much of soldiers' pranks that he could not let an occasion slip of playing one. But when they had passed through the wood he was also the first to open his leathern pouch and reimburse the involuntary stage-proprietor.

At the Tuebingen gate of Stuttgart a corporal stood waiting to receive them. Several soldiers from Nordstetten had come out to meet their comrades; and Aloys clenched his teeth as every one of them greeted him with, "Gawk, how are you?" There was an end of all shouting and singing now: like dumb sheep the recruits were led into the barracks. Aloys first expressed a wish to go into the cavalry, as he desired to emulate George; but, on being told that in that case he would have to go home again, as the cavalry-training would not begin till fall, he changed his mind. "I won't go home again until I am a different sort of a fellow," he said to himself; "and then, if any one undertakes to call me gawk, I'll gawk him."

So he was enrolled in the fifth infantry regiment, and soon astonished all by his intelligence and rapid progress. One misfortune befel him here also; he received a gypsy for his bedfellow. This gypsy had a peculiar aversion to soap and water. Aloys was ordered by the drill-sergeant to take him to the pump every morning and wash him thoroughly. This was sport at first; but it soon became very irksome: he would rather have washed the tails of six oxen than the face of the one gypsy.

Another member of the company was a broken-down painter. He scented the spending-money with which Aloys' mother had fitted him out, and soon undertook to paint him in full uniform, with musket and side-arms, and with the flag behind him. This made up the whole resemblance: the face was a face, and nothing more. Under it stood, however, in fine Roman characters, "Aloys Schorer, Soldier in the Fifth Regiment of Infantry."

Aloys had the picture framed under glass and sent it to his mother. In the accompanying letter he wrote, -

"DEAR MOTHER: - Please hang up the picture in the front room, and let Mary Ann see it: hang it over the table, but not too near the dovecote; and, if Mary Ann would like to have the picture, make her a present of it. And my comrade who painted it says you ought to send me a little lump of butter and a few yards of hemp-linen for my corporal's wife: we always call her Corporolla. My comrade also teaches me to dance; and to-morrow I am going to dance at Haeslach. You needn't pout, Mary Ann: I am only going to try. And I want Mary Ann to write to me. Has Jacob all his oxen yet? and hasn't the roan cow calved by this time? Soldiering isn't much of a business, after all: you get catawampously tired, and there's no work done when it's over."

The butter came, and was more effective this time: the gypsy was saddled upon somebody else. With the butter came a letter written by the schoolmaster, in which he said, -

"Our Matthew has sent fifty florins from America. He also writes that if you had not turned soldier you might have come to him and he would make you a present of thirty acres of land. Keep yourself straight, and let nobody lead you astray; for man is easily tempted. Mary Ann seems to be out of sorts with you, - I don't know why: when she saw your picture she said it didn't look like you at all."

Aloys smiled when he read this, and said to himself, "All right. I am very different from what I was: didn't I say it, Mary Ann, - eh?"

Months passed, until Aloys knew that next Sunday was harvest-home at Nordstetten. Through the corporal's intervention, he obtained a furlough for four days, and permission to go in full uniform, with his shako on his head and his sword at his side. Oh, with what joy did he put his "fixings" into his shako and take leave of his corporal!

With all his eagerness, he could not refrain from exchanging a word with the sentry at the gate of the barracks and with the one at the Tuebingen gate. He must needs inform them that he was going home, and that they must rejoice with him; and his heart melted with pity for his poor comrades, who were compelled to walk to and fro in a little yard for two mortal hours, during which time he was cutting down, step by step, the distance that lay between him and his home.

He never stopped till he got to Boeblingen. Here he ordered a pint of wine at the "Waldburg;" but he could not sit quiet in his chair, and walked away without emptying the glass.

At Nufringen he met Long Hartz's Jake, – the same who had teased him so. They shook hands, and Aloys heard much news of home, but not a word of Mary Ann; and he could not make up his mind to inquire after her.

At Bohndorf he forced himself to rest: it was high time to do so; for his heart was beating furiously. Stretched upon a bench, he reflected how they all would open their eyes on his arrival: then he stood before the looking-glass, fixed the shako over his left ear, twisted the curl at the right side of his forehead, and encouraged himself by a nod of approbation.

It was dusk when he found himself on the heights of Bildechingen and once more beheld his native village. He shouted no longer, but stood calm and firm, laid his hand upon his shako, and greeted his home with a military salute.

He walked slower and slower, wishing to arrive at night, so as to astonish them all in the morning. His house was one of the first in the village: there was a light in the room; and he tapped at the window, saying, –

"Isn't Aloys here?"

"Lord a'-mercy!" cried his mother: "a gens-d'armes!"

"No: it's me, mother," said Aloys, taking off his shako as he entered, and clasping her hand.

After the first words of welcome were spoken, his mother expressed her regret that there was no supper left for him; nevertheless, she went into the kitchen and fried him some eggs. Aloys stood by her near the hearth, and told his story. He asked about Mary Ann, and why his picture was still hanging in the room. His mother answered, "Don't think any thing more of Mary Ann, I beg and beg of you: she is good for nothing, – she is indeed!"

"Don't talk anymore about it, mother," said Aloys; "I know what I know." His face, tinted by the ruddy glow of the hearth-fire, had a strange decision and ferocity. His mother was silent until they had returned to the room, and then she saw with rapture what a fine fellow her son had become. Every mouthful he swallowed seemed a titbit to her own palate. Lifting up the shako, she complacently bewailed its enormous weight.

Aloys rose early in the morning, brushed up his shako, burnished the plating of his sword, and the buckler and buttons, more than if he had been ordered on guard before the staff. At the first sound of the church-bell he was completely dressed, and at the second bell he walked into the village.

Two little boys were talking as they passed him.

"Why, that's the gawk, a'n't it?" said one.

"No, it a'n't," said the other.

"Yes, it is," rejoined the first.

Aloys looked at them grimly, and they ran away with their hymn-books. Amid the friendly greetings of the villagers he approached the church. He passed Mary Ann's house; but no one looked out: he looked behind him again and again as he walked up the hill. The third bell rang, and he entered the church; Mary Ann was not there: he stood at the door; but she was not among the late-comers. The singing began, but Mary Ann's voice was not heard: he would have known it among a thousand. What was the universal admiration to him now? *she* did not see him, for whom he had travelled the long road, and for whom he now stood firm and straight as a statue. He heard little of the sermon; but, when the minister pronounced the bans of Mary Ann Bomiller, of Nordstetten, and George Melzer, of Wiesenstetten, poor Aloys no longer stood like a statue. His knees knocked under him, and his teeth chattered. He was the first who left the church. He ran home like a crazy man, threw his sword and his shako on the floor, hid himself in the hay-loft, and wept. More than once he thought of hanging himself, but he could not rise for dejection: all his limbs were palsied. Then he would remember his poor mother, and sob and cry aloud.

At last his mother came and found him in the hay-loft, cried with him, and tried to comfort him. "It was high time they were married," was the burden of her tale of Mary Ann. He wept long and loud; but at last he followed his mother like a lamb into the room. Seeing his picture, he tore

it from the wall and dashed it to pieces on the floor. For hours he sat behind the table and covered his face with his hands. Then suddenly he rose, whistled a merry tune, and asked for his dinner. He could not eat, however, but dressed himself, and went into the village. From the Adler he heard the sound of music and dancing. In passing Jacob's house, he cast down his eyes, as if he had reason to be ashamed; but when it was behind him he looked as proud as ever. Having reported himself and left his passport in the squire's hands, he went to the ball-room. He looked everywhere for Mary Ann, though he dreaded nothing more than to meet her. George was there, however. He came up to Aloys and stretched out his hand, saying, "Comrade, how are you?" Aloys looked at him as if he would have poisoned him with his eyes, then turned on his heel without a word of answer. It occurred to him that he ought to have said, "Comrade! the devil is your comrade, not I;" but it was too late now.

All the boys and girls now made him drink out of their glasses; but the wine tasted of wormwood. He sat down at a table and called for a "bottle of the best," and drank glass after glass, although it gave him no pleasure. Mechtilde, the daughter of his cousin Matthew of the Hill, stood near him, and he asked her to drink with him. She complied very readily, and remained at his side. Nobody was attentive to her: she had no sweetheart, and had not danced a round that day, as every one was constantly dancing with his or her sweetheart, or changing partners with some other.

"Mechtilde, wouldn't you like to dance?" said Aloys.

"Yes: come, let's try."

She took Aloys by the hand. He rose, put on his gloves, looked around the floor as if he had lost something, and then danced to the amazement of all the company. From politeness he took Mechtilde to a seat after the dance: by this he imposed a burden on himself, for she did not budge from his side all the evening. He cared but little for her conversation, and only pushed the glass toward her occasionally by way of invitation. His eyes were fixed fiercely on George, who sat not far from him. When some one asked the latter where Mary Ann was, he said, laughing, "She is poorly." Aloys bit his pipe till the mouthpiece broke off, and then spat it out with a "Pah!" which made George look at him furiously, thinking the exclamation addressed to him. Seeing that Aloys was quiet, he shrugged his shoulders in derision and began singing bad songs, which all had pretty much the same burden: -

"A bright boy will run through
Many a shoe;
An old fool will tear
Never a pair."

At midnight Aloys took his sword from the wall to go. George and his party now began to sing the "teaser," keeping time with their fists on the table: -

"Hey, Bob, 'ye goin' home?
'Ye gettin' scared? 'Ye gettin' sick?
Got no money, and can't get tick?
Hey, Bob, 'ye goin' home?"

Aloys turned back with some of his friends and called for two bottles more. They now sang songs of their own, while George and his gang were singing at the other table. George got up and cried, "Gawk, shut up!" Then Aloys seized a full bottle and hurled it at his head, sprang over the table, and caught him by the throat. The tables fell down, the glasses chinked on the floor, the music stopped. For a while all was still, as if the two were to throttle each other in silence: then suddenly the room was filled with shouting, whistling, scolding, and quarrelling. The bystanders interfered; but, according to custom, each party only restrained the adversary of the party he sided with, so as to give the latter a chance of drubbing his opponent undisturbed. Mechtilde held George by the head

until his hair came out by handfuls. The legs of chairs were now broken off, and all hands whacked each other to their hearts' content. Aloys and George remained as if fastened together by their teeth. At length Aloys gained his feet, and threw George down with such violence that he seemed to have broken his neck, and then kneeled down on him, and would have throttled him had not the watchman entered and put an end to the row. The musicians were sent home and the two chief combatants taken to the lock-up.

With his face black and blue, pale and haggard, Aloys left the village next day. His furlough had another day to run; but what should he do at home? He was glad enough to go soldiering again; and nothing would have pleased him better than a war. The squire had endorsed the story of the fracas on his passport, and a severe punishment awaited him on his return. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, but walked away almost without knowing it, and hoping never to return. At Horb, on seeing the signpost to Freudenstadt, which is on the way to Strasbourg, he stopped a long time and thought of deserting to France. Unexpectedly he found himself addressed by Mechtilde, who asked, "Why, Aloys, are you going back to Stuttgart already?"

"Yes," he answered, and went on his way. Mechtilde had come like an angel from heaven. With a friendly good-bye, they parted.

As he walked, he found himself ever and anon humming the song he had heard George sing so long ago, and which now, indeed, suited poor Mary Ann's case: -

"In a day, in a day,
Pride and beauty fade away.
Do thy checks with gladness tingle
Where the snows and roses mingle?
Oh, the roses all decay!"

At Stuttgart he never said a word to the sentry at the Tuebingen gate nor to the one at the barrack-gate. Like a criminal, he hardly raised his eyes. For eight days he did penance in a dark cell, – the "third degree" of punishment. At times he became so impatient that he could have dashed his head against the wall; and then again he would lie for days and nights half asleep.

When released from prison, he was attached for six weeks to the class of culprits who are never permitted to leave the barracks, but are bound to answer the call at every moment. He now cursed his resolution to become a soldier, which bound him for six years to the land of his birth. He would have gone away, far as could be.

One morning his mother Maria came with a letter from Matthew, in America. He had sent four hundred florins for Aloys to buy a field with, or, if he wished to join him, to buy himself clear of the army.

Aloys and Matthew of the Hill, with his wife and eight children, – Mechtilde among them, – left for America that same autumn.

While at sea he often hummed the curious but well-known old song, which he had never understood before: -

"Here, here, here, and here,
The ship is on her way;
There, there, there, and there,
The skipper goes to stay;
When the winds do rave and roar
As though the ship could swim no more,
My thoughts begin to ponder
And wander."

In his last letter from Ohio Aloys writes to his mother: -

"... My heart seems to ache at the thought that I must enjoy all these good things alone. I often wish all Nordstetten was here, – old Zahn, blind Conrad, Shacker of the stone quarry, Soges, Bat of the sour well, and Maurice of the hungry spring: they ought to be here, all of them, to eat their fill until they couldn't budge from their seats. What good does it do me while I am alone here? And then you might all see the gawk with his four horses in the stable and his ten colts in the field. If Mary Ann has any trouble, let me know about it, and I will send her something; but don't let her know from whom it comes. Oh, how I pity her! Matthew of the Hill lives two miles away. His Mechtilde is a good worker; but she is no Mary Ann, after all. I do hope she is doing well. Has she any children? On the way across there was a learned man with us on the ship, – Dr. Staerberle, of Ulm: he had a globe with him, and he showed me that when it is day in America it is night in Nordstetten, and so on. I never thought much about it till now. But when I am in the field and think, 'What are they doing now in Nordstetten?' I remember all at once that you are all fast asleep, and Shackerle's John, the watchman, is singing out, 'Two o'clock, and a cloudy morning.' On Sunday I can't bear to think that it is Saturday night in Nordstetten. All ought to have one day at once. Last Sunday was harvest-home in Nordstetten: I should never forget that, if I were to live a hundred years. I should like to be in Nordstetten for one hour, just to let the squire see what a free citizen of America looks like."

THE PIPE OF WAR

It is a singular story, and yet intimately connected with the great events of modern history, or, what is almost the same thing, with the history of Napoleon. Those were memorable times. Every farmer could see the whole array of history manœuvre and pass in review beneath his dormer-window: kings and emperors behaved like play-actors, and, sometimes assumed a different dress and a different character in every scene. And all this gorgeous spectacle was at the farmer's service, costing him nothing but his house and home, and occasionally, perhaps, his life. My neighbor Hansgeorge was not quite so unlucky, – as the story will show.

It was in the year 1796. We who live in these piping times of peace have no idea of the state of things which then existed: mankind seemed to have lost their fixed habitations and to be driving each other here and there at random. The Black Forest saw the Austrians, with their white coats, in one month, and in the next the French, with their laughing faces; then the Russians came, with their long beards; and mixed and mingled with them all were the Bavarians, Wurtembergers, and Hessians, in every possible uniform. The Black Forest was the open gate of Germany for the French to enter; it is only ten years since that Rastatt was placed as a bolt before it.

The marches and counter-marches, retreats and advances, cannonades and drum-calls, were enough at times to turn the head of a bear in winter; and many a head did indeed refuse to remain upon its shoulders. In a field not far from Baisingen is a hillock as high as a house, which, they say, contains nothing but dead soldiers, – French and Germans mixed.

But my neighbor Hansgeorge escaped being a soldier, although a fine sturdy fellow, well fit to stand before the king, and the people too, and just entering his nineteenth year. It happened in this wise. Wendel, the mason, married a wife from Empfingen, and on the day before the wedding the bride was packed on a wagon with all her household goods, her blue chest, her distaff, and her bran-new cradle. Thus she was conveyed to the village, while the groom's friends rode on horseback behind, cracking off their pistols from time to time to show how glad they were. Hansgeorge was among them, and always shot more than all the others. When the cavalcade had reached the brick-yard, where the pond is at your right hand and the kiln at your left, Hansgeorge fired again; but, almost before the pistol went off, Hansgeorge was heard to shriek with pain. The pistol dropped from his hand, and he would have fallen from his horse but for Fidele, his friend, who caught him in his arms. He had shot off the forefinger of his right hand, just at the middle joint. Every one came up, eager to lend assistance; and even Kitty of the brick-kiln came up, and almost fainted on seeing Hansgeorge's finger just hanging by the skin. Hansgeorge clenched his teeth and looked steadily at Kitty. He was carried into the brickmaker's house. Old Jake, the farrier, who knew how to stop the blood, was sent for in all haste; while another ran to town for Dr. Erath, the favorite surgeon.

When Old Jake came into the room, all were suddenly silent, and stepped back, so as to form a sort of avenue, through which he walked toward the wounded man, who was lying on the bench behind the table. Kitty alone came forward, and said, "Jake, for God's sake, help Hansgeorge!" The latter opened his eyes and turned his head toward the speaker, and when Jake stood before him, mumbling as he touched his hand, the blood ceased running.

This time, however, it was not Jake's witchcraft which produced the result, but another kind of magic. Hansgeorge no sooner heard Kitty's words than he felt all the blood rush to his heart, and of course the hemorrhage ceased.

Dr. Erath came and amputated the finger. Hansgeorge bore the cruel pain like a hero. As he lay in a fever for hours after, he seemed to see an angel hovering over him and fanning him. He did not know that Kitty was driving the flies away, often bringing her hand very near his face: such neighborhood of a loving hand, even though there be no actual touch, has marvellous effects, and may well have fashioned the dream in his wandering brain. Then again he saw a veiled figure: he could

never recall exactly how she looked; but-so curious are our dreams-it had a finger in its mouth, and smoked tobacco with it, as if it were a pipe: the blue whiffs rose up from rings of fire.

Kitty observed that the closed lips of Hansgeorge moved in his sleep. When he awoke, the first thing he called for was his pipe. He had the finest pipe in the village; and we must regard it more closely, as it is destined to play an important part in this history. The head was of Ulm manufacture, marbled so that you might fancy the strangest figures by looking at it. The lid was of silver, shaped like a helmet, and so bright that you could see your face in it, and that twice over, – once upside-down and once right side up. At the lower edge also, as well as at the stock, the head was tipped with silver. A double silver chain served as the cord, and secured the short stem as well as the long, crooked, many-jointed mouthpiece. Was not that a splendid pipe?

"And who shall dare
To chide him for loving his pipe so fair,"

even as an ancient hero loved his shield?

What vexed Hansgeorge most in the loss of his finger was, that he could not fill his pipe without difficulty. Kitty laughed, and scolded him for his bad taste; but she filled his pipe nevertheless, took a coal from the fire to light it, and even drew a puff or two herself. She shook herself, and made a face, as if she was dreadfully disgusted. Hansgeorge had never liked a pipe better than that which Kitty started for him.

Although it was the middle of summer, Hansgeorge could not be taken home with his wound, and was compelled to stay at the brickmaker's house. With this the patient was very well content; for, although his parents came to nurse him, he knew very well that times would come when he would be alone with Kitty.

The next day was Wendel's wedding; and when the church-bell rang and the inevitable wedding-march was played in the village, Hansgeorge whistled an accompaniment in his bed. After church the band paraded through the village where the prettiest girls were, or where their sweethearts lived. The boys and girls joined the procession, which swelled as it went on: they came to the brickmaker's house also. Fidele, as George's particular friend, came in with his sweetheart to take Kitty off to the dance; but she thanked them, pleaded household duties, and remained at home. Hansgeorge rejoiced greatly at this, and when they were alone he said, -

"Kitty, never mind: there'll be another wedding soon, and then you and I will dance our best."

"A wedding?" said Kitty, sadly: "who is going to be married?"

"Come here, please," said Hansgeorge, smiling. Kitty approached, and he continued: – "I may as well confess it: I shot my finger off on purpose, because I don't want to be a soldier."

Kitty started back, screaming, and covered her face with her apron.

"What makes you scream?" said Hansgeorge. "A'n't you glad of it? You ought to be, for you are the cause."

"Jesus! Maria! Joseph! No, no! surely I am innocent! Oh, Hansgeorge, what a sinful thing you have done! Why, you might have killed yourself! You are a wild, bad man! I never could live with you; I am afraid of you."

She would have fled; but Hansgeorge held her with his left hand. She tried to tear herself away, turned her back, and gnawed the end of her apron: Hansgeorge would have given the world for a look, but all his entreaties were in vain. He let her go, and waited a while to see whether she would turn round; but, as she did not, he said, with a faltering voice, -

"Will you be so kind as to fetch my father? I want to go home."

"No; you know you can't go home: you might get the lockjaw: Dr. Erath said you might," returned Kitty, – still without looking at him.

"If you won't fetch anybody, I'll go alone," said Hansgeorge.

Kitty turned and looked on him with tearful eyes, eloquent with entreaty and tender solicitude. George took her offered hand, and gazed long and earnestly into the face of his beloved. It was by no means a face of regular beauty: it was round, full, and plump; the whole head formed almost a perfect sphere; the forehead was high and strongly protruding, the eyes lay deep in their sockets, and the little pug nose, which had a mocking and bantering expression, and the swelling cheeks, all proclaimed health and strength, but not delicacy or refinement. George regarded her in her burning blushes as if she had been the queen of beauty.

They remained silent for a long time. At last Kitty said, "Shall I fill your pipe for you?"

"Yes," said George, and let go her hand.

This proposal of Kitty's was the best offer of reconciliation. Both felt it as such, and never exchanged another word on the subject of their dispute.

In the evening many boys and girls, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, came to take Kitty to the dance; but she refused to go. Hansgeorge smiled. When he asked Kitty to go as a favor to him, she skipped joyfully away, and soon came back in her holiday gown. Another difficulty arose, however. With all their good nature, none of the comers cared to give up their dance and stay with Hansgeorge; and Kitty had just announced her intention, when, fortunately, old Jake came in. For a good stoup of wine, – which they promised to send him from the inn, – he agreed to sit up all night, if necessary.

Hansgeorge had got Dr. Erath to preserve his finger in alcohol, and intended to make Kitty a present of it; but, with all her strength of nerve, the girl dreaded it like a spectre, and could hardly be induced to touch the phial. As soon as Hansgeorge was able to leave the house, they went into the garden and buried the finger. Hansgeorge stood by, lost in thought, while Kitty shovelled the earth upon it. The wrong he had done his country by making himself unfit to serve it never occurred to him; but he remembered that a part of the life which was given him lay there never to rise again. It seemed as if, while full of life, he were attending his own funeral; and the firm resolve grew in him to atone for the waste committed of a part of himself by the more conscientiously husbanding what yet remained. A thought of death flitted across his mind, and he looked up with mingled sadness and pleasure to find himself yet spared and the girl of his heart beside him. Such reflections glimmered somewhat dimly in his soul, and he said, "Kitty, you are quite right: I committed a great sin. I hope it will be forgiven me." She embraced and kissed him, and he seemed to have a foretaste of the absolution yet to come.

One would expect to find in a man a peculiar fondness for the spot where a part of his bodily self is buried. As our native country is doubly dear to us because the bodies of those we love are resting there, – as the whole earth is revealed in all its holiness when we call to mind that it is the sepulchre of ages past, that so must a man who has already surrendered a part of his dust to become dust again be attracted by the sacred claims of earth, and often turn to the resting-place of his unfettered portion.

"all who tread
The earth are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom," -

Thoughts like these, though vaguely conceived, cannot be supposed to have taken clear form and shape in such a mind as that of our friend Hansgeorge. He went to the brickmaker's house every day; but it was in obedience to the attraction, not of something dead, but of a living being. But, joyfully as he went, he sometimes came away quite sad and downhearted; for Kitty seemed intent upon teasing and worrying him. The first thing she required, and never ceased requiring, was that he should give up smoking. She never allowed him to kiss her when he had smoked, and before she would sit near him he was always obliged to hide his darling pipe. In the brickmaker's room he could

not smoke on any account; and, much as he liked to be there, he always took his way home again before long. Kitty was not mistaken in often rallying him about this.

Hansgeorge was greatly vexed at Kitty's pertinacity, and always came back to his favorite enjoyment with redoubled zest. It appeared to him unmanly to submit to a woman's dictation: woman ought to yield, he thought; and then it must be confessed that it was quite out of his power to renounce his habit. He tried it once in haying-time for two days; but he seemed to be fasting all the time: something was missing constantly. He soon drew forth his pipe again; and, while he held it complacently between his teeth and struck his flint, he muttered to himself, "Kitty and all the women in the world may go to the devil before I'll stop smoking." Here he struck his finger with the steel, and, shaking the smarting hand, "This is a judgment," thought he; "for it isn't exactly true, after all."

At last autumn came on, and George was pronounced unfit for military service. Some other farmers' boys had imitated his trick by pulling out their front teeth, so as to make themselves unable to bite open the cartridges; but the military commission regarded this as intentional self-mutilation, while that of George, from its serious character, was pronounced a misfortune. The toothless ones were taken into the carting and hauling service, and so compelled to go to the wars, after all. With defective teeth they had to munch the hard rations of the soldiers' mess; and at last they were made to bite the dust, – which, indeed, they could have done as well without any teeth at all.

In the beginning of October, the French general Moreau made good his famous retreat across the Black Forest. A part of his army passed through Nordstetten: it was spoken of for several days before. There was fear and trembling in all the village, and none knew which way to turn. A hole was dug in every cellar, and every thing valuable concealed. The girls took off their strings of garnets with the silver medallions, and drew their silver rings from their fingers, to bury them. All went unadorned, as if in mourning. The cattle were driven into a secluded ravine near Eglesthal. The boys and girls looked at each other sadly when the approaching foe was mentioned: many a young fellow sought the handle of his knife, which peeped out of his side-pocket.

The Jews were more unfortunate than any others. Rob a farmer of every thing you can carry away, and you must still leave him his field and his plough; but all the possessions of the Jews are movables, – money and goods: they, therefore, trembled doubly and trebly. The Jewish Rabbi – a shrewd and adroit man – hit upon a lucky expedient. He placed a large barrel of red wine, well inspirited with brandy, before his house, and a table with bottles and glasses beside it, for the unbidden guests to regale themselves. The device succeeded to perfection, – the more so as the French were rather in a hurry.

In fact, the storm passed over, doing much less damage than was expected. The villagers collected in large groups to view the passing troops. The cavalry came first, then a long column of infantry.

Hansgeorge had gone to the brick-yard with his comrades Xavier and Fidele: he wished to be near Kitty in case of emergency. The three stood in the garden before the house, leaning upon the fence, Hansgeorge calmly smoking his pipe. Kitty looked out of the window and said, "George, if you'll stop smoking you may come into the house with your friends."

"We are quite comfortable here, thank you," replied Hansgeorge, sending up three or four whiffs in quick succession.

On came the cavalry. They rode in entire disorder, each apparently occupied with himself alone; and nothing showed that they belonged together save the common interest manifested in any deviltry undertaken by any one of them. Several impudently kissed their hands to Kitty, – at which Hansgeorge grasped his jack-knife and Kitty quickly closed the sash. The infantry were followed by the forage-wagons and the pitiable cavalcade of the wounded and dying. This was a wretched sight. One of them stretched forth a hand which had but four fingers. This curdled Hansgeorge's blood in his veins: it seemed to him as if he himself were lying there. The poor sufferer had nothing but a kerchief round his head, and seemed to shiver with cold. Hansgeorge jumped over the fence, pulled

off his fur cap, and set it on the poor man's head; then he gave him his leathern purse with all the money in it. The poor fellow made some signs with his mouth, as if he wished to smoke, and looked beseechingly at Hansgeorge's pipe; but the latter shook his head. Kitty brought some bread and some linen, and laid them on the cart. The maimed warriors looked with pleasure on the blooming lass, and some made her a military salute and garbled some broken German. No one asked whether they were friends or foes: the unfortunate and helpless have a claim on every one.

Another troop of cavalry brought up the rear. Kitty stood at the window again, while Hansgeorge and his comrades had returned to their post at the garden-gate. Suddenly Fidele exclaimed, "Look out: the marauders are coming."

Two ragged fellows in half-uniform, without saddle or stirrup, came galloping up. While yet a few yards off, they stopped and whispered something to each other, at which one of them was heard to laugh. They then rode up slowly, the one coming very near the fence. Quick as a flash he tore the pipe out of Hansgeorge's mouth, and galloped off at the top of his horse's speed. Putting the still-burning pipe into his mouth, he puffed away merrily in derision. Hansgeorge held his chin with both his hands: every tooth seemed to have been torn out of his jaw. Kitty laughed heartily, crying, "Go get your pipe, Hansgeorge: I'll let you smoke now."

"I'll get it," said Hansgeorge, breaking a board of the fence in his fury. "Come, Fidele, Xavier; let's get our horses out and after them: I won't let the rascals have my pipe, if I must die for it."

His two comrades went away and took the horses out of the stable. Kitty came running over, however, and called Hansgeorge into the house. He came reluctantly, for he was angry with her for laughing at him; but she took his hand, trembling, and said, "For God's sake, Hansgeorge, let the pipe alone. I'll do any thing to please you if you'll only mind me now. How can you let them kill you for such a good-for-nothing pipe? Do stay here, I beg of you."

"I won't stay here! I don't care if they do send a bullet through my head! What should I stay here for? You never do any thing but tease me."

"No, no!" cried Kitty, falling upon his neck: "you must stay here! I won't let you go."

Hansgeorge felt a strange thrill pass through him; but he asked, saucily, "Will you be my wife, then?"

"Yes, yes, I will, Hansgeorge! I will!"

They embraced each other with transport, and Hansgeorge exclaimed, "I'll never put a pipe into my mouth again as long as I live: if I do, I hope I may be-"

"No, no; don't swear, but keep your word: that's much better. But now you will stay here, won't you, Hansgeorge? Let the pipe and the Frenchman go to the devil together."

Xavier and Fidele now came riding up, armed with pitchforks, and cried, "Hurry up, Hansgeorge! hurry up!"

"I am not going with you," said Hansgeorge.

"What will you give us if we bring your pipe back?" asked Fidele.

"You may keep it."

They rode off post-haste down the Empfingen road, Hansgeorge and Kitty looking after them. At the little hill by the clay-pit they had nearly caught up to the marauders; but when the latter found themselves pursued they turned, brandished their swords, and one of them drew a pistol. Fidele and Xavier, seeing this, turned round also, and returned faster than they had come.

From that day Hansgeorge never touched a pipe. Four weeks later his and Kitty's banns were read in the church.

One day Hansgeorge went to the brickmaker's: he had come unperceived, having taken the back way. He heard Kitty say to some one inside. "So you are sure it is the same?"

"Of course it is," said the person addressed, whose voice he recognised as belonging to Little Red Meyer, a Jewish peddler. "Why, they were always seen together: for my part, I don't see how he ever made up his mind to marry anybody else."

"Well," said Kitty, laughingly, "I only want to make him stare a little on our wedding-day. So you won't disappoint me, will you?"

"I'll do it as sure as I want to make a hundred thousand florins."

"But Hansgeorge mustn't hear a word about it."

"Mum's the word," said Little Red Meyer, and took his leave.

Hansgeorge came in rather sheepishly, being ashamed to confess that he had been listening. But when they sat closely side by side, he said, "Kitty, don't let them put any nonsense into your head: it's no such thing. They once used to say that I was courting the maid at the Eagle, who is now in Rothweil: don't you believe a bit of it. I wasn't confirmed then: it was nothing but child's-play."

Kitty pretended to lay great stress on this matter, and put Hansgeorge to a world of trouble to clear himself. In the evening he did his best to pump the whole secret out of Little Red Meyer; but all in vain: his word was "mum."

Hansgeorge had many things to go through with yet, and, in a manner, to run the gauntlet of the whole village. On the Sunday before the wedding, he, as well as his "playmate" Fidele, adorned their hats and left arms with red ribbons, and went, thus accoutred, from house to house, the groom that was to be repeating the following speech at every call: – "I want you to come to the wedding on Tuesday, at the Eagle. If we can do the same for you, we will. Be sure to come. Don't forget. Be sure to come." Thereupon the housewife invariably opened the table-drawer and brought out a loaf of bread and a knife, saying, "There! have some bread." Then the intended groom was expected to cut a piece from the loaf and take it with him. The loss of his forefinger made Hansgeorge rather awkward at this operation; and many would hurt his feelings unintentionally by saying, "Why, Hansgeorge, you can't cut the bread. You oughtn't to get married: you are unfit for service."

Hansgeorge rejoiced greatly when this ordeal was over.

The wedding was celebrated with singing and rejoicing, although there was no shooting, as it had been strictly forbidden since Hansgeorge's misfortune.

The dinner was uncommonly merry. Immediately after it, Kitty slipped out into the kitchen, and came back with the memorable pipe in her mouth: no one, at least, could say that it was not the same. Kitty puffed away a little with a wry face, and then handed it to Hansgeorge, saying, "There, take it: you have kept your word like a man, and now you may smoke as much as you please. I don't mind it a bit."

Hansgeorge blushed up to the eyes, but shook his head. "What I have said is said, and not a mouse shall bite a crumb off: I'll never smoke again in all my life. But, Kitty, I may kiss you after you've done smoking, mayn't I?"

He strained her to his heart, and then confessed, laughing, that he had overheard a part of Kitty's talk with Little Red Meyer, and had supposed they were speaking of the maid at the Eagle. The joke was much relished by all the company.

The pipe was hung up in state over the wedding-bed of the young couple; and Hansgeorge often points to it in proof of the maxim that love and resolution will enable a man to overcome any weakness or foible.

Many years are covered by a few short words. Hansgeorge and Kitty are venerable grandparents, enjoying a ripe old age in the midst of their descendants. The pipe is an heirloom in which their five sons have a common property: not one of them has ever learned to smoke.

MANOR-HOUSE FARMER'S VEFELA

1

Not many will divine the orthography of this name in the Almanac; yet it is by no means uncommon, and the fate of the poor child who bore it reminds one strongly of the German story of her afflicted patroness, the holy St. Genevieve.

The grandest house in all the village, which has such a broad front toward the street that all the wandering journeymen stop there to ask for a little "assistance," once belonged to Vefela's father: the houses standing on each side of it were his barns. The father is dead, the mother is dead, and the children are dead. The grand house is now a linen-factory. The barns have been altered into houses, and Vefela has disappeared without a trace.

One thing alone remains, and will probably remain for all time to come. Throughout the village the grand house still goes by the name of the Manor-Farmer's House; for old Zahn, Vefela's father, was called the Manor-House Farmer. He was not a native of the village, but had moved there from Baisingen, which is five miles away. Baisingen is one of those fertile villages called "straw shires," and the Baisingers were nicknamed "straw-boots," from their custom of strewing the streets of the village with straw. The German peasantry are not difficult to please in point of cleanliness; and such a device suits their tastes for two reasons: it saves street-sweeping and helps to make manure for the numerous fields of such rich folk as the Baisingers. The Manor-House Farmer lived in the village thirty years; but he never had a dispute without hearing himself reviled as the Baisingen straw-boots, and his wife as the Baisingen cripple. Mrs. Zahn had a fine figure and a good carriage; but her left leg was a little short and made her limp in walking. This defect was a chief cause of her unusual wealth. Her father, whose name was Stauffer, once said publicly at the inn that the short leg shouldn't hurt his daughter, because he would put a peck of crown-thalers under it as her wedding-portion, and see if that wouldn't make it straight.

He kept his word; for when his daughter married Zahn he filled a peck-measure with as many dollars as would go into it, stroked it as if it had been wheat, and said, "There! what's in it is yours." To keep up the joke, his daughter was told to set her foot upon it, and the peck of silver flourished on the wedding-table as one of the dishes.

With this money Zahn bought the manorial estate of the counts of Schleithem, and built the fine house from which he took his nickname. Of nine children born to him, five lived, – three sons and two daughters. The youngest child was Vefela. She was so pretty and of such delicate frame that they used to call her, half in scorn and half in earnest, "the lady." Partly from pity and partly from malice, every one said in speaking of her that she was "marked," for she had inherited the short leg of her mother. This expression has an evil meaning: it is applied to humpbacks, to one-eyed and lame persons, as if to insinuate that God had marked them as dangerous and evil-disposed. Being too frequently treated with scorn and suspicion, these unfortunates are often bitter, crabbed, and deceitful: the prejudice against them provokes the very consequences afterward alleged in proof of its truth.

It was not that Vefela did harm to any one: she was kind and gentle to all. But the hatred felt by all the village against the manor-house farmer was transferred to his children.

For eighteen years the manor-house farmer carried on a lawsuit with the village commune. He claimed the seignorial rights of the estate. He had fifty votes in the election of the squire; and he drew the smoking-tithe, the chicken-tithe, the road-tithe, and a hundred other perquisites, which the farmers never paid without the greatest chagrin, grumbling, and quarrelling. Such is human nature! A count or a baron would have received all these taxes without much difficulty; but the farmer had to swallow a curse with every grain which was yielded by his fellows. For want of a better revenge,

they mowed down the manor-house farmer's rye-fields at night while the corn was yet green. But this only made matters worse, for the manor-house farmer recovered his damages from the commune; and he employed a gamekeeper of his own, half of whose salary the villagers were bound to pay. So there was no end to petty disagreements.

A new lawyer having settled in the little town of Sulz, a lawsuit began between the manor-house farmer and the commune, in which paper enough was used up to cover acres of ground. Like a great portion of the Black Forest, the village then belonged to Austria. The "Landoogt" sat at Rottensburg, the court of appeals at Friburg in the Breisgau: an important case could be carried still further. In the complicated state of the higher tribunals, it was easy to keep a suit in a proper state of confusion to the day of judgment.

The quarrel between the manor-house farmer and the villagers grew in time into a standing feud between Baisingen and Nordstetten. When they met at markets or in towns, the Baisingers called the Nordstetters their subjects or copyholders, because a Baisingen man ruled over them. The Nordstetters, who went by the nickname of Peaky-mouths, never failed to retort. One sally provoked another: the badinage remained friendly for a time, but grew more and more bitter, and, before any one expected it, there was a declared state of war, and cudgellings were heard of on all sides. The first occurred at the Ergenzingen fair; and after that the two parties rarely met without a skirmish. They would travel for hours to a dance or a wedding, drink and dance quietly together for a while, and finally break into the real object of their visit, – the general shindy.

The manor-house farmer lived in the village as if it were a wilderness. None bade him the time of day; nobody came to see him. When he entered the inn, there was a general silence. It always seemed as if they had just been talking about him. He would lay his well-filled tobacco-pouch upon the table beside him; but the company would sooner have swallowed pebbles than asked the manor-house farmer for a pipeful of tobacco. At first he took great pains to disarm the general ill-will by kindness and courtesy, for he was a good man by nature, though a little rigid; but when he saw that his efforts were fruitless he began to despise them all, gave himself no more trouble about them, and only confirmed his determination to gain his point. He withdrew from all companionship of his own accord, hired men from Ahldorf to do his field-work, and even went to church at Horb every Sunday. He looked stately enough when on this errand. His broad shoulders and well-knit frame made him seem shorter than he really was; his three-cornered hat was set a little jauntily on the left side of his head, with the broad brim in front. The shadow thus flung on his face gave it an appearance of fierceness and austerity. The closely-ranged silver buttons on his collarless blue coat, and the round silver knobs on his red vest, jingled, as he walked, like a chime of little bells.

His wife and children-particularly the two daughters, Agatha and Vefela-suffered most under this state of things. They often sat together bewailing their lot and weeping, while their father was discussing his stoup of wine with his lawyer in town and did not return till late in the evening. They had become so much disliked that the very beggars were afraid to ask alms of them, for fear of offending their other patrons. In double secrecy, as well from their father as from their neighbors, they practised charity. Like thieves in the night, they would smuggle potatoes and flour into the garden, where the poor awaited them.

At last this was too much for Mrs. Zahn to bear: so she went to her father and told him all her troubles. Old Stauffer was a quiet, careful man, who liked to be safe in whatever he did. First of all, therefore, he sent his peddler-in-ordinary and general adviser in the practical duties of his magisterial office, who was of course a Jew, and bore the name of Marem, to Nordstetten, directing him to inquire privately who were the actual ringleaders in carrying on the lawsuit, and to see whether the matter could not be settled. Marem did so, but with an eye to his private interests. He procured an acquaintance to spread the report that the manor-house farmer had succeeded in having an imperial commission appointed to come to Nordstetten and remain there until the matter was finally adjudicated, at the expense of the losing party. Then he went himself to the leading spirits,

and told them that for a certain compensation he would bring about a compromise, though it would be no easy matter. Thus he secured a perquisite from both parties. But what is the use of all this fine manoeuvring, when you have men to deal with who act like bears and spoil the most exact calculations with their savage ferocity?

Old Staufer now came to Nordstetten, and Marem with him. They went to the inn, accompanied by the manor-house farmer, "to meet the spokesmen of the village.

"Good-morning, squire," said the assembled guests to the three men as they entered, acting as if no one but old Staufer himself had come. The latter started at this, but called for two bottles of wine, filled his glass, and drank the health of the company, jingling his glass against the glasses of the others. But Ludwig the locksmith replied, "Thank you, but we can't drink. No offence, squire, but we never drink till after the bargain is made. What the rich gentlemen-farmers of Baisingen do is more than we can say."

The squire took his glass from his lips and sighed deeply. He then went to business with much calmness; dwelt upon the folly of throwing away one's dearly-bought earnings to "those blood-suckers," the lawyers, reminded the company that every lawsuit eat out of one's dish and skimmed the marrow-fat from one's soup, and concluded by saying that a little allowance here and a little allowance there would bring about a peace.

Each party now proposed a composition; but the two propositions were far apart. Marem did all he could to bring them nearer to each other. He took aside first the one and then the other, to whisper something into their ears. At length he took upon himself, in the teeth of objections made on both sides, to fix a sum. He pulled them all by the sleeves and coat-tails, and even tried to force their hands into each other.

After much wrangling, the manor-house farmer said, "Sooner than take such a beggar's bit as that, I'll make you a present of the whole, you starvelings!"

"Why, who spoke to you," said Ludwig the locksmith, "you straw-boots?"

"You'll never walk on straw as long as you live," replied the manor-house farmer. "I'll find such beds for you that you won't have straw enough under your heads to sleep on. And if I should be ruined, and my wife and child too, and not have a span of ground left, I'll not let you off another farthing. I'll have my rights, if I must go to the emperor himself. Mark my words." He gnashed his teeth as he rose, and all hope of a compromise was gone. At last he even quarrelled with his father-in-law, and went out, banging the door after him.

When he came home, his wife and daughters wept as if somebody had died, so that all the passers-by stopped to learn what was the matter. But all their entreaties could not turn the manor-house farmer from his purpose. Old Staufer returned home without coming to see his daughter: he sent Marem to say good-bye to her.

The old state of things went on. The manor-house farmer and his wife had frequent differences, which Vefela had to settle. The father had a sort of reverence for "the child," for such was the name by which she went all over the house. There was such angelic mildness in her face, and her voice had such a magic charm, that if she only took his hand, looked up into his face with her blue eyes, and said, "Dear daddy," he became meek and gentle at once: the strong man followed the guidance of his child as if it were a higher being; he never spoke a harsh word in her presence, and did every thing to please her, except only to make peace with his enemies.

Yet on this very subject the obstinacy of the manor-house farmer was but the cloak for a great struggle which was going on in his mind. He would fain have extended the hand of reconciliation, but was ashamed to confess what he called his weakness; and, as matters had gone so far, he thought his honor was at stake in keeping up the war. The thought of his honor recalled his pride; and he thought himself superior to the other farmers. This notion was fostered by the fawning law-clerks of the town and by mine host of the Crown Inn there, who always talked to him of his excellent mind and of his barony. He did not believe what they said; but still he liked to hear it. Finding, in time, that

the townsfolk were really no wiser than himself, and convinced, like all European peasants, that the city is inhabited by beings of a far different order from those who plod in the fields, he could not but come to the conclusion that the peasantry were far beneath him. Not that he really enjoyed the society of this sort of people, who never objected to his standing treat for a stoup of wine; "but," thought he, "a man must have some company, and it's better than farmers' gossip, after all." At last, without avowing it even to himself, he enjoyed the stimulus to his vanity which their conversation afforded.

Such is life. The manor-house farmer quarrelled with himself, with his wife, with his fellow-men, with everybody and every thing, because he would not humble himself to surrender a jot or tittle of these old feudal rights, or rather wrongs, when he had enough and to spare without them: the confusion of his heart and of his mind increased from day to day, and he undermined his happiness and that of his family when they might all have enjoyed so much good fortune.

After a time, a few old farmers, who had no warm stoves at home, or whose scolding wives made their dwellings too hot to hold them, would drop in to see the manor-house farmer of a winter evening; but he received them sullenly, vexed that these only came and not the more important and influential. Their visits soon ceased.

The mother and daughters often spent a week with her father at Baisingen, but the manor-house farmer did not go with them. He never saw his father-in-law again until he lay upon his bier.

The life in the village became more and more disagreeable. It is a sad thing to go into the fields and not receive a friendly greeting from all you meet. The manor-house farmer, to make the time pass away, was forced to talk to his dog, Sultan, – a poor entertainment for a man at any time.

The hard times brought upon Europe by Napoleon did not leave a single farm-house of the Black Forest unvisited. Strasbourg was not far away, and those who had good hearing maintained that they had heard the shots fired off there in honor of the French victories. This was said to be a sign of great trouble in the land, – just as if any sign were needed to show that things would be turned upside-down.

The preparations for the Russian campaign were going on briskly. The manor-house farmer's oldest sons, Philip and Caspar, were forced to go: their father would rather have gone himself, for he was tired of every thing. He saw the departure of his sons with the stony silence of one whose faculties for wishes or for hopes were gone.

Philip and Caspar were probably buried in the Russian snows: at all events, they have never been heard of. General Huegel used to tell a story of a soldier whom he had seen on the retreat from Moscow leaving the ranks and shedding copious tears over his many distresses. The general rode up to him and asked, kindly, "Where are you from?"

"I'm the manor-house farmer's boy from the Black Forest over there," answered the soldier, pointing sideways, as if his father's house were within gunshot around the corner. The general was so much amused by the soldier's answer that the tears ran down his cheeks also and turned to icicles in his mustache.

This is all that was ever known of the life and death of the manor-house farmer's two sons.

Meantime, pleasure and pain were mingled at home. When a misfortune lasts long, people manage to live in it as if it were a house, and make themselves comfortable. While in health, man cannot cultivate sorrow beyond a given length of time, the fountain of life always lifts the gladness of life like the sunbeams upon its waters. Harvest-homes and weddings were once more held at home, while far away in the distant steppe hundreds of sons, brothers, and sweethearts were laid on the cold bed of death.

Agatha, the oldest daughter, was engaged to be married to the innkeeper of Entingen: the manor-house farmer, at war with the whole village, had to see his children travel out of his sight and easy reach. At the wedding-day, Vefela, the bride's-maid, looked beautiful. She was dressed just like the bride, with a crown or tiara of glittering silver-foil around her head, and her hair, which hung down her back in two long wefts, tied in red silk ribbons a handbreadth wide. This is a decoration

which none but virgins are permitted to wear: those who cannot claim the title are compelled to wear white linen ribbons or tape. Around her neck was the chain of garnets worn by every peasant-girl, the dark color of which displayed the brilliant fairness of her tints to great advantage. The collar of white lace was partially covered by a nosegay which was set in the bosom of her scarlet bodice with its silver chains and clasps. The wide blue skirt reached down to the knees and was half covered with, a white apron; at the shoulders, and at the ends of her short linen sleeves, red ribbons fluttered gayly. The high-heeled, wooden-soled shoes made her limping gait more unsteady still. And yet, as she walked to the church beside her sister to the sound of music and the firing of pistols, she looked so charming that all wished she had been the bride instead of the bride's-maid.

Who knows where were the manor-house farmer's sons while he sat with his guests at the wedding-table? No one thought of them. Once only Vefela sank into a deep brown study and gazed fixedly into vacancy. She seemed to see nothing of what was going on around her: her look seemed to pierce the walls and to wander searching into space. She was thinking of her brothers that were gone.

Not two months later, Melchior, the third son of the manor-house farmer, was married also. At Agatha's wedding he had made the acquaintance of the only daughter of the innkeeper of the Angel, in Ergenzingen, and engaged himself to her. Although Melchior was still very young and scarcely a year older than Vefela, the wedding was hurried as much as possible, lest he might also be forced to go to the wars. Melchior left the village, and Vefela was left at home alone. The mother's health failed. A silent grief was gnawing at her life. She always wished to induce her husband to sell all he had and live with one of his married children; but his answers were so harsh that she was forced to drop the subject. These were sad times for Vefela, for she was always called upon to mediate and make peace. Her mother's ill-health increased her fretfulness; and she often said that if her father were still living she would leave her husband. These two people had lived to see the second generation which issued from their union, and yet they could not come to understand each other: the older they grew the more did their heart-burnings and bickerings increase. Vefela always brought matters around, and wore an air of gayety and happiness; but in private she often wept bitterly over her sad lot and that of her parents, and made many vows never to marry. She knew no one to whom she would have devoted herself; and then she saw how much she was needed in the house to prevent the smouldering flames from bursting through the ashes. It is written that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children. Such is the case particularly with evil marriages. The heart that is without love to its father and its mother is exposed to many dangers.

The death of Vefela's mother suddenly made her father feel how dearly, after all, he had loved her in his inmost heart. He grieved to think that he had not been more indulgent, and that he had often taken her ailments for pretexts and affectation. Every unkind word he had uttered stung him to the soul: he would gladly have given his life to recall it. Such are we. Instead of bearing with and sustaining each other in life, most men grieve when it is too late, when death has made the irreparable separation. Why not love while yet we live? Every hour not spent in kindness is so much robbed from the life of those around us, which can never be restored.

On Sunday the manor-house farmer no longer went to church in the town, but to the village church, for his wife lay buried beneath the shadow of its steeple: he always took the roundabout way of the churchyard. The weekly visit to his wife's grave seemed like an effort to atone for his shortcomings toward her in life.

The house was all quiet now. Not a loud word was spoken, and Vefela ruled there like a spirit of peace. Peace was there, but not joy: some one seemed to be always missed or anxiously expected. Still, the effect of Vefela's management on the manor-house farmer was such that he gradually regained his spirits: he did nothing without consulting "the child." Indeed, he left almost every thing to her disposal: when any thing was asked of him, he usually answered, "Ask Vefela."

Thus they lived for years. Vefela was over five-and-twenty. Many suitors asked for her hand; but she always said that she did not wish to marry; and her father always assented. "Vefela," he would

say, "you are too refined for a farmer, and when I have gained my lawsuit we will move into town, and I will give you a peck of dollars for your portion, and you can choose a gentleman." Vefela would laugh; but secretly she agreed with her father, at least in so far that she made up her mind that if she ever did marry it should not be a farmer. She had suffered so much from the ill-governed passions and implacable hatred of the peasantry that she had contracted a great hatred against them. She thought that in town, where people are more refined and have better manners, they must also be better and truer. She had steeled herself to bear her troubles only by looking upon the people about her as coarse, and herself as something higher; and, after pondering on the matter for so many years, she had come not only to think herself better, but even to fancy that she occupied a higher position. This was her great misfortune.

2

It is a great mistake to suppose that in the country people, may live alone and undisturbed. Such a thing is only possible in a large city, where men take no interest in each others' affairs, where one man may meet the other daily for years, and never think of inquiring who he is or what he does; where you pass a human being without a greeting or even a look, just as if he were a stone. In the country, where everybody knows everybody, each one is compelled to account to all the others' for what he does: no one can rest content with the approbation of his own judgment. In the Black Forest the passing word of recognition varies with the direction of your steps. If you are going down hill, the passer-by inquires, "You going down there?" If you are ascending, "You going up there?" If he finds you loading a wagon, he says, "Don't load too heavy," or, "Don't work too hard." If you are sitting before your door or on a stile, it is, "You resting a little?" If two are talking, the third man who passes by says, "Good counsel, neighbors?" and so on.

There is a charm in this communion of work and rest, word and thought; but the custom has its drawbacks. Any one having good or bad reasons of his own for disposing of his time in a manner different from what is customary has to contend against the gossip and the jibes and mockery of all. An old bachelor or an old maid are in particular the butts of this sort of street-raillery, whether it be from poverty or any other motive that they cling to their single condition.

The more Vefela approached the sombre years of old-maidhood, the more was the "manor-house lady" persecuted by this sort of fun. One Sunday, as she walked through the village, a crowd of young men were standing before the town-hall, and "Tralla," the butt of the village, – a poor simpleton who was half dumb, – stood near them. When they saw Vefela, one of them cried, "Tralla, there comes your sweetheart." Tralla grinned from ear to ear. They urged him on to take his sweetheart by the arm. Poor Vefela heard them, and almost sank to the ground with shame and vexation. Already had Tralla hobbled up and taken her arm, with his brutal features distorted with fun. Vefela raised her eyes to the young fellows with a look so full of entreaty and reproach that one of them was actually induced to take her part. What he said was not heard, being drowned in the uproarious laughter of the others. Here Vefela found a rescuer whom nobody had expected. Her father's dog Nero, who had followed her, suddenly sprang on Tralla's back, seized him by the collar, and dragged him down. Vefela took him away from his victim in all haste, and hurried on her way. From that time Nero was a power in the village. The whole affair mortified Vefela greatly, and confirmed her in her dislike to farmers and farmers' ways.

Vefela spent some weeks with her brother Melchior, in Ergenzingen. Here too she was often sad; for Melchior had hard-hearted, stingy wife, who hardly gave him enough to eat.

The squire of Ergenzingen, a widower with three children, frequently came to Melchior's house; and one day he asked Vefela to marry him. Vefela was disposed to consent; for, though not attached to the squire, she was weary of her lonesome life, and hoped to derive pleasure from being a kind mother to the children. But the manor-house farmer came and told his daughter that the squire was a hard man, who had been unkind to his first wife, and, besides, that Vefela could only be happy with a man of great refinement. The squire was rejected. But his proposal had been heard of in Ergenzingen; and the boys, with whom he was unpopular on account of his strictness, came one night and strewed bran all along the path between his house and Melchior's. The squire forthwith began to hate the manor-house farmer and Vefela: she returned with her father to the solitude of his roof.

Vefela would have done better to have followed her own counsel and married the squire; but her doom was sealed, and she could not escape it.

The life of the manor-house farmer seemed likely to end sooner than his lawsuit. The strong man was sinking under petty ailments: the trouble and chagrin so long suppressed had gnawed his core. For hours and hours he would sit speechless in his arm-chair, only murmuring occasionally an

indistinguishable word to his dog Nero, whose head was on his master's knee, while his faithful eyes looked up into his face. Vefela could not be with him always, and he now felt doubly the dreariness of his lot. He would have given any thing for the privilege of receiving a guest in his warm, cosy room, only to have given or received a pinch of snuff. He went to the window and looked out; he coughed when anybody passed; but no one spoke to him, no one came. He closed the sash and returned grumbling to his seat.

It was two days before New-Year. Vefela had gone to the well with the maid for water. She purposely did this coarse kind of work because the villagers had said that she was ashamed of it. Just as her bucket was full, the girl said, "Look at that man there with the double eyes: I guess he is the new surgeon."

A man in citizens' dress, with spectacles on his nose, was coming down the village. Just as he was passing the two girls, Vefela took the pail on her head; but, by an unlucky step, she slipped upon the ice and fell, pouring the water over her. When she recovered herself the strange gentleman was standing by her: he took her hand and helped her up, and then asked her, kindly, whether she had not hurt herself, for she had had a bad fall. There was something so winning in the tone of his voice that Vefela experienced a strange sensation: she thanked him quite warmly, and assured him that she was not hurt. She walked on, the gentleman beside her.

"Why, you are limping," said he again. "Does your foot pain you?"

"No," answered Vefela; "I have a short foot;" and, though she was chilled through, the blood shot into her face. She covered her face with her apron, pretending to wipe it, though it was wet through and through. The stranger now remarked that her limp was scarcely to be perceived. Vefela smiled, half incredulous, half flattered. It was a strange thing to Vefela to find the gentleman walking by her side through the village, all the way to her father's house; and even there he entered with her, with a word of apology, to which he gave no time to reply. Nero, however, sprang upon the stranger, and would have dragged him down had not the manor-house farmer and Vefela interfered. The stranger now gave sundry directions to guard against Vefela's taking cold. She must go to bed, drink tea, and so on.

Edward Brenner (for such was his name) sat down and chatted cosily with the manor-house farmer. Not an hour passed before he was master of his whole history. The latter took a strong liking to Dr. Brenner, but spoke so much of the spectacles, and asked so often whether he had need of them all the time, that Brenner soon perceived that this instrument of learning was not agreeable to him. He took them off, and the manor-house farmer nodded pleasantly, observing that he could talk with a man much better when his head was not in a lantern. He now gave him a full account of his bodily grievances also. Brenner looked wise, said that the doctors had all mistaken his disease, and prescribed an infallible remedy.

From this time forth he visited the manor-house farmer daily. All were glad to see him except Nero, who proved so intractable that he had to be chained whenever Brenner came. One day the latter threw him a piece of bread as he was leaving the house; but the dog never touched it, but sprang furiously at the giver.

Vefela was not equally inaccessible to the fine speeches and flatteries of Brenner. She often scolded the maid for saying that Brenner had but one coat, for he wore the same in the week and on Sunday. Such was the way with the gentlefolks, she said; and everybody knew it who wasn't too stupid. She often lingered near when Brenner talked with her father, and rejoiced to find the latter almost invariably pleased with the views advanced by the surgeon. His health happened to improve a little after taking Brenner's prescription: this gave the latter an excuse for saying again and again that he was in fact a better doctor than the licensed physician, but that the law prevented him from practising. He scolded about those who thought the only way to be wise was to cram your head with books. "Practice makes perfect," he said. "A farmer who knows the world often understands more about government matters than all the ministers and governors; and so it is in medicine." This mixture of

sense and nonsense was very pleasing to the manor-house farmer's ears: it jumped exactly with what his own experience had made him wish to be true. The lawsuit also came in for a share of the kind solicitude of Brenner. He confirmed the notion of the manor-house farmer to meet in kind the tactics of his adversaries, and resort to bribery. Brenner suggested the shrewd expedient of stealing a march on the other party by giving gold instead of silver. Those were the "good old times" when a lawsuit could not come to an end without "cribbings" and officials had no hesitation in receiving illegal pay.

One evening, as Brenner left the house, Vefela accompanied him to the door, and they remained standing there a while together. Brenner took Vefela's hand and said, "'Pon honor, Vefela, you are a sweet girl, and not like the peasant-girls at all: you are too refined for a peasant-girl. 'Pon honor: and you have as much sense as any of them in the city."

Vefela said he was making fun of her; but in her heart she believed him. He kissed Vefela's hand and took his leave, taking off his hat politely to Vefela. She remained standing under the door a long time with thoughtful eyes and a pleased smile upon her lips: Brenner's polite and yet kind-hearted manner had pleased her greatly. She went upstairs singing, and let the soup-bowl fall out of her hands, – at which she laughed aloud. Every thing was so delightful that evening that she could not frown, no matter what happened. Late at night she went into the cellar and brought the men a bottle of cider: they must have a little enjoyment on a working-day for once.

The intimacy between Brenner and Vefela increased from day to day.

An event which had been so long expected that it almost took them by surprise brought rejoicing into the manor-house. The news came that the lawsuit was gained. The opponents had been at Rottenburg, where the magistrate had told them very plainly, though with a little circumlocution, that "the manor-house farmer's duns had come in ahead of their grays." Though confined to the house, the manor-house farmer put on his Sunday clothes and poured a whole pot of fresh milk into Nero's breakfast. He sent to Melchior and Agatha to come and rejoice with him: nobody cared to let him know that Agatha was on her death-bed. Brenner, also, was sent for; and he alone accepted the invitation. The manor-house farmer sat up till late at night, drinking, laughing, and talking, and sometimes lapsing into sudden seriousness. He sighed to think that his "old woman" could not share his good luck, and drank a full glass to her memory. At last, as he was beginning to nod in his chair, they carried him to bed.

It was very late when Brenner started to go. Vefela lighted him to the door: they were both greatly excited, and exchanged fervent kisses. On his entreaties and solicitations, Vefela at last said, aloud, "Good-night." Brenner did the same, took the key, unlocked the door, closed it with a bang, and locked it. But he had not left the house.

No one had any suspicions except Nero, who was tied in the yard, and who barked all night as if a thief had got into the house.

Life and death were both busy in that house that night. The next morning the manor-house farmer lay dead in his bed: the palsy had struck him.

None could understand why it was that Vefela raved like a maniac by the bedside of her father. Usually so calm and moderate, she could not be made to hear reason now.

The estate was again purchased by a baron, and the farmers bore their feudal burdens without a murmur.

3.

Vefela moved to Ergenzingen, to live with her brother Melchior. Nobody accompanied her from the village except Nero. Agatha died soon after her father, and people whispered that Vefela would marry her brother-in-law; but that was out of the question. Brenner came to Ergenzingen several times every week. He must have raised money in some way or other, for he was always showily dressed, and had a peculiar confidence, almost amounting to arrogance, in his behavior to Vefela as well as to others. He gave them all to understand that he must be addressed as "Doctor." Vefela did not quite understand it all, but she did not complain, as she had made him acquainted with her situation.

Melchior had a man employed whose name was Wendel, – a stalwart, hard-working fellow, who shared all Nero's friendships and enmities. He loved the dog because the dog hated Brenner, and loved him doubly for his devotion to Vefela. In Germany, polite people address each other as "they;" equals on intimate terms are the "thee" and "thou;" and superiors sometimes undertake to address inferiors as "he" or "she." Brenner had once addressed Wendel as "he;" and this gave the latter, what he had long desired, a pretext for hating the "beard-scraper" like poison. In spite of this, however, he never objected to hunting him up in town, even late at night, whenever Vefela took the trouble to say, "Wendel, won't you, please?" Then he trudged along, and Nero ran with him, and they brought the doctor a letter from Vefela. Sometimes, when he had ploughed all day and was more tired than his horses, it cost Vefela but a word to make him hook up again and take Brenner to town through storm and darkness.

One Saturday night Vefela said to Wendel in the yard, "To-morrow you must be so kind as to drive to Horb early in the morning and bring Brenner here."

"Is it true," asked Wendel, "that you are going to be betrothed to him?"

"Yes."

"Take my advice and don't do it. There are honest farmers in the world enough."

Vefela replied, "You can't forgive Brenner for having said 'he' to you." She had intended to say more, but checked herself, not wishing to offend the poor fellow. To herself she said, "It is shocking how stupid and obstinate these farmers are," and congratulated herself on having got over all that. Notwithstanding his demurrer, Wendel was on the road long before daybreak.

Vefela and Brenner were now publicly betrothed, and people gossiped a good deal about it, some even hinting that Brenner had given the manor-house farmer a drink of which he died, as he had refused his consent to the match. So over-cunning is foul-mouthed suspicion.

The first change to which Vefela was now forced to submit was a very sad one. Brenner sent a seamstress from the town to fit dresses for her. Vefela felt like a recruit who is no longer his own master, and is forced to wear any clothes brought to him, because the lot has picked him out; but she submitted without a word. Next Sunday, when she had to put on the new dresses, she stood weeping beside the seamstress, and took a sad farewell of every piece. The skirt was particularly hard to part with: her mother had given it to her when she was confirmed, and had told her to go in it to the altar when she married. It is a great defect in a city lady's dress that it cannot be put on or off without the assistance of a servant. Vefela shuddered as the seamstress fumbled about her. Her hair was braided and put up in a comb; and, when all was done, Vefela could not help laughing as she looked at herself in the window and made herself a reverential bow.

Brenner was delighted when she bashfully entered the room: he said she looked ten times as pretty as before. But when Vefela said that the city dresses amounted to nothing after all, – that one peasant's dress was worth more, and cost more too, than six such city flags, – Brenner looked cross, and said that that was "silly village-prattle." Vefela bit her lips, and her eyes were full of tears: she went out and wept.

She very seldom left the house, for she was ashamed to be "marked" so. She thought everybody must be looking at her. Only one other girl in the village wore city dresses. She had been brought up by old Ursula, and no one knew exactly where she came from.

Vefela had hard times in Melchior's house, for his wife was a very dragon, and always gave birth to still-born children, – so that people said they were poisoned in her womb. Melchior and Vefela often sat in the barn, pretending to amuse themselves by peeling turnips, but in fact eating them with much appetite. Vefela did her best to encourage her brother to yield and keep the peace. She knew what it was to live in a house divided against itself, and thought a quiet life cheaply bought at almost any sacrifice. Melchior was a good fellow, and agreed to every thing.

Vefela urged Brenner with increasing earnestness to hasten their marriage. Then he suddenly came out with a new project. He would go to America. He knew as much of doctoring as the official

physician, but the laws would not allow him to practise here; so he would go to a free country. Vefela wrung her hands, fell on her knees, and besought him to give up the plan: they had money enough to live comfortably without doctoring. But Brenner was not to be moved, and scolded Vefela for a "stupid peasant-girl that didn't know there were people living 'tother side the big hill." Poor Vefela gave way at this: she lay with her face on the ground, and the dreadful thought swept through her mind that she was despised and would be wretched for life. Brenner must have guessed at her thoughts: he came, raised her up gently, kissed her, and spoke so well and so politely that Vefela forgave and forgot every thing and agreed to go to America with him at once. Where would she not have gone if he had led the way?

Brenner made all the preparations. Vefela's fortune was turned into money and exchanged for gold, to be of better use for travelling. Vefela kept it in the same press with her wardrobe.

The banns were to be spoken at the church; but Brenner's papers never arrived from Hohenlohe, his birthplace. At last he came one day when Vefela was busy at the wash-tub, and said, "Vefela, I'll tell you what: I'll go home and get my papers myself. A friend of mine is waiting at the door in the carriage; and so I shall have a ride for nothing as far as Tuebingen. While I'm about it, I'll get our passport countersigned by the ambassador, and then we can be off in the fall."

"The sooner the better," said Vefela.

"By-the-by," said Brenner, again, "I'm out of change: couldn't you let me have a little?"

"Here is the key," said Vefela: "help yourself. You know where it is, – at your left hand as you open the press, by the new linen which is tied with blue tape."

Brenner went up-stairs and returned after some time. Vefela dried her hand with her apron and gave it to him: his hand trembled. She wished to go with him a little way, but he begged her to stay, and ran quickly down the stairs. Vefela was hurt that he would not let her go with him to the door, supposing that he was ashamed of having his friend see her. What was all this to end in? Bitter tears fell into the wash-tub at the thought of it. Still, she went up into her attic and looked out of the window to follow the carriage with her eyes. What was her astonishment when she saw that the carriage, instead of taking the road to Tuebingen, started toward Herrenberg! It was on her lips to call to the travellers that they were on the wrong road; but she bethought herself that she must have misunderstood Brenner, or that he might have made a slip of the tongue.

A week, a fortnight, passed by, and nothing was seen or heard of Brenner. Vefela was often sad to think that her whole life was to be given to a man who did not esteem her: she was not proud, yet she could not help thinking how much every one in the village, even the squire himself, would have felt honored by her hand. But again the mere recollection of Brenner would make her happy as a queen, and she would beg his forgiveness in thought for all the unkind ideas she had had of him. She saw no fault in him now: when those we love are away we never see their faults, but only their virtues. Had Brenner but had a single virtue!

When Melchior wondered why Brenner remained so long away, she would answer in such a manner as to make him suppose she knew the reason and was not disturbed about it.

One day, when in low spirits, Vefela went into her room. For a long time she looked out of the window in the direction from which Brenner was to come. To dispel her sadness by a look at her wedding-dress, she opened the press. Oh pity! what did she behold! Every thing rifled and strewed about as if the Pandours had been there. Involuntarily her hand sought the money: it was gone! She shrieked aloud, and the whole truth flashed upon her. The wrong road-the trembling hand-the fear of her going with him-the long absence! She flew to the window to fling herself out. A hand seized her and held her back. Melchior had heard her cry and hastened to her. Vefela fell upon her knees, wrung her hands, and told him the dreadful truth. Melchior raved and swore. He would find him out. He would bring him before every court in the empire. Then Vefela sank upon her face and told him her shame: her brother sank down by her side and wept with her. Long they remained closely

pressed against each other, sobbing aloud, without speaking a word, and almost afraid to look each other in the face.

Whoever is acquainted with human nature, and with the German peasantry in particular, will fully appreciate the goodness exercised by Melchior in never reproaching his sister with her fall. On the contrary, he did his best to restore her love of life. Most people make themselves paid for their sympathy with misfortune by immediately giving full vent to their friendly mortification and their wise admonitions. This treatment may do for children and for people who know not what they have done or what has befallen them; but for those who feel the arrow rankling in their flesh it is sheer cruelty to harry them still further, instead of drawing it out with care and tenderness.

They held counsel together what was to be done, and agreed that the main thing was to keep quiet and adjust the whole affair secretly. With a resolution quite unlike him, Melchior made his wife give him money, and started in his little wagon in pursuit of Brenner. Vefela wished to go too, and seemed desperate at the thought of having nothing to do but stay at home and weep; but Melchior kindly persuaded her not to undertake the journey.

Days and weeks passed in silent wretchedness. Those who had known Vefela before would have been frightened at the change in her. But she saw nobody, and lived a life of hopelessness which was hardly life. She ate and drank, slept and waked, but seemed to know nothing of what she was doing, and looked straight before her, like a mad woman. She could not even weep any more. Her soul seemed to be buried alive in her body. She saw and heard the world around her, but she could not find and could not understand herself.

When Melchior returned without having seen a trace of the runaway, Vefela heard his story with heart-rending calmness. She seemed incapable of surprise. For days she hardly spoke a word. Only when she heard that Brenner was pursued with warrants giving an exact description of his appearance did she break out into loud wailings. A million tongues seemed to proclaim her sorrows and her shame throughout the land. And yet-so inexhaustible is love-she wept almost more for Brenner than for herself.

Yet her misery had not yet reached its climax. When Melchior's wife discovered her condition she became more wicked than ever. Vefela bore all this with patience; the double life within her seemed to give her strange new powers of mind and body, which bore her safely through her troubles. But when she heard her sister-in-law reproach Melchior and curse the day in which she had entered a family that had such a stain upon it, then the heart of the poor unfortunate bled deeply. She, the angel of peace, to be the disgrace of such a dragon! This was too much to bear.

It was the sad fate of poor Vefela that a phalanx of bad or weak men and women, clad in the dismal garb of gloomy passions, lined the path on which her journey through life had been cast. This prevented her from recognising those bright exceptions who do not press forward hastily, because their unostentatious dignity holds them back, and because they have a right to suppose that they will be detected without it.

As Vefela sat weeping on the kitchen-hearth one day, Wendel came in and said, "'Mustn't cry: don't you mind how I told you there were plenty of good farmers' boys in the world, though they don't know how to make bows and shambles?'"

Vefela looked up with tearful eyes, astonished at the speech. But she said nothing, and after a while Wendel went on: -

"Yes, look at me: what I say is as true as if the parson said it in the pulpit." He took Vefela's hand and said, "To make it short, I know all about it: but you are better than a hundred others for all that; and, if you will say the word, we shall be man and wife in a fortnight; and your child shall be my child."

Vefela quickly drew away her hand and covered her eyes. Then, rising, she said, with a burning blush, "Do you know that I am as poor as a beggar? You didn't know that, did you?"

Wendel stood still a while, anger and pity contending for the mastery within him. He was ashamed of Vefela's words for her sake and for his own. At last he said, "Yes, I know it all. If you were rich yet, I would never have opened my mouth. My mother has a little lot, and I have saved a little money: we can both work and live honestly."

Vefela looked up to heaven with folded hands, and then said, "Forgive me, Wendel: I didn't mean to speak so wickedly. I am not so bad; but the whole world seems so wicked to me. Forgive me, Wendel."

"Well, do you say the word?" he inquired.

Vefela shook her head, and Wendel, stamping the ground, asked, "Why not?"

"I can't talk much," said Vefela, breathing hard; "but, forgive me, I can't. God will reward your good heart for this: but now please don't let us speak another word about it."

Wendel went out and gave Melchior warning against next Martinmas.

At last the worst came. The squire of the village had heard of her condition, and now gave full scope to the spite he had so long harbored. He sent the constable to tell her that she must leave the village, as otherwise her child, if born there, would have a right to claim a settlement and come upon the parish.

Vefela would not allow any resistance to be made to this act of cruelty. In a stormy autumn night she got into the little wagon, and Wendel drove her to Seedorf. On the road Wendel tried to comfort her as well as he could. He said he could never forgive himself for not having pitched Brenner down the Bildechingen steep, as he once intended, and mashed him to a jelly. Vefela seemed almost glad to find no chance to live at Seedorf. Wendel begged and implored her to go with him to his mother in Bohndorf. But she was deaf to all his prayers, sent him back next morning, and went on her way on foot to Tuebingen, as she said. Nero had gone with them too, and would not be separated from Vefela. Wendel had to tie him with a rope under the little wagon.

The wind drove the rain about, and the soil was so slippery that Vefela lost her footing at every step as she took the way to Rottenburg. She wore a city dress, and had a light-red kerchief on her neck. Under her arm was a little bundle. An old song, long forgotten, suddenly returned to her thoughts, – the song of the earl's daughter who was betrayed. Without opening her lips, she often repeated to herself, –

"O, weep ye for your land so wide,
Or weep ye for your fallen pride?
Or your bright cheeks that are so wan,
Or for your honor that is gone?
Gone, gone!
Your honor that is gone."

She was hardly a hundred yards out of Seedorf before something rushed up to her. At first she started; but soon her eyes brightened, for it was Nero. He had a piece of rope around his neck, and seemed so happy!

The storm was so severe that it seemed as if two stones were being struck together close by your ears, and as if intangible, rustling curtains were weaving themselves around and around as if to smother you. As she went slowly on her way, of a sudden the thought fell on her like a thunderbolt that Brenner was now upon the sea. Only once had she seen a picture of the storm in the gospel, but now she saw the terrible reality: she was in the midst of it herself. The dark, hilly billows tossed the ship, and there stood Brenner stretching out his arms and wailing. There! There! Vefela raised her arms, her lips parted, but the scream died in her mouth: she saw Brenner buried in the waves. Her arms sank to her side, she bowed her head, folded her hands, and prayed long for the soul of the lost

one. Thus she stood for a long time, fully knowing that Brenner had died that instant. With a deep sigh she looked up again, took the bundle, which had fallen from her hand, and went on.

On the hill where the road turns and Rottenburg is displayed to the eye, stands a chapel. Vefela entered, and prayed long and fervently. On leaving the chapel again, the long plain before her had the appearance of a lake: the Neckar had overflowed its banks. Vefela went outside of the town toward Hirschau. Here she met an old acquaintance, – Marem, her grandfather's Jew adviser. He had a bag strapped across his shoulder, and was leading a cow toward Hirschau. Who would have supposed that Marem's sympathy for Vefela drew tears from his eyes? Yet so it was. Take a village Jew and a peasant of the same degree of intelligence, and you will find the former more cunning, more on the alert for his profit, and apparently more cold; but in all purely human misfortune you will see a warmth and a delicacy of feeling which lift him far above his ordinary existence. His peculiar lot has deadened his social feelings, but has concentrated his heart all the more upon that which is purely human.

Marem tried his utmost to dissuade Vefela from pursuing her aimless journey. He offered to take her to his own house, and even to raise money for her. Vefela refused every thing. At Hirschau they both went into a tavern: Marem had a good soup boiled for Vefela; but after the first spoonful she got up again to continue her journey. Marem wished to keep the dog back; but the faithful beast refused to stay behind, and Vefela departed with a "God reward you."

An hour later, Marem, having sold his cow, went to Tuebingen also. Not far from Hirschau, Nero came running up to him with a red kerchief in his mouth. Marem grew pale with fear. Nero ran forward, and he followed: they came to a spot where the water had overrun the road; the dog sprang in, and swam on and on, on and on, until he was lost to sight.

* * * * *

The grandest house in all the village once belonged to Vefela's father. The father is dead, the mother is dead, and Vefela has disappeared without a trace.

NIP-CHEEKED TONEY

On the ridge where the road forks, and leads to Muehringen on one side and to Ahldorf on the other, in what is called the "Cherry-copse," three lasses were sitting one Sunday afternoon under a blossoming cherry-tree. All around was quiet: not a plough creaked nor a wagon rattled. As far as the eye could see, Sunday rested everywhere. From the opposite hill, where the church of an old monastery is yet standing, a bell tolled its farewell to the worshippers who were returning to their homes. In the valley the yellow rape-seed blossomed among the green rye-fields; and on the right, where the Jewish graveyard crowns a gentle eminence, the four weeping willows which mark its corners drooped motionless over the graves of the grandmother, mother, and five children who were all burned in one house together. Farther down, amid the blooming trees, was a wooden crucifix, painted white and red. Every thing else breathed still life. The "beech-wood," the only remnant of leaf-forest in the whole neighborhood, was dressed in its brightest green, and the gladed pine-grove swept along the road in unruffled calmness. Not a breath stirred. High up in the air the sky-lark trilled his gladness, and the quail sang deep in the furrows. The fields seemed to wear their green robes only for their own delight; for nowhere was man visible to indicate, with his shovel or his hoe, that he claimed the allegiance of the earth. Here and there a farmer came along the footpath; sometimes two or three were seen viewing the progress of their crops. Dressed in their Sunday gear, they seemed to regard with satisfaction the holiday attire of nature.

The three girls sat motionless, with their hands in their aprons, singing. Babbett sang the first voice, and Toney (Antonia) and Brigetta accompanied. The long-drawn sounds floated solemnly and a little sadly over the mead: as often as they sang, a thistlefinch, perched on a twig of the cherry-tree, piped with redoubled vigor; and as often as they paused at the end of a strain, or chatted in a low voice, the finch was suddenly silent. They sang: -

"Sweet sweetheart, I beg and I beg of you,
Just stay a year longer with me;
And all that you lack, and all that you spend,
My guilders shall keep you free.
"And though your guilders should keep me free,
Yet I cannot do your will;
Far, far o'er the hills and away I must go,
Sweet sweetheart, then think of me still.
"Far over the hills and away when I came,
Sweet sweetheart, she open'd the door;
She laugh'd not, she spoke not, she welcomed me not:
It seem'd that she knew me no more.
"There's never an apple so white and so red
But the kernels are black at its core;
There's never a maid in all Wurtemberg
But plays false when you watch her no more."

Pop! went the report of a fowling-piece. The girls started: the finch flew away from the cherry-tree. Looking round, they saw the gamekeeper of Muehringen run into a field of rape-seed, with his dog before him. He picked up a heron, pulled out one of its feathers and fixed it in his hat, thrust the bird into his pouch, and hung his gun upon his shoulder again: he was a fine-looking fellow as he strode through the green field.

Tony said, "He might have let the bird alone on Sunday."

"Yes," said Babbett; "the gamekeepers are no good Christians anyhow: they can do nothing but get poor folks into the workhouse for trespassing, and kill poor innocent beasts and birds. That green devil's imp there sent poor Blase's Kitty to prison for four weeks just the other day. I wouldn't marry a gamekeeper if he were to promise me I don't know what."

"Old Ursula once told me," said Bridget, the youngest of the three, "that a gamekeeper is bound to kill a living thing every day of his life."

"That he can do easy enough," laughed Babbett, catching a gnat which had settled on her arm.

By this time the gamekeeper came quite near them. As if by a previous arrangement, they all began to sing again: they wished to pretend that they did not see the gamekeeper, but in their constraint they could not raise their voices, and only hummed the last verse of the song: -

"If she plays me false I will play her fair:
Three feathers upon my hat I wear;
And, as she will not have me stay,
I'll travel forth upon my way."

"Girls, how are you?" said the gamekeeper, standing still: "why don't you sing louder?"

The girls began to giggle, and held their aprons to their mouths. Babbett found her tongue first, and said, "Thank you, mister, we are only singing for ourselves, and so we hear it if we sing ever so low: we don't sing for other people."

"Whisht!" said the gamekeeper: "the little tongue cuts like a sickle."

"Sickle or straight, it's as broad as it's long; whoever don't like it may talk to suit himself if he can," replied Babbett. Tony jogged her, saying, half aloud, "You're as rough as a hedgehog, you Babbett."

"Oh, I can stand a joke as well as the next one," said the gamekeeper, making the best of a bad job.

For all that, the girls were a good deal embarrassed, and did just the worst thing to put an end to it: they rose and took each others' arms to go home.

"May I go with you, ladies?" said the gamekeeper again.

"It's a high road and a wide road," said Babbett.

The gamekeeper thought of getting away, but reflected that it would look ridiculous to let these girls bluff him off. He felt that he ought to pay Babbett in her own coin, but he could not: Tony, by whose side he walked, had "smitten" him so hard that he forgot all the jokes he ever knew, although he was not a bashful man by any means. So he left the saucy girl in the enjoyment of her fun and walked on in silence.

Just to mend matters a little, Tony asked, "Where are you going on Sunday?"

"To Horb," said the gamekeeper; "and if the ladies would go with me I wouldn't mind standing treat for a pint or two of the best."

"We're going home," said Tony, blushing up to the eyes.

"We'd rather drink Adam's ale," said Babbett: "we get that for nothing too."

At the first house of the village, Babbett again said, pointing to a footpath, "Mr. Gamekeeper, there's a short cut for you goes round behind the village: that's the nearest way to Horb."

The gamekeeper's patience was running out, and he had a wicked jibe on his lips; but, checking, himself, he only said, "I like to look an honest village and honest people in the face." He could not refrain from turning his back on Babbett as he spoke.

The gamekeeper grew uncivil because he could not crack a joke, – a thing that happens frequently.

As they were entering the village, the gamekeeper asked Tony what her name was. Before she could answer, Babbett interposed, "Like her father's."

And when the gamekeeper retorted upon Babbett, "Why, you are mighty sharp to-day: how old are you?" he received the common answer, "As old as my little finger."

Tony said, half aloud, "My name's Tony. What makes you ask?"

"Because I want to know."

When they had reached the top of the hill, at "Sour-Water Bat's" house, the three girls stood still and laid their heads together. Suddenly, like frightened pigeons, they ran in different directions, and left the gamekeeper all alone on the road. He whistled to his dog, who had started in pursuit, put his left arm in his gun-strap, and went on his way.

At the stone-quarry the girls met again and stood still.

"You are too rough, you are," said Tony to Babbett.

"Yes, you are so," Bridget chimed in.

"He didn't hurt you," continued Tony, "and you went at him like a bull-dog."

"I didn't hurt him either," answered Babbett; "I only fooled him. Why didn't the jackanapes answer me? And, another thing, I don't like the green-coat, anyhow. What does he mean by running through the whole village with us and making people think we want something of him? And what will Sepper⁶ and Caspar think of it? I'm not such a good-natured little puss as you are; I don't take things from counts or barons, nor barons' gamekeepers either."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Sepper and Caspar, who had looked for their sweethearts at the cherry-bush in vain. Babbett now told the whole story so glibly that no one else could get a word in edgewise. As a good many smart things occurred to her while she was speaking, she put them into her own mouth, without being unnecessarily precise. People have a way of embellishing the recital of their own doings and sayings in this manner: it requires so much less readiness and courage to invent these things when the person at whom they are levelled is gone than when he is by.

Sepper expressed his hearty approval of Babbett's proceedings, and said, "These gentry-folk must be stumped short the minute you begin with them."

The gamekeeper certainly did not belong to the "gentry-folk;" but it was convenient to class him so, for the purpose of scolding the more freely about him.

Sepper gave an arm to Tony, his sweetheart, while Bridget hung herself upon the other. Caspar and Barbara walked beside them; and so they passed out through the hollow to take a walk.

Sepper and Tony were a splendid pair, both tall and slender, and both doubly handsome when seen together: among a thousand you would have picked them out and said, "These two belong together." Sepper wore a style of dress half-way between that of a peasant and a soldier: the short flapping jacket set off in fine contrast the display of well-rounded limbs cased in the close-fitting military breeches. He looked like an officer in undress, so fine was the blending of ease and precision in all his movements.

At the top of the hill they saw the gamekeeper in conversation with the woodranger of Nordstetten. Sepper even observed that he was pointing toward them, and cleared his throat as if to prepare a sharp answer for the "gentleman," who was still two hundred yards away. Then he put his arms around Tony's neck and gave her a hearty smack, as a sort of broad hint for him who ran to read. This done, he walked on, whistling a lively tune, with something of a swagger.

His manner would have been still more emphatic if he had heard what the gamekeeper was saying to the woodranger, which was, "See! there she comes now. It is a girl as white as wax, – for all the world like the mother of God in the church: I never saw any thing like it in all my life."

"Yes, I thought you meant her," replied the woodranger "It's the Poodlehead's daughter: they call him Poodlehead because he has white curly hair like a lamb, just as the girl has, too. In the village they call her the maiden-blush, because she has such pretty red cheeks. The old parson knew what's

⁶ Joseph; Joe.

good, and wanted her for a cook; but it was no go. Poodlehead wiped his chops for him with a 'No, thank ye.' Tony will get her ten acres some day in this commune, and they say there's more besides."

The gamekeeper shook hands and took his leave before the party had quite reached him.

Sitting on an unploughed strip of land, between two fields, – such as take the place of fences in that hedgeless country, – our friends spent the afternoon in singing and kissing. Bridget had the worst of the game, for her sweetheart was with the soldiers at Heilbronn: who knows what he was about while his girl sat aside from the others with blushing face, playing with a flower and thinking of him? At dusk she was wanted to "fix up" the others: her own collar was in perfect trim, while the collars and the hair of her friends were all "mussed and fussed," as she said, scolding good-naturedly.

All the girls and boys now met on the highroad, and the sexes walked separately. In the west, or, as they say there, "across the Rhine," the sun went down blood-red and gave promise of a pleasant day. The boys walked into the village in files which spread nearly across the street, singing or whistling tunes set in four parts. About thirty yards behind, the girls walked arm in arm. They sang incessantly. Scarcely was one song at an end before one girl or the other struck up a new one, and the others fell in without consultation or debate.

Tony was on the left flank, and on her right arm hung Blatschle's Mary Ann, called the Flambeau Mary Ann, – a poor unfortunate girl the whole left side of whose face, from the forehead to the chin, was blue, just as if there were clotted blood beneath the skin. At the great fire which happened eighteen years before, and where seven men lost their lives, Mary Ann's mother had hurried up, and on seeing the flames had passed her hand over her face in great fear and fright. When her child was born, one-half of its face was blue. Tony always had a certain horror of Mary Ann; but she did not like to hurt her feelings by going away. So she went on, trembling inwardly, but singing the louder to regain the mastery over herself.

Near the manor-house farmer's house the gamekeeper came up with the party on his return from Horb. On seeing Tony he blushed up to the eyes, and lifted his gun off his shoulder a little, sinking it again immediately, and, turning toward Tony, he said, "Good-evening, girls."

A few returned the salutation, and he said, in a low voice, to Tony, "May I walk with you now?"

"No, no! that will never do," said Tony, no louder than he had spoken: "go and walk with the boys, just to oblige me."

The gamekeeper was delighted, and, with a polite bow, he walked on.

At the Eagle there was, a general halt. The curfew sounded, and the boys, with their heads uncovered, mumbled a paternoster: the girls did the same; and then all crossed themselves.

But as soon as this was done the jokes and laughter were resumed. The gamekeeper said, "Good-night, all," and went on his way. The girls teased Tony about him, and said he had whispered to her. Sepper, who heard this, suddenly grew stark and stiff: the pipe which he was lifting to his mouth remained in the convulsive grasp of his one hand, while his other fist clenched, and his eyes, which stared upon Tony, shot forth fierce and angry thoughts. Then again he swung proudly on his knees, and only once cast his head backward in something of disdain.

When all separated, Sepper went with Tony to her father's house. He was silent a while, and then said, -

"What are you carrying on with the gamekeeper?"

"Nothing."

"What were you saying to him?"

"Just what people are apt to talk."

"But I don't want you ever to speak a word to him."

"And I'm not going to ask you for permission to speak to anybody."

"You're a proud, deceitful thing."

"If you think so I can't help it."

They walked on in silence. At Tony's door she said "goodnight;" but Sepper allowed her to go in without an answer. He stood before the door all the evening, whistling and singing: he thought that Tony must certainly come to him; but she did not come, and he went away in high dudgeon.

That whole week Sepper never spoke a word to Tony, and even went out of his way to avoid meeting her.

On Saturday afternoon he was out in the "Warm Dell" with his team to get clover for Sunday. On his way home he saw Babbett coming up the "Cowslip Dell" with a heavy bundle of clover on her head. He stopped, and made her put her clover and herself on his wagon. Here Babbett told him her mind about his foolish jealousy so very plainly that he went to the well near the town-hall and waited until Tony came to fetch water. He hastened to lift the bucket for her and adjust it on her head, and then walked by her side, saying, "How have you been all the week? I have such lots of work."

"You give yourself lots of trouble, which you might let alone. You are a wild, wilful fellow. Do you see now that you were in the wrong?"

"You must never speak to that gamekeeper again."

"I'll speak to him whenever I please," said Tony: "I am not a child. I understand my own business."

"But you needn't speak to him if you don't choose to."

"No, I needn't; but I am not going to be led about by a halter that way."

Peace was restored, and no disturbance occurred for a long time, for the gamekeeper did not show himself at Nordstetten again.

Tony often sat in the cherry-copse of a Sunday afternoon, with her playmates, and sometimes with Sepper, laughing and singing. The wild cherries—the only ones which ripen in the climate of the Black Forest—had long disappeared; the rape-seed was brought home; the rye and barley were cut, and the peaceful life of our friends had passed through but little change: Sepper's and Tony's love for each other had, if any thing, increased in intensity. That fall Sepper had to go through the last course of drill with the military, and then he would get his discharge, and then—the wedding.

Since that Sunday in the spring Tony had never cast eyes on the gamekeeper. But when she and Sepper were cutting oats in the Molda⁷ the gamekeeper came by and said, "Does't cut well?" Tony started, and plied her sickle busily without answering. Sepper said, "Thank you," knelt upon a sheaf and twisted down the tie with all his might, — as if he were wringing the gamekeeper's neck. The gamekeeper passed on.

It happened that Babbett's and Caspar's wedding came off just three days before that on which Sepper was obliged to go to the military. So he made up his mind to enjoy himself once for all, and kept his word. In almost every house where Caspar and his friend left the invitations, somebody said, "Well, Sepper, your turn will come next." And he smiled affirmatively.

At the wedding Sepper was as happy as a horse in clover. He enjoyed the foretaste of his coming bliss. When the dance began he climbed up to the musicians and bespoke them for his wedding, with two additional trumpeters: he belonged to the Guard, and therefore thought himself entitled to more trumpets than others.

But in the evening a new apparition crossed his path and changed the color of his thoughts. The gamekeeper came to the dance, and the first one he asked to dance with him was Tony.

"Engaged," answered Sepper for Tony.

"The lassie can speak for herself, I guess," replied the gamekeeper.

"You and I will dance the next hop-waltz together," said Tony, taking Sepper's hand. But she turned around toward the gamekeeper once more before the hop-waltz began. The next waltz Tony

⁷ The name of a tract of ground. All the lands belonging to a village are divided into such tracts, every tract having particular qualifications. These are subdivided, and the subdivisions distributed among the farmers: in this manner every farmer has a portion of every kind of ground belonging to the farm-manor.

danced with the gamekeeper, while Sepper sat down at the table and made up his mind not to stir another foot that evening, and to forbid Tony to dance any more. But Babbett came and asked him to dance. This was the bride's privilege, and Sepper could not refuse. Of course the dance was a cover for a round lecture. "I don't know what to make of you at all," said she: "that gamekeeper seems to have driven every bit of sense out of your head. It'll be your fault and nobody else's if Tony should ever come to like him. She wouldn't have had a thought of him this many a day; but, if you go on teasing her about him this way, what can she do but think of him? And with always thinking about him, and wondering whether he likes her or not, she might get to like him at last, after all, for he does dance a little better than you, that's a fact: you couldn't reverse waltz the way he does, could you?"

Sepper laughed; but in his heart he could not deny that the shrewd little rogue was right, and when he sat at the table with his sweetheart he clinked his glass against the gamekeeper's and beckoned to Tony to do the same. The gamekeeper drank, bowed politely to Tony, and nodded slightly to Sepper. The latter had made up his mind, however, not to be sulky again, and prided himself a little on the good tact of his behavior to the gamekeeper, and then sat, happy as a king, with his arm round Tony's waist. He was called away to the master-joke of the wedding.

According to ancient custom, all the young men had conspired to steal the bride. They formed a ring around her, and Caspar had to bargain for her release amid a plentiful volley of small jokes and lively sallies. Six bottles of wine were at last accepted as a ransom, and the reunited pair marched off arm in arm. The musicians came down from their platform to the yard under their windows, and played the customary march; and many a hurrah followed from the crowd.

Tony stood at the window, in a dreamy mood, long after Babbett was gone and the others had returned to the dance.

It was very late at night, or, rather, early in the morning, when Sepper saw Tony home; yet it was long before they parted. Tony pressed her cheek against his with wild emotion, and held him with all the force of her arms. He too was greatly excited; yet he could not refrain from talking about the gamekeeper. "Let the gamekeeper alone," said Tony: "there's nothing in the world but you."

Sepper lifted her high up in the air; then he embraced her again, and, pressing his lip to her cheek, he whispered, "Do you see? I should just like to bite you."

"Bite," said Tony.

Well done! Sepper had bitten in good earnest. The blood flowed freely and ran down her cheeks into her neck and breast. Her hand rushed to her cheek, and there she felt the open scars of the teeth. She thrust Sepper away with such force that he fell on his back, and shrieked and cried aloud, so that the whole house was alarmed. Sepper got up and tried to comfort her; but with loud wailing she pushed him away again. Hearing a noise in the house, he slipped away quietly. He thought the matter was not so bad, after all, and that if he was out of the way she would hit upon some excuse to quiet them.

Her father and mother came up with lights, and were frightened almost to death at the sight of their child dripping in blood. Old Ursula, who knew so many remedies, was sent for immediately. She had no sooner cast eyes on the wound than she declared, "This may end in a cancer, or else the person who did it must clean the wound with his tongue." But Tony protested vehemently that she would rather die than ever let Sepper touch her again.

Various remedies were applied, and Tony groaned as if she were at the point of death.

The story spread through the village like wildfire; and it was even said that Sepper had taken a piece of flesh out of Tony's cheek. Everybody came to comfort her and to find out all about it. Sepper came too; but Tony screamed like a maniac, and declared he must leave the house at once and never come back. All his prayers and tears availed nothing: Tony seemed to be really beside herself, and Sepper had to go. He went to Babbett and begged her to say a good word for him. Babbett was busy arranging the wedding-gifts: kitchen-furniture, and all sorts of utensils, lay scattered about. She scolded Sepper roundly, but left her work at once and hastened to Tony. The latter fell upon her

playmate's neck and cried, "I am spoiled for all the days of my life!" After a great deal of coaxing, she consented to rise from her bed; but, when she stood before the looking-glass and saw the horrible devastation, she exclaimed, "Jesus! Maria! Joseph! why, I am just like Flambeau Mary Ann! Oh God! I'm sure I must have sinned against her: I am punished hard enough!"

On no condition would she hear of seeing Sepper again; so the poor fellow had to trudge off to Stuttgart in a day or two, with a little white linen knapsack on his back, and a heavy, heavy load on his heart.

It was two weeks before Tony left the house, and then she kept her face well tied up. She walked out with a hoe on her shoulder to dig potatoes; and, strange to say, almost the first person she met was the gamekeeper.

"How are you, pretty Tony?" he asked, almost tenderly.

She could have sunk into the earth with shame, it seemed so strange for him to call her by name, and say "pretty" besides; and she felt more keenly than ever how much she was disfigured. As she sighed and said nothing, the gamekeeper went on: – "I have heard of what has happened: won't you let me see it?"

She bashfully pushed the kerchief aside, and the gamekeeper involuntarily raised his hands to his own face and said, "It is horrid, it is inhuman, to act so to a sweet, good girl like you! There's a fair specimen of your farmers' brutality. Don't be offended: I certainly didn't mean you by it: but these people are often worse than wild beasts. But don't be grieved about it."

Of all this Tony only heard the sympathy of the gamekeeper, and said, "I'm dreadfully spoiled and mangled, a'n't I?"

"I shouldn't mind it," said the gamekeeper: "if you had but one cheek you would please me better than all the girls between Nordstetten and Paris."

"It isn't right to tease one so," said Tony, smiling sadly.

"I am not teasing you," said the gamekeeper; and, taking her hand, he continued, "Oh, if you would say the word, how glad I should be to marry you!"

"That is talking sinfully," said Tony.

"I don't see any sin in our getting married," returned the gamekeeper.

"If you want to be good friends with me, don't say another word about it," said Tony, taking her way across the field.

The gamekeeper was content, for the present, to be "good friends," and made the most of it; for he came to Nordstetten almost regularly twice or three times a week. He managed to start some business-negotiations with the Poodlehead, Tony's father, about cordwood; and this always gave him an opportunity of talking with Tony. He said nothing more about marrying, but anybody but a fool could see that he alluded to it all the time. He had much trouble with Babbett, whose influence upon Tony was of the greatest consequence. At first he tried good humor and fun, but Babbett never would understand his jokes: she did nothing but talk about Sepper as long as the gamekeeper was within hearing.

A lucky occurrence gave the latter a great advantage. Tony had a rich cousin in Muehringen, who was to be married shortly: the dance was to last three days; and Tony was invited. The gamekeeper's sister soon made friends with her, and the two girls rambled over the fields together and kept near each other at the dance. Tony now appeared for the first time with an uncovered face; and it might almost be said that the bite had improved her looks. Some wild and superstitious people purposely mangle what is perfectly beautiful, so that the "evil look" may have no power over it, and by way of appeasing the devil, who can suffer nothing perfect to exist. Whether the "beauty-spots" cultivated by the damsels of our day were originally derived from this superstition I cannot tell. At all events, the bite on Tony's cheek was just enough to give the spirit of envy a little "but" to hang on the end of an acknowledgment of her comeliness.

The gamekeeper always kept near Tony while the dance was going on; and in the evening he treated her to something that no peasant-girl of all Nordstetten had ever enjoyed. The old baron, a stout and well-fed personage, though very parsimonious, and unmerciful in hunting down every poor farmer who took an armful of dry sticks out of the wood, was very ambitious for the prosperity of a little private theatre which he maintained at the manor-house, and to which he used to invite the grand folks of the neighborhood. The gamekeeper was permitted to bring Tony to see the theatricals.

She trembled till her teeth chattered as she walked up the hill on which the manor-house, or rather castle, stands, with its drawbridge, moat, and parapet, in the style of the Middle Ages. Without a breath, and on tip-toe, she came into the hall, where the ladies and gentlemen were already assembled. A place was assigned her not far back of the orchestra. The lord-lieutenant's lady levelled her eyeglass at her for a long time; Tony cast down her eyes, almost afraid to breathe. The scar on her cheek tingled as if the eyes of the lady had opened the wound afresh. The rise of the curtain came to her relief, and now she listened with breathless attention. She shed tears over the fate of the poor boy who died in prison, because he was accused of stealing, just to save the credit of his master, to whom he owed a debt of gratitude; and if she had been the master's daughter she certainly would not have put off her disclosure until it came too late. When the curtain fell, a deep sigh escaped her.

On the way home the gamekeeper put his arm around Tony's waist, and she clung closely to him. She was quite overcome with mingled emotions. It seemed as if all she felt, and the feigned events she had seen, were of the gamekeeper's doing, and as if she owed it all to him; and, again, she wished to go back to the old man and his sweet daughter, who were now so happy together. The gamekeeper, too, was happy, for he obtained Tony's promise to walk with him after church on Sunday afternoon.

Thus the gamekeeper's manœuvres were far more successful than those in which poor Sepper was engaged on horseback on the plains of Ludwigsburg; and, before the latter got his honorable discharge from the military, Tony had given him another discharge which he never desired. When he came home, his first visit was to the house of Tony's father. She was spinning in the room, but gave him no look of recognition, only directing a fixed, cold stare at him from time to time. He took his discharge out of his pocket, brushed every mote of dust from the table, and spread the document before their eyes. Tony would not walk to the table to look at it. He wrapped it up in a piece of paper and went, carrying it carefully in his hand, to Babbett's. Here he heard the whole story, and also that the two playmates had quarrelled about the gamekeeper, and were not on speaking terms. He mashed the discharge into a ball with both hands and went away.

At dark Sepper was sitting under the cherry-tree where we first made Tony's acquaintance. It was leafless. The wind whistled over the stubble, and the pine-wood sighed and murmured like a mighty current. The night-bell sounded from the convent, and a belated raven croaked as he flew toward the wood. Sepper saw and heard nothing. His elbows rested on his knees, and his hands covered his eyes. Thus he remained a long time. The bark of a dog and the sound of footsteps approaching aroused him, and he sprang to his feet. The gamekeeper was coming out of the village. Sepper saw the flash of his gun-barrel: he also saw a white apron, and concluded, rightly, that Tony was accompanying the gamekeeper. They stood still a while, and Tony returned toward the village.

When the gamekeeper was near him, Sepper said, in a tone of defiance, "Good-evening."

"How are you?" returned the gamekeeper.

"I've got a crow to pick with you," said the former again.

"Oh, Sepper," said the gamekeeper, "since when have you got back?"

"Too soon for you, you-: we won't be long about it. There! we'll draw straws for which of us must give up Tony, and if I lose I must have the gun."

"I won't draw any straws."

"Then I'll draw your soul out of your body, you rascally green-coat!" roared Sepper, seizing the rifle with one hand and the gamekeeper's throat with the other.

"Seize him, Bruin," cried the gamekeeper, with a smothered voice. A kick from Sepper disabled the hound, but released the gamekeeper a little. They now wrestled furiously for the gun, and held each other by the throat, when suddenly the charge went off, and the gamekeeper fell backward into the ditch. He groaned but slightly, and Sepper bent over him to hear whether he was still breathing. Tony came running up the road: she had heard the report, and was filled with forebodings of evil.

"There, there!" cried Sepper; "there lies your gamekeeper: now marry him!"

Tony stood like a statue, without speech or motion. At last she said, "Sepper, Sepper, you have made yourself and me unhappy."

"What am I to you? I ask nothing more of anybody," cried Sepper, and fled toward the highlands. He was never heard of again.

On the way to Muehringen, in the cherry-copse, is a stone cross, to mark the spot where the gamekeeper of Muehringen was slain.

Tony lived through many years of solitary grief.

GOOD GOVERNMENT

1

On May morning a magnificent tree was found before the house of Michael the wagoner. It was a tall fir; the branches had been cut off, and only the crown was left. It towered far over all the houses, and, if the church were not on a hill, it would have looked down on the steeple. There was not another May-pole in all the village; and all the girls envied Eva, the wagoner's oldest daughter, the distinction of having this one set for her.

The children came up the village, a green hut moving along in their midst. A conical roof of twisted withes, covered with leaves, was put on a boy's head, and in this curious disguise he went from house to house, stopping at every door. Two boys walked beside him, carrying a basket filled with eggs and chaff, followed by a crowd with green boughs in their hands. They sang at every house, -

"Bim, bam, bum!
The May-man he has come;
Give us all the eggs you've got.
Or the marten will come to your cot;
Give us all the eggs we will,
Or we'll strew our chaff on your sill.
Bim, bam, bum," &c.

Where they received no eggs they fulfilled their threat, and cast a handful of chaff on the sill, with cheers and laughter. This happened but very rarely, however, though they left not a single house unvisited except the manor-house farmer's. But the "May-man" failed on this occasion to attract the general interest, for all the world had flocked to Michael the wagoner's house to see the May-pole. It could not have been brought there without the aid of at least six men and two horses. How it could have been done so "unbeknown" was the wonder of all, for setting May-poles was rigorously forbidden and punished with three months' confinement in the Ludwigsburg penitentiary. The fear of this punishment had deterred all the boys from putting this monster nosegay before their sweethearts' windows, - all but Wendel's Mat, who went to see Eva. Who had helped him was not to be discovered: some supposed that they were boys from Dettensee, which is only a mile off and belongs to the dominions of his high mightiness the Duke of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen.

Many of the farmers, on their way to the field with their ploughs and harrows, stopped to look at the May-pole. Others, with hoes on their shoulders, did the same. Wendel's Mat was there also, and he chuckled in his sleeve continually, tipping the wink to Eva, who sat gayly at the window with her eyes shut. Those closed eyes were very significant. At every arch repetition of the question, "Who could have set the May-pole!" she answered with a roguish shrug of the shoulders.

Just as the May-man and his followers had reached Michael the wagoner's house and began their song, the beadle and the ranger made their appearance, and a solemn "Hush your noise, you-!" from the former, stopped the proceedings. Amid the sudden silence the officer of the law walked up to Mat, took him by the arm, and said, "Come along to the squire."

Mat shook off the broad hand of the functionary, and asked, "What for?"

"You'll hear in good time. Come along, now, or you'll be sorry for it."

Mat looked about him as if he did not exactly know what to do, or as if he was waiting for assistance from some quarter. The May-cabin marched straight up to the beadle and struck his face. The boy probably took it for granted that, as May-man, his person was sacred and secure; but

the beadle knew no sacred personage except himself, and pulled the boy's hut to pieces at a blow. Christian, Mat's younger brother, sprang out of it; and there was an end of the Maying.

Meantime Eva had come out of the house and took Mat by the arm, as if to save him. But he shook her off almost as roughly as he had done the beadle; while the latter said to Eva, "You may as well wait till I come for you."

"Come on," said Mat, casting a look of much meaning on Eva; but she, poor thing, saw nothing now, for the tears were in her eyes. Holding her apron to her face, she went back quickly to the house.

The farmers went to their work, and Mat followed the officers to the squire's, the children bringing up the rear. When nearly out of hearing, some of the boldest cried, "Soges! Soges!" This was the beadle's nickname, and always made him furious. He had administered his office while the Black Forest yet formed a part of the possessions of the house of Austria. His devotion to his august master was such that he thought it necessary even to affect the dialect of Vienna; and, instead of pronouncing the German for "I say it," "I sag's" or "I han's g'sa't," – as a plain Black Forester would have done, – he said, "I sog'es." Soges thereby became his title.

The mysterious brown door of the squire's house removed Mat, Soges, and the ranger from the sight of the multitude. The squire welcomed the prisoner with a round rating for the crime of which he stood accused. Mat remained calm, only beating with one foot the time of a tune he sang in imagination. At last he said, "'You 'most done, squire? All that's nothing to me, for I haven't set any May-pole: go on talking, though, for I've plenty of time to listen."

The squire waxed very wroth, and would have assaulted Mat bodily had not Soges whispered some more sagacious counsels in his ear. He sank his clenched fist, and ordered Soges to take the criminal to the lock-up for twenty-four hours for a flagrant denial.

"I belong to the village; I am to be found at any time, and I'm not likely to run away about such a trumpery as this: you can't lock me up," said Mat, rightly.

"Can't?" cried the squire, reddening with anger: "we'll see if we can't, you-"

"Save your blackguarding," said Mat: "I'm going; but it's an outrage to treat the son of a citizen this way. If my cousin Buchmaier was at home it couldn't be done."

On the way to the lock-up they met Eva; but Mat did not even make an attempt to speak to her. Eva could not understand how this happened. She followed Mat with her eyes until he was no longer in sight, and then, bent with shame and trouble, she entered the squire's dwelling. His wife was Eva's godmother, and Eva would not go until Mat had been released. But her intercession was of no use this time: the president-judge of the district was shortly expected on his tour of visitation, and the squire wished to conciliate him by a specimen of unrelenting severity.

In conjunction with his faithful prime minister Soges, a report was prepared and Mat transported to Horb early next morning. It was well that Eva's house lay at the other end of the village, so that she could not see the wretched plight to which a night's imprisonment had reduced the fine, active fellow who generally appeared so neatly clad. In his anger he tore a bough from every hedge he passed, gnawed it between his teeth, and threw it away again. In the fir-wood he broke a twig and kept it in his mouth. He never spoke a word: the fir-sprig seemed to be the symbol of his silence in regard to the May-pole, – a charm with which he intended to tie his tongue. Arrived at the court-house door, he hastily took it out of his mouth and unconsciously thrust it in his pocket.

No one who has not been in the hands of a German court of justice can form any idea of the misery attending such a perfect loss of the power of self-control: it is as if one's mind had been forcibly deprived of its body. Pushed from hand to hand, the feet move with apparent freedom of will, and yet do only another's bidding. Mat felt all this keenly; for he had never been in trouble like this. He felt as if he was a great criminal, and had killed somebody at the very least: his knees seemed to sink under him as he was taken up the long flights of steps which lead to the top of the hill. He was locked up in the old tower which stands so uncomfortably on the hill, like a great stone finger pointing upward as if to say, "Beware!"

Every minute appeared to last an age. As long as he could remember, he had never been left alone for an hour without work: what could he do now? For a while he peered through the doubly-barred and grated window in the wall, which was six feet thick, but saw only a patch of sky. Lying on the bench, he played with the fir-sprig which he found in his pocket, – the only keepsake he had of the green world without. Sticking it into a crack of the floor, he amused himself with supposing it to be the great May-pole before Eva's window, – which he seemed not to have seen for a hundred years. Sighing, he started up, looked around wildly, whistled, and began to count the needles of the fir-sprig. In the midst of this occupation he stopped and regarded it more closely: he had never before seen the beauty of one of Nature's fabrics. At the stem the needles were dark-green and hard; but they grew gradually lighter and softer, and at the ends they were like the plumage of an unfledged bird. At the tip, the germ, with its neatly-folded scales, gave promise of a fir-nut. A smell sweeter than that of lavender or of rosemary oozed out of its pores. Mat passed it gently over his face and closed eyes, until he fell asleep. He dreamed of being spellbound to a swaying fir-tree, without being able to stir: he heard Eva's voice begging the spirit who held him in chains for leave to come up to him and set him free. He awoke, and really heard Eva's voice and that of his brother Christian. They had brought him his dinner, and begged the jailer to let them speak to Mat in his presence; but in vain.

It was late in the day when Mat was brought up for a hearing. The president-judge received him roughly, and scolded him in high German, just as the squire had done in the dialect of the country. Wherever judicial transactions are withheld from the public eye, as they have been in Germany for three or four centuries, any man accused of an offence will always be at the mercy of the officiating functionary. Though it will not do to torture or to beat him, there are means of ill treatment which the law cannot reach.

The judge walked up and down the room with rattling spurs, and twirled a bit of paper nervously between his fingers, as he put his questions.

"Where did you steal the tree?"

"I don't know any thing about it, your honor."

"You lie, you beggarly rascal!" cried the judge, stepping up to Mat and seizing him by the lapel of his coat.

Mat started backward, and clenched his fist involuntarily.

"I'm not a rascal," said he, at last, "and you must write what you have said in the minutes: I'd like to see what sort of a rascal I am. My cousin Buchmaier will come home after a while."

The judge turned away, biting his lips. If Mat's case had been a better one, the judge might have had reason to rue his words; but he wisely abstained from inserting what he had said in the minutes. He rang the bell, and sent for Soges.

"What proof have you that it was this fellow that put up the May-pole?"

"Every child in the village, the tiles on the roofs, know that Mat goes to see Eva: no offence, your honor, but I should think it would be the quickest way to send for Eva, and then he won't deny it: he can't qualify that it isn't so."

Mat opened his eyes wide, and his lips quivered; but he said nothing. The judge hesitated a long time, for he perfectly understood the impropriety of such a mode of proof; but the desire to set an example prevailed.

The hearing ended by drawing up the minutes, and requiring Mat, as well as Soges and the customary two "assessors," or, as they are vulgarly called, "by-sleepers," to sign them. Mat had not the courage to repeat his demand about the abusive words of the judge, but suffered himself to be led back quietly to prison.

When it grew dusk, Eva might have been seen sitting on the stile at the end of the village and looking over toward the tower, thinking that Mat must surely come before long. She sat behind a hedge, to avoid being seen and questioned by the passers-by. There she saw Soges coming up the

hillside. As she walked toward the road, Soges beckoned to her; and, hoping to hear news from Mat, she ran to him in all haste.

"Not too fast, Eva," cried Soges; "I only wished to tell you that you must come to court tomorrow: you've saved me a walk."

Eva turned ashy pale, and looked almost beside herself; then she ran down the hill, and did not stop till she had come to the Neckar. She looked around in amazement, for it had seemed to her that she was to be locked up at once with no hope of escape but by running away. She went home, weeping silently.

Eva hardly closed her eyes all night for thinking of the chambers hung in black, and the skull and bones with which her imagination garnished the thought of courts and judges. If her playmate Agatha, the tailor's daughter, had not come to sleep with her, she would have died of fear. At the first dawn of morning she went to the press and took out her Sunday gear. Agatha had to dress her, for she trembled so much that she could not tie a string. She looked at herself sadly in her broken glass. It seemed as if she were forced to go to a funeral in holiday garb.

Michael the wagoner accompanied his daughter, for it would not do to let the child go alone. In the court-house he took off his hat, stroked his short hair, and drew his face into an expression of smiling humility as he stood, scraping the floor with his feet, before the unopened door. He rested his hawthorn stick against the wall, took off his three-cornered hat, pressed it to his breast with his left hand, bent his head humbly, and knocked at the door. It opened. "What do you want?" inquired a gruff voice.

"I am Michael the wagoner, and this is my daughter Eva, and she is very much afraid; so I thought I would ask whether I might come in to court with her."

"No," was the rude answer; and the door was slammed in his face so heavily that he staggered some steps backward. He had no opportunity of advancing his other argument, – that in strictness he ought to appear before court and not Eva, as the house before which the May-pole was belonged to him.

With both hands folded upon his hawthorn stick, and his chin resting upon his hands, Michael the wagoner sat beside his daughter in the entry, and looked at the stone floor, which seemed almost as void of sympathy as the face of the official. "If Buchmaier was at home," he muttered, "they would strike up another tune." Eva could not speak a word: she only coughed once or twice into her neatly-ironed handkerchief.

Summoned at last, she rose quickly. Neither spoke, but, after a mute, parting look, Eva disappeared behind the door. At the door she stood still: the judge was not there, but the clerk sat playing with his pen, while the two "assessors" whispered softly to each other. Eva shook and trembled in every limb: the silence lasted ten minutes, which, to the poor girl, seemed half an eternity. At last the clink of spurs announced the judge's arrival. Eva seemed to find favor in his eyes, for he tucked her chin, stroked her burning cheeks, and said, "Sit down." Eva obeyed, just seating herself on the very edge of the stool. After going through the customary catechism of name, station, age, and so on, the judge asked, -

"Well, who put up your May-polo?"

"How can I know, your honor?"

"Didn't you drop the rope out of the dormer-window to tie it with?"

"No, your honor."

"And don't you know who is your sweetheart?"

Eva began to weep aloud. It was dreadful to deny; and yet she could not confess it. In America such a question would have had no other result than a reprimand from the bench to the counsel putting it. But so defenceless is the condition of parties and witnesses where justice hides in corners, that the judge even went further, and said, -

"It's no use to deny it: Mat is your sweetheart, and you're going to get married very soon."

Eva remembered that four weeks later they intended to ask that same court for permission to get married, – an indispensable formula under the code of that happy country. If she denied it now, she thought they would refuse to give her the "papers" and the "acceptance," and, besides, it was against her conscience to say "No." Her heart beat quickly; a certain feeling of pride arose within her; a consciousness of superiority to all the ills that flesh is heir to pervaded her being: she forgot the papers and the judge, and only thought of Mat. The last tear dropped from her lids; her eyes brightened; she arose quickly, looked around as if in triumph, and said, "Yes: I'll never have any one but him."

"So Mat put up your May-pole?"

"It may be, but of course I couldn't be by, and that night I was-" Here the tears choked her utterance again. It was well for the poor girl that she held her hands before her eyes, and could not see the smiles of the men of justice.

"Confess, now, he put up your May-pole, and nobody else."

"How can I know?"

By all sorts of cross-questions, and the oily assurance that the punishment would be but slight, the judge at last wormed the confession from her. The minutes were now read to her in fine book-German and in connected periods: of her tears and sufferings not a word was written. Eva was astonished to find that she had said so much and such fine things; but she signed the minutes unhesitatingly, only too glad to get away at any price. As the door closed behind her and the latch fell into the socket, she stood still, with folded hands, as if chained to the ground; a heavy sigh escaped her, and she almost feared the earth would open under her feet, for she now reflected, for the first time, how much harm she might have done to her beloved. Clinging to the balusters, she came slowly down the stone steps, and looked for her father, who was keeping up his spirits with a stoup of wine at the Lamb Tavern: she took her seat by his side, but said nothing, nor brought a drop to her lips.

Mat was now called up again, and Eva's confession read to him. He stamped his foot and gnashed his teeth. These gestures were immediately recorded as the basis of a confession, and, after sufficient baiting, Mat found himself completely caught: like game in a net, his desperate efforts to disengage himself only entangled him still further.

Being asked where he had got the tree, Mat first said that he had taken it out of the Dettensee wood, – which was in the duchy of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, and therefore under another sovereignty and jurisdiction. But, when another investigation and a report to the court at Haigerloch was talked of, he at last confessed that he had taken it out *of his own wood*, – "by the Pond," – and that it was a tree which would have been marked for felling in two or three days by the forester.

In consideration of these extenuating circumstances, Mat was fined ten rix-dollars for having taken a tree out of his own wood before it was marked.

Up at the stile where Mat had torn off a sprig the day before, he met Eva and her father, who were coming up the hill-slope. He would have passed on without a greeting; but Eva ran up to him and cried, huskily, "Don't sulk, Mat: I'll give you my cross and my garnets if they make you pay a fine. Thank the Lord, you're not locked up any more."

After some altercation, Mat gave in: hand in hand with Eva he walked through the village, and received kind congratulations from all he met.

This is the story of the May-pole before Michael the wagoner's house: on the wedding-day it was decked with red ribbons. The heavens and the earth seemed to like it better than the good government or the vigilant police, for it unaccountably took root and sent forth new branches. To this day it graces the house of the happy couple as a living emblem of their constant love.

2

This story is connected with another, of more general interest. The prevalence at this time of the wicked custom of putting up May-poles, as well as other offences against the peace and dignity of the forests, induced the judge to issue an ordinance which had long hovered at the nib of his pen. From immemorial times it has been the custom of the peasantry of the Black Forest to carry a little axe in their left hand whenever they go abroad. Only the "men" – that is, the married men-do so; and it is a badge which distinguishes them from the "boys," or unmarried young fellows. It is said to be a remnant of the ancient time when every one bore arms.

On Whitsunday the following ordinance was found on the blackboard nailed in front of the town-house of every village in the presidency: -

"It having been found that many offences against the forest are occasioned by the improper practice of carrying axes, the public are hereby notified, -

"That from this day forth every person found upon the road or in the woods with an axe shall be held to give the gamekeeper or ranger accurate information of the purpose for which he has the axe with him; and, if he fails to do so, he shall be punished by a fine of one rix-dollar: upon a repetition of the offence he shall be fined three rix-dollars: and, upon a further repetition, with imprisonment for not less than one and not more than four weeks.

*"RELLINGS,
President-Judge."*

A crowd of farmers flocked around the town-house at the close of the afternoon service. Mat, who was now one of the "men" also, read the ordinance aloud. All shook their heads and muttered curses: the old squire said, audibly, "Such a thing wouldn't have been done in old times: these are our privileges."

Buchmaier was now seen coming down from the upper village with the axe in his hands. Every eye was turned toward him as he walked along. He was a stout, strong man, in the prime of life, – not large, but broad-shouldered and thick-set. The short leathern breeches had allowed his shirt to bag a little round his waist; the open red vest showed the broad band which connected his suspenders, and which was woven in various colors and resembled a pistol-belt in the distance; the three-cornered hat was fixed upon a head disproportionately small; the features were mild and almost feminine, particularly about the mouth and chin, but the large, bright blue eyes and the dark, protruding brows spoke clearness of apprehension and manly boldness.

Mat ran to meet the new-comer, told him of the ordinance, and said, "Cousin, you are not good councilmen, any of you, if you knuckle under to this."

Buchmaier continued his regular pace without hastening his steps in the least: he walked straight up to the board, everybody stepping aside to let him pass. He raised his hat a little, and there was an expectant silence. He read the ordinance from beginning to end, struck the flat of his hand upon the crown of his head, – a sign that something decisive was coming, – took the axe into his right hand, and with a "Whew!" he struck it into the board in the middle of the ordinance. Then, turning to the by-standers, he said, "We are citizens and councilmen: without a meeting, without the consent of the councils, such ordinances cannot be passed. If the clerks and receivers are our lords and masters, and we are nobody, we may as well know it; and, if we must go before the king himself, we can't put up with this. Whoever agrees with me, let him take my axe out and strike it into the board again."

Mat was the first who stepped forward; but Buchmaier held him by the arm and said, "Let the older men come first."

This movement turned the scale in the minds of those who had halted between two opinions, not knowing whether to imitate Buchmaier's course or to condemn it. The old squire made his essay

first, with a trembling hand; after him, no one kept aloof, and the name of the judge in particular was hacked into a hundred pieces. By degrees, all the village assembled, and every one contributed his stroke amid shouts and laughter.

The acting squire, informed of what had happened, thought of calling the military from Horb. But his sapient minister dissuaded him from such a requisition, as it would be of no use; "and, besides," thought he, "let them make as much rebellion as they can; there will be a fine crop of summonses, and every summons is a creutzer to me. Hack away, boys: you are hacking into your own flesh, and that flesh is my copper." With a joyous mien he counted his coming gains as he drank his stoup of wine in the Adler.

Thus it happened that not one in the village remained innocent of the offence except Soges and the squire.

Next Tuesday, at the suggestion of the old squire, the councilmen went to court of their own accord and gave information of what they had done. The judge stormed. His name-Rellings-is a word used in the Black Forest to designate a tom-cat; and he might then really be compared to a shorn puss, with spectacles on its nose and spurs at its feet. He talked of locking up all the offenders at once; but Buchmaier stepped forward with great decision and said, "Is that all you are good for? Locking up? You won't do that yet a while. We are here to stand by what we have done: we avow it freely, and there can be no such thing as imprisonment before trial. I am not a vagrant. You know where I live. I am Buchmaier, this here's Beck, that there's John the Blacksmith, and that's Michael's son Bat, and we're all to be found on our own freeholds. You can't lock us up without a sentence, and after that the way is still open to Reutlingen and to Stuttgart, if need be."

The judge changed his tone, and summoned the men to appear before him at nine o'clock of the following day. This was well at least, so far as Soges thereby lost his creutzers. Thus do great lords and little lords frequently err in their calculations.

Next day an array of more than a hundred farmers, with axes in their hands, marched through the village. They often stopped before the door of a house and called for the belated master, who rushed out in great haste, pulling on his coat as he walked along the road. Jokes and witticisms were passed about, but died away whenever the speaker's eye fell upon Buchmaier, who walked on silently with contracted brows. Not a drop had been tasted before going to court. Business first, pleasure afterward, was the motto of the farmers.

The judge was lounging at the window in his dressing-gown, with his long pipe in his mouth. On seeing the approach of the armed force, he closed the window in all haste, and ran to ring the bell; but, as his boots were always spurred, he stumbled over the window-curtain and fell at full length upon the floor. His long pipe lay beside him like a weapon of offence. He rose quickly, however, rang for the tipstaff, sent him to the commandant and to the captain of the gens-d'armes, and ordered them all to come up with arms heavily loaded. Unfortunately, there happened to be but four men in the town. He now ordered them to remain in the porter's room and hold themselves in readiness to act at a moment's warning. He then gave directions that but one farmer should be admitted at a time, and the door always closed upon him.

Buchmaier, being first called in, said, holding the door in his hand, "Good-morning, your honor;" and then, turning to the others, "Come in, men: we have a common grievance I'm not going to speak for myself alone."

Before the judge could interfere, the room was filled with farmers, each carrying an axe on his left arm. Buchmaier stepped up to the clerk, and said, stretching out his hand, "Write down word for word what I say; I want them to read it at the Provincial Government." Then, after passing his hand twice through his shirt-collar, he rested his hand upon the green baize of the table, and continued: -

"All respect and honor to you, judge: the king has sent you, and we must obey you, as the law requires. The king is a good and a true man, and we know it isn't his will to have the farmers knocked about like dumb cattle or boxed on the ears like children. But the little lords and gentlemen that hang

by one another from the top to the bottom are mighty fond of commanding and giving orders: one of these days they will set it down in notes how the hens must cackle over their eggs. I'm going to lift the lid off the pan and just give you a bit of my mind. I know it won't do any particular good just now; but, once for all, it must be said: it has been tickling my throat too long, and I'm going to get it out of me. The commune is to be put on the shelf altogether, and all things to be done in the rooms of you office-holders. Then why don't you sow and reap in the rooms too? Such a little whippersnapper of a clerk twists a whole town-housefull of farmers on his fingers, and before you know it you find clerk after clerk saddled upon us for a squire: then it is all fixed to the liking of you pen-and-ink fellows. What is true is true, and there must be law and order in the land; but the first thing is to see whether we can't get along better without tape-fellows than with them; and then we don't carry our heads under our elbows, either, and we can mind our own business, if we can't talk law-Latin. There must be studied men and scholars to overlook matters; but, first, the citizens must arrange their own affairs themselves."

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